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Grim Sleeper:

Gender, Violence, and Reproductive Justice in Los Angeles

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GRIM SLEEPER: GENDER, VIOLENCE, AND REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE IN LOS ANGELES

by

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Dedication

For Josie Murillo Grigsby

For Martin A Grigsby, Dr. Clyde Woods, and Irvin Landrum.

For the ancestors who came before and walk beside me

Acknowledgements

This dissertation comes to a close at a time when discourses of women's rights are front and center in policy debates. Massachusetts' legislation finalizing the no buffer zone for abortion clinic patients followed by Hobby Lobby's ruling on family planning continue to affect low income women of color the most and have set legal precedents that might prove far reaching in the regulation of family planning and labor. It also comes at a time when Reproductive Justice is thrown casually around like presidential campaign bumper stickers, swiftly becoming synonymous with Wendy Davis's filibuster. Unfortunately, the long history of black women's reproductive organizing, day-to-day hustle, and challenges faced in community based organizations are being left untold. It is in this history my dissertation emerged and sought to recover. It is in this history of black women political activism that I hope my work does justice. I am indebted to the women who have spent many days and nights organizing, educating, and advocating for black women's reproductive justice. I have endless gratitude and respect for the community of women with whom I spent many years working side by side. I thank you.

There are a host of individuals, communities, and academic centers that have contributed to the completion of this dissertation. This is by no means a complete statement of thanks. Anyone who may be left out, please blame it on the incredible exhaustion of graduate school.

duly noted. I am most appreciative for my committee chair. Without a doubt João Costa Vargas is the most generous, meticulous, punctual, and demanding advisor one could be paired with. His unflinching honesty does not come at an expense but has only furthered my intellectual growth and approach to radial politics. João is a giant among many, and has given generously of his time and patience in guiding me through this process. I have met no other who sacrifices and gives as much personally to further the political project to develop Black Diaspora scholars and communities.

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With graduate school you never know what you are getting into until you have made it through. The process can be lonely, grueling, and maddening. I am blessed to have endured this journey with my writing comrades Luciane Rocha, Halie Eshe Cole, Lauren Hammond, Alix Chapman, and Kai Green. We shared early drafts, coffee shop regimens, and long workdays. Other times Skype sessions, extended phone calls, lively text conversations functioned to check-in, complain and commiserate about graduate student life. Alone yet together. I wouldn't have made it without them.

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jokes, and true Black Californian ways have made him an irreplaceable friend and colleague. This list of thanks would not be complete without a special shout out to my cohort wife, Courtney Desiree Morris and Martin Perna whose open hearts, brilliance, and love make everything seem like a party.

I have an amazing and rather large family and although many of them are not named here, they are all in my heart. My sisters-cousins, Valerie Mejia and Michelle Malerba, called or visited just when I needed it. I am proud to have them in my life and thankful they let me into theirs. To my family: Raheem Mitchell, LaShannea Mitchell, Major Mitchell, and John Murillo thank you for the endless support, jokes and making coming home a welcome adventure. My mother, Josefina "Cha Cha" Murillo Grigsby, was born in Juarez, Mexico and educated in the U.S. and has by far the best grip and use of English grammar I have encountered. This dissertation would be in grammatical disarray. It would be a party of misplaced pronouns, tangled verb tense agreements, dangling participles, and commas falling like confetti all over my sentences if it were not for her. She is the most hard working, giving, and supportive woman. Everything I am is because of her courage and love.

Finally my love: Laurence Ralph, you've put up with and understood my antics, complaints, and crazy. There are not enough words to properly thank you. I am grateful to have a partner who understands a rigorous academic schedule. Thank you for reading unfinished chapters, drafts, listening to my conceptual rants and your quiet encouragement. Every day, month, and year led us to this place, to be here, together.

GRIM SLEEPER:
GENDER, VIOLENCE, AND REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE IN LOS ANGELES

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Discussions of South Los Angeles often reflect dystopic conditions of black communities as supine beneficiaries of endless social welfare living in seemingly malignant spaces where poverty and disease darken corners of an otherwise ideal city. This dissertation contributes to literature on urban violence, public health, and nonprofit studies through a feminist ethnography of black women's community organizing. The Grim Sleeper murders spanned a 25-year period, marking two decades of violence against black women's bodies in South Los Angeles. Slow moving police investigations began in 1984, were colored by depictions of murdered black "prostitutes," which spurred a community response by women activists, yet the suspect was not arrested till 2010. Just a year before, in 2009, public health research for Los Angeles County, revealed staggering disparities in black women's reproductive health, including: a maternal mortality rate nearly four times all other racial groups and rising STI's among adolescents and women between the ages of 14 - 25. Again, with little comment or action this time in public health, the lives and bodies of black women continued to be in precarious positions. In national and popular debates of reproductive rights discussion surrounds abortion legislation, failing to address a range social inequalities that cut into reproductive lives of

black women. I explore, the Grim Sleeper as not just a named serial killer but as characteristic of latent state responses to reproductive health challenges experienced by black women. Activist's response to this parallel and cyclical lived experience of gendered violence against black bodies is at the center of my research. I argue that blackness, neither marginal nor invisible, is principal to understanding how race and social inequalities effect lived geographies. I closely examine; (1) the nature of reproductive justice within a community organization and (2) the ways California's economic downturn affects approaches to social transformation through nonprofit and advocacy work. (3) A murderer's twenty-five year history of targeting black women and the silence that surrounded it as reflective of state approaches to the lives of black women. Utilizing public health, policy, archival, oral history and ethnographic data my dissertation proposes the advancement of a reproductive justice standpoint by situating black women's agency as a starting point for well-being and community health agendas.

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Introduction

There is something about poverty that smells like death. Dead dreams dropping off the heart like leaves in a dry season and rotting around the feet; impulses smothers too long in the fetid air of underground caves. The soul lives in a sickly air." ~ Zora Neale Hurston[1]

The major source of difficulty in our political work is that we are not just trying to fight oppression on one front or even two, but instead to address a whole range of oppressions." ~ The Combahee River Collective

I boarded the airplane bound for Los Angeles and settled into my seat. Returns to the city were always a mixed bag of emotions. Excitedly, I awaited my return home while anxiously producing a mental checklist of archives to visit; follow-up interview sessions to squeeze in between family events and community fundraisers. A few moments of apprehension invaded my list making; if I called the organization I might get sucked into a meeting or campaign. While I wanted to see the women involved with my project I didn't want to have to decline an invitation to an event or disappoint them by rejecting another volunteer opportunity. This internal debate hit a snag when a white man who had the stature of Obi Wan but the grace of Rush Limbaugh flopped down in the seat next to me. Though he seemed nice enough his English accent was mildly annoying and the constant shifting in his chair betrayed a pre flight discomfort. Reluctantly, we exchanged

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[1] Hurston, Zora Neale. Dust tracks on a road: An autobiography. Edited by Robert E. Hemenway. University of Illinois Press, 1984.

a round of formulaic pleasantries then riffled through a few questions of small talk when the tiresome topic of occupation finally landed. He asked, "So what do you do? You are student at the university, right?" There were times when my default answer was "yes' or plainly "I'm a teacher" but there was something in this assumption packaged in a British accent that made me say, "No, actually I am an anthropologist…" Before I could continue answering, he cut me off with the tried and true annoyance of all socio-cultural anthropologists, "So you work with bones?" "No." "No? What do you do then?" "I work on Los Angeles. Specifically, I study black women's historical and contemporary political work in social justice health organizing..." Cutting me off again, he responded with a mocking condescension loosely veiled by a comedic flair, "Oh, is there such a history? I didn't know LA had any history because you know where I'm from, Europe, that is the *real* history…all that other stuff doesn't truly count, we have hundreds of years of civilization…" As he droned on, I briefly considered correcting his misinformed assumptions supported by white privilege and colonialism that invalidated any history that was non European. Then I remembered my nearly three-hour flight, my seat near the window obstructed by his aisle seat and felt confined. I sat, angry at the cliché scene unfolding. Three hours can be a remarkable length of time when occupied by discomfort and irritation. Though I didn't question my safety, the racial violence thrown at me fashioned as a haphazard comment or a matter of fact erasure sparked an ire that was normally reserved for academic conferences[2]. There is no history in Los Angeles. No

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[2] Cultural critic and scholar, bell hooks explores the anger of black academics who face racism of liberal colleagues, specifically how the consistent pushing down of anger is an

conversation to be had about black women, who were left unacknowledged in his monologue on European history. Thankfully, at the same moment this guy was launching into the superior cultural history of Europe, the plane propelled forward, forcing the rest of his words down his throat.

This small moment amongst others gave life to the research that was to become this dissertation. These questions of history, pauses over significance, and denial of current bodily experiences of black women belie the ways in which normalized violence and erasures continue to disregard black life. I believe it is in the interplay and space between the above two epigraphs and experiences similar to mine on the airplane that the lives and work of black women exist. Facing continued erasure through acts of violence somewhere between a range of oppressions and souls in a sickly air, black women build community and relationships on a mission to make life not merely livable but transformative.

Grim Sleep: Gender, Violence, and Reproductive Justice in Los Angeles is an attempt to bring together two neglected archives of violence on black women's bodies, both have been publically neglected and contested. Both provide a window into the ways in which human lives are taken for granted while communities of black women struggle

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expectation of their position. However, as a survival tactic, hooks suggests the suppression of rage invokes internalized colonialism. The book opens with a scene where hooks describes treatment from both white passengers and airline staff dismissing her colleague in favor of whiteness. This moment described above was indicative of a similar dismissive racism where any answer I could have given in regard to my occupation was invalidated by his white position of privilege. hooks, bell. "Killing Rage: Ending Racism." Owl Books. New York. 1996.

to change the very same condition. Drawing from field work undertaken from March 2009 through August 2011, my project considers how the Grim Sleep functions as the name of a serial killer but also describes latent state responses to black women's reproductive health challenges.

Activist response to this parallel and cyclical lived experience of gendered violence against black bodies is at the center of my research. This dissertation contributes to emerging literature on Black California, urban studies and critical medical anthropology by focusing on activist black women and illuminating the process of community advocacy within the context of high mortality rates through reproductive justice work that has yet to be studied. Through this project I show the multivalent effects of structural violence experienced by black women and its impact on their wellbeing. I closely examine and evaluate (1) the nature of reproductive justice work within a community organization; (2) the ways in which California's economic downturn affects approaches to social transformation through nonprofit and advocacy work; and (3) A murderer's twenty-five year history of targeting black women and the silence that surround these killings as reflective of state approaches to the lives of black women

BLACK LIFE AND DEATH

Body Dumps

Drawing from social geography, historical records, and morbidity reports from the department of public health, I develop this term in Chapter One to show multiple ways that death is experienced by black women in Los Angeles, yet is concentrated in a

specific geographic location. Following Woods (2007) who states, "physical geographies are bound up in ... social and environmental processes, it follows that the materiality of the environment is racialized by contemporary demographic patterns as shaped by historic precedents." I take social geography to be an intersectional development of race, place, and process. Chapter one, demonstrates and argues that body dumps are developed as part of a historical racialization of space and bodies tied to death and negligence. There is a return to this concept in Chapter Five, "I want to Have a Life," through the exploration of personal health choices made by black activist women engaged in nonprofit community organizing. The chapter demonstrates the need to socially transform the culture of nonprofit burnout from working in underfunded positions. Body dumps are then simultaneously located in racially gendered geographies and material spaces that are occupied by black women.

Grim Sleep

Building on the popularized name of the South Los Angeles serial killer who took a 14-year hiatus from his murdering spree in 1989 only to begin again in 2003, I define grim sleep as a violent culture of negligence that produces and causes conditions that increase premature death amongst black populations. This conceptual argument draws from the anthropological concept of structural violence which, "is one way of describing social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm's way... The arrangements are structural because they are embedded in the political and economic organization of our social world; they are violent because they cause injury to people (Farmer1999)." However, I suggest grim sleep is symptomatic of latent outcomes of

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hyper-racialized material lives that experience disproportionally high instances of death. Using ethnography, my project suggests black women are especially subject to the violence of grim sleep and black activist women contest it by 1) mobilizing public health data that represent the outcomes of years of lack of access and geographic barriers to clinics, care, and information; and 2) developing creative programmatic schemes to negotiate the capitalist philanthropic funding process that challenge black reproductive justice organizations through the guise of capacity and single-issue focus.

Reproductive Justice

Black women's activism remains largely absent from reproductive health and rights narratives developed in the early 1970s and 1980s women's movements. Community and social activism of black women centered on health historically has taken into account additional factors such as income, race, housing, and education as contributors to poor reproductive health. The work of black women in Los Angeles diverges from the dominant discourse reproductive rights and health, which singularly focus on legal gains and the latter on status, family planning, and physiological knowledge. Reproductive Justice as developed and utilized by black women activists turns to social movement building that encompasses both rights and health agendas.

I analyze reproductive justice as a community organization strategy and employ it as a conceptual framework to better understand the multivalent approaches to transforming black women's reproductive health. For example, I explore how programming on voter education and diets is seemingly unrelated to reproductive health yet within a reproductive justice framework introduces and advances an approach to

transforming whole body health and wellbeing. Thus, reproductive justice moves from an intersectional approach to race, place, and gender inequality that seeks to end single-issue focus within health advocacy, programming, and funding. Put another way, reproductive justice is key to black women's bodies and lived experience of health, gender and violence that requires an intersectional ethnographic analysis. To better understand black life and death in South Los Angeles I explore three themes: Body Dumps, Grim Sleep and Reproductive Justice and present an integrative narrative and analysis of death that reads public health data and mortality reports of a serial killer through the community work of black reproductive justice advocates.

SETTING

Los Angeles, California is a sprawling metropolis located in the southwestern coastal region of the state. California has the reputation of being a leader in policy and legislation. Currently, the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, the most comprehensive reform of health care legislation, is underway a year ahead of federal mandates and many are looking to the state's success or failure. However, as a testing ground for three strikes laws, repeal of affirmative action, and gang injunctions, California has shown that policy change comes at the expense of communities of color. The most populous city in the state, Los Angeles, has an estimated population of 3.8 million and is considered to be one of the most culturally and racially diverse cities in the United States. As such, government agencies' approaches to policy and city management have far-reaching effects, and are perpetually under scrutiny. Looking to the lives and experiences of black women, my project focuses on one of the smaller demographics of

the city. As of the 2010 census, the city's population is reported to be 9.6 percent black, which is a decrease from the 11.2 percent reported in the 2000 census. The decrease in black population is attributed to high rates of premature death and early morbidity due to health status as well as increased incarceration rates in black communities[3].

The city is racially and economically segregated, which is manifested through the urban planning of the city, including the development of freeways, low-income housing, and leisure spaces (Avila 2006). Structural racial inequalities such as the lack of access to medical institutions, prenatal care, geographic holes in affordable housing and quality food are key factors in the deteriorating health of black communities. In Los Angeles, black women comprise just 4.7 percent of the population, yet health outcomes across race, class, and education indicators display disproportionally higher rates of maternal mortality, low infant birth weight, gonorrhea, chlamydia and HIV/AIDS infection. For example, the rates of maternal mortality[4] among black women in Los Angeles are five times higher when compared to other racial groups in the city. For every 100,000 live births, 52 black women die giving birth or shortly after. The assumed concomitant relationship between blackness, disease, and urban poverty in Los Angeles paints a stark picture collapsing death into data sets of morbidity and mapped dump locations of murder victims. While statistics provide a quantifiable measure of premature and

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[3]The Public Policy Institute of California reports the following staggering rates of incarceration, "Among adult men in 2010, African Americans were incarcerated at a rate of 5,525 per 100,000, compared to 1,146 for Latinos, 671 for non-Latino whites, and 43 for Asians. Among women, African Americans were incarcerated at a rate of 342 per 100,000, compared to 57 for Latinas, 66 for non-Latina whites, and 5 for Asians."
[4] Maternal death is defined as the death of a mother during or shortly after pregnancy or birth.

preventable death, the lived experiences of structural violence and street violence are imperative to understanding how black women negotiate community organizing and politics.

Over the course of 24 months of deep ethnographic research I worked as a grant writer, program coordinator, coalition representative, note taker and youth intern mentor at the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice located in Leimert Park in Los Angeles. This organization's staff and membership, who are discussed in depth in chapters three and five, are building upon a 12-year history of community engagement. While the need for public support is great, nonprofits faced unprecedented challenges during the state fiscal crisis of 2008 - 2012 and its aftermath. In South Los Angeles neighborhoods, few community-based organizations are entirely operated by black boards of directors, executive directors, and staff. Additionally, nonprofits that choose to manage and operate projects and organizations with a specific focus on black communities face social, racial and economic barriers to funding. However, many nonprofits are struggling to maintain funding, stability, and relevance with their community and constituents. A recent UCLA Center for Civil Society report, The State of Nonprofits in Los Angeles, states "Fifty-nine percent of nonprofit organizations reported an increase in demand for services over last year. Fifty-two percent of respondents experienced revenue decline. Thirty-four percent reported that they were operating in a deficit" (2010). My ethnographic project documents black women's struggles to address the conditions of their lives through a reproductive justice

community organization in the thick of a national recession and statewide economic crisis of historic proportions.

METHODS

Three primary questions guided my ethnographic analysis: (1) What are the practices black women employ to engage and resist historical and current state violations of their reproductive lives through matrices of health policy and legislation? (2) How does a South Los Angeles-based reproductive justice community organization assess its impact on South LA black communities' health and wellbeing[5]? (3) How do personal narratives and bodily experiences inform black women's work and enhance reproductive justice discourses?

To answer these questions, I employed a multilayered research approach that included archival and ethnographic research consisting of observant participation (Tedlock 1995) and oral history interviews 1) I used these methods to collect data from different sites, producing an in-depth analysis of a social history of black women in South Los Angeles with special attention paid to health organizing, health outcomes and premature death via health status or street violence and the ways in which policy is implemented to systematically limit women's access to social services. 2) I also examined the daily practices, effectiveness, and civic engagement of women who operate, volunteer in or staff a reproductive justice organization while confronting limitations by policy and legislation changes. 3) Finally, through a reproductive justice

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[5] I understand *wellbeing* as the total social, cultural, and spiritual health that is free from disease, stress, and poverty that limit a sustained healthy production of black communities. This concept is discussed at length in Chapter Five.

lens, I delineated how black women's agency is understandable via women's personal narratives that explore their subjectivities and agency as gendered and racialized subjects in South Los Angeles. This approach facilitates a multilayered analysis that incorporates structural, historical and personal data into the larger ethnographic project at the state, community and individual areas of analysis. These methods work together to present a comprehensive look at the ways that race, gender, class, sexuality, and location function as part of a racial logic that informs city social geographies that are tied to material realities while keeping an eye on the micro level of experience. Equally important, this project explores how black women are simultaneously recreating social and civic engagement while confronting the racial dynamics of South Los Angeles.

The use of archival research helps to understand how larger histories of social movements in Los Angeles have developed. I used archives from the UCLA Young Research Library and the Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research to provide historical evidence of women's participation in Los Angeles social movements. I also evaluated polices that the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice [BWOHJ] felt greatly impact the health status of black women and girls, including state health initiatives, laws, budget changes and abortion legislation. For example, California Proposition 4 was proposed legislation requiring minors and abortion providers to notify parents or guardians in writing before scheduling procedures. This statewide policy change, initially proposed in 2006 (though it was defeated), has continuously appeared on California ballots yearly, even as recently as 2012. Measures and imposed state policy such as this generated a considerable amount of work for the women involved with The

BWOH J. Archival and organizational materials provide a view into the ways that activists have responded to restrictions on their reproductive health.

My ethnographic approach enables me to examine the micro level of lived experiences in community organizing. The bulk of my data is derived from multi-sited observant participation (Tedlock 1995). This method foregrounds an active participation in the anthropologist's fieldwork, which is a move away from participant observation that suggests that a detached 'objective' analysis is paramount to ethnographic writing. I gathered data through volunteer work with the BWOHJ events, daily routines at the office, and occasional meetings that occurred at members' houses. As an active participant, I could better learn about the lives and decisions made by the women involved in community organizing. Finally, oral histories and semi-structured interviews (Weiss 1995, Ritches 2003) were used to help answer questions regarding women's individual motivations in contributing to reproductive justice campaigns and organizations.

I answered these primary questions by maintaining a sustained and critical relationship with the nonprofit organization. The Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of black Los Angeles communities since 1994. Fieldwork was conducted during a period of 24 months, combined with sustained contact over two summers, through email and bimonthly conference calls. I remained active and observed not only the interactions of the organization's members but also community members who came to events, workshops, and discussions. This often included dropping members off at their homes,

doctor's visits, or family functions. During this time I took on responsibilities as grant writer and facilitated program coordination. Due to the small staff size, over the years volunteers often became as present as staff and through work, many developed personal friendships with each other and myself.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

These themes and questions are explored through the following five chapters. Chapter 1: Los Angeles as Body Dumps, presents a historical and social geographic analysis of the city by conceptualizing the term body dumps through the lens of violence. This chapter sets the tone for the dissertation by foregrounding the types of violence experienced by black communities in South Los Angeles from lack of access in reproductive care to the street violence of a serial killer and the creation of body dumps is explained. Chapter 2: Dark Matter: Historical influence of black women's organizing in LA, presents a historical genealogy of black women's organizing in Los Angeles as part of a dark matter that influences black counterpublics in Black LA women's activism and policy. Chapter 3 entitled Reframing Hustle ideology in black women's nonprofit work, argues that black women's nonprofit organizing must repurpose the concept of hustling to resist changes in funding structure. Drawing from multi cited ethnography, it further describes the challenges of keeping a black organization afloat during California's economic crisis. Chapter 4: The Limits of Respectability in Reproductive Justice, argues that the use of the politics of respectability reproduces heterosexism within policy advocacy and displaces black queer reproductive justice advocates. Finally, Chapter 5: I

Want to Have a Life Too, argues that nonprofit cultural dynamics lead to burn out and intergenerational trauma within organizations, making black activist women ill.

CONCLUSION

This work presents the first look at what live lives of black women in Los Angeles look like at the intersection of activism and violence. It additionally moves the field of urban anthropology and theories of violence toward a comprehensive analysis of dynamics within social justice work through nonprofit organizations. It further contributes to critical medical anthropology discourse of reproduction by presenting the ways in which structural violence affects multiple health indicators and the response by black activist women.

Chapter One: Body Dumps to Grim Sleep: Exploring Violence and Death Among Black Women in Los Angele*s*

INTRODUCTION:

It's 2011. There are just under one hundred women in the room. In Los Angeles, California, a nonprofit's team of ten volunteers organizes a yearly symposium. At this symposium the reproductive health status of black women and adolescents are reported and discussed. A community task force is to be created with a mission to inform policy on the escalating rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and premature death of black women. Though discussing a critical and sobering subject matter, this symposium was convened with the care of a family reunion. A DJ played musical selections from Aretha Franklin as vibrant African fabrics were carefully fashioned as table clothes. Bouquets of Gerber daisies, roses, and carnations were deliberately arranged to welcome black women who often experienced isolation working as advocates in community based organizations, clinics, or as representatives to the Los Angeles County Health Departments and as state capitol lobbyists. Here they shared the burden of their work that so often occurred in single issue-based Silos[6]. When the opening panel began, many who have come to see each other at other forums that lacked diversity felt the warmth of the

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[6] Silos: a concept or term drawn from business and financial terminology is a mindset present when certain units withhold information with others in the same company. This type of mentality will reduce efficiency in the overall operation, reduce morale, and may contribute to the demise of a productive company culture. Commonly used within activist and nonprofit as a similar discourse a silo signifies issues, actions, campaigns that are single agenda focused that is confined by ideological barriers the prohibit or obstruct coalition work. (Hotăran, Ilinca. "Silo Effect vs. Supply Chain Effect." Review of International Comparative Management 10 (2009): 216-221.

carefully planned gathering which reaffirmed their ties to the commitment of enhancing and healing black women's lives.

The jovial ambiance shifted when Kimberly[7], a fifty-year-old advocate who joyously spread her cause to be "Spectacularly-Sporty," began her talk. "I was in my late twenties when I was attacked. He grabbed me from behind and pulled me into his car and ripped my clothes. Just ripped them. Ripped them all. I screamed, you know, you know I did, but a woman screaming on Western Avenue wasn't nothin new. I ran down that street half naked. I called the police and an investigator came to talk to me but I never heard from them again." As she finished her story Kimberly explained that it was this incident and the trauma it caused her and her family that caused her to feel compelled to be an advocate for black women. Moreover, her attack and survival became a primary reason she adhered to the idea of womb healing through reproductive justice.

As she gave her testimony, amongst the women in the room a ripple of murmur and gasps revealed shock. She was a member of the committee that tirelessly planned this symposium. Additionally, several of the women in the audience knew and had worked side-by-side with Kimberly for five years. Over the course of several oral history interviews for this project, more than one woman revealed to me that they never knew of this traumatizing episode or that this was the reason she became a health advocate. I met Kimberly four years prior at a training session on 501(c)(3) nonprofit state lobbying guidelines and practices that was organized by the Black Women's Organization for

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[7] According to stipulations and requirements for the University of Texas at Austin Internal Review Board for human subject research all names have been changed.

Health and Justice. In the few moments during the training when participants are encouraged to connect a personal story with a proposed legislation to be lobbied upon, she had alluded to womb healing work from trauma. Neither they nor I knew that she had been sexually assaulted and narrowly escaped death only to have her story dissolved into other forms of violence and criminalization that occurred during the 1980s in South Los Angeles.

In this chapter, through the historical and processual creation of Los Angeles black female body dumps, I consider the social and cultural geography of the body through the gendered violence of the Grim Sleeper Murders and the structural violence manifested in disproportionate reproductive health outcomes. In 2008, LA Weekly journalist Christine Pelisek reported, "Last fall, they arrested a guy who preyed on prostitutes; his DNA[8] wasn't right. They are combing through evidence gathered from 30 body dumps dating to the 80s, with a crime analyst inputting each clue into a giant 'automated filing cabinet'." This indifferent summation by Pelisek invokes both the

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[8] Though research and journalism on the Grim Sleeper murders has been minimal there is a sustained focus on the DNA testing and the LAPD's creating and use of biologized archive of DNA that is obtained from incarcerated people. From forensic research scientists to legal scholars this topic of biological surveillance through familial DNA has decidedly created a polemic argument on privacy and public safety concerns. While a number of Los Angeles Times articles tout the testing as a scientific breakthrough that aided in arresting Franklin, it is a civil liberties topic of debate. As of 2009 the California DNA database now contained approximately 1.2 million convicted people. Additionally, in the January before Franklin Jr. was arrested based on a nephew's partial DNA Match, Governor [Jerry] Brown announced a "major expansion" of the California database, as the state began to add the DNA of arrestees. California expects this to increase the pool of new DNA profiles from 200,000 to nearly 390,000 a year" (Rosen 2009). See Also: MILLER, GREG. 2010. "Familial DNA Testing Scores A Win in Serial Killer Case." Science 329, no. 5989: 262.

impermanent nature of black life within the city while the literal imagery of the dumping of bodies implies the notion of waste that has come to represent black life in South Los Angeles. Black neighborhoods are cast as vacant wastelands, blighted neighborhoods, and impoverished urban ghetto areas of Los Angeles where deleterious reproductive health conditions such as epidemic rates of STIs, including gonorrhea and syphilis, low infant birthrate and maternal mortality are represented as dark spots on an otherwise idyllic landscape of the California promise. Thus, unseen women who were cast away as undeserving of police investigation unwillingly contribute to these body dumps with not only their lives, but with those of their families' and are left to make sense of the vacancy in their lives created and maintained by racial and gendered structural violence.

In the sections that follow, I provide a historical and contextual overview of the violence that surrounds black women living in South Los Angeles, considering the ways in which gender affects the development, experience, and reaction to violence. First, by detailing the murders of black women and the media silence that allowed the murders to remain unsolved and kept communities unaware for over two decades. Then, I will move into a discussion of the development of South Los Angeles as a black space in a multiethnic city. Next, the chapter will move to detail state changes in social policy and safety net programs that have set the stage for contemporary health conditions that have led to health disparity. Finally, the chapter will address public health data that reveals health disparity and the creation of body dumps through illness and disparity. We will then circle back to the concept of grim sleep and consider its implications in a larger context as they will be addressed throughout the dissertation.

BODY DUMPS AS SERIAL MURDER

The drive to the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice was just one and a half miles from my Inglewood apartment. In other cities this could be considered biking distance or a few stops on a bus. In Los Angeles it was the ideal commute typically taking seven to ten minutes with little chance of getting caught in traffic. Because of the proximity to the organization's office, I would often coast home during lunch to pick up a forgotten notebook or a camera to document the day's events. Driving down boulevards in Los Angeles, one becomes quite content to ignore advertisements that pop up in the city's sky space. However, while conducting my fieldwork, I felt it was my anthropological duty to be keenly aware of the neighborhood shifts, changes, and new additions. One morning on my drive down LaBrea Blvd to the office a gigantic bold caps font spelling "REWARD" in bright red caught my attention. The billboard was an aberration from the usual movies or liquor advertisements that littered the elevated commercial property. It was a call for community help by the Los Angeles Police Department, "for information on the murder or attempted murder of 13 victims between 1985 and 2007." Scouring the images for clues and wanting to take a long look at the billboard, I craned my neck in the opposite direction from which I was propelling the car, hoping to take in all the information. I was living in the neighborhood for almost nine months before I saw these notices start to intermittently appear on billboards along major South Los Angeles avenues. Although I regularly read the Los Angeles Times and several other city newspapers, including limited-circulation African American newspapers, I couldn't recall previously reading or hearing about a serial killer. The

silence that ensconced the serial attacks and killings of these women became a defining mark of gendered violence against black women.

In South Los Angeles, from 1984 to 2010, Lonnie Franklin Jr. sexually assaulted and murdered numerous women within a one-mile radius. *LA Weekly* journalist Christine Pelisek nonchalantly described the accumulation of murders attributed to Lonnie Franklin, Jr., as *body dumps*. When originally apprehended, he was charged for thirteen murders. That number has now been increased to sixteen. This change was attributed to the police finding an archive of 180 photographs depicting naked, sleeping, or scantily clad black women of various ages in his home. The LAPD later scanned and posted many of these photos on the department's Facebook page in order to get community members' help in identifying the women pictured. As a result, several other women have been identified by family members who reported them missing many years ago. While there is no physical evidence, beyond the photographs, linking Franklin Jr. to the unidentified women, it is believed that he is responsible for many more murders than those for which he is currently being arraigned.

The moniker, "Grim Sleeper" was fashioned by Pelisek to highlight the fifteen-year "hiatus" Franklin Jr. may have taken from his murderous wrath from 1987 until 2002, when another woman's body was found dumped behind a trash bin. This is the longest reign of a serial killer in the United States west of the Mississippi River. However, the nightmare was initiated in 1984 and 1985 when the bodies of Sheila Burris and Gail Fricklin were found tossed and dumped in alleys near a Watts senior center. Another woman was haphazardly left behind a dumpster under a dry Christmas tree after being

shot at point blank range with a gun that was later linked to eight other murders. He launched a silent attack on black women that went undiscovered and was minimally publicized.

In 1986, the bodies of black women were soon accumulating not only on the streets but also within the LAPD's Department of Homicide. They emerged as heaps of cold case files that received little sustained investigation. In July 1986, the Los Angeles Herald Examiner reported a seventeenth slaying in South Central Los Angeles. There were at least three prominent issues with the approach of the investigators to the murders. First, during the 1980s the Los Angeles Times reported that no less than five different men were slaying women across South LA, contributing to the slippage of evidence between killers. Additionally, three separate murders were falsely attributed to former Los Angeles Police Deputy Ricky Ross, who was caught soliciting sex while on duty but was later released when it was revealed that the evidence had been falsified. Initially, a few of Franklin Jr.'s victims were tied to what the police investigator William Booth referred to as the "Strawberry Murders," which referred to the women's alleged sex work. The title was later changed to the "South Side Slayer," after community activists criticized the investigation process.

Figure 1.1: Images of the remaining 38 women who need to be identified from the
LAPD's Grim Sleeper Facebook Page published in 2010

This leads to the second point of contention - that the LAPD investigators misattributed and blamed many of the murders on the profession of black sex workers and their late night presence in public spaces. During the height of this murderous era an LAPD lieutenant stated that the killer was targeting "prostitutes" and if women living in the neighborhood were not working the street, then they should have nothing to worry about stating, "they [the victims] were often out late at night ... the hours when most of our crimes have occurred," thus implying that both their time and location contributed to their demise. Most notably, it was the victims' alleged occupation as assumed sex workers that pointed to their contested vulnerability.

A final critique made by the BCFB addressed the lack of mobilized resources towards the investigation of the killer and in search of missing women. Activists were specifically aggravated with the LAPD's refusal to seek FBI assistance unlike in the Richard Ramirez case. Several community members viewed the investigators' unwillingness to collaborate with activists as an additional cause to the length of time the cases went unsolved. A 1989 *Newsweek* article reported, "LAPD officials say there is no need to expand the 'Slayer' Task Force since, unlike the Night Stalker, he has confined his activities to a small area." However, it is significant that this relatively "small" yet densely populated area was home to black working class communities that, during those times, were confronting the loss of twenty-five unsolved murder cases, more than triple the number of victims of Richard Ramirez[9]. The "Night Stalker," as Ramirez was known,

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9 Carlo, Philip. (1996). *The Night Stalker: The Life and Crimes of Richard Ramirez* (Paperback ed.). New York, New York: Kensington Publishing Corp.

was a serial rapist who murdered eight Los Angeles and Hollywood Hills women. This much-publicized search included several televised news reports, press conferences, and periodic articles detailing the murders throughout the San Fernando Valley and extended throughout the state when there were sightings of him in San Francisco (Carlo 1996). The LAPD approach to the Southside slayings and later to the Grim Sleeper murders was, in fact, the opposite and was evidenced by the number of women who were unaware of the murders. The department's refusal to address community members' concerns of their failure to alert the residents of South LA neighborhoods of imminent danger was perpetuated by Police Chief Darryl Gates and then followed by Chief William Bratton's refusal to comment to the press about the number of unsolved murders and failure to apprehend the murderer, which produced two outcomes of violence. First, the denial of resources or acknowledgement of the serial aspect of the murders created a standard that substantiated the patriarchal state's gendered violence against black women through silence and denial of protection. Secondly, the confusion between killers, mischaracterization of victims, and the institutionalized neglect of black women's safety created a zone of normalized violence tied to black urban space. These two outcomes reveal the disposability of black life within urban spaces and, specifically, in South Los Angeles.

Who are the women murdered by the Grim Sleeper, Lonnie Franklin? More than a dozen black female bodies aged 14 to 36 were discarded - to give any age range - denotes the shocking number of killings that occurred. Yet, it also produces a nameless objectified body that, not unlike other stereotypes of working class black women, is

always already interpolated as sexually available and interchangeable. Even in her formidable journalism, Pelisek lumps all the women together and builds upon the narrative of the lone heroes or of evil. While Pelisek extensively interviewed Enietra Washington her story is constructed as the lone survivor, detailing her courageous escape. While this report to the police, on one hand provided a break in the case, on the other it ignored years of work by black activists, aggrieved family, and women such as Kimberly, whose stories were not recorded nor remembered. The construction of these narratives, too tightly tied to the acts of bravery or objects of sadism, failed to remove Enietra Washington and others from the concomitant process of raced and gendered violence. Instead, these women were part of the social geographies of "body dumps" that came to characterize this section of Los Angeles beyond murder. This is exemplified by Pelisek's statement, "police have known that a single madman is out there, a man whose audacity and sick good luck have made him the most enduring serial killer in California history" (Pelisek 2008). Far from one man's, "sick good luck" the accumulation of missing and murdered black women reveal the ways in which race, place, gender and discourses of sexuality compounded upon bodies. While the Grim Sleeper archive was made known through the movements of one man's meticulous and normalized reign of violence, it's important to consider that several killers preyed on women.

These instances of assault carried out on black women and within black communities are representative of the intricate and multifarious patterns of violence. The Grim Sleeper murders give way to understand and cull together an unending archive of violence experienced by black communities in South Los Angeles at three levels of

convergence. Primarily, structural violence (Farmer 2004, Farmer et al 2004) is engaged to understand the making of inequalities that are brought on by a set of historical and social conditions. According to Farmer, structural violence, "is exerted systematically - that is, indirectly - by everyone who belongs to a certain social order" (2004). When reflecting on the Los Angeles Police force's lack of presence during the investigation of the serial murders, the systematic negligence produced an aspect of racialized structural inequality that becomes a prominent feature of the grim sleep of violence. At a moment when police presence was heightened in South Los Angeles due to popular approaches to the war on drugs and gang cultures, the denial by the police force of the serial nature of the murdering of black women not only represented a form of structural violence but aided in perpetuating symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1977, Bourdieu 1989). The notorious reputation of South Los Angeles during the 1980s led to cultural understanding of the area as a black wasteland. However, the threat of violence in South LA through sexual assault has received scant scholarly or public media attention (Simmons 2002, West 2002, Wyatt 1992). The subjectivity of survivors of gendered violence is, then, what ethnographies have sought in various ways to explore (Thomas 2011, Biel 2005, Das 1998). Yet, it is most clear that the subjectivity of black activist women resists the gendered inequalities and objectification of the body dumps and central narrative to understanding the ways in which these levels of violence coexist and comingle over their lives and social spaces.
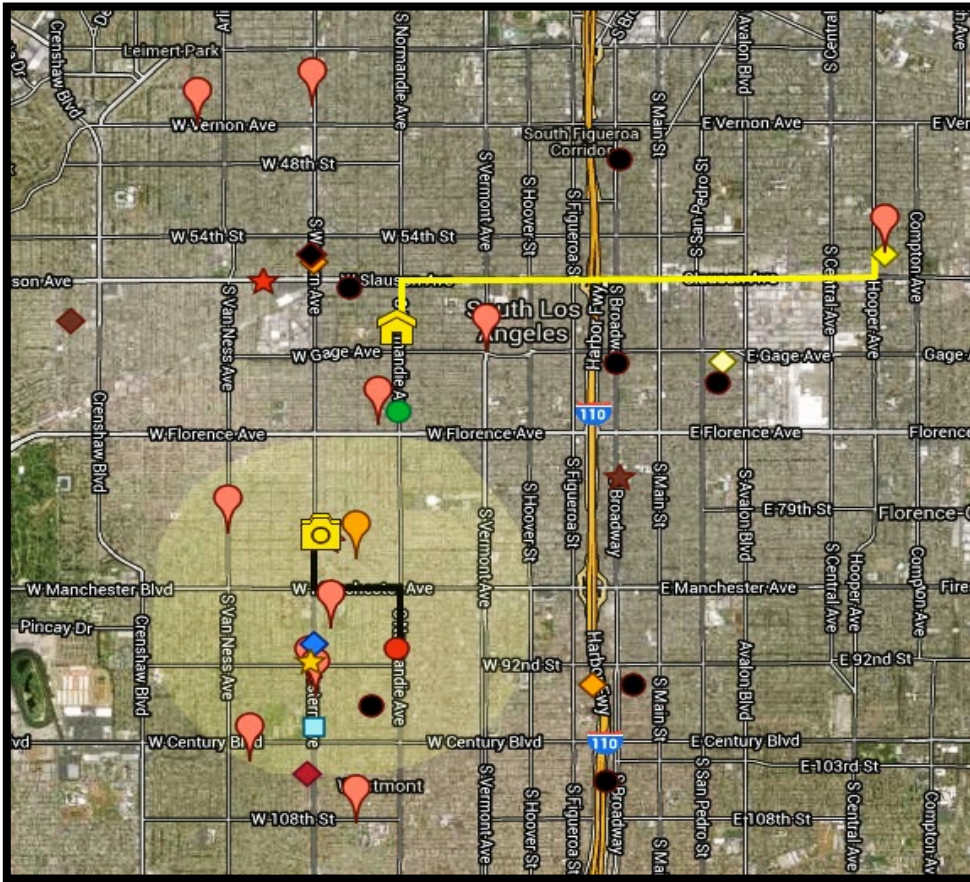
Figure 1.2: Map of Lonnie Franklin Jr.'s killings and daily routes.

The making of racialized gendered violence is not just the result of one "psychopath" but rather the cultural validation of violence against black women. Both the press and Pelisek's myopic focus on a lone killer as an individual's violence is abstracted from the culture of structural violence, which is perpetuated by state officers' and departments' systematic neglect of black women's safety. Consequently, black women's bodies come to stand in place as markers to the killers, to the state, and mainstream public as disposable noncitizens through unresponsiveness, neglect, and the discourse of prostitution shadowing their lives under a grim sleep.

BODY DUMPS AS SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY

"Girl, yes. Everywhere I went, I wouldn't say I was paranoid, but between the drug war, gangs, and all the murders, I just made sure I got in the car and went. I was very cautious of everywhere, every neighborhood I went in, I would just go to work and come home, nothing else. I was not going out." - Sasha

Sasha moved to Los Angeles in 1976. While working at the airport, she lived both in East and South LA during a time when high crime and danger characterized this area of the city. What is intriguing about Sasha's recollection of her life in Los Angeles between 1976 and 1992 is that all her experiences of the city are merged together as one blur of danger. She vaguely remembers the specifics of the 'South Side Slayer' though what rings clear in her interview is the embodied fear and the ways in which she moved through the city seeking to avoid lingering in public spaces. In this statement she, in fact, takes herself out of the streets and presumably away from violence, while still moving through the city and encountering the idea of danger. When we examine Figure 1, which indicates the proximity of Franklin's murder victims to his daily movements, we can see that a number of women were encountered on his drives to work, church, or to local bars within a few blocks' radius. That Franklin's prowling of South Los Angeles remained confined to a small spatial area proves to be significant to the ways in which black Angelinos experience spatial restriction that is sustained by ideological constructions of black space and poverty within the city. South Los Angeles in general and SPA 6 in particular has the highest concentration of residents per square mile.

However, increased demographic shifts within the last twenty years have intensified racial segregation. On the east side of South LA, increased Latino migration to California drew more working class families to central areas of the city such as Watts, Compton, and even as far as Hyde Park areas once solely inhabited by black Angelino in the 1960's and 1970's. In the 1990's, Latino populations surpassed any other racial groups in Los Angeles city. For example, figure six depicts the area demarcated for zip code 90044. This stretch of South LA is just 5.7 square miles running along the 110 Harbor Freeway was a primary zone of rebellion during 1992 and historical home to black residents. This area now according to 2010 census data is home to over 54,351 Latinos compared to 33, 656 black residents. In contrast, figure five depicts the area of zip code 90077 and reports 31,915 black and just 15, 393 Latino residents in a 4.7 square mile zone. The close proximity of these two zip codes reveal the changing racial landscape where dense populations within a concentration of racial groups develop contiguous segregation at the street, rather than, city level of distinction. Thus, when reviewing Figure two which mapped Franklin Jr's victim along side figure five we can see the overlap in black populations is connected to these patterns processual development of residential segregation.

Back women's dislocation and pursuit to avoid public spaces in order to remain safe can be understood through cultural geography and anthropologists' discussions of body, embodiment, and space within urban contexts. Explaining the body as it is discussed through anthropological and geographic discourses has taken several turns in assessing the socially constructed body itself and the ways in which theories of

experiences and cultural meaning can be derived from it. In the synthesis of decades of theory, anthropologist Setha Low, quoting O'Neil states, "the body is best conceived as a multiplicity; the two bodies of the social and the physical (Douglas 1970), and the 'three bodies' of the individual, social, and body politic (Sheper Hughes and Lock); or the 'five bodies' which add the consumer body and the medical body to the other three" (2003). In this way scholars have sought to delineate social processes that have affected how people have approached the study of the body. Though these studies construct the body as a concrete social entity, my research strives to make sense of the changing social processes where the objectified body is constructed within and due to gendered and racialized discourses that inform spatial experiences of black communities.

Secondly, there are ways that displacement and dislocation also differently mark bodies and black women's experiences. Black women's bodies reside on the margins of public concern by functioning as place markers for what is constructed as polluted, violated, and disposable. Simultaneously, black women's bodies and lives remain central to not only the understanding of violence, but as residing in the middle of the county and South Los Angeles, causing interplay between a marginalized yet centralized, experience of disavowed blackness. For example, considering the danger created by Franklin's focus on black women's bodies, the denial of the ruthless assaults inflicted on bodies stained by race, gender and assumed occupation can be understood through Mary Douglas' explorations of pollution. She states, "a polluting person is always in the wrong. He has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed some line which should not have been crossed and this displacement unleashes danger for someone" (2002). Though

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displacement is most commonly understood as removal or characterized by the disarticulation of an experience in the case of the grim sleep that affects the lives of black women in Los Angeles, it is useful to further explore Douglas' assertion that, "there are several ways of treating anomalies. Negatively, we can ignore, just not perceive them, or perceiving we can condemn. Positively, we can deliberately confront the anomaly and try to create a new pattern of reality in which it has a place" (2002). While the historical construction and representation of black women bodies as anomalies is well documented (Washington 2005), when combined with notions of disease, pollution and moral judgments tied to black women's lives, the outcomes prove deadly and silently perpetuate violence by mobilizing negligence by ignoring the why of the danger posed. Consequently, the women who were then viewed as "prostitutes" experience a compounding of dislocation by embodying a South Los Angeles space through the pollution of moral character by being assumed as sex workers, which was mapped upon their bodies.

We will next move to the ways in which cultural geography and theories of embodiment have sought to derive meaning from the experiences across spaces. For example, social geographers Moss and Dyke state, "bodies act as a link between everyday activities and the larger organization of social power and are deeply embedded within the ways people negotiate power through social relations." (2002) These links from body to activities to space are mutually constituted, yet are contested over space and time. In this way collective lived experiences, which can be mapped by inequality, reveal relationships to power and spatial containment. As such, the body dump was not solely

the outcome of the geographic piling of black women's bodies from one man's violent actions, but also through the representation and perception of South Los Angeles as a site that is both dangerous and disposable, suggesting that regulatory norms of perceived sexual promiscuity or availability inform both racial and gendered perceptions of the spatial location of black bodies. Body dumps are, then, part of a black women's geography as a contested space, insofar as they fail to acknowledge the work a body does through the living while engaging representations of the dead or of the uninhabitable area.

Finally, the work of black geographers and, in particular, work that addresses black women's resistance to embodied and spatial cartographies speak to both the invisibility, neglect, and the simultaneous experience of hyper visibility through historical oppression as it is mapped upon black bodies and communities (Gilmore 2005, Mckittrick and Woods 2007, McKittrick 2006, Price 2011, Tolia-Kelly 2010, Woods 1998). The endeavor to delve into black spatial experiences is explained by McKittrick who states, "the relationship between black population and geography - here I am referring to geography as space, place, and location in their physical materiality and imaginative configurations - allows us to engage with a narrative that locates and draws on black histories and black subjects in order to make visible social lives which are often displaced and rendered ungeographic" (2006). When what is deemed as "ungeographic" is taken in consideration with Douglas' discussion of pollution, we can see that hegemonic processes and discourses of exclusion have historically marked blackness by looking at what is danger, disease, or deviancy as indicative of black space.

However, black geographies seek to understand not only how these processes shape black lives but what are the knowledges of embodied experiences that are produced within black spatial existences that defy oppression (McKittrick and Woods 2007). Gilmore illustrates this point stating, "displacement of different social, cultural and economic categories that can be both categories that one struggles against while also living within the social production of the landscape. One can, at one time, find oneself economically confined to a particular geography while resisting the spatial limitations" (2005). Subsequently thinking back to Sasha, who is unable to economically afford to live in another location, her reimagined geography and creation of space occurs within the space of her car, house and through her work with black women's organizations.

I want to push the conceptualization of the phrase "body dumps" from merely referring to the locations of recovered bodies during Franklin's murderous walk around South Los Angeles to instead represent the perception of black bodies within an urban location and the conditions that emerge from spatially experienced violence. This geography of black women's bodies within South Los Angeles is one marked by differences through spatial boundaries that reveal the nexus of social processes of race, class, gender and sexuality to relationships of power, moving through spaces, yet stuck in spatialized histories of violence that over-determine mapped bodily conditions, crime, and disease that, as Mary Douglas suggested, constructs identity and locations as polluted which must be separated. However, within these over-detailed exclusions, black women's bodies exist as a physical and living accumulation of oppression that speaks from and to histories of death, dislocation, and disposal (Brown 2008).

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BODY DUMPS AS SOUTH LOS ANGELES

There are several ways in which the reputation of Los Angeles precedes itself. For every high profile story there is a dramatic end. A city where the next Hollywood blockbuster is exceptionally newsworthy, the hyperbolic rise and fall of local heroes or movie stars turned governors are the makings of life and death in Los Angeles. It is as sensational and newsworthy as it is tragic and for some, left untold. Yet, what does this fairytale with its inevitable dark side hold for the city's black populations? How have popular perceptions of black Los Angeles affected how they experience it? In 2003, the city council officially changed the name of South Central to South Los Angeles. The name change occurred as a perceived identity shift from what was commonly and negatively associated with the 1992 Uprisings, gangs, street violence, and poverty - all of which were heavily represented by low-income black people.

Hailed as one of the most diverse cities in the United States, Los Angeles routinely boasts a large population of multiethnic neighborhoods within city and county lines. From large Central American and Mexican populations to large Asian populations from Japan and Korea, extensive diversity coupled with a high level of immigration produces an ever-changing political landscape. The Los Angeles County of Public health reports, "nearly half of its residents are Hispanic (48%), around one-third white (30%), and around one in ten are Asian (13%) or Black (9%). Residents report over 90 languages as their primary spoken language" (Key Indicators 2009). There is also substantial economic inequality within Los Angeles County. The 2010 US Census recorded over 1.5 million residents (nearly 16% of LAC's population) living in poverty.

While the interplay between races and cultures is often touted as one significant display of multiculturalism at work, racial and ethnic communities' continual shifting and growth at times recreates or aggravates real and media-sensationalized racial tensions. Historian Avila argues that early on in post war Los Angeles social, economic, and legislation changes transformed the demographic and conceptual layout of what the city consisted as more and more black people sought to leave the poverty of the South for seemingly better chances in the North and the western cities of California. He states, "the collusion of public policy and private practices enforced a spatial distinction between 'black' cities and 'white' suburbs and gave shape to what the Kerner commission, a presidential commission appointed to assess the causes of the 1965 Watts riots in Los Angeles, identified as 'two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal" (2004). This creation of separate yet intermingled spaces and neighborhoods would continue across the county (Camarillo 2004, Johnson 2013, Kurashige 2010, Waldinger 1996), though immigration also began to characterize where in the city the development of ethnic enclaves[10] were positioned under resourced and racially oppressed communities adjacent to each other. In this way the concentration of race or ethnic groups can fluctuate block by block. This was made evident in the removal of the South Central Farm and the murder of Latasha Harlins in 1991 where racial and ethnic tensions both came to light and revealed histories of cross ethnic antagonism. For example, "African Americans, on

[10] The city contains historic and business districts that mark large ethnic populations and communities including: Little Ethiopia, Little Armenia, Filipino Town, China Town, Little Toyko, and Korea Town. Though African Americans and Black Angelinos do not have marked historic districts, popular understandings and, at times, negative perceptions mark Leimert Park and South Central as historically black populated areas.

the whole, are given the most negative stereotypes ratings by others, are among those most likely to view race relations in competitive terms, most consistently express support for affirmative action, and are the most acutely race-conscious" (Bobo & Johnson 2000). These conclusions are indicative of the racial hierarchies that are perpetuated, which reveal the ways in which hierarchy shaped by race, gender, and socioeconomic status expose power relations across ethnic populations within a small area (Stevenson 2004, Lawson 2007).

However, in this conversation of the Rubik's-cubed race and ethnic makeup of the city, the lives and stories of black residents are bound to South Los Angeles. The development of South Central as black Los Angeles space began as early as the turn of the twentieth century when new southern migrants arrived looking for better job opportunities and quality of life, yet many black residents of Los Angeles continued to be shut out from wealth building occupations (De Graaf 1970, Kurashige 2008, Smith 2003). Still, increased post World War II growth in migration added to the development of Central Ave and Leimert Park as cultural centers and boundary lines of what would become known as black Los Angeles (Bryan et al 1999, Widener 2009, Vargas 2008).

Black Los Angeles neighborhoods have been home to various forms of rebellions and activism that stem from cultural, racial, and economic discrimination (Davis 1990, Hunt and Ramon 2010, Horne 1995, Gilmore 2005, Pulido 2006, Sides 2003, Vargas 2006). The historical significance of the 1965 riots became, for some, evidence of the growing inequality and racial discrimination. While others highlight the shifting perceptions of opportunity, for example, "much greater long-term importance than the

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Watts riot, black ideological fragmentation, or white backlash—were the widening economic disparities among African Americans themselves, produced by regional, national, and global economic restructuring" (Sides 2003), the Watts Riots introduced a violent presence of policing that increased as the Black Panther Party's presence gained in numbers and influence. The polarizing poverty and racial oppression that black Angelinos faced continued to characterize not only the structural inequalities, but became mapped upon black bodies. This increased as urban areas in the 1980s experienced deindustrialization and cuts in social services due to budget cuts introduced by Ronald Reagan. Consequently, low income city residents suffered a rise in unemployment, homelessness, and people with drug addictions with fewer health services for support (Scott and Soja 1998). In the following decade, the 1991 murder of fifteen-year-old Latasha Harlins, who was shot by a Korean store owner who had a history of conflict with the family, yet did not receive any jail time, became part of the building of friction between black and other racialized populations - in addition to the Los Angeles Police Department that would tear at the already worn fabric of the city (Stevenson 2004). In particular, South Central LA witnessed the rise, destruction, and fallout of the 1992 Rebellion, which proved hard on the area (Baldassare 1994, Vargas 2004).

Another side to the perception of South Central as a wasteland is that of the gang culture and violent miscreants that run the streets. This stigma was aided by several early 1990s pop culture, such as the rise in West Coast hip hop that stylized Blood and Crip gang dress, aesthetics and life stories. The popularity of films such as *Boyz in the Hood*, *South Central*, *Menace to Society* and *Poetic Justice*, further polarized the black

experiences of South Los Angeles from that of the rest of the city. The difficulty with these pop cultural iterations of blackness is that they mask the socioeconomic and structural violence experienced by black communities across generations that lead to the development of gangs (Brown, et al, 2012). Heightened police surveillance and presence sought to control gang and drug-related activity. However, inflated media reports, militarized approaches to policing in Daryl Gates' "Operation HAMMER," and excessive use of violence were lodged against black and brown youth in South LA (Davis 2002). The systematic removal of criminalized black youth and homeless populations by the LAPD simultaneously validated popular constructions of South Central as a danger zone while silently neglecting the mounting health concerns (Blasi 2007, Camp 2011). Furthermore, it is important to highlight this contrast of police presence in the form of control, criminalization, and policing of residents against the geography of the neglect as it relates to the black women's bodies in South Los Angeles and reveals time-intricate structures of violence in the creation of body dumps.

Developments of great class and economic inequalities manifest themselves in deeply racialized fashion. The scholarship of UCLA urban studies in the 1990s brought to light the ways in which class differences are reflected in segregation, policy, and racial tensions in the city (Soja 1996, Scott and Soja 1998, Dear, Schockman and Hise 1996). While black communities have long been established, the research, and arguments of these scholars point to the continued tensions between races that exponentially increased due to deindustrialization and the aftermath of the 1992 uprisings. Additionally, another scholar points out the significance of race in economic inequalities by stating, "if

residential patterns were based solely on the basis of income, family type and size, and age of household head, Black/White segregation in Los Angeles county would be .110 – more than five and a half times lower than it actually is .613" (Charles 2000). These numbers point to a measure of statistical data that quantifies socio-economic contribution of a given demographic. The lower the numerical deviation the lessor the difference between each group. The work of the LA school scholars prioritizes the nature of race and class development within the city and its effects on racialized communities.

While this ethnography is set in Los Angeles, focus is placed in the South Central section marked as Service Planning Area (SPA) Six. Los Angeles is divided into eight different SPAs. SPA 6 is located in South Los Angeles and is home to just over one million people, making it the smallest area, covering just twelve square miles, with the highest concentration of black residents. According to the Los Angeles Department of Public Health, SPA 6 covers most of what is culturally, historically and commonly considered South Los Angeles and is composed of 34 percent African Americans, 60 percent Latinos and six percent marked racially 'other'[11]. The division of the city into these areas plays several important roles in how state and county resources are allocated. As such, these distinctions within Los Angeles county are an indication of how research is approached through public health studies. Additionally, the experiences of the women working in reproductive health advocacy as well as those women who are seeking services become equally familiar with formalized institutions and their demarcation of the city and county sections. Figure 3 below illustrates the mapped location of SPA 6

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[11] Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. Key Indicators of health. June 2011

within the larger context of Los Angeles County and reveals the difference in spatial sizing. As the most densely populated service area with the highest concentration of black residents, South Los Angeles communities teeter on the margins of death and social inequality while being literally central to the city landscape and imaginations of violence.
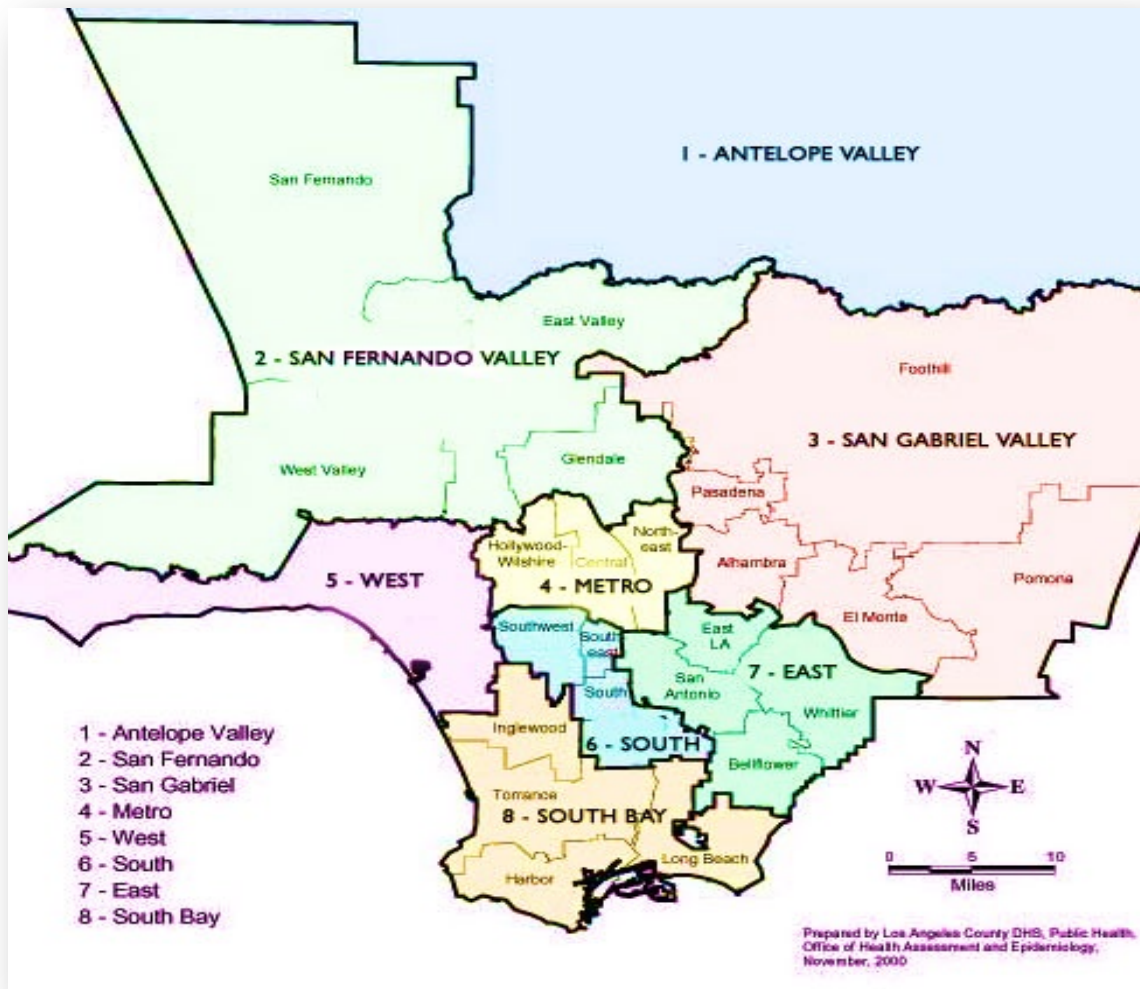
Figure 1. 3: Map of Los Angeles County Service Planning Areas
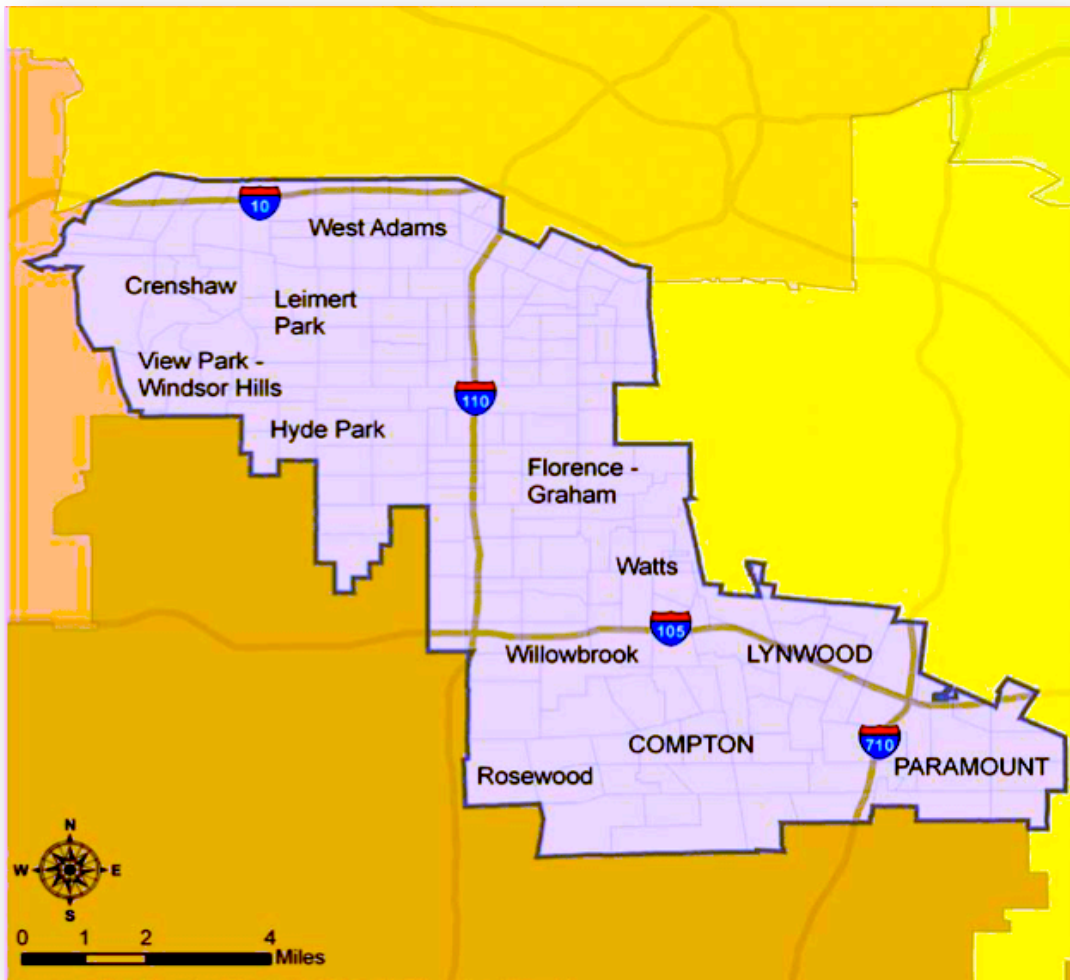
Figure 1.4: SPA 6 in detail listing notable South Los Angeles neighborhoods.
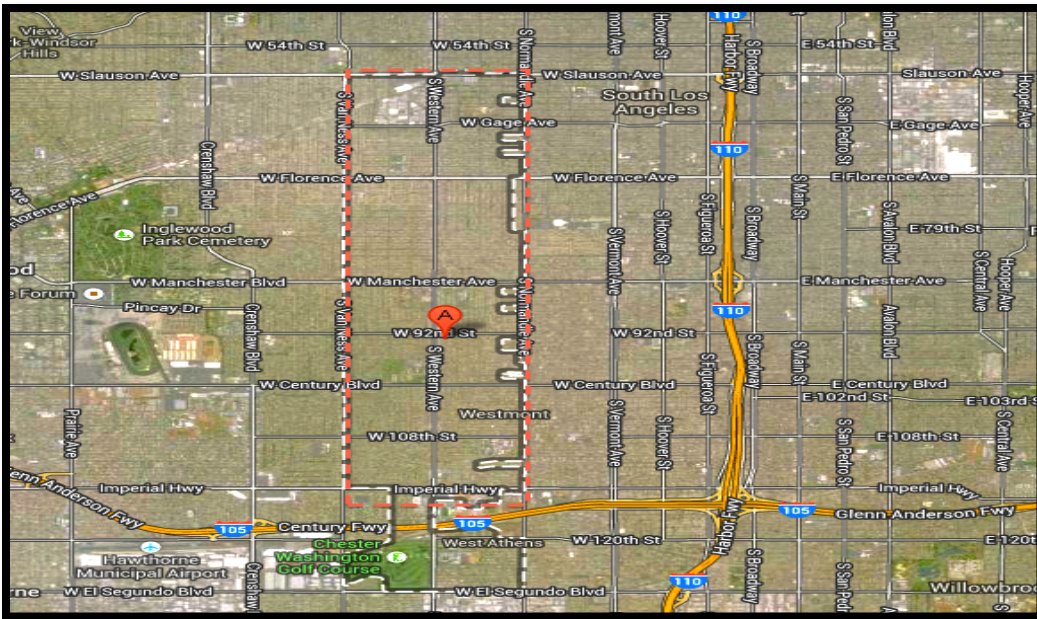
Figure1.5 The Red outline demarcates areas for zip code 90047.
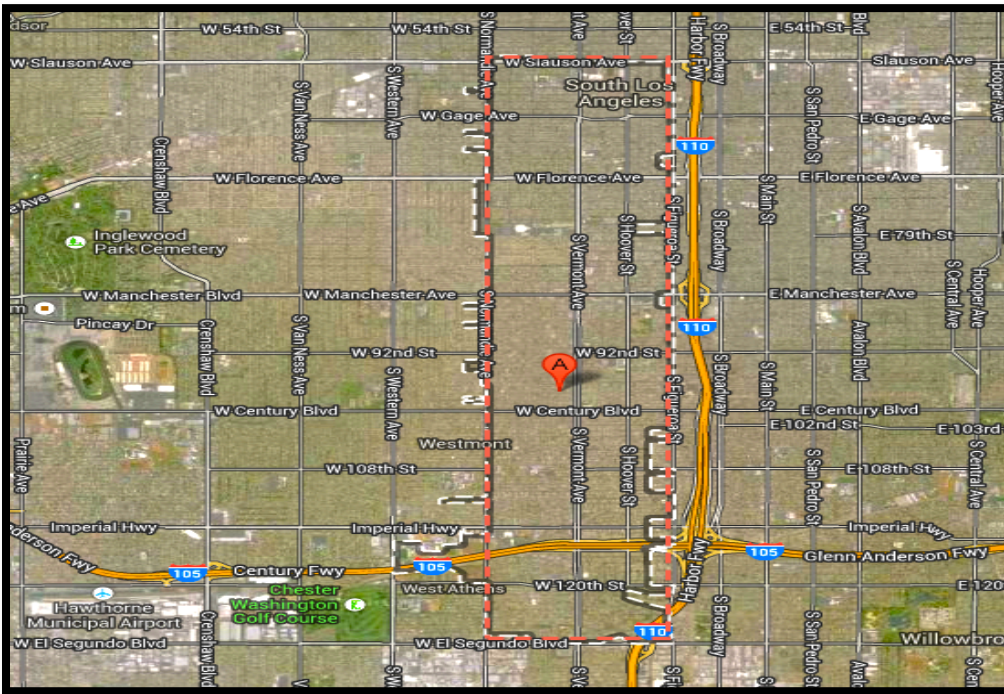
Figure 1.6 Area of zip code 90044

BODY DUMPS AS HEALTH DISPARITY

In March of 2009, I returned to Lemeirt Park to resume research and reproductive justice work with the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice. Just three weeks into my fieldwork, I overheard Sasha exclaiming with hurt in her voice, "oh god, how terrible, I can't believe it, so sad." I then left my office to see what was happening. There I found Sasha, Patricia and several other long time volunteers sitting in a circle, talking. All their attention seemed to be directed towards Ms. Jackson.

Her watery eyes seemed to reveal the pain before she reached her words. That changed in a few seconds. Her eyes flashed from what one could observe as pain, to horror, to anger, then remorse and finally faded into a duller version of the strong bright eyes we all knew. Ms. Jackson paused a moment before beginning to recount the story. She started, "I had called a month prior and there was no answer but I didn't think anything of it. You know Jackie she was always running around doing something even when she was sick, just couldn't sit still." "Well," she continued, "After about two weeks I tried calling again. I had just remembered that she went in for some surgery and you know I wanted to see how she was doing since all of her family lives out of state." After taking a breath and sitting up, as if pulling all the strength from her lower back muscle which was needed to deliver these next words, Ms. Jackson continued, "After another week or so I decided to just go over to Jackie's house and see how she was doing. I saw the front door was littered with old newspapers, the screen door was locked but the front door was wide open. You know… then I knew something was really wrong. I called out to Jackie a few times and waited, but got no response. Then I used the key she had given

me and walked in. I couldn't believe it. I found her on the floor; dead for at least a month she was just laying there. That's what the paramedic said. She was already decomposing. Her kids say she was released into her own care from the hospital with a broken pelvis. Who can move with a broken pelvis with no help? Why would they release her?"

There were many questions from the women that were left unanswered. There was also a great sense of the loss they felt for their friend and comrade in community health organizing. What also seemed to be unsaid but palpable was the deep sadness the women felt because they had failed to check up on her recovery until it was too late. This, combined with the knowledge that many of them live on their own, without health care, and have their own reputations of being similarly busy about town, added to the sense that this unfortunate outcome could very easily have happened to them. Patricia, Sasha, and Ms. Jackson all became involved in black women's health through professional and personal experiences of health complications, tragedy, and premature death of black women. Premature death according to the national health ranking system, "measures the loss of years of life due to death before age 80 as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL-75)" (CDC 2010). Thus, the death of a 25-year-old would account for 50 years of lost life, while the death of a 60-year-old would account for 15 years. Ranks are based on the most recently available data from the CDC. The measure of premature death in youth and young adults is largely preventable and can function as an indicator of socioeconomic inequality. Public health research additionally shows that preventable illnesses such as heart disease, lung cancer,

complications from diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity, are major factors in the higher rates of premature death in black communities.

When analyzing public health data, clear body dumps have figuratively and literally developed throughout South Los Angeles. When a similar demographic focus is placed upon women in South LA to those who died at Franklin Jr.'s hands, we can see a pattern through public health information that presents a striking case for the evolution of a concurrent body dump. Young women between the ages of 14 and 36 were the primary targets for Franklin Jr. and present the highest vulnerability in reproductive health disparity within the city. While the use of public health data at the service planning area, city, county, and state level cannot be assumed to include absolute data on population or total outcomes for health indicators, it is the most readily available information on the health status across multiple conditions. Additionally, at least half of the members of BWOHJ have previously or are currently working in county offices, affiliated nonprofits, and hospitals, with a few members holding graduate degrees in health related professions. The reliance on data reflects the organization's members' interest and expertise as well as justification for programmatic planning and later reasoning in advocating for policy change.
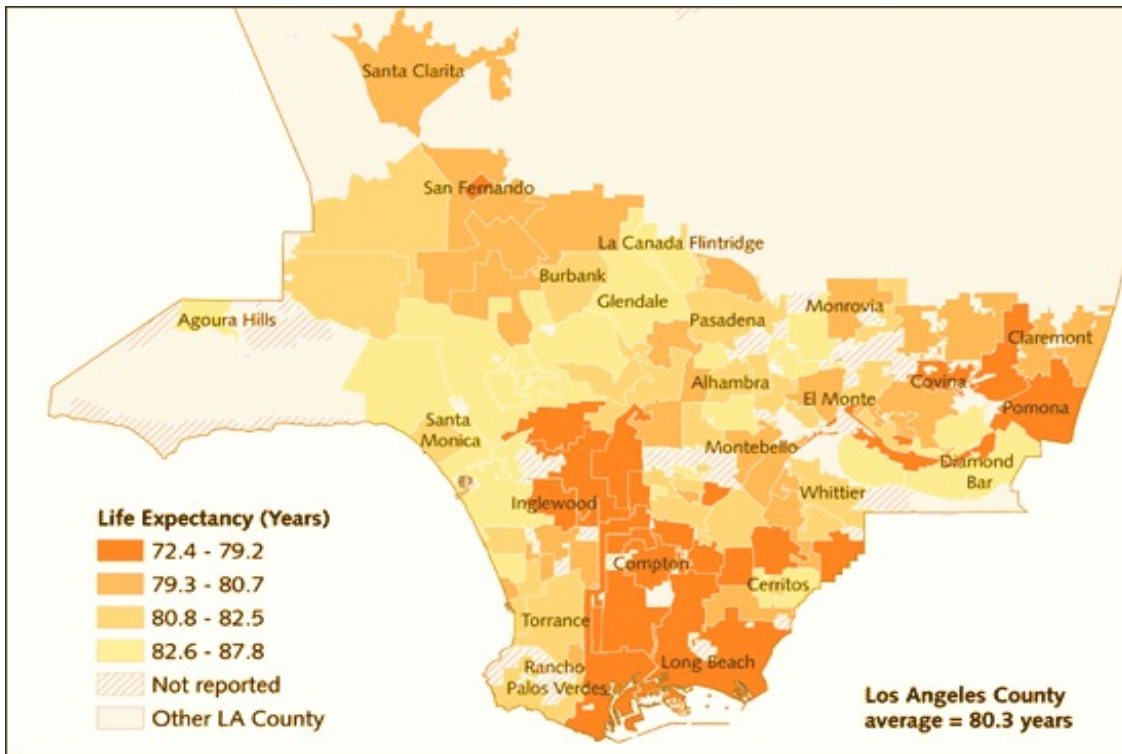
Figure 1.7: Map of LA County Life Expectancy

Health Disparity in the Numbers

As a reproductive justice organization the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice at times engaged a daunting agenda by keeping their eye on several health indicators of black women which have an effect on their reproductive health. Figure 4 depicts the contrast of life expectancy within Los Angeles County. When paired with Figure 3 which details the division of the county into service planning areas, we can see the area with the shortest life expectancy at just 72.4 years of ages is the same area demarcated as South Los Angeles. The juxtaposition of these two taken into account with county demographic data that reveal the highest concentration of black residents within this area gives meaning to the ways in which race and the intersection of location can

reveal persistent racism and violence upon the body across multiple factors. Health disparities can be defined as gaps in the quality of health and health care that mirror and are impacted by differences in socioeconomic status, racial, and ethnic background, and education level. This has, at times, ranged broadly from a conversation on black women's obesity rates and its implications for effective birth control dosage to breast cancer detection.

Specifically, the organization has developed focus on sexually transmitted infection prevention and education through its own sexual health education programs and partnerships with the Los Angeles Department of Public Health to address perpetually growing rates of STI disparity within the Black community of South Los Angeles. Locally, within SPA 6 the 2009 incidence of chlamydia occurred at a rate of 922.2 new annual cases per 100,000 population versus just 208 case in the western SPA 5, which demographically is comprised of higher incomes and a larger white population. At the State level, case rates of Gonorrhea increased significantly according the California Department of Public Health report of 2010, where African Americans reported 398.2 cases per 100,000. The second highest demographic are Latinos who report 52.4 cases per 100,000. These statistics reveal that both incidence and prevalence are significantly higher in black communities. Nationally, black women are also seeing these epidemic trends of chlamydia mirror those of gonorrhea, which reflect an incidence that is ten times higher than other demographics. Public health education on sexually transmitted infections reports that due to similarities in bacterial makeup, a person who has contracted chlamydia may additionally carry gonorrhea or have been previously exposed.

While these two bacterial infections are curable and with medication being free to low cost, the alarming rise in new cases reflects the absence of information and access within the black population where cases have soared. In the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, special task forces have been convened to strategize how to address the rising numbers. Members of BWOHJ have taken special interest in the education of adolescent girls and boys because while these two infections are curable, research and testing confirms that, if left untreated, there may be outcomes of infertility (Ndowa 2012, Skerlev 2014). As a reproductive health organization whose agenda addresses the entire black women reproductive cycle, preventing infertility in the black community reflects not only an immediate health agenda, but a larger commitment to community building.

In fact, it was the staggering health disparity in black infant and maternal health that spurred the development of the organization. As the Black Women's Organizations for Health and Justice developed a broader reproductive health and justice agenda, the attention to low-birth-weight babies and black maternal mortality has not waned given the following outcomes: 1) In California the maternal mortality rate for black women is five times higher than other racial or ethnic groups. This exists across education and income levels. The California Department of Public Health reveals the stark disparity stating, "the mortality rate for black women was 46 deaths for every 100,000 live births from 2006 to 2008, while the rates for Asian, white and Hispanic women in the same period ranged from 9 to 13 deaths per 100,000 births" (2011). This is on par with the national rates which report African American women with the highest rates of maternal mortality (Adams 2013); 2) Additionally, black infants within SPA 6 are reported at an

occurrence of 14.5 per 100 live births and an infant death rate (per 1,000 live births) 9.9 which, again, is more than double other demographics. There has been incremental improvement to maternal and infant health research that revealed that stress related to anti-black racism continues to produce low birth weight babies across education and income levels (Ford and Collins 2010, Schoendorf, Hogue, Kleinman and Rowly 1992); 3) Obesity is considered a major risk factor for pregnancy. It can contribute to other health issues including gestational diabetes and high blood pressure that cause complications in delivery and infants. At the local level, the L.A. County Department of Public Health reports 35.4 percent of the SPA 6 population measures in as obese, which is a stark contrast to the majority white SPA 5 located on the western end of the county which reports a rate of 10 percent obesity[12]. Subsequently, reports of obesity and its connections to various negative health outcomes prompted the Los Angeles City Council in 2008 to adopt a year-long moratorium on the erecting, development and opening of new fast food eateries in South Los Angeles. Falling in line with statewide reports, black California residents have the second highest rates of obesity at 28.9 percent per 100,000 (2010). Though these three health concerns by no means fully convey the entire picture

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[12] Obesity defined as a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or greater. Body mass index and the topic of obesity recently become an agenda issue for Reproductive health and family planning organizations. This is because reports have shown that BMI may affect the effectiveness of birth controls of oral contraceptives. While that is a concern for BWHOJ, obesity also develops in communities (like South Los Angeles) with fewer fresh food outlets and additionally can lead to gestational diabetes and other pregnancy related complications.

of health concerns that contribute to poor black maternal health, it begins to shed light on the complicated nature of health disparity.

Social Causes for Health Disparity

Black communities' experiences with medical institutions are fraught with skepticism and anger. In California, at least into the 1950s, compulsory sterilization was consistently described as a public health strategy that could breed out undesirable defects from the populace and fortify the state as a whole. Convinced of its efficacy, sterilization proponents pushed for implementation of the law beyond the walls of state institutions. In 1975, the Madrigal v Quilligan court case predominantly featured Mexican-American women who were sterilized without their consent, yet built upon histories of African American compulsory sterilizations that took place during the state's early implementation of the law during the early 20th century. However, the 1975 case and its 1979 appeal by Assemblyman Torres brought the history of reproductive justice into the contemporary memories of current reproductive justice advocates[13] who continue to link racism to inequalities. The impact of these histories was brought to recent attention in

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[13] In 1909 California passed the nation's third sterilization law that fell in step with the nation's fascination and enthusiasm to justifying science and social control through eugenics policies. For further reading on eugenics see Ordover, Nancy. *American eugenics*: Race, queer anatomy, and the science of nationalism. U of Minnesota Press, 2003. For a conversation on Eugenic discourses and laws on black women's reproduction see foundational work Roberts, Dorothy. "Killing the black body: Race, reproduction, and the meaning of liberty." (1997).

2013 with the forced sterilization of 148 incarcerated women in California state prisons who received tubal ligations from 2006 to 2010[14].

In Los Angeles racial segregation has developed hand in hand with discrimination in black population access to hospitals, clinics and urgent care facilities. Public health and social epidemiologists have shown that segregation has a great impact on health outcomes and, in particular, plays an important role in determining longevity or duration of life. As LeViest explains, "segregation is reflective of race differences in the social infrastructure, material living conditions, and life chances of whites and African Americans. A consequence of these ''different Americas'' is that different race groups have different levels of exposure to health risks" (2012).

This is, in part, due to encountering stress related to race and gendered discrimination (LeViest et al 2012, Saegert, Fields, Libman 2011, Sternthal, Slopen, & Williams 2011, White and Borrell 2011). Additionally, research suggests that class or economic status leads to greater disparity in health outcomes in part due to lack of access to a higher quality of care or health insurance which catches preventable and treatable illness (Williams and Collins 1995). Furthermore, gender is a social determinant in health that studies within public health, medical sociology and epidemiology have proven to

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14 For further reading please see: Johnson, Corey G. "Female inmates Sterilized in California prisons without approval" http://cironline.org/reports/female-inmates-sterilized-california-prisons-without-approval-4917. Last modified 07, July 2013.
Stern, Alex. "Sterilization Abuse in State Prisons: Time to Break with California's Long Eugenic Patterns." http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alex-stern/sterilization-california-prisons_b_3631287.html Last modified 23, July 2013.
McGreevy, Patrick and Wilson, Phil. "Female inmate Surgery Broke Law" Los Angeles Times http://articles.latimes.com/2013/jul/14/local/la-me-prison-sterilization-20130714

greatly impact mortality, quality of care and long range health outcomes. Finally, race within this context presents one of the most telling outcomes in health disparity.

While focusing on the disease and the outcome, established literature of public health research traditionally focused on illness rather than social processes of discrimination. Researchers within these disciplines have sought to isolate variables in order to predict or assess disparity without conceptually attuning to the shifting impact of race and gender across income, segregation, and in some cases, education. This multivariate research fails to consider the conceptual implication of race, gender and health and instead focus on determinants of disease such as site of infection and access to treatment. A fundamental cause of illness can be determined by a population's access to resources which help individuals avoid diseases and their negative consequences through education, treatment and preventative care. Thus, even if public health departments effectively eradicate some diseases, an association between a fundamental cause and disease will reemerge if the context of socioeconomic and racial inequality is not addressed.

Looking towards the social causes of reproductive health disparity within Los Angeles, it is important to bear in mind the nature of social services and histories of social discrimination in care within the city, i.e., that which has been directed at black populations. Contextual reasons and fundamental causes that rely on social structural understanding of inequality and access to resources are key interventions in addressing disparate health outcomes between populations. In particular, the convergence of these

two conceptual frames makes room for longitudinal research and intervention within health.

CONCLUSION: GRIM SLEEP

        While it may seem a stretch to connect the violence of serial murders to the serial aspect of illness and health disparity experienced by black women in South Los Angeles, the failure of multiple state agencies to comprehensively respond to the multifaceted assault on the lives of black women brings to light the precarity they face. The interplay between structural violence and racialized embodiment reproduces a foreboding negligence that marks black bodies and spaces as disposable. The dialectal relationship between health and death is at times tied to discourses of discrimination and inequality. Yet when public health research attempts to isolate variables such as education, income, or age the numbers still point to race as a primary influence in the outcomes for premature death, preventable death, and homicide. For example, the Healthy California 2010 report published in 2011 indicates that African Americans still top the charts in homicide related deaths occurring at a rate of 31.3 per 100,000 and the nearest rate of comparison was 8.0 per 100,000 in Latino communities. However, the continued reliance on those diseases or illnesses that have been determined to be reportable or communicable misses the ways in which Grim Sleep affects the lives and social geographies of black communities. I consider Grim Sleep to mean a processual racial negligence that relies on the latency of structural violence. This produces an incubation-like period where severe dislocation and negligence sustains bleak living conditions. While structural violence is significant in its historical or retroactive analyses of systemic

oppression. It conceptually produces an over determined narrative of violence that ethnographically can seem fixed and limit agency of those who experience the most oppressive conditions. The unidirectional oppression characterized by structural violence minimally speaks to the spatial experiences within the suppurate processes of race, health, and violence that black communities endure. Additionally, although in Pelisek's naming of Franklin Jr. as a *grim sleeper* the journalist pointed to a period of inactivity, I on the other hand, take that perceived dormancy to instead expose a period of formation that is in fact incrementally producing deadly living conditions for black women. Grim sleep is then simultaneously productive and causal of racial inequality and eventually conditions leading to black death. Finally, though public attention on violence against black men and most notably male adolescents has remained a staple in black public discourses the failure to recognize the same and in some case extreme levels of violence levied toward black women and female adolescents suggests their lives are submerged between misrecognition and disavowal. These conditions are characterized by dislocation, disposal, or misrecognition from which black communities launch their survival and transformative actions. Grim Sleep, then, in this conversation is an unfinished growth process where the festering of severe racial negligence through structural violence is most apparent in the lives of black women.

Chapter Two: Dark Matter and Community Organizing: History of Los Angeles Black Activist Women's Work and the Fight for Justice

INTRODUCTION

"It started with reviewing the data showing African-American women with the highest rates of gonorrhea; but it can never just be African American women. There was a blurb about Hispanic women with high STD rates. Ok great, then we'll include women of color in the grant, not a problem. Now these meetings were about how we need to look at men who have sex with men (MSM). Oh, we got to put the transgender community in there, oh what about this, oh what about that?! I just sat back, fuming, because, again, black women got dropped in priority. It seemed as if we are not important enough to be the focal point. We are not important enough to have dedicated resources. We, all of a sudden, now have to be inclusive but when there was an HIV epidemic happening, they had no problem targeting white men who have sex with men or men who have sex with men in general. That's where the data was, that's where the problem was, so that's what they focused on. What the fuck is this?! AGAIN, as in many other things (look at the data on infant mortality, you look at prenatal care, and you look at health disparities in general but, especially, in reproductive health), its crazy. Forty-nine percent of Black women between the ages of 18 to 49 have Herpes. That's not a reportable disease[15] but it is huge and a lot of people don't even know about this data. But again, we are not

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15 A reportable disease is one that has been determined by national, state, and local health agencies to be a public health concern. This means that when the disease is diagnosed or treated the information is reported to agencies. Reporting allows for the collection of statistics that show how often the disease occurs. This helps researchers identify disease trends and track disease outbreaks. This information can help control future outbreaks.

important enough. That's what the funders are saying. That's what health departments

are saying. They see the data and then ignore it. They leave it only to black women's

organizations or only to organizations like Great Beginnings for Black Babies but they

DON'T FUND them. In fact, [mimicking health department]'we are going to take the

funding away because we don't like how you handled that.' Until we get more black

women in positions where we can do the work and control the funding, we will always

have to be inclusive."

Candice expressed this frustration with funding and organizing just after recounting how

Patricia was fired from a position as community stakeholder in a public research and

education program that was coordinated by the L.A. Department of Health Services,

Department of Public Health and a local university researcher. The project was initially

aimed towards black communities and was funded by the Centers for Disease Control as

part of their national effort to make amends for the poor handling of the infamous

Tuskegee syphilis experiments[16]. However, this partnership between the university,

county health departments, community health advocates, and the Black Women's

Organization for Health and Justice became contentious when several black activist

women began to question the approach and power dynamics of the meetings. This was

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[16] From 1932 to 1972, the Public Health Service conducted a study on black men with syphilis, who were not offered treatment. In 1972 the US Government started a health benefit program for participants and families and in 1997 apologized for the study. For further reading see: Jones, James H. *Bad Blood*. Simon and Schuster, 1993.

further complicated by Patricia's adamant critique of the county department's bullying and refusal to engage community youth. However, the tipping point occurred when Patricia revealed leaked documents from the county department that, in effect, 'blacklisted' several black community based organizations that did not conform or questioned the approach of the state department through this STD initiative. As such, the list was circulated and these black organizations were no longer to be offered funding. After Patricia's initial discovery and reporting to the CDC, her position was terminated from the 'collaborative.' In response, The Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice published documents online and informed their members, allies, volunteers, coalition members and staff via email newsletter. In the aftermath, Candice's righteous indignation was ignited as changes to the project included reframing inclusivity that withdrew focus on black women and revealed the perpetual disavowal of black women's lives by the city and county departments. It is this sentiment of not being "important enough" combined with exclusionary and oppressive practices that continue to fuel her and others' activism in the city.

This chapter seeks to provide a theoretical and historical context for the nature of black women's contemporary health activism in South Los Angeles. Building on work such as Kimberly Springer's (1999, 2005) which details black feminist work as varied in scope and often obscured within larger national movements, it places emphasis on health and sexual violence organizing. Rather than provide an exhaustive or comprehensive review of social movements in Los Angeles, I draw from scholars such as Laura Pulido's (2005) work on the Los Angeles Left and Gay Johnson's (2013) work on coalitional work

between black and brown communities committed to cultural politics. Their work looks to particular iterations of radical politics to better understand, as Johnson suggests, a "constellation" of activism; one which is specific, yet connected to others across time and space. This project and chapter looks to excise and illuminate the connected specificity of black women's activism that confronts multi variant violence and seeks to secure social transformation.

The first half of this chapter explores three theoretical linkages to contemporary black women's activism used to explore the context, nature, and tactics within South Los Angeles. I begin by engaging literature on social movement theory and processes. Next, this chapter explores 'dark matter' as a way to make sense of black activist women's influence in local politics and the social dynamics of South Los Angeles. I then move into the use and development of black feminist counter publics as a method of grassroots activism, while keeping an eye on connections to larger national movements. The second portion of the chapter briefly chronicles, illustrates, and characterizes four decades of black women's activism in Los Angeles. The final portion of the chapter takes a specific look at reproductive justice as a theory and praxis with a detailed focus on The Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice programming. This chapter ends with a brief description of three projects that, over the twelve-year history of the organization, propelled them to mobilize a reproductive justice agenda.

PART I: THEORY

Social Movement Theory

The making, reasoning and processes of social movements are varied and often debated in literature. Blumer's early take on social movements loosely defined as, "collective enterprises to establish a new order of life" still holds true (1969). Yet, how differently situated communities enter and organize collectively varies.

Charles Tilly's (1979) foundational work on social movement theories details three analytical components of a social movement, including: 1) Social movements are made up of groups and collective actions; 2) Protests or events are considered to be part of a repertoire of action; and 3) There are ideas, values and goals that unify a group towards action. Scholars have differently determined and expanded the importance of each of these three areas of Tilly's early formations, which they largely still draw from. Early work also sought to delineate stages of social movements, which included emergence, coalescence, formalization or bureaucratization, and then declined (Blumer 1969, Mauss 1975, Tilly 1978). Though few movements adhere to such linearity, aspects of these works continue to inform research.

Further explorations of new social movements are loosely defined by literature as collective action that has primarily occurred post 1960. Scholars have noted that the form, tactics, and processes of new social movements are not entirely different from early movements, which were primarily class-based, yet often ignored, racial groups' experience of multiple forms of oppressions. One of the most defining characteristics of new social movements is the intersectional nature of the causes, which at times can

privilege identity-based politics (Brodkin 2005, Edelman 2001, Lloyd 2005, Nelson 1997, Tilly 2004, and Tilly 2002). Recent research has critiqued the narrow use of identity politics as a way to mask the intersectional oppression nature of exclusionary practices that early feminists, such as the Combahee River Collective, elucidated in its influential statement of politics (1981).

When considering black women's reproductive justice organizing, two important aspects remain prominent towards the development of a social movement. First, reproductive justice organizations seem to function in what is a structuralist (Johnston 2013) assessment of Tilly's first point, where collectives and groups function in networks of overlapping structures with interrelated relationships. In this way, organizations can function across several spheres of interest. For Reproductive Justice organizing, this is an important tactic to leverage resources from smaller organizations to larger and longer-established nonprofits. A second key aspect of black reproductive justice organizing is the importance of collective interests that are interpreted before action. Here the importance is placed upon the transformation of thought into action (Johnston 2013). This aspect, drawn from black feminist thought and praxis, makes black women's organizing seek cultural, social and structural change.

In Los Angeles, black women's social movements have functioned as constellations between networks of multiethnic or racial groups while establishing a unique approach to community organizing. The declining population and limited funding typically requires black women, more than others, to build multiethnic coalitions. This practice is at times a political strategy of collective interests while also demonstrating

strategy of survival and activism to forge cross identity and oppression movements. The following section will explore the nature of black women's organizing.

Dark Matter

Black activist women's organizing and community building is multifaceted, comprehensive, and is present in many movements from labor to health to politics to massive nationalist movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Historically, scholars have explored and detailed the politics, approaches and struggles of black activist women's organizations and individuals who have dedicated their lives to social transformation, yet their stories continue to be hidden (Mcguire 2010, Ransby 2002, Springer 1999, Springer 2005, Sudbury 2005). In this section, I explain and consider dark matter as a way to think through black women's experience of activism as one that is made knowable not by its visibility, but by its impact. Though *dark matter* is a term borrowed from physics, I aim to show it is potentially helpful to explore the enduring nature and possibilities of black women's activism.

I will begin by defining dark matter as the substance that is studied within physics and cosmology. Dark matter is an invisible material, which can only be detected through its gravitational influence on its surroundings. Scientists report that dark matter accounts for 23 percent of the mass-energy density of the observable universe. In comparison, ordinary matter accounts for only 4.6 percent of the mass-energy density of the observable universe (Carroll 2006). From these figures, dark matter constitutes 80 percent of the matter in the universe, while ordinary matter makes up only 20 percent (Carroll 2007, Gates 2010). Additionally, Scientist Griest explains, "The dark matter

problem has been around for decades, and there is now consensus that we don't know what the most common material in the universe is. It is 'seen' only gravitationally, and does not seem to emit or absorb substantial electromagnetic radiation at any known wavelength scales yet explored. The universal average density of dark matter determines the ultimate fate of the universe, and it is clear that the amount and the nature of dark matter stands as one of the major puzzles in science (Griest 2005)." No longer believed to be confined to black holes, dark matter, although seemingly invisible, can be identified through masses that move much faster than other forms of baryonic matter and which have an intense gravitational pull on its surroundings. Dark matter presented as both substance and force presents an interesting lens to think through in black women's activism. As black women, these community organizers are seeking social juridical and cultural transformation, yet are often considered to be simultaneously invisible and influential.

However, the theme of darkness, invisibly, or incomprehensibility has been explored in cultural studies, literature and critical social theory regarding blackness and race. For example, literary theorists focus on blackness and the presence of blackness within text as a literary device signaling fear, depression, angst and evil as a reference to black people even when it is not explicitly stated (Morrison 2007). Secondly, critical social theory and Black feminist explorations of 'darkness' have critiqued perceived confusion or the incomprehensible notions and spectacular nature of black bodies (Hammonds 2004, Fanon 1967, Omolade 1995, White 2006). Finally, Afro-futurism within literary and cultural studies has seen recent popularity, yet the early work of

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W.E.B Dubois (1920) revealed an essay entitled "The Comet," which featured black people as both the first and last people on the planet and signaled a desired shift in social equality (Dubois 2000, Fawaz 2012). On one hand, Afro-futurists explore the place of science fiction and technology within conversations of blackness (Hamilton 2013, Morris 2012). On the other, they also develop discussions and scholarship through Afro-futurism as concept, performance, and creative realism that questions established static formations of blackness and, like Dubois, seek to create different social conditions (Dery 1994, Ra and Corbett 2006, Kreiss 2012).

My work does not look into what is the known or unknown or future, but is focused instead on the present gravitational force or influences that black women's activism enacts upon an issue, space, or agenda. In contrast, the work of DuBois lingers on the effects of double consciousness on individuals and black people's perceptions of themselves through a veil while inhabiting a dark space. I intend to ethnographically derive meaning to account for the energy attributed to ongoing discussions and politics that begin with intersectional approaches to race (Crenshaw 1982) that have become so commonplace and influential that scholarship, activism and organizing cannot be conducted if abstracted from the entire socioeconomic condition of a cultural construction. Specifically, this work thinks through darkness, not as incomprehensible, but instead, considers the spatial possibilities for a black community that continues for decades against all odds. The work, actions, and outcomes of black activist women's organizing are often ignored or absorbed into other movements and strategy of changes while the initial force remains invisible. Black activist women's intersectional approach

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to health justice work requires a relational agenda across social, economic, and gender positions that could be better understood in terms of impact or influence rather than placing emphasis on invisibility. Much like the substance of a black hole, carrying a different weight that reinforces the structure of its surroundings, deliberation on dark matter presents an opportunity to reframe how we approach black activism. Furthermore, the gravitational pull of the black body, specifically, the black woman's body, continues to be a primary way of understanding race in the United States. Dark matter thus provides a lens through which we can understand blackness through activist black women's activist geographies, shifting what may be seen to instead consider what may be felt and experienced within present quests for social transformation.

Counterpublics

Beginning with understanding larger processes of social movements, then moving to the dark matter effect of black activist women's work, it is important to therefore consider counterpublics as a specific in the development of black activism and community organizing. Studies in counterpublics emerge from Fraser's (1997) development of subaltern counterpublics which resist and rearticulate from Habermas' (1964) theories of the maintenance of the public sphere. The public sphere, considered by Habermas to be the realm of all social life, which "access is guaranteed to all citizens," is a position from which the framework of subaltern counter public takes place. More importantly, societies with marked disparities and social stratification both exhibit and enforce an oppression of ideas and bodies where the development of counterpublics is a means of resistance, survival, and support (Fraser1997). It is this point that becomes a

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marked departure from a common democratic public sphere where a number of competing publics are mobilized through discourses.

Additional scholarship on the concept of the counterpublic by Michael Warner presents the distinction between the public and a public suggesting differences and can have great impact on how groups imagine themselves and function as a social totality. Furthermore, while delineating a set of counterpublics he states, "The subordinate status of a counterpublic does not simply reflect identities from elsewhere, participation in such a public is one of the ways by which its members' identities are formed and transformed" (Warner 2007). This formation occurs through several modes including self-organization, developing in relation to strangers, through addressing communication both personal and impersonal; it garners recognition, and it is a social space that develops and acts in accordance to their historical circulation of discourse. Finally, a public is what Warner declares a poetic world making. Consequently, a counterpublic develops, conscious or not, awareness of its own set of communicative norms which dictates the difference between the developed public and a public. Along these lines, the possibilities of counterpublics to be a source of support, competition, and resistance are important outcomes of community organizing.

Black Counterpublics emerge as part of a political strategy outcome of a multitude of black political ideologies. While seeking alternative spheres of public engagement (Inwood 2011), historically black counterpublics have been addressed and represented through black male dominated spokesmen who have popularized or become charismatic representations of various black political spheres (Dawson 2001). However,

black feminist counterpublics have long fostered resistance and intersectional development of the black public sphere (Collins 1998, Dawson 2001), though they are defined as a set of institutions, communications networks and practices which facilitate debates of causes and remedies to the current combination of political setback and economic devastation facing major segments of the black community (Dawson 1994). Black activist women's conscious development and use of the counterpublics have remained true to Fraser's feminist critique of functioning to garner recognition and to redistribute information and political ideology. An additional characteristic of the black counterpublic is explained as, "specifically those spaces where African Americans could come together in a relatively safe environment free from white society's gaze (Harris-Lacewell 2004)." Intergenerational and developed cross class interest black counterpublics within black women's organizing have embraced this last characteristic as part of storytelling for group healing while reclaiming political space within public debates on health and social justice policy. Furthermore, the move towards digital counterpublics is increasingly important when nonprofit and black community organizations move to resist "click activism.[17]" Seeking to produce thoughtful and conscious use of social media by conducting online health workshops, forums and the

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[17] This term refers to the growing trend of online engagement occurring through social media and online web spaces. This includes the "click" of supporting or "liking" a social cause to emailing a prewritten letter to an assemblyman, congress or intended company. While there are many platforms that send mass emails to constituents there is minimal engagements and sustained interest that turn into present commitment. This form of involvement has been popularized by Moveon.org and has been implemented by national nonprofit organizations like American Civil Liberties' Union and Planned Parenthood USA.

live streaming conference proceedings for their intended groups, the digital counter publics' reach and longevity has extended.

Understanding the emergence and collective use of community ideologies within framing of issues through dark matter and strategized in counterpublics is helpful to detail the contemporary and enduring work of black activist women and organizations in South Los Angeles.

PART II: HISTORICAL

Black women's health activism in Los Angeles is at times obscured within histories of nationalist, labor, and multiracial quality of life movements. Contemporary grassroots organizations find their foundations in tactics, allies and approach from those that emerged from decades of community organizing from the early 1960s. Additionally, chronicling African American health activism, Alondra Nelson (2011) outlines three areas of grassroots movements engaged prior to 1966, including institution building, integrations, and politics of knowledge. These areas provided a foundation for the Black Panther Party to launch a series of health actions that, in turn, were engaged and reformulated in later decades by black activist women.

Alondra Nelson (2011) reports that in 1970 the Black Panther Party chapter development required establishing health clinics and suggests that the 1972 shift in the BPP 10-point Program towards a human rights agenda was greatly informed by the Panthers' relationships with Che Guevara, who was a medical doctor. Yet, on-the-ground community work in free medical clinics, sickle cell screening, and iconic free food and breakfast programs and the Black Panther Party's health survival programs were

primarily staffed by black women. While scholars have argued that they may have initiated these programs but were also supported in terms of family care being a "traditional" women's role (Matthews, Pulido 2006), they were important sites that addressed the inequality and discrimination in health that the black neighborhood confronted. This small but growing archive on black women's health activism engages the ways in which black women's bodies and wellbeing are always already central to community political work and practices. This section highlights the work of black women and organizations within Los Angeles from 1970 to contemporary Reproductive Justice work.

1970's Welfare Rights

Though The Black Panther Party for Self Defense gained notoriety for the comprehensive and radical community service program developed throughout the state, this history often overshadows radical movements that worked concurrently for radical politics or quality of life injustices (Pulido 2006). One movement was that of the National Welfare Rights Organization which had an extraordinarily active chapter in Los Angeles (Nadasen 2005). The Welfare Rights Organization utilized campaigns and rallies to draw attention to the meager living conditions endured by women on the social service Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program. Another approach to social change was their tactic of educating women on how to navigate welfare offices and complete paper work. Women would often lose benefits or be misled by county and state workers when trying to navigate bureaucratic paper work and program stipulations. The duo of community

education and activism is a necessary combination utilized by black activist women to address the range of issues they confronted while living in poverty.

A prominent figure to emerge from the Los Angeles chapter was activist Johnnie Tillman, who in a 1972 article in Ms. Magazine explained life on Welfare as:

> "Either it breaks you, and you start hating yourself, or you break it. There's one good thing about welfare. It kills your illusions about yourself, and about where this society is really at. It's laid out for you straight. You have to learn to fight, to be aggressive, or you just don't make it. If you can survive being on welfare, you can survive anything. It gives you a kind of freedom, a sense of your own power and togetherness with other women. Maybe it is we poor welfare women who will really liberate women in this country. We've already started on our welfare plan. Along with other welfare recipients, we have organized together so we can have some voice (Tillman 1972)."

Carrying out an intersectional agenda which Nadasen explores as deriving from a third world women's "Multiple consciousness," Tillman and other welfare rights activists progressed from race, class, and gender identity. Tillman moved to Los Angeles in 1959 and earned a living as a laundry service worker until she became too ill to continue. Based on her experiences with social services and the NWRO, she later established ANC Mothers Anonymous in Los Angeles and sought to control her own reproduction that was not controlled by the state. An early proto formation of reproductive justice organizing, "her philosophy of black power encompassed defending her children from the perils of poverty and protecting her civil rights as a single mother" (Nadasen 2009). For black and poor women, the access to state resources is vital to caring for their children.

The Welfare rights movement in Los Angeles, through Tillman, implemented the rhetoric of self-determination encouraged by Black Nationalist movements, but working

class black women developed its meaning through family, reproduction, and challenging stereotypes of pathology within single parent homes (Nadasen 2009). The intersectional framing of income and living wage discrimination addressed the impact of state agencies on poor black women's lives.

1980s Black Coalition Fighting Back

> Police often imply the prostitute women are 'asking for it' and that killers of prostitute women help to clean up the streets. The message society gets is that if you kill a prostitute woman or a woman the police claim to be a prostitute your chances of getting away with it are higher than killing anyone else, because the lives of these women are seen to be less of a priority. LAPD's cover-up of the murders validates the view that some women are less deserving of protection than others. ~ Margaret Prescod, BCFB

In the 1980s when several black women went missing and dozens were discovered lifeless and murdered, black activist women and family members of the murdered organized and took to the streets to demand a response from the Los Angeles Police Department. The Black Coalition Fighting Back (BCFB), founded in 1986, was a group of concerned citizens who felt the lives of black women were going unnoticed yet the LAPD presented a, "double standard in policing in our city[Los Angeles]." According to the coalition, the amount of attention that was given to nearly a decade of murders was minuscule. This double standard they are referring to is one of race and class consciousness, which invokes the conversation on racialized space discussed in Chapter One.

In February of 1989 the coalition organized a series of press conferences to speak out about the Police Department's refusal to publicize the murders, which were now linked to a separate set of serial killings. At this point the coalition included members of

the NAACP, Church Women United, Coalitions Against Discrimination in Nursing, Southern Christian Leadership Committee and Black Women for Wages for Housework. This broad based group drew from collective ideologies (Reese 2003) of discrimination against black people to garner support. In an official press release the coalition, via lead organizer Margaret Prescod, stated, "the value of human life must not be determined by the size of one's bank accounts, the job they do, or what neighborhoods they live in. The silence on the part of our civic and community leaders on the serial killings has been defining. No rewards have been offered so far for the capture of the killer or killers. It seems as though they just don't care about these women (1989)." This statement is indicative of the crosscutting issues black women were experiencing in relation to the silence on the murders. It additionally reveals the impact of previous histories of activism that reflected the living wage, labor, racial, and housing issues that black communities faced. While Margaret Prescod emerged as the coalition's spokesperson, her support and analysis of the racist and sexist approach that the police investigators were taking reflected a larger radical view that drew from the 1970's nationalist and Radical Left movements. Additionally, working with CAPA (Coalition Against Police Abuse), Executive Director and former Black Panther Michael Zinzun strengthened ties to black community organizations looking to address issues of poverty and public safety from state violence.

Additionally, the BCFB participated with multi-racial organizations at events that sought to address violence against women. While they created counterpublics by holding press conferences on sites where bodies were discovered, they also held special vigils and

memorials for the missing and murdered women as a way of honoring the dead and protecting the living. An interesting point of departure from other black women's community organizations in South Los Angeles is that the BCFB also participated and brought their stories to Take Back the Night ceremonies that sought to voice sexual violence on local university campuses. This event has, typically, not gained relevancy or popularity in South Los Angeles communities.

Along with distributing flyers that contained sketched composites of the suspected serial killer, the BCFB utilized multiple organizing strategies that sought to help the families of missing women by holding talking circles in local libraries so that families could pull together information and grieve. Furthermore, given the lack of institutionalized and public support, the BCFB sought funding from independent foundations such as Liberty Hill stating, "The purpose of the grant is to educate and organize in Black and Third World communities on the serial murders of mainly black women in Los Angeles, the problems with the police investigation of the murders, and the low-profile media coverage, exposing the double burden of racism and sexism faced by Black women" (1989). Again, education, mobilization, and the use of public spaces were primary avenues through which to broaden their base. Though the killer was not apprehended for another two decades, the coalition provided a space to both mobilize grief and draw awareness to the racial nature of the gendered violence experienced by black women that manifested itself through neglect by the state.

Though the 1980s in Los Angeles are most notably remembered for the swift government shut down of social services and deindustrialization that led to high rates of

unemployment and poverty, members of this cross-issue coalition drew from previous decades of resistance and radical politics to address the silence concerning the murder and violence against black women that was taking place alongside heavy policing of South Central neighborhoods.

1990s the Battle of Multi-Ethnic Coalitions

While the 1980s marked an expedient path to death and anti-black racism, the 1990s saw both a resurgence of conservative policy and a rise in multiethnic and racial organizing. A wave of California propositions that sought to end the civil rights gains of the 1960s was introduced. This included Proposition 209, which ended Affirmative Action in public employment, education and contracts; Proposition 187, which prohibited undocumented persons from using and accessing education, health care, and social services; and Proposition 184, commonly known as the "Three Strikes Law," which mandated life sentences for people charged with their third felony. This trifecta of conservative policies led to a number of multiethnic, racial, and class community organizations campaigning across a number of issues[18].

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[18] In development of these propositions created a resurgence of student, blue collar, and immigrant activism that swept the city and local universities Unfortunately while organizing was cross ethnic including Central American, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese and Mexican immigrant communities outside of the Justice for Janitors campaign black labor and community struggles fell from agendas and were eclipsed by immigration campaigns. For more information on multiethnic labor organizing see: Brodkin, Karen. *Making Democracy Matter: Identity and Activism in Los Angeles*. Rutgers University Press, 2007. Brodkin, Karen. *Power politics: Environmental Activism in South Los Angeles*. Rutgers University Press, 2009.
Waldinger, Roger D., Chris Erickson, Ruth Milkman, Daniel Mitchell, Abel Valenzuela, Kent Wong, and Maurice Zeitlan. "*Helots no more: A case study of the Justice for Janitors campaign in Los Angeles.*" (1996). Savage, Lydia. "Geographies of organizing:

During this time, black women's organizing simultaneously played an important role in community mobilization while struggling to demarcate black concerns, operating under various multiethnic and people of color labels. The city and state saw a rise in immigrant and labor rights activism which, in many ways, precluded black Angelinos from activist agendas. In addition, although tensions between black and brown communities escalated due to media propaganda and activist women worked together in several organizations (Brokin 2007, Gottlieb, Vallianatos, Freer & Dreier 2005).

Community organizing in South Los Angeles began to focus on the number of youth that were incarcerated for alleged gang involvement. For example, Mothers ROC - as Gilmore (2006) detailed, Mothers Reclaiming their Children organized mothers of wrongly incarcerated youth. Their work featured Know Your Rights campaigns, courtroom observations, fundraisers for legal expenses and group caravans for mothers and families who wished to see incarcerated sons and daughters (Gilmore 2005). Another distinguished feature of their work was the insistence on fair trials and the attempt to obtain fair trials for wrongly accused black and brown youth. This organization later evolved into Families to Amend California's Three Strikes (FACTS), an organization that

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justice for janitors in Los Angeles."Organizing the landscape: Geographical perspectives on labor unionism (1998): 225-252. Erickson, Christopher L., Catherine Fisk, Ruth Milkman, Daniel JB Mitchell, and Kent Wong. "Justice for janitors in Los Angeles and beyond." The Changing Role of Unions (2004): 22-58. Kelley, Robin DG. "Building bridges: The challenge of organized labor in communities of color." In New Labor Forum, pp. 42-58. Labor Resource Center, Queens College, City University of New York, 1999. Narro, Victor. "Impacting next wave organizing: Creative campaign strategies of the Los Angeles worker centers." NYL Sch. L. Rev. 50 (2005): 465.

historically sought to repeal California's three strikes law, which disproportionately targets black youth.

2000's Reproductive Justice Public Health Crisis

I got involved with women's health organizations because my friends were dying and no one knew the information about why or how to stop it. No one was talking to us. No one cared. But us. – Barbara, BWOHJ

In the new millennium black women's organizing began to refocus on health. For example, The LA Birthing project began as a group of black women that wished to bring attention to low birth weight babies that this collective brought together. Though the labor, violence, and policing challenges of the previous decades were far from over, reproductive justice emerged in women's social movements and activism[19]. Though in the late 1980s and 1990s national organizations began to create Women of Color caucuses to speak to racism that existed within national reproductive rights organizations and sexism within black Civil Rights organizations, black reproductive justice advocates rearticulated the needs of black women through a Reproductive Justice framework (Nelson 2003). Later in 1994 the term was coined at the International Conference on Population and Development congress on women where the assertions of reproductive rights as a Human Right were launched (Ross 1998, Solinger 1998, Solinger 2005).

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[19] Research and scholarship on radical community based organizations in Los Angeles has maintained a focus on a handful of organization. The prominence of groups like the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, Justice for Janitors, Mother ROC, FACTS and the Bus Riders Union has at time eclipsed work by other nonprofits though may not be radical (James 1999) in their approach to community organizing still make quite a impact within black communities. For a chart of black Los Angeles community organizations please see appendix.

This Reproductive Justice is used as a concept to distinguish grassroots activism from what had become known as reproductive rights organizing and litigation which focused on rights. Black reproductive justice advocates, in particular, Loretta Ross, formerly of SisterSong, popularized the definition to be simply stated as, "the right to have a child, the right to parent a child, and the right not to have a child." In this statement the work and the condition needed to cover the process and environment to birth and rear a child is important to the movement work that organizations take on. The term "Reproductive Justice" was broadened to incorporate reproductive health activism and reproductive rights activism, which tended to focus on access to medical and legal protections of abortion. While obtaining health information that is relevant to black women as well as securing policy that sustains abortion rights, the reproductive justice advocate looks to the entire social content of health, poverty, education, environment and citizenship as they impact women's and families' ability to make family planning and rearing decisions.

Organizations that drew from a Reproductive Justice framework employed an intersectional approach to women's health activism that specifically sought to broaden the reproductive rights and health movements. For instance, this shift is explained as, "emphasis on individual choice, however, obscures the social context in which individuals make choices and discounts the ways in which the state regulates populations disciplines individual bodies, and exercises control over sexuality, gender and reproduction" (Silliman 2005). By addressing the social dynamics of reproduction like Tillman and NWRO, RJ activism accounts for the ways in which socioeconomic status,

access to information and ability to mobilize that information through choices produces different outcomes for women of color across several intersectional social contexts. As a result, activist women develop strategic agendas that incorporate educational workshops and conferences as a strategy to educate and bring together women from across the city, state, and in some cases, the nation, to share the social and cultural dynamics of access issues. Subsequently, strategic agendas pay attention to education as particularly important to make sure allies, members, and volunteers are versed in making the connections between racism, power and Reproductive Health. When successfully combined and thoughtfully implemented, education, activism, and advocacy create a network of care that can provide emotional support to reproductive advocates often working in a range of professions including public health, public policy, academics, grassroots non profits, legal and media consultants.

The lens of reproductive justice draws from a black feminist theory that speaks to the interlocking oppression and experiences of black women's race, class, gender and sexuality. In this way it is indirectly influenced and draws from the works of third world feminist movements and black feminist activism of the late 70s and early 80s (Mohanty 2003, Nelson 2003, Silliman et al 2005). This analysis and strategic approach allows for multiple agenda to be set in motion. For example, along with the shift from individual rights, scholar activist Andrea Smith states, "consequently, since under a capitalist system, those with resources are granted more choices, it is not inconsistent to withdraw reproductive rights choices from poor women through legislation such as the Hyde Amendment (which restricts federal funding for abortion) or family caps for TANF

(Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) recipients" (Smith 2005). The emphasis on reproductive justice as a collective action, movement building, social justice that focuses on the reproductive health, access, and rights and the ability to exercise and mobilize informed choices, marks a significant distinction from individualized rights campaigns that is best understood as part of a larger analysis of power.

PART III: PRAXIS

BWOHJ's Progression to Reproductive Justice

The comprehensive and multifocal lens of reproductive justice mobilized programmatically by the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice led to the emergence of eight different projects[20]. In the winter of 1997, the organization's newsletter of this period introduced the origins of the group explaining, "Six women came together one winter morning for a one-day retreat. Our agenda included creating an art mural of our dreams, gathering resources and organizing a system of referral for the women we knew who are in health crisis. We wanted to spend time on us, talking about our health, defining health as being the total picture of mental, emotional, physical, financial, and spiritual wellbeing." Healing circles functioned by way of sharing of stories, information and communicating needs (Brown, Jemmott, Mitchell, & Walton 1998). These circles became an important organizational feature that characterizes the organization and is carried through all programs. Though all programs were developed as a response to health disparities affecting black communities, three serve as prime

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[20] Please refer to table 1 for a complete depiction of the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice programing.

examples of the shifting importance of reproductive justice organizing and the development of black counterpublics.

Black Womens Organization for Health and Justice (1997)

- Baby Love 1999
- Sistah's Connect (1999)
- Internet Quilt (2002)
  - Tea & Technology
  - Blog
- Move on up(2000)
- Breast and Cervical Health (2002)
- Kitchen Divas
- Afya Reproductive Justice
  - Reprodtctive Just(US)Policy briefing (2010)
  - Get Smart Before you Get Sexy (2009)
    - RJ Bootcamp (2012)
  - Reproductive Freedom Day
  - Publications
  - EJ + RJ (2011)
    - Green Salon And Beeauty Product inititve.
  - Reprodtctive Just(US) Coorinating Committee

Table 1: Black Women's Organization For Health and Justice program flow chart.

Baby Love

The first program initiated by BWOHJ with a reproductive agenda was "Baby Love," which in 1999 outlined a mentoring and parenting focus that sought to support young women through intergenerational community building and support. During this time the concern and activism on black infant health peaked as a response to a rising incidence of low infant birth weight and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), which, according to a survey conducted by the Los Angeles Department of Public Health in 2002, these rates were, and continue to be, three times higher than in other races. As a way to address these rates BWOHJ developed "Baby Love." The program, in part, sought social transformation from inside black communities rather than looking to structural inequalities of income or health care as factors in black infant health. They established three roles for black women to perform in the lives of young black women. This structure reflects how the organization at the time sought to delineate community engagement, advocacy, and social change. For example, a primary position within this program included "Sisterfriends" who were women partnered with an expectant mother until the child's first birthday to offer guidance and support. Sisterfriends had children of their own and were educated by the organization on black infant mortality, SIDS, and infant health. Through the organization, they often organized holistic parenting classes and baby showers. A second tier of support was mentors who were paired with a teen to guide, counsel, tutor and support young women through 'rites of passage' including understanding menstruation and beginning comprehensive sexual health education. Finally, a third level of support Baby Love volunteers provided was through the role of

advocates. In this program, volunteer advocates were made available to accompany black women to doctors' visits, through medical procedures they may feel to be intimidating, or to help ease the stress when dealing with complex medical bureaucracy. Advocates were trained in mediation, HMO producers and Medi-Cal clauses. This position and volunteer responsibility was one that Patricia, as executive director, was most passionate about. In later years, though the organization sought to increase the quality of care and options available to black women through policy advocacy, Patricia believed that this type of on-the-ground and in-person advocacy was equally important. This integrative approach to community support at multiple points of convergence during pregnancy, adolescent mentorship and through advocacy is a unique feature of BWOHJ that reveals their complex and intersectional response to a single reproductive health issue.

The organization's 1999 focus on birth disparities and maternal health culminated in its annual conference of that year entitled Birth Stories, which invited speakers to explore related topics, including a keynote address on race and sexism's influence on black women's quality of care. The Fall 1999 newsletter, in preparation for the conference, was dedicated to the conference theme and featured stories on members' miscarriages, information on herbal supplements for pregnancy, stats on maternal[21] health and death, and social mothering[22] through elder neighbors, extended aunts, and

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[21] Maternal deaths are defined as "deaths that occur during pregnancy or within forty-two days after pregnancy termination, regardless of pregnancy duration and site, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy, but not from accidental or incidental causes" - CDC definition.

[22] For a contemporary ethnographic that explores social mothering in black activist communities in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Rocha, Luciana. "Outraged Mothers, Violence and

volunteers like those associated with Baby Love, to celebrate the black community traditions of support. This newsletter began with Patricia, who was the editor at the time, stating "where is the outcry for Black women whose babies have died through miscarriage or infant death (1999)." As the organization's inaugural conference, the strong presence of black women sharing their stories and the building of Birth Stories as a site of black counterpublics was a determined and conscientious project that occurred over many months across multiple mediums. For example, in this same year the organization launched its website, which featured snippets of stores shared during healing circle meetings and allowed comments to continue the conversation via internet for those who were unable to make the meeting. Given through development of safe spaces in print, online forums, public workshops and program dialogues, black counterpublics as developed by the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice were both transformative and healing spaces.

Unfortunately, over time this program declined in participation and by 2005 it was no longer running. Though black infant health support programs were still very much needed, between 1999 and 2005 several other county funded and operated programs such as the Black Infant Health Initiative and Great Beginnings for Black Babies were partnered with the offices of Women, Infant, Children (WIC) and the Department of Social Services and received a steady stream of funding and clients, creating a funneling system of resources that became equally precarious during the state's budget crises.

The power of Emotions in Rio De Jeneiro's African Diaspora" University of Texas. Unpublished Dissertation.

While larger nonprofit foundations such as First Five LA provided financial support to smaller nonprofits, their approach to black infant health resembled standardized programs, with learning modules that depersonalized community support and advocacy. In this way Baby Love remained one of the few programs that began and ended with the needs of black women developed from their personal experience. As the program became nonoperational, BWOHJ strengthened its relationship and built coalitions with organizations such as First Five LA and Great Beginnings for Black Babies to introduce their approach to maternal and black infant health to a number of spaces.

Best Breast Health

A second program whose development speaks of the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice's progression towards a highly developed reproductive justice framework is *Best Breast Health* (BBH), which focused on breast cancer, then later evolved to include cervical cancer education. Also initiated in 1999, though it did not gain prominence until 2001, this program trained volunteers and later members as peer educators who were sent to local churches, recovery or re-entry homes, community based organizations and black women's professional organizations. These sessions additionally provided referral information on free-to-low-cost mammograms and support groups for women who do detect masses. In late 2001 BWOHJ secured a small grant to partner with the American Cancer Facilitation Training Association that enabled the organization to facilitate comprehensive and intensive training. In order to become what the organization deemed "breast health motivators," volunteers and potential trainees were expected to complete a thirty-hour educational training program that

featured learning modules from the American Cancer Facilitation training. This material was combined with the racial and cultural sensitivity that the organization inserted into all programs. In this case, talking circles were devoted to supporting those who were diagnosed with breast cancer and those who lost a loved one as well as specific workshops covering the specific impact of breast cancer amongst black women. For example, orientation material which relies heavily on the Los Angeles Department of Health Services reported, "African American women under the ages of 45 are more likely to develop breast cancer than any other groups of women." Although black women report lower rates of breast cancer, they continue to experience a higher death rate due to minimal access to insurance and proper medical care.

In fact, within a few years, BWOHJ expanded their network to a partnership with the National Black Leadership Initiative on Cancer, which made the organization their local representative office based on the impact that peer education was making. The occurrence of cancer was so prominent within the organization and its members that in 2003 breast self-exams (BSEs) were encouraged as a part of monthly meetings and twice yearly the organization printed newsletters featuring instruction, resources and statistical updates on cancer as they affected black women. Furthermore, BSE and Keep in Touch information became an integrated part of the "well woman exam checklist" that was distributed to members as reminders to encourage a systematic evaluation of health across ages. Breast cancer touched many of the women involved with BWOHJ, including Akua, a founding member who detected her own mass during a BSE break during a meeting. So common was breast cancer that Sasha recalled that the early stages of her

time in BWOHJ work primarily focused on BBH stating, "I was working on BBH and my friend Stacy had breast cancer. She was 39. So they did a mastectomy. Six months later she kept complaining about her back. Her back was in constant pain, so she went to the hospital and come to find out the breast cancer spread to her bones, to her lungs, and it spread all through her body. They admitted her to Harbor-UCLA in October and on May 16th she died. On May 31st she would have been 40 years old. She was just a friend of mine, never a member of the organization but that's one of the reasons why I started working for them. Later, I found out she had the triple negative[23] and through BWOHJ I found out what that meant for black women. Since then I've been pulled towards BBH because of Stacy." From founding members to close friends, breast cancer found its way into multiple aspects of the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice. So prevalent was the experience of cancer that, as mentioned, Patricia and other members began to include breast self exams as break time activities during day-long trainings or monthly events.

This program exposes the breadth of BWOHJ's approach to reproductive health and its expanded historical pursuit of abortion rights. Doing so speaks to the organizational insistence on intergenerational transformation and community engagement

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[23] A diagnosis of triple negative breast cancer means that the three most common types of receptors known to fuel most breast cancer growth–estrogen, progesterone, and the HER-2/neu gene– are not present in the cancer tumor. This means that the breast cancer cells have tested negative for hormone epidermal growth factor receptor 2 (HER-2), estrogen receptors (ER), and progesterone receptors (PR). This type of cancer commonly referred to as "Triple Negative" is disproportionately high occurrence in African American women cancer patients. The deadly combination of triple negatives' rapid progression and the number of uninsured or underinsured black women produces higher mortality rates. http://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/triple-negative-breast-cancer.

bearing in mind the complete reproductive health cycle of black women. Additionally, breast cancer in women's activism has developed its own issue oriented funded sources that abstracts detection, treatment and survival rates from intersectional experiences of race, health, gender and class. Refusing to draw lines between disease from race, health, social economic status and access to information, the organization's insertion of breast cancer into reproductive health agendas furthers current paradigms on reproductive health.

Afya Dada Just(us)

The third program, which exemplifies the organization's progression towards a reproductive justice standpoint through engagement with local and national social movements, is the "Afya Dada Just(us)" project that expands yearly. In the early years of the nonprofit, reproductive health was introduced through HIV education and prevention of low birth weight babies amongst black women. Though annual conferences such as Kindred Sisters (2001) included workshops on reproductive health, the topic only sporadically appeared in conference and organizational materials. Partnerships with local advocates and public health supported a sustained funding for HIV prevention and breast health that at this time was not inclusive of a reproductive justice discourse. Additionally, though questions of reproductive rights and black women's historical experiences of reproductive control informed BWOHJ events from 1999 to 2003, the organization had no established project or infrastructure to hold sexual health information and policy advocacy.

The turning point occurred in 2003 when a copy of a 2001 newsletter prepared for 'Kindred Sisters,' a symposium on STDs, caught the attention of the California Women's Law Center. The two organizations then collaborated to expand the initial eight-page newsletter, which featured information on abortion rights, history and providers, reproductive health definitions, a chart explaining birth control options and community references to African American OBGYNs. The expanded book included seventy-five pages of historical information on black reproduction in the United States, explanations of reproductive health infections and disease, and family planning methods. This manual eventually became a training guide for peer educators, interns, and staff. Completed and published in 2005, the first printing was initially used by Patricia and the Board of Directors to build the organization's funding network. During this time it was also used by staff to educate foster youth in the final stages of the state's emancipation process, which requires foster youth to attend a series of "life skills" workshops. In 2006 the BWOHJ revealed the guide at *"Woman 2 Woman,"* coordinated in conjunction with support from Loretta Ross and the SisterSong[24] national conference. Given SisterSong's commitment to multiracial organizing, 'Woman 2 Woman' offered a dedicated space for reproductive justice advocates and professionals to focus on the health status of black women. Building from the guide, the topics and workshops included the impact of stress

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[24] SisterSong was formed in 1997 and initially funded by the Ford Foundation to educate women of color and policy makers on reproductive and sexual health and rights, and to work towards the access of health services, information and resources that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. The mission of the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective is to amplify and strengthen the collective voices of Indigenous women and women of color to ensure reproductive justice through securing human rights http://www.sistersong.net

and fibroids in black women, holistic approaches to reproductive health, and an overview of chlamydia and gonorrhea disparities in Los Angeles.

This pivotal period began the emergence of what is the tour de force of the organization. Afya Dada Just(us) is now the foundation of an entire arm of programming, events and publications. By 2008 this flagship project[25] maintained seven second-tier programs that did not include attendance at coalition meetings at the city, state, and national level. Afya Dada Just(us) now coordinates educational comprehensive sexual education workshops for foster youth, women in reentry homes, LAUSD classrooms in the schools' sex education programs, summer gang prevention and intervention programs, and is a frequent presence at a number of South LA health fairs hosted by black churches and community groups. Since 2006 the nonprofit's yearly conference, organized by the twelve-member Afya Dada Just(us) coordinating counsel, now specifically forefronts a reproductive justice agenda as part of its mission and agenda to transform policy.

The Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice's incremental and substantive move to integrate policy advocacy into its programming was facilitated by the nonprofit's membership in a statewide coalition of reproductive rights, health, and justice affiliates. Beginning in 2009, the Afya Dada Just(us) interns, staff, and volunteers traveled to the state capitol to participate in a statewide lobby day. Held yearly in the spring, this day focuses on reproductive rights assembly bills and state proposed budget

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[25] Please refer to the second tier of programming in Chart 1 in this chapter.

cuts to safety net programs. In preparation for the day of lobbying, BWOHJ holds two full-day trainings that cover legislative advocacy procedures and bill making processes. Any member of the organization or the community is welcome to attend the training and the all-expense-paid day trip to Sacramento. For several women, it is their first time to the state capital or meeting the assembly member who represents their district. At the yearly lobby day and quarterly coalition meetings BWOHJ is one of three nonprofits that focus on women of color and employ a reproductive justice agenda. Though the coalition is comprised of just over twenty different organizations and nonprofits, a large number are established reproductive rights organizations, such as Planned Parenthood or the American Civil Liberties Union. These organizations tend to focus on issues which prioritize the individuals' access to reproductive rights or health. BWHOJ's presence in this coalition highlights the need for black reproductive organizations' voice within statewide campaigns on reproductive policy to ensure that interlocking forms of discrimination, as they affect reproductive health, are addressed. Although early in the development of the organization policy education and advocacy were included in newsletters or through Baby Love's personal advocate training, direct lobbying on bills has been a later development in the organization. Currently Afya Dada Just(us), through its membership in coalitions and the development of its Environmental Justice (EJ) Meets RJ program, must now keep a detailed list of the numbers of hours and resources spent on advocacy to ensure that they are not over the established federal limits for groups under 501(c)(3) distinctions.

The development of this program from a single eight-page newsletter to a full-fledged reproductive justice program is, in itself, no small endeavor. Through the years of expansion and changes, Afya Dada Just(us) has expanded to include leadership development, policy advocacy, reproductive health education and alliance building as its four major pillars of social change. The organization's current manifesto, published in 2009 states:

> Words written about our bodies, our sexuality, our community and our lives aim to control, degrade, and silence the strength and beauty of our being, this manifesto gives witness to the resiliency, spirit and light of our lives and work. Reproductive Justice brings focus to a complete woman and girl, not as silos isolated by funding streams or special interest. Reproductive Justice insists that justice will only be achieved when women and girls have the power and resources to make healthy, informed, non-coerced decisions about our bodies, sexuality and families.

Black women's triumphs and challenges encountered through this program are the heart of this ethnography. While these projects and program highlight the health disparity and needs to be addressed within black communities, the growing catalogue of BWOHJ was also influenced by Patricia's life style developments and funding challenges, later discussed in Chapter Three, to stabilize the, at times, struggling nonprofit. Over time a gap between those members who have been part of the organization since 1997 and new, younger ones who were looking for new directions to push reproductive justice agendas, yet were unprepared to take up the reins for the existing programs, has formed. Although the nonprofit experienced major shifts in membership and, later, a funding crisis, these evolving programs continue to expand reproductive justice's agendas.

Chapter Three: Reframing Hustle Ideology in Nonprofit Organizations: Black Women's Responses to the 2009 California Budget Crisis

INTRODUCTION

Just moments after answering the office phone, Sasha, a community health advocate and employee at the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice, bellowed, "No sir, you have called here five times today. No, we are not a business; we cannot buy an ad for the program. We are a nonprofit, meaning we have NO MONEY!" then sweetly said, "No, the executive director is not here. I told you, we cannot make a donation. The best we can do is go to your football game and cheer for your team to win. That, we most certainly can do." This conversation took place in late summer of 2009, when the small community based organization struggled to pay bills and maintain an active rotation of eight partially funded programs. During this time they experienced an increase in call volume that included solicitations for donations and requests for free or sliding scale health services. My ethnographic fieldwork, which took place from 2009 to 2011 in South Los Angeles, coincided with the state's worst financial crisis to date and focused on the daily experiences of activist black women.

The Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice was founded in 1999, when four women working as health care professionals became tired of discussing their personal health challenges and troubles with job security in parking lots after work. They believed that if as nurses, health educators, and employees of the public health department they were encountering health issues, that other black women might have similar problems and needed a place to share information. It was then that the women

decided to create a discussion space to educate black women and collectively seek out solutions. Ten years later, this South Los Angeles community group grew to operate eight programs. The organization now moves from a reproductive justice agenda to secure total wellbeing for black women across the city. Reproductive justice covers health challenges and social inequalities that black women confront in their lives, including breast cancer and nutrition choices, to reproductive health legislative advocacy and developing internet literacy. The Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice is now a reproductive rights, health education, and advocacy nonprofit. I observed and worked with the organization through its reproductive justice projects, observed committee and coalition meetings, conducted oral histories and topic focused interviews with founders, long time members, volunteers and student interns. I became intimately aware of the financial strain and challenge the women experienced both as an organization and as individuals.

This chapter considers how the state's economic downturn and shifts in foundation funding requirements affected a South Los Angeles black women's community based organization. I begin by providing a brief historical context to California's 2009 budget and economic crisis. Then I consider how two significant changes to Los Angeles foundation giving processes which have affected decision making in nonprofits. Next, I turn to blues epistemology and through ethnographic research, consider working class strategies of survival as they apply to black women's community activism. Finally, I explore how the underground economy concept of 'hustling' emerges as a strategy of survival implemented by black activist women as a response to these economic conditions. This article contends that black women's

engagement of hustling ideology within nonprofit community organizing is a response to neoliberal market ideology which can limit social transformation by imposing inorganic corporate structures upon community based organizations.

HISTORICAL

From 2008 to 2011 the State of California experienced a staggering economic recession coinciding with the national "downturn." The basis of what came to mar both the state's reputation as a land of opportunity and the credit worthy 'Golden State' was an unbalanced budget that initially revealed an 11.2 billion dollar deficit that would escalate to 26.6 billion with an additional gap accumulating yearly. California holds the nation's largest economy which regularly resides in the top ten of world economies. Its decline from the early 2000's 5th position to a fluctuating 8th or 9th in the past few years sent the state into an unprecedented crisis.

California's decline was several decades in the making. Geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore expertly tracks the state's cyclical decline and rise through extensive war time spending and contracts that banked on the state's military and industrialized economy. She details four clear periods of economic recession in the state's history, including the 1970 post war recession as a result of war time spending, the subsequent 1975 planned structural adjustment of the gold standard, the 1980 recession and the 1990 great recession both of which were tied to an international banking crisis (2007). California's ability to bounce back from these early economic crises was deeply tied to the state's participation in military spending. In later decades, intensified investment by individuals and private corporations within technology industries and real estate markets provided

economic cushions that also experienced their waves of decline that substantially impacted the state budget.

The outcomes of the state's economic struggles have most affected the working class and those in need of social services. For example, the 1980's deindustrialization proved to have far reaching consequences in California and hit South Los Angeles particularly hard. Scholars report that between 130,000 to 153,000 jobs were lost in Los Angeles (Avila 2004, Davis 1990, Gottlieb 2005, Soja 1989, 1996, Sides 2003). Among those, many were men and women of color. Few low income communities of color regained the economic stability from the loss of factory or "blue collar" jobs, which historically provided retirement pensions, health insurance, and long time financial security. South Los Angeles was home to a number of factories, including Oscar Meyer and McDonnell-Douglas plants. The shut down or removal of these factories left the area with few economic avenues to pursue and created a high concentration of economically depressed areas.

California's new millennium financial fallout from a sharp decline in the 'dot-com' investment coupled with the state's energy crisis served as the context to the state's 2008 budget crisis that was years in the making. In 2001, Governor Davis, who initially controlled a budget surplus early in his tenure, faced two financial events that would come to define his time in office. First, in the late 1990s, investors began to pour large amounts of finance capital into internet dot-com businesses and caused what is characterized as the swell of a financial bubble. Economists detail three phases of financial bubbles and their subsequent bursts, which begins with financial liberalization

and increased prices. Then due to a saturated market, assets prices collapse, which is characterized as the burst and, finally, the defaulting of firms (Allen and Gale 2001). In this last phase of the financial bubble, we see the effect on the real economy and that banks who have assumed the risks may have challenges in other areas of investment. In 2001 the deflation of the dot-com bubble revealed the deep impact of Silicon Valley on the state's budget with a drastic decrease in revenue. For a state whose budget depends heavily on the income tax, the several billion dollar shortfall would prove challenging.

Furthermore, the energy crisis of January 2001 would affect Californians at all income levels and contributed to Gray Davis' abysmal approval ratings. The deregulation of energy pricing by Texas power companies resulted in Californian Utility corporations paying an 800% increase for energy (Duane 2002, Smith et al 2001). While Texas corporations, such as Enron were collecting hand-over-fist in stock revenue, California utility companies were stretching their finances, propelling power shortages across the state. On January 17th and 18th the state experienced rolling blackouts in both commercial and private sectors. According to the Los Angeles Times, Davis, fearing the catastrophic effect of the loss of energy to the state, declared an emergency. Then, in what was considered overspending during a time of mounting deficit, Davis approved the construction of a dozen power plants[26] throughout the state and agreed to pay 43 billion

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[26] In a 2009 ethnography of South Gate, a city located in Los Angeles' County South Bay, anthropologist Karen Brodkin details the ways in which the construction of this power plant was contested by community member through environmental justice. Brodkin, Karen. *Power Politics: Environmental activism in south Los Angeles*. Rutgers University Press, 2009.

dollars over 20 years for the state's power needs. This decision would simultaneously save the state and, yet, prove disastrous to his approval ratings.

By 2002, the rising state deficit and measures Grey Davis took to balance the budget would ultimately lead to his recall from office. In several wildly unpopular actions including borrowing billions from the tobacco industry, Davis initiated tax increases on cigarettes, a banking income tax, and doubled vehicle registration fees while making cuts to social welfare programs during a time of high unemployment. In an attempt to close the widening budget gap, Davis' cuts came at the expense of many low income families. Media outlets reported that his proposal sought to "eliminate $221 million that counties receive to administer health and social service programs such as food stamps, Medi-Cal and foster care" (Sacramento Bee 2002). The attempt to balance the budget by increasing taxes and cutting welfare spending fell in line with historical trends in policy changes that would disproportionately affect black and low income women. In 2003, a special election was initiated for the recall and election of a new governor. The results ushered in the era of the 'governator' with former actor Arnold Schwarzenegger stepping in to address the mounting deficit.

As we turn to the 2009 economic downturn and California's fiscal emergency, we can see a much larger picture of economic decisions by state officials that positioned the state for its most severe recession in thirty years. The sordid tale of California's cyclical recessions, excessive spending on prisons (Alexander 2012, Gilmore 2007, Schnyder 2010), and continually cutting funding from safety-net programs made the state ripe for a crippling financial crisis that would last four years with yet-to-be-told outcomes. In 2008

Governor Schwarzenegger was forced to declare a fiscal emergency, submitted the state budget ninety days late and implemented Executive Order S-16-08[27]. This forced all state employees to take two mandatory furlough days and prohibited state funded institutions from entering new contracts. In subsequent budget proposals, attempts to balance the budget during the crisis featured heavy cuts to social services and safety net programs. The California Budget Project reported:

> Since 2008- 2009, the state has made multiple cuts to CalWORKs that have reduced families' income and scaled back services designed to help parents prepare for and find a job. The cumulative impact of these cuts amounts to $3.3 billion between 2008-09 and 2011-12, according to a CBP analysis of state data. This reduction is equivalent to a loss of roughly $3,000 for each of the 1.1 million children in the CalWORKs Program (Falling Behind 2012).

These excessive cuts place undue stress on families, particularly black single-female heads of households that combine Welfare, Cal-WORKS, and free lunch programs to care for children. Black women's consistent unequal access to high salary jobs with paid insurance suggests the combined use of state services is imperative to supplement their meager earnings or to entirely account for the household finances and family care (Collins 2000, Davis 1981, Kelley 1996, Ong 2001). The fiscal dynamics for young black mothers becomes increasingly difficult and complex as they try to obtain undergraduate degrees or professional certifications from state colleges.

In fact, since 2007-08, California repeatedly cut funding for publicly supported colleges and universities. Between the 2007- 08 and 2011-12 academic years, state support for the University of California and California State University systems was

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[27] "Executive Order S-16-08" Was initiated by Arnold Schwarzenegger as Governor.
 http://gov.ca.gov/news.php?id=11310

reduced by nearly one-third, while community colleges lost nearly one-fifth of their state support. At the same time the state cut funding for higher education, student fees rose dramatically. Annual undergraduate fees for state residents at the University of California jumped from $6,636 in 2007-08 to $12,192 in 2011-12, an increase of 83.7 percent. During the same period, undergraduate fees for state residents at the California State University nearly doubled from $2,772 to $5,472, a 97.4 percent increase.

Indeed, the multiple cuts to spending across social service programs and education, along with high foreclosure rates, deeply impact black homes and communities. Furthermore, because women comprise more than three out of five adults enrolled in the major safety-net programs that provide these benefits and services, such as the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Program, the Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP) Program, and the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Program, cuts to these programs disproportionately affect low-income women and their families.

The relationship between a nonprofit's financial stability and California's economy is deeply imbricated through the deployment of the state budget and private funds. First, nonprofits typically have two to three primary areas to seek funding: 1) the private sector through large public philanthropic multi-year grants; 2) county, state and federal grants that are written into the budgets for educational, service providers and specific districts through place based funding; and 3) a smaller combination of individual donations and creative fundraising. As the budget shrinks, the competition increases amongst nonprofits working in similar social sectors or geographical areas. For example,

a report for The Foundation Center research shows that, "In 2009, two in five foundations expect to dip into their endowment principal to fund their grants budget. About two-thirds (63 percent) expect to reduce the number or size of grants they will award, or both" (Lawrence, 2009). When public giving depends heavily on state budget and private wealth donations through income tax dividends, the fiscal crisis of the failing stock market, real estate slump and technology industries crash narrows financial avenues and interferes with community based organizations' funding options.

SHIFTS IN FOUNDATION GIVING

While California was in the midst of the deepest and longest financial crisis of the 21st century, philanthropic foundations simultaneously shifted the ways in which grants were allocated along two lines. First, large corporate companies, endowments, and foundations ceased to offer multi-year general operating grants to nonprofit organizations and began to focus instead on programming. Secondly, the successes of New York's Harlem Children's Zone which centralized funding to a demarcated hundred block zone over three decades increased interest in placed-based initiatives and grants. These two changes amplified competition for grants between community-based organizations within South Los Angeles. This shift presented a particular challenge for organizations that were neither service providers 501(c)(3) nor strictly social advocacy 501(c)(4) yet integrated service, education, and advocacy and, as such, found themselves rotating emphasis to match grant stipulations and tax accountability. For instance, 501(c)(3) groups operate for religious, charitable, research or educational purposes and political activity, including local, state or national advocacy, cannot amount to more than two percent of the

organization's yearly budget, whereas a 501(c)(4) organization may engage in social advocacy and other political activities, as long as these activities utilize ten percent or less of the annual budget. In contrast, groups with a 527 distinction are also tax exempt and may raise money for political action and lobby as a special interest group. For the Black Women's Organization for Health Justice, operating on a meager budget with grants increasingly calling for advocacy, presented a challenge to remain functionally operating within tax stipulations that spoke to the organization's community and member needs beyond legislative action. The nexus of these fiscal challenges and modifications to the landscape of nonprofit funding would lead to perpetual reconsideration of organization programming and creative fundraising strategies. These shifts affected not only the BWOHJ but the changes were especially tough on nonprofits that serve low-income black neighborhoods.

In one such case, the South Los Angeles Collection, these shifts presented a number of issues. One of the primary challenges to keeping nonprofits running was the decline in grants offered towards the general operation of an organization. Simultaneously, there was an increased push towards "high impact" community programming. This created an especially vexing situation for nonprofits that rarely ran scheduled programs but continued to serve a high number of community members on a drop-in or as-needed basis. For example, during fieldwork at the South Los Angeles Collection, I observed several women ranging in age from 16 to 45 who needed assistance navigating online applications for federally funded housing or cash aid programs. I also guided a number of young men, recently released from juvenile

detention centers, through online resume building and job application websites. After

spending several hours with a few people, I questioned the library director as to why they

didn't host a career workshop or welfare application tutorial and he said,

> When I got here a few years ago we tried that. We opened the doors, told all the guys on the block to tell their friends, bought food and invited a few people from YJC and FACTS[28] to help out if they had other questions. And you know what happened? No One Showed. It's always packed in here and on that day, no one. Right?" Nods for confirmation to a library staff person. "That's right, we couldn't believe it." Sofia said. "What was that about? These knuckle heads, and I say that lovingly you know, any other day will sit for 45 minutes to wait to get on the computer for 20 minutes, to fill out an application but once it's a regular or organized thing, they won't show. They just won't do it. I get it. They spend their days in a hyper regulated school or dealing with these police officers driving by and questioning them all day long. Why would they want sit in another 'class' and answer questions? Plus, you know, you never know, what will go down in the hood on any day. Someone might be beefin' with another group, cops might antagonize someone to get info on another. Sometimes people are not around for a few weeks and we find out they've been locked up or in the hospital. We saw that we could just help more people if they knew we are here to help and let them come to us, but there ain't no funding for that. You can't project numbers impacted or report deliverables on the fact the youth feel safe in here so they come in but we still have to find a way to pay bills.

In this case, developing programming is counter intuitive to how the library interacts with

the community members it serves. Located in the heart of South Los Angeles, this

organization was founded over fifty years ago, but not until the hiring of the latest

director five years ago, did neighborhood residents feel comfortable entering and using

the facilities. Staff of the library revealed that people in the neighborhood once believed

the building to be an undercover police office. Furthermore, the specific challenges of

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[28] Two Los Angeles nonprofit organizations that organize educational, 'know your rights" workshops and legally advocate for youth who have entered criminal justice system as well as formerly incarcerated people who are in social reentry programs. For more information other local organizations please see appendix.

operating an organization in highly surveilled and policed locations presented another outcome in community behavior, where those who feel perpetually regulated will often opt for assistance on a personal level and when it works best for them. The director's close engagement with members of the neighborhood provided him the opportunity to make sense of these choices rather than characterizing them as lazy or irresponsible. He saw the agency being enacted in deliberately missing a workshop or class. For an organization like this, general operating grants are crucial to being able to keep its ongoing relationship with community members and to keep the doors open.

Additionally, the transitions in the application funding process to concentrate on programming cultivated a nonprofit climate that became counter intuitive to the discourse of capacity. The prevailing use of the term "capacity" by foundations correlates to a measure of effectiveness that is presumed to determine the ability of a nonprofit to achieve its organizational mission and produce consistent measurable deliverables based on proposed project goals and outcomes. The concept and discourse surrounding capacity is also reflective of a nonprofit's ability to retain, develop, and grow its agenda through the collective skills of its staff. Through external assessments and observed site visits, capacity becomes a projected measurement of success. An ever-evolving marker of sustainability, growth, and grant worthy institution, capacity and its building or assessment is determined across the following areas: financial, staff skills, community engagement and structural capacity[29]. This shift is true to neoliberal ideologies of

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[29] For a more extensive conversation on Capacity in Nonprofits see. (De Vita and Fleming 2001) Kaplan, Alan. 1999. "Organizational Capacity." The Nonprofit Quarterly

individualized market and the expansion of capitalism within privatized public services as a response to urban poor communities (Gill 1995, Jessop 2002). What results is a disciplinary capitalism that transforms the nonprofit management culture towards a better business model. This maintains both private capital flow and social stratification that moves community based organizations away from launching critiques of social inequality by further integrating neoliberal ideals.

The emphasis placed on demonstrating stability by way of capacity coincided with a decrease in availability of general operating grants. These funds are used to keep organizations running and are meant to cover rent, utilities, supplies, and in some cases, an executive director's salary or support staff development. However, when nonprofits are required to prove capacity without this type of funding it becomes difficult to attain structural or organizational longevity. Moreover, the time and ability to develop staff skills and strategic plans does not fall under programming. Thus, organizations that are evaluated as lacking the capacity to execute grant objectives are not funded and rarely make it to a second round of interviews. These groups perpetually struggle to build and prove capacity, while managing programming, to ready themselves for the next grant application. Furthermore, a 2011 study by the Urban League on the effects of changing funding conditions,

> The recent expansion of the nonprofit sector, coupled with the greater involvement of for-profit firms in areas previously dominated by nonprofit providers, have created greater competition for funds. Nonprofits in increasingly

6 (4): 18–19. Draper, Lee. 2000. "Goal: Stronger Nonprofits—How to 'Do' Capacity Building." Foundation News & Commentary 41(5): 33–36.

competitive environments have more difficulty in diversifying their resource base to reduce organizational uncertainty to manageable levels."

A drawback to the reliance on capacity, as an evaluation of grant worthiness, is the subjectivity in criteria and qualifications that changes for each grant application. Finally, it can be incredibly difficult for small underfunded organizations to apply for larger grants if there is not a historical precedent set by their organization to manage large funds. This is what literature in nonprofits studies considers the starvation cycle (Bruno-van 2011, Gregory 2009). This occurs when underfunded entities fail to account for the entire cost to run, operate, and maintain an organization's overhead in budget making or grant proposals. If funded, they are expected to actualize ambitious project deliverables with inadequate resources. However, if the case is such that they are not funded, then a group may still run programs in order to prove capacity in other areas.

We can see that a measure of capacity assessed through longevity and participation in programming offers very little for organizations that do not have access to general operation or multi-year grants. These particular measurements of deliverables and sustainability prove to be quite an exasperating cycle in the context of depleting available funds. For example, while the South Los Angeles Collection draws on its long history as a marker of sustainability, the BWOHJ draws on its ever evolving breadth of programs. Though BWOHJ fails to exhibit longitudinal financial capacity combined with a rotating skeleton staff of two and sometimes three, it cannot claim sufficient staff capacity for it eight programs. Yet, it seeks to demonstrate capacity through community engagement and the social relevance of its programming. For example, Let's Talk About

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Sex, is a reproductive health peer education program that focuses on lowering the incidence of chlamydia in the South Los Angeles Service Planning Area (SPA) where there are 922.2 new cases each year per 100,000 people versus 208 cases in the West Los Angeles Service Planning Area that is 64.3 percent white. This program maintains a steady flow of short term grants of just five to eight thousand dollars on a quarterly basis. While this presents minimal success to the program, grants tend to be smaller in dollar amount and require written proposals and reports similar to those of larger multi-year grants. This requires staff to engage a repetitive cycle of grant writing and reporting that often takes time away from skill building and social transformation.

Another change to nonprofit financing was the 2009-2010 shift by large public California foundations toward 'place-based' funding that occurred, in part, to the much publicized success of the Harlem's Children Zone. Place-based funding, as it is implemented and understood, seeks to provide a sustained, integrative, and engaged approach to funding in geographically demarcated areas. While the areas may contain historic neighborhoods and exist within service planning areas or voting districts, the mapping and area perimeters are predefined by foundation appointed task forces. These designated, "communities" as one foundation calls them, do not cover the entire SPA, city or county, yet, it is presented as both the responsibility of community stake holders and task force member to galvanize said area as a launch pad for systemic city, county, and state level changes. These systemic changes are to occur by simultaneously predetermined health, education and crime agendas in the designated areas while mobilizing advocacy.

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During my time at the South Los Angeles Collection, I attended several of the early meetings for The California Endowment's South Los Angeles plan, as a resident and organization stakeholder. Four major outcomes were determined to mark action areas including: 1) providing a health home[30] for all children; 2) reversing childhood obesity; 3) increasing school attendance; and 4) reducing youth violence (BHC 2009). Soon after, during the spring of 2010, the California Endowment launched a ten year place-based initiative that focused on the Vermont-Figueroa corridor of South Los Angeles, which was one of ten different communities throughout the state. The project brought together several of the area's larger and smaller grassroots organizations. Seeking to learn from the failure of the 'Empowerment Zone' of the mid 1990s, several weekly meetings were held at different community based locations in an attempt to keep the discussion of action areas open. However, after the task force developed their council of stakeholders and the discussion turned to the proposal and funding process, a series of "invitation only" planning sessions were initiated to determine major outcomes of this new program of funding. The California Endowment [TCE] was among four other major public funders, including First Five LA, California Consumer Protection Fund, and the Robert Wood Foundation to create multi-billion dollar initiatives to be carried out over ten years in specific and defined neighborhoods across California.

Several stipulations were implemented in order for an organization to qualify for a grant. First, they had to be located within the designated area. Second, they had to either

30 A health home is commonly referred to in public health discourse as a local or neighborhood doctor's office, clinic, or hospital where a resident can regularly be treated for health prevention medical needs.

run an accepted program or engage in advocacy at the city, county or state level. This at times presented more than one challenge for people working in the nonprofit sector. For example, Candice, now in her early thirties, has professionally worked and volunteered in South Los Angeles since she was twenty-three and is now the head programs officer at the area's oldest community clinic. Her experience with the funding shifts has become a drain on her time and resources. She explains,

> They [TCE] really wanted to foster collaboration but it just made it very competitive. People were nice until the money was ready to be awarded. They are very specific. We are trying to go for a second round of funding. We got funded on the first round for two years and now we are trying to get a second two years. They are like, we really want to support this project but you have to do this. They are telling a service provider, a clinic like Umma: 'This is great, all that service you do but I want you to do a systems change. I'm not going to fund you until you do a systems change, that is a policy thing.' I'm like, well you are creating work outside of what we primarily do. I think that is great. But let us do the service to show how the system can change, in practice! But they are not seeing that. I think that has been the major frustration of grant funding or private funding. They have to show they can make an impact but they're being short-sighted in the same breath. Also, a lot of foundations went away from supporting general operations and now it is very specific to programs. Now, you have to do a specific health education piece or you have to do a special screening project. It is very prescribed. Instead of 'we just need some funds' to operate, it creates more work and more expenses. Yes, they are covered, but only for a short period of time. If I have staff members on a grant, once that grant is over technically I can't sustain them, unless I get another grant to continue that specific work.

We can see here that even those who are or were ideal candidates for grants often struggle in the aftermath of approval through both budgetary concerns and reapplication processes. Consequently, the changes that have been made in attempts to integrate and propel social changes by addressing inequalities have, in fact, been hampered by the bureaucracy, competition, and measures of capacity, all of which seek to impart social

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structures of capitalism or market civilization that are incongruent to the organizing and material needs of black communities.

The question becomes, how then does an organization such as BWOHJ address these changes? In May 2009, the BWOHJ staff and a group of representatives from a grant advisory task force sat around an old cracked conference table. The potential funders arrived for a scheduled site visit, indicating that the organization had advanced to the second round in the grant approval process. They arrived with clipboards and a set of questions that the organization was required to answer to assess the alignment of the foundation's goals with those of the nonprofit. The previous day the executive director had made pointed calls to volunteers and members to request their attendance, should the evaluators have any questions about their community engagement. Though the executive director, Patricia Smith-Daniels, had a previous working relationship with one of the members of the task force, when the representative posed the question, "What is your theory of social change?" Patricia, who had been welcoming throughout the hour visit, became irritated. She later spoke to me about how her irritation stemmed from frustration that most organizations rarely had time to theorize practices, programs, and community needs in what she felt was an academic fashion. Yet, in this moment, she was focused on keeping her organization afloat and her community alive. Still, she launched into her often-told story. Patricia asked, "Do you know the story of the people drowning in the river?" Without waiting for an answer, she proceeded.

> Well, there was this woman who is taking a walk and comes upon a river. She sees people drowning. They are her people; her community, the ones that look just like her and the people who live next door. So she runs to the mouth of the

river, to pull them out, one by one. She is trying and trying. The harder she works to save her people, it seems that more people fall in but she never stops. Just like her, I used to believe I could pull everyone out. I know that I can no longer do that. Some days there are too many, and some days I can't get to the river at all. So, I have moved up the river. So I can try to dam the water, so that it will not reach my people at all. That is my theory of change.

This narrative explains the organization's necessary move to advocate for policy change due to grant shifts and the needs of black communities. If we are to visualize the flow and structure of the river as the ways in which the intersectional implications and dynamics of race, class, and capitalism markets impact black women, then admittedly the act of damming the waters does not present a radically transformative answer or process. Yet, Patricia is attempting to band-aid the flawed mechanism killing her people. Though she herself is neither of nor clear of the raging waters, her position is attempting to dam the river with one arm while simultaneously stretching to pull people out with the other, existing in two places and engaging two processes at one time. By maintaining eight programs that offer various reproductive health education activities, nutrition workshops, and informative seminars on political and legal developments as they might affect black communities, BWOHJ is present and saving lives amongst those who are drowning. This is made possible by shifting linear advocacy strategies which present advocacy as solely visits with legislators, calls to representatives, and letters of support for specific pieces of legislation or written policy briefs. BWOHJ's approach to advocacy maintains that both education and advocacy is imperative to address black women's excessive reproductive health disparities and early morbidity rates in Los Angeles. Additionally, it provides a unique view into understanding the breadth of work required to initiate and sustain advocacy policy within black communities. Moreover, since personal or organizational

testimonies are often shared at the legislative level during lobby visits to state assembly members as well as on a community level at city council offices, community members are able to create direct links of their experiences to the changing legislative landscape. Patricia believes that preparing members to become advocates in their lives is paramount in advocacy work. In this example, the state is not only met at the capitol; it is met in the department of social services office and the emergency clinic. Furthermore, the intersectional aspects of experience of race, class, and gender of this experience suggest that methods of advocacy must differ from conventional tactics used by other communities.

Blues Epistemology Framing Nonprofit Hustle Ideology
"Every year, I keep saying, yeah that was bad, but next year is going to be really, really, hard" - Miranda

The conditions that community based organizations face in underfunding, especially where instability is far more constant, require an approach to programming and social engagement that is simultaneously independent of funding streams yet also pliable and in conversation with broad based agendas so that they may reach into collective social networks to scrounge or hustle up funds during emergent situations. The requirement and characteristic of black organizations as simultaneously operating on multiple levels is driven from what geographer Clyde Woods explores as a blues epistemology, explaining,

> This distinct and evolving complex of social explanation and social action, this praxis, provided support for the myriad traditions of resistance, affirmation, and confirmation that were to follow... the ontology, or world view, embedded in these communities has provided a sense of collective self and a tectonic footing from which to oppose and dismantle the American intellectual, cultural and social

economic traditions constructed from the raw material of African American exploitation and denigration. (1998. 29)

Social explanation functions not only as a way to relay or communicate the predicament of black and working class people, but to present a perspective that moves and that is tied to the lived experiences of black Americans.

In the case of BWOHJ, the story relayed above about social change and the river is tied to how the women view the life of their organization as a constant struggle through the river. Thus, their course of action, programming and approach to funding is first created here in the collective self. However, the constant need to address foundation and grant stipulations can be tiresome, as one member insists, "sometimes fundraising in a black organization is like changing a flat tire on a moving car" and can be revealed in their hustling from one month to the next.

In September of 2009, the staff met for the second half of a four-hour weekly staff meeting on funding. During that time the executive director, her daughter, Adasa, who had recently joined the staff post earning a Master's degree, Sasha, two interns and myself were present. The mood was somber and stressed, the people in the office were often subjected to weekly meetings with the executive director to follow up on tasks, programming and funding. Sasha often lamented, "We have an individual meeting, then a staff meeting, then a planning meeting, a debriefing about an event from last week, then another meeting to follow up on our individual meetings ... meetings, meetings, meetings! Then [*she*] asks why no works gets done?!" Yet, for the Executive Director,

there was no time to waste. Every meeting was an opportunity to clarify some goal or objective.

During this hot, early September afternoon, she gathered the staff for an additional meeting on funding. The organization had only three hundred dollars in its account and with rent, events, printing costs and salaries there would not be enough for the organization to carry on for the rest of the week, let alone the rest of the year. While they did have a possible $52,000 in the funding pipeline, one-third was contingent on the assessment of the site visit previously mentioned, while the other two-thirds were mere possibilities based on meetings and conversations the executive director had with colleagues turned friends at other foundations. This meeting was called not only to make the staff aware of the current financial crisis but to suggest they gather to create an emergency fundraising plan.

Everyone was asked to list what programs, tasks, and events they were working on, to calculate time spent on each, whether it was generating funds and whether there were any opportunities for increasing the organization's income flow. In this emergency planning session, grants of five thousand dollars from the county's board of supervisors or city council offices were suggested and mini project grants from the local United Way office were also proposed. These paltry but rapidly approved grants can provide organizations life lines to survival until another round of grants applications approaches. However, small grants function like payday advances, where the money is immediate and high interest costs can be measured in the unusual amount of work needed to successfully apply and produce measurable and deliverable outcomes in short time frames. Yet, in a

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dire financial situation such as a meager three hundred dollars in a business account, five thousand dollars can also cover two part-time staff salaries, rent, utilities and supplies for one month. BWOHJ pieced together small grants such as these to buy time until larger grant funds were awarded, but the effect of such labor-intensive tasks for seemingly piddling funds wears on the organization and committed staff who have endured more than one of these emergency meetings.

Patricia then zeroed in on Sasha and myself, who were charged to organize the summer intern training, asking for suggestions. Sasha responded to the executive director's deliberation by providing a rundown of the multitude of tasks required to prepare for another set of interns participating in a service learning project from a local university. Unimpressed, Patricia paused, pursed her lips and contorted her face as if a rancid smell had suddenly hit the room. The staff, accustomed to this response, collectively looked down and settled in their seats for the series of comments that were sure to follow. She questioned whether the interns would be ready for legislative visits in the fall? Does the program build a lucrative relationship with the university? And why are staff hours being spent on this instead of on approaching the university directly for funds? Her misplaced frustrations were not actually with the staff nor the coming of new interns. They were outcomes from the perpetual funding crisis in the organization. Given the dire budget, Patricia is reluctant to take on another set of projects that do not immediately lead to funding. However, she is also keenly aware of how the affiliation with the university may be of greater importance when applying for future funding.

NONPROFIT HUSTLE IDEOLOGY

The Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice regularly faces the challenges of scarcity in funds, vast amounts of work, and translating grant stipulations to the established programmatic work and needs of the community it serves. The process attempts to address the perpetual funding crisis. Patricia and her staff approach the situation with a complex matrix of practices that reflect characteristics and ideology of street hustling.

In colloquial or slang discussions the word, action, and characteristic of a 'hustler' varies, yet there continues to be three commonly agreed upon attributes. Hustle can function as verb, noun, or a description of behavior. For example one might hustle, which according to the Urban Dictionary[31] reflects an engaged process of "doing anything you need to do to get money." This may or may not include activities that are illegal. Second, a hustle may actually refer to a specific act, such as selling T-shirts on a street corner or out of a trunk of a car. Third, it can describe a person's behavior, where one can embody a hustler's mentality of making ends meet, being on the move and dedicated to generating funds by any means necessary, be it legal, illegal, or in between. In recent years, popular culture and hip hop artists such as Rick Ross have popularized the term, once strictly referring to underground informal drug economies, to depict the notion of hard work that reflects skills and attitudes that are beyond professional training,

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31 The Urban Dictionary is a popular internet site, where users can add, edit and create definitions for slang terms and detail common usages of word. Highly subjective and at the mercy of trends and changing trends among users it offers a contemporary colloquial view into uses and understandings of 'Hustle.'

yet remain necessary to those hoping to make it in America. For example, a song by rap

artist Ace Hood states,

> Same old shit, just a different day
> Out here trying to get it each and every way
> Mama need a house, baby need some shoes
> Times are getting hard, guess what we gonna do
> Hustle, hustle, hustle, hard
> Hustle, hustle, hustle, hard
> Hustle, hustle, hustle, hard
> Closed mouths don't get fed on this boulevard

Songs such as this and Rick Ross' "Everyday, I'm Hustlin" reflect a popular ideology of

work that is excluded from formal economy jobs. The popularity of this song and its

representation of hustler mentality in urban areas resonate with black youth and

community members, not necessarily local hip hop artists, who were often heard playing

either song in car stereos or repeating the lyrics in everyday conversations around the

BWOHJ office. The reframing of hustling from strictly illegal drug dealing or sex work is

worth examining in the context of community organizing. The variety of ways in which a

hustle strategy or mentality can operate not only at the individual level but through

practices in community based organizations is reflective of differences in access to larger

funding networks, grants, and asset wealth in black communities (Oliver & Shapiro 2006,

Shapiro 2004). The impact of a national recession and the California economic downturn

creates a context where many individuals, communities, and organizations are engaged in

a struggle to make ends meet.

  In the field of Anthropology, hustling has long been studied as part of a myriad of

activities included within black working class informal economies (Stack 1974, Valentine

1978, Vaketesh 2005). Scholarship in urban studies has sought to delineate how informal economies are important systems in communities that attempt to supplant low income households (Wilson 2010). While not always a rejection or usurped by the formal economy, informal or underground economies often systematically combine explicitly illegal transactions with those that may occupy a grey area. However, there are several approaches to studying what is known as the informal economy, yet it can loosely be defined as;

> The production and exchange of legal goods and services that involves the lack of appropriate business permits, violations of zoning codes, failure to report tax liability, non compliance with labor regulations governing contracts and work conditions and/or lack of legal guarantees in relations with suppliers and clients (1999: 580, cited in Cross 2000:36-37).

Defined here are the laws or regulations that might be bypassed, ignored, or forgone by informal economy entrepreneurs and clients. In this strict set of parameters that Cross provides, the reasoning for why and how informal economies exist is not as easily delineated. Participation in underground economies occurs both from need and, to a lesser extent, a rejection of formal economy occupation. Informal economies present a mix of legal, illegal and areas of interaction that lie somewhere in between. Often the level of bureaucratic engagement is not rejected so much as the need to hustle is far more closely tied to individual survival.

Hustling and participation with informal economies as studied in black working class communities represent just one of many strategies for survival that is often combined with uses of social services and temporary formal economy jobs. Hustling and other informal economy work represent an outcome of social inequality rather than a

cause of poverty (Valentine 1978). While studies of underground drug systems and complex sex-work (Bourgois 1995) may suggest that participation in informal economies is inherently dangerous and illegal, urban ethnographic studies reveal that hustling is associated with multi-sited negotiation of urban poverty that represents a continued investment in American dream aspirations while drawing on black working class traditions of community kin work and survival. Anthropologist Sudhir Venkatesh makes an important point in the studying of informal economies stating, "despite the moralizing of some, we cannot truly understand the 'shady' economy if we see it as a dirty, lawless world of violence and disrepute, one that tarnishes an otherwise pristine sphere where everyone pays their taxes, obeys the laws, and turns to the government to solve dissipate and maintain order" (2006). Given the previous conversation on the popular culture engagement of hustling ideology framed as continuous hard work and survival, coupled with a broader discussion of informal economies beyond drug dealing and sex work, the possibilities of participation and the boundaries of activity included within hustle work can be explored in several contexts, including nonprofits.

The office of BWOHJ is located in Leimert Park. This small area representing the nexus of poor black neighborhoods and affluent Baldwin Hills community is located on historic Crenshaw Boulevard, sandwiched between Slauson and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevards. The small park has functioned as the cultural center of black Los Angeles for several decades (Vargas 2006, Hunt 2010). Depending on the time of year, the corner hustlers can sell anything from Los Angeles NBA 'official' team jerseys to incense and African styled jewelry. A typical Saturday features busy barber shops operating car-

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washes in the parking lot, booming music that rattles neighboring building windows, and a fair amount of street traffic.

It was an early Saturday morning in the nonprofit's office, when Patricia walked in and dropped several bags of food, art craft supplies and armloads of paperwork on the front office table. It was not uncommon for BWOHJ to host meetings or day-long health educator trainings on Saturdays, often requiring the staff to work six days a week. This morning as she managed to burst through the door weighed down by packages, though admittedly not a fan of contemporary hip hop, she paused, leaned to the side, placed a hand on her hip and said you know, I'm like that song, "every day... I am, hustling." The young summer interns burst into giggles at the older woman's announcement. The informal economy and hustle mentality are not exclusively engaged by youth. While the executive director was not referring to the illegal sale of goods or services, there is truth to the statement that occurs on two levels.

First, Patricia Smith-Daniels embodies a hustler's ideology that is drawn from experience and collective black social consciousness. Just as in the popular song, "Hustle Hard," where children need to be fed and the trouble of paying bills is eminent, the notion, "closed mouths don't get fed," is key to understanding the executive director's role in an underfunded organization. Smith-Daniels has not only been the executive director of the organization for the past nine years, she is also one of four founding members. Throughout, the other founders have either moved out of state, passed away, or are no longer involved in nonprofit work. This has placed a great deal of stress on Patricia's shoulders to carry out the organization's mission and purpose. As a result, it

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has become her sole source of income, making the organization's need for funding deeply tied to her own survival. During my time with BWOHJ, rarely a weekend passed when Patricia's weekend schedule included less than four community or funding related events. Happy hours, galas and banquets often served as both social forums and an opportunity for the executive director to chat-up someone's ear about the organization. She had long forgone a personal life separate from BWOHJ, often stating, "This is serious business and I'm serious about the lives of black women." In many cases, Patricia often found herself at events with the same recurring group of women from other younger, yet better funded non-black, reproductive justice organizations. Patricia used these moments to detail the work of her organization or spark conversation about community education or advocacy efforts in upcoming elections. It was also an opportunity to carefully reminisce about successful collaborations while pushing for additional efforts. By continuing to keep conversations centered on programs or reproductive health challenges, Patricia strategically ensured BWOHJ's place in future funding proposals. In her opinion, all events and conversations led to relationships and relationships were how funds were granted. Many times she advised her program coordinators to, "find out who has the money, then see who we know, who might know them, and then figure out how we can fit into that conversation." Again, as the popular saying suggests, "closed mouths don't get fed." Patricia was never one to let an opportunity pass to insert her agenda or make her presence known and BWOHJ was perpetually in need of being fed.

While this type of networking can be characteristic of business transactions, Patricia is drawing from her networks and past successes to build a case for future

funding partnerships. Another key characteristic of hustling ideology is not only practicing work beyond a 9-to-5 work day, but also engaging your client and would-be collaborators in such a way that highlights the possibility of an outcome or an immediate economic benefit for both. Anthropologist Venkatesh explains,

> They describe themselves as being woven together in a web of exchange based on highly personal connections. The implication is that any other such networks, namely, beyond the ghetto's border or those of another racial or ethnic group are difficult to penetrate. From their perspective, the broader economic landscape looks like a set of loosely overlapping quilts and business associations (2006).

Here we can see, similar to the street hustlers' web of exchange and transaction, Patricia is drawing on past outcomes, conversations, and using what have over several years become personal relationships as an entry way to achieve inside tracks on grants. Because nonprofit funding is largely based on philanthropic grants, timelines and delivering of funds is rarely immediate. Additionally, depending on the amount of the grant funding, deposits can be broken up into quarterly or into two allotments. The practice of hustling is most successful in accounting for the number of invited grants applications versus blind applications the organization submits. Building relationships, keeping the organization's name relevant in reproductive health and policy issues and in conversation with well funded organizations effectively transfers existing collaborations into semi-lucrative economic possibilities. Yet, the hustlers' practice functions within BWOHJ on a level that is not quite legal or illegal. It occurs with what may be considered a shady interaction or occurring in the interstices of the nonprofit industrial complex's intricate grant reporting landscape.

For seven years BWOHJ has held a day-long summit on the state of black women's health in California, expressly concerned with the conditions of black women's lives in Los Angeles. In recent years, committee planning commences in late February and kicks into high gear in June with the event traditionally taking place in September. Though attendance often fluctuates, the planning committee is composed of 10-14 women. For many, this is an after work activity, a volunteer community engagement after their 9-to-5 jobs. On these nights that began at 7:00 pm, the front reception area would be littered with paper cups, plates, napkins and half empty catering trays. The aroma of freshly cooked dinners of roasted peppers, baked sweet potatoes combined with quinoa and corn, or some other adventurous vegetarian combination of herbs and grain, inundated the tiny office.

How BWOHJ managed to fit four to five catering trays and more than a dozen women in the tiny office space fascinated me. More like a familial gathering, these meetings tended towards robust laughing, personal updates about children, divorce and unmanaged time lines. Because many of the women in attendance battled LA traffic for an hour or two to be present, beginning the meeting on time was fraught with difficulty. Bursts of laughter, incomprehensible tangents that ended in collective singing of popular songs were interwoven with lulls in conversation. Through time checks and irritation with how long the aimless and poorly facilitated meetings lasted, most of the women welcomed the sisterhood of the meeting but the night wore on and many had to prepare for early mornings at their "day job." While for Patricia this was her full time "day job," it was rarely confined to regular working hours. Familiar conversations about children

and current movies murmured in the background as the planning meeting bore on late into the Monday night and the attention of the women who sat around the table waned.

In June of 2010 after months of planning, the committee agreed upon a shortened event, without workshops or multiple tracks of panels. Though the past four conferences spanned two days and featured multiple-themed tracks of information, poor attendance and rising costs necessitated their removal. The proposed summit was to highlight the policy recommendations made from the previous year's events and focus on advocacy education and voter registration. Focus was now turned to confirming speakers and detailing a budget. Patricia sought to get the attention of the group and announced:

> Patricia: It costs about $45,000 to cover the costs of the summit, not including staff salary. We have a grant consumer protection fund to be applied to technology education; a mini grant from CCRF--for publications; Liberty Hill- for advocacy; a mini grant for environmental justice education ... However, are still about 25,000 dollars short of what we need and we have 12 weeks to pull it together.

> Candice: Why were there grants for environmental justice education? Where does the technology education fit into the agenda?

> Miranda: Why are we short? What is the base budget?

> Barbara: Well, right *NOW*, what do we have to work with?

The room immediately paused then, turned tense, and as a cacophony of questions rolled in. The executive director explained that instead of the agreed upon half-day event, she strongly suggested a two-day conference that would cover this information over four tracks dedicated to engaging different women across education and income levels. This brought on quite a bit more questions and concern, as six months prior the committee had decided a smaller event was more manageable and could be better focused upon, given

the organization's limited funds, dwindling participation, volunteer time needed and resources. Many in the planning committee displayed faces of obvious irritation with the unilateral changes made by Patricia. Candice, a volunteer in her late 20s with a Masters in Public Health, who runs programming at a small community clinic, looked around to everyone for some acknowledgment of the situation. Though deeply supportive of the organization's mission, she often found the switching of gears inefficient and tiresome.

In this late night moment of confusion and building contempt, Candice stated, "Well then, what have we been planning for the last six months? This is not what we agreed on, Patricia," visibly aggravated. The director, frustrated with the questions, explained how, during her conversations with potential funders, they stated that they were not likely to provide funding for systematic long term reproductive justice programming or a shortened event, but they will fund a conference. In her view, simply adding a work shop or three to an already packed agenda should not be a major issue. Instead, it offered the women time to highlight their own work in various public health and community settings, providing a much needed opportunity to educate conference goers on the impact of the Affordable Care Act in the black communities of Los Angeles. Thus, a much broader scope of issues that truly reflected the work of BWOHJ could be tackled. To the executive director, it was a win-win situation.

The practice of hustling is at times common in underserved, funded and communities in poverty, and although not explicitly dangerous and illegal, it can be easily missed, though it remains key to survival. However, it can be particularly hard to

discern within a nonprofit system because a) hustling, while understood as an outcome of social inequality, is more readily tied to individual or household survival; and b) though given the prevalence in the use of corporate structure, many still look to 501(c)3 nonprofits as an alternative to professional business or revenue building ventures without understanding how deeply imbricated private capital is involved with public tax exempt nonprofits, for example, returning to the concept of "capacity," important to funding process and subjective determined by foundations. The steep increase of organizations applying for grants brought on by the economic recession increased competition, where philanthropic groups once looking at dozens of applications are now looking at hundreds of program proposals to fund. While writing grant applications, nonprofits must provide proof of capacity to be deemed grant worthy. Markers of capacity include previous grants held, budget, staff size, and organizational stability and growth potential. Not unlike a measure of individual credit worthiness, proof of capacity relies on historical contracts and proven measurable outcomes.

So when we consider the previously mentioned agenda shift by BWOHJ Executive Director Patricia, we can better understand her strategic response to the organization's funding crises under a markedly different lens. First, her announced changes to the program by listing a number of grants that may or may not have initially fit into the scope of the advocacy event, yet they represented potential opportunities for funding. This can be described by what Valentine states, "as sources of income, the benefits from hustling are sometimes more anticipated than real, as with all activities involving chance" (1978). By adding numerous workshops on environmental health and

technology, the organization's output is increased while the return in proposed funding remains unknown. Because the grant writing process is simultaneously based on past and proposed work, the organization must reframe and reorganize the summit agenda in order to include grant requested topics. While writing to the grants needs rather than letting their program stand on its own changes the focus and intention of the summit, it provides an opportunity to be funded where previously none existed. Additionally, because information can be lifted from existing programs that focus on social media and environmental justice staff resources can be dispersed through the existing summit agenda. In this practice of a hustling framework, money is then able to flow throughout the organization instead of being concentrated on a single summit which is housed under the reproductive health-focused Let's Talk About Sex Program. By accepting four grants and applying to several others to cover the costs of the conference, Patricia substantially increased work for the committee and volunteers. Yet, it also created an organization-wide safety net, meaning the organization's bills and staff salary could potentially be paid, which would not have been possible with the small scale event. Furthermore, though the organization operates in South Los Angeles, their office is not located within an approved zone for place-based funding through The California Endowment. Instead, the BWOHJ solicited and secured funds across issues and locations which eliminated restrictions on neighborhoods served.

CONCLUSION

The Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice operates on a holistic health agenda that is foregrounded through a reproductive justice framework. It is

important to note that due to the reproductive justice agenda, it requires the organization to take on many forms of health education and activism. Because they are working through a 501(c)(3) model which is increasingly becoming corporatized, they must combine a black social consciousness resembling hustler ideology to develop a complex funding strategy to respond to crises while managing to keep community education and advocacy a top priority.

As I have argued, the reframing of hustling is key to understanding black working class strategy on an organizational level that is reflected in underfunded groups that are seeking strategies to better their communities. Black women's community hustling within nonprofit work is grounded in black working class ideology as a marker of resiliency that continues to build momentum towards social change. The exclamation of one board member stating, "We are not *that* org, we will find a way, no doubt about that!" confirms that black women's organizations' (such as BWOHJ) persistence in keeping their doors open is much like the hustlers' narrative of doing what one has to, to ensure survival. However, given that black community organizations provide both life saving information and services, their hustling is important to the continued health of black Los Angelenos. Furthermore, creative fund sourcing is a result of shrinking capital spent on social welfare services that are key to low income community health. As such, the development of underground economies escalates while state and private spending shrinks. Thus, black women community organizers' implementation of hustling ideology emerges out of black working class traditions as a response to racialized social location. This chapter reveals

the ways in which grassroots activists respond to market changes at an organizational

level that implement black cultural understandings of a hustling ideology.

Chapter Four: Reproducing the Politics of Respectability in Reproductive Justice Organizing

INTRODUCTION

In February of 2012 I was invited to attend a convening of black reproductive justice advocates and organizers from across the nation. After several years of fieldwork, dissertation research, and policy campaign struggles, with a sprinkle of triumph here and there, I came to think of these women from across the nation as friends and colleagues. I felt this weekend couldn't have come at a better time. I was deep into my dissertation writing and needed a break to calibrate how Los Angeles women's experiences and approaches were matching up against national struggles. In 2011, at the close of my fieldwork, The Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice was running along a long and unending precipice built on underfunding and high employee turnover, which threatened shutdown. Nationwide from 2010 to 2012, a number of black women's health organizations shut their doors due to lack of funding. Conversations and campaign agendas drew from reproductive justice frameworks but tensions surfaced when some shifted focus from reproductive health to include a broad range of issues from gender justice in transgendered communities to decriminalizing sex work in urban cities. During workshops on strategy building, movement memory and defining 'Black RJ' agendas, a question boiling at the surface of every discussion continued to be, "Why do we [black RJ activists] try to take on all issues? Followed by the statement, 'we can't be everything to everyone'."

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While a majority of the participants agreed or even addressed the first frustration themselves, the latter revealed uncertainty and hurt within the group. The statement of "being everything to everyone" brought up in various ways over the weekend usually came at the heels of a conversation of sex work, incarceration, or queer transgendered and cis-gendered[32] experiences in reproductive rights organizations. Of this motley crew of thirty-five to forty reproductive justice advocates, independent organizers, researchers, and organizational representatives, more than half were living as out lesbians or gender queer with a few others living non disclosed queer lives but resisting LGBT identity politics. Questions such as those mentioned above and sub textual comments about maintaining the health of black 'women' and investing in traditional relationships to avoid teenage pregnancies often pushed the boundaries of inclusion. Instead, this weekend filled me with the concern that long-held notions of black politics of respectability were still informing much of the work and blocking potential coalition work between organizations.

My involvement with reproductive rights and health organizations and fieldwork revealed the ways in which a black reproductive justice organization reproduced respectability politics while seeking to reclaim then mobilize representations of black women as a reproductive justice strategy. This chapter first defines and explores the limits of respectability politics by building from black feminist scholarship and detailing

[32] Cisgender is a term that refers to a gendered identity as socially constructed but drawing from biological assessment. A cisgender person is someone who identifies as the gender/sex they were assigned at birth. For example, your birth certificate says female, and you identify as a female woman. This is at times used in opposition to transgender.

the ethnographic secondary marginalization. I then move to reveal how the operationalizing of respectability and secondary marginalization produces an institutionalized displacement of black queer experiences. Finally, I argue that BWOHJ's contestation and reclamation of images of black women are at one time a push to retain relevancy while impacting approaches to policy advocacy that create rifts between black organizations and black queer communities.

POLITICS OF RESPECTABILITY

Black feminist historian Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham developed the concept of Politics of Respectability, which functioned as a part of racial uplift strategy for social reform in black communities during the early twentieth century (1993). As Higginbotham explains, "respectability demanded that every individual in the black community assume responsibility for behavioral self-regulation and self improvement along moral, educational and economic lines. The goal was to distance oneself as far as possible from images perpetuated by racist stereotypes" (1993). Employed as a method of social transformation, politics of respectability required the shifting of representation of black Americans as a means of attaining citizenship rights while at times adhering to white middle class behavior and expectations. Though it on one hand cultivates opposition to hegemonic representation of black behavior as immoral, violent, and fighting scientific racism notions of biological inferiority, on the other, as a framework for approaching social transformation engaging politics of respectability, it relied on the policing of sexuality and morality along class distinctions within black communities. Though not exclusively levied against black women nor used by black bourgeois communities only,

this cultural dynamic sought to recreate norms and regulate notions of black femininity in both the private and public sphere.

Other theoretical rumination on respectability politics has sought to delineate how as a cultural phenomenon it functions within intellectual traditions and research agendas that exclude queer and black working class resistance (Cohen 2004, Harris 2003, Kelley 1997, Warner 1993, White 2001). For example, Richardson suggests, "The process of distorting the complexities of black women's sexuality has its roots in the discourses of black sexual deviance that have become part of the mythology of white supremacy" (2003). In this way the continued investment in respectability has ramifications for the ways in which womanhood is constructed and lived within the historical and cultural record. Contemporary deployment of respectability politics has continued to police behavior through cultural compulsory heterosexual politics (Riche 1980). Though part of an early twentieth century social reform strategy, issues with representation and notions of respectability continue to be front and center within reproductive justice organizations.

The use of respectability politics first revealed itself during an early encounter with the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice at a Los Angeles coalition meeting. The meeting was scheduled to begin at eight A.M. in a high-rise building in the Korea Town section of the city. This building housed the Family Health Council, a nonprofit that worked exclusively through Title X[33] funding to provide family planning education, services, and supplemental funding to smaller nonprofits. By contributing

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[33] Title X is the federal family planning program for low-income women, which provides birth control, breast and cervical cancer screenings, and testing for H.I.V. and other sexually transmitted diseases.

$20,000 to the planned budget the council was a major funder of the annual BWOHJ conference. Patricia suggested the planning committee meetings take place here because its central location between South Los Angeles, Downtown, and West Los Angeles would mean less traffic and fewer delayed arrivals of her team members. It was early in my fieldwork and regular volunteers Sasha, Kelly and Candice (women who would later become the heart of the organization) were amongst the nine women circling the table. They selected whole wheat muffins and fruit provided by the executive director as they caught each other up on the previous day's developments. Many were smiling and getting ready to prepare their reports on the tasks they had taken up at the last meeting. Forty-five minutes late, the meeting slowly convened. With the exception of the intern and myself, most of the women were in their late thirties to early forties; Patricia and Sasha were in their early fifties. This cross section of age was a source of pride for Patricia, as Executive Director, who often boasted BWOHJ as a multigenerational organization that was ahead of the curve in addressing black women's health.

After reports on funding, swag donations[34], and proposed keynote speakers, it came to my turn to report on publicity and coalition opportunities for the upcoming summit. I began to discuss a conference organized by a collective of lesbian, gay, and

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[34] In this context, swag is a term used for donated products, gifts and materials that are donated by companies and sponsors of an event or conference to be included in a 'goodie bag' for conference attendees. Though this is common at Hollywood galas and events, Los Angeles Nonprofits have also adopted this practice of creating swag bags to entice sponsors and encourage conference registration. Far from high profile cosmetics or accessories associated with Hollywood swag, nonprofit and public health swag usually included free condoms, change purses, portable sewing kits and other branded office supplies.

transgender women of color associated with the University of California scheduled take place a month before "Serious Business," and soon noticed the women squirming in the chairs. I suggested this would be an ideal opportunity for the nonprofit to flyer, table, and network for our own upcoming conference given the connection to a younger university population and artist communities. Soon the squirming turned into uncomfortable shifting from chair to chair. A few of the women began to impatiently tap their pens on curiously blank yellow legal tablets. Those who were not fidgeting suddenly became interested in previously discarded muffin wrappers.

Finally, I passed around the hot pink flyer for the "tongue to tongue" arts and education conference that artfully featured two women's tongues. Slow, incremental squeals of "EEWW!" filled the room. Waves of giggling fits shattered my attention and interrupted my presentation about the depth of workshops and papers being presented. Clutching imaginary pearls, heavily breathed statements of "oh my god," followed the shaking of heads juxtaposed to fits of nervous laughter. I had to stop because these women who less than two minutes ago had sat poised and ready for work were dangling this bookmark sized flyer with two fingers as if it were dripping with saliva. Once the women gained their composure, it was agreed that given the explicit sexual nature and gay audience, it would not gel with long time BWOJH members who were volunteers in their church health ministries and congregations, nor would it appeal to family planning funders.

Though the organization sought to expand its base, it was clear that policing of sexuality was a concern. This example demonstrates the ways in which reproductive

justice and health information was limited to what was perceived as a normative and appropriate representation of black femininity[35]. Through the display of comical disgust, the politics of respectability was invoked as a process connected to respectability that Michael Warner describes as "the politics of shame, in other words, included vastly more than the overt and deliberate shaming produced by moralists. It also involves silent inequalities, unintended effects of isolation and the lack of public access" (1999). Patricia's assessment that respectable church going women and, more importantly, funders would not accept the potential collaboration, initiated a politics of shaming thus negating any relationship between the organization and queer women of color who were represented by the image of two tongues. Additionally, shame revealed itself through the ways in which the women refused to be connected with the flyer itself. By holding the flyer as if it was dirty, it placed the object within the category of abnormality and outside

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[35] Politics and interaction between black working class and aspiring middle class blacks have been characterized as tenuous at best. From E. Franklins Frazier's early conceptual work on the limitations of the black bourgeoisie to Patrick Moynihan's problematizing of black women's "overbearing" matriarchal position as the down fall of black families, foundational studies on class dynamics between the two groups have long created separate spheres of blame. In this example BWOHJ's relationship to black middle class women as funders begins to pull apart the complex ways in which both groups' economic social spheres impact community organizing and the development of social justice agendas. For more reading on black class dynamics see:
Moynihan, Daniel Patrick, Lee Rainwater, and William L. Yancey. The Negro Family: The Case for National Action. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1967.
TenHouten, Warren D. "*The Black Family: Myth and Reality*." Psychiatry: Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes (1970). The Black Family: Essays and Studies. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1999.
Frazier, Edward Franklin. *The Negro in the United States*. New York: Macmillan, 1957.
Frazier, E. Franklin. "Black Bourgeoisie. 1957." New York: Free P (1997). Kelley, Robin DG. "House Negroes on the Loose: Malcolm X and the Black Bourgeoisie." Callaloo 21, no. 2 (1998): 419-435.

of the bounds of respectability of how one is groomed and presented. Though one side of the flyer featured two tongues touching coming forth from two women on black and brown, the back of the flyer listing a number of workshops on art, politics, and community support, was ignored. Refusing to engage with the flyer and, by extension, queer women of color, represented the organization's attempt to solidify a politics of respectability that mobilizes static representations of sexuality and gendered norm that shamed, excluded and made laughable queer sexualities and discourses.

Instead we can see by looking at figures 4.1 and 4.2 the women were invested in reproducting images that exuded strenth and respectibility by drawing on iconic imaging frames. The purposful use of early 20th century images of black womanhood and 1960's Afro clad women signal both beauty and strength. These images while familiar to many black activist women are also used in such away the conceals sexuality infavor of seemingly dignified represenations. While popular in they too serve to distance sexulity from the organization. In fact, when programming deals directly with sexual content BWOHJ goes to great lengths to expressnly not depict black women. This is impart due social ramficications of controllling images and the delicate balance that must be struck to engage their ageing Chritian member base, manage their reputation to potential funders, while attempting to attrack younger demographics.

Figure 4.1: Organization Flyer depicting the use of early 20th century images of black
womanhood

CONTROLLING IMAGES AND REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE POLICY WORK

In the case of the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice, the politics

of respectability at times led to a mobilization of controlling images. In 2011, this was, on

one hand, a response to what nationwide has been dubbed the legislative "War on

Women[36]" and, on the other, an attempt to resist stereotypes. Patricia's commitment to

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[36] For further reading please see: Mosko, Melissa A. 2013. "Democracy, Deliberation, and
the (So-Called) War on Women." Social Philosophy Today 29, 33-47.
Strassel, Kimberly A. 2013. "How to Beat the 'War on Women'." Wall Street Journal -
Eastern Edition, November 08. A13

presenting positive heteronormative images of black women and families was grounded her unyielding stance that images of black women be "respectable." In previous years photographs of early twentieth century black clubwomen were featured on event flyers under the headings of, 'Respect, Integrity, and Inclusion.'

By 2011 Patricia and her committee of volunteers, who were now named the Afya Dada Just(us) Coordinating Committee, were planning their sixth conference. Looking to recreate a dedicated space to discuss black women's health through education and advocacy, this conference was organized around the images and concept of four women, drawing on Nina Simone's 1966 song, Four Women, which narrates stereotypes of black women in society in song. The song highlights the plights and challenges of black women Aunt Sarah, Safronia, Sweet Thing, and Peaches who respectively parallel construction of the Mammy, Jezebel, Tragic Mullata, and Sapphire or Angry Black women stereotypes. The coordinating committee then developed each archetype of a black woman as a pathway of information that considered the specific images of the woman and then attempted to relate to them a proposed social positioning. The group then determined what information and reproductive health needs would be relevant to said woman. Ultimately, each would develop information for legislative and policy implications. For example, in delineating the needs of Sweet Thing who is meant to be sexually provocative, workshops on safe sex and access to free-to-low-cost sexually transmitted

Zoppo, David. "the war on women: federal remedies to fight back against states that de-fund planned parenthood." Vermont Law Review 37, no. 2 2011. "The War on Women." New York Times, February 26. 1
2012. "Vote! 7 Reminders Why from the War on Women." National NOW Times 44, no. 1: 2.

disease treatment were proposed. While, according to Patricia, this would allow the conference to consider a cross-section of topics, appeal to a variety of funders, and connect with black women across age, income, and education levels, the images perpetuated heteronormativity and drew upon familiar stereotypes.

Though previous conferences focused on a specific health disparity or intended outcome with forward vision of advocacy, the 2011 conference placed particular emphasis on policy given the frustrations many black activist women felt with the ubiquitous use of "War on Women" by media, public officials and activists alike. Though first introduced in the mid 1990s, the phrase "War on Women" was again popularized during 2011 and 2012 when a record number of legislative acts were introduced across the nation. According to a 2012 Guttmacher report, "In the 50 states combined, legislators introduced more than 1,100 reproductive health and rights-related provisions, a sharp increase from the 950 introduced in 2010. By year's end, 135 of these provisions had been enacted in 36 states, an increase from the 89 enacted in 2010 and the 77 enacted in 2009" (Guttmacher 2012). The provisions or legislation ranged from restrictive measures on abortions, to budget cuts to family planning and abortion providers, to mandated waiting periods and ultrasounds. Alongside these challenges to abortion was republican resistance to the implementation of the Affordable Care Act and Republican Representative Todd Akins' use of the phrase "legitimate rape," which attempts to delineate a form of rape that is justified. Additionally, as a nationwide abortion provider, The Planned Parenthood Federation experienced the brunt of the conservative hostility. However during this time, reproductive justice advocates, while actively supporting

campaigns and coalitions against these restrictions, remained vigilant in their analysis that women of color, undocumented, unemployed and working class women would be the most affected. This stance also reflected the ways in which the phrase "War on Women" much like the second wave feminist slogan, "sisterhood is for everybody," failed to account for the specific ways in which race and class differently affected reproductive health access to care and tended to center around Planned Parenthood as the primary target.

Seeking to bring forth the voice of activist black women and their communities, the Four Women conference mobilized the images of black women to address a range of reproductive health issues. Historically, the BWOHJ held conferences on specific health disparities, which included the following: infant mortality in 1999, AIDS and HIV in 2001, Reproductive Health in 2002, Reproductive Justice and Coalition in 2007. Specifically, looking to engage and increase civic participation amongst black communities, printed conference materials stated, "The goal of this conference is for attendees – especially women – to feel empowered to mobilize and directly affect change in order to educate other communities of color on the eve of the upcoming 2012 national and local elections." To this end, the emphasis on black women and images and policy then created a space that in seeking to elevate the position of black women and adolescents, marginalizes queer women within the reproductive justice framing of reproductive health education policy.

Perhaps an equally important factor in the coordinating committee's decision to use images as frame and theme for the conference was the mass publication and

advertisement of MSNBC news host Melissa Harris-Perry's book *Sister Citizen* (2011).

Looking to capitalize on the popularity of the book, Patricia felt it would attract potential

donors and give invited city officials the opportunity to see what the reproductive needs

and political representation of black women would entail. Harris-Perry is a political

scientist at Tulane University whose work gained public acclaim amongst black women,

including those involved with BWOHJ and broader activist circles. Harris-Perry employs

a multidisciplinary approach to argue that black women's yearning for recognition within

their political and personal lives is shaped by shame and stigma that are predicated on

decades of misrecognition due to the prolific stereotyping of that limited mobility of

black women. A particular point of interest for black activist women reading Harris-

Perry's analysis was her attention to black women involved in political arenas. While

writings in blogs and magazines have paid attention to representations of black women in

popular culture, specifically Hip Hop, Harris-Perry's focus on political figures and

developments, including Michelle Obama and the outcome of the much publicized Duke

University Lacrosse rape case[37], was viewed to be a more serious consideration of the

impact of controlling images. While drawing heavily on decades of black feminist

literature and scholarship on images of black women Harris-Perry's discussion of the

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[37] The Duke Lacrosse Case gained national attention when Crystal Mangum accused
several members of the team of rape. Racial stereotypes were present in both media
coverage during the investigation and its aftermath when the charges were proved false.
For further reading see: Meadows, Susannah, Evan Thomas, Andrew Murr, Daren
Briscoe, Arian Campo-Flores, Andrew Romano, and Steve Tuttle. 2006. "What
Happened At Duke?" *Newsweek* 147, no. 18: 40-51.
Hassett-Walker, Connie. 2012. "Race, Social Class, Communication, and Accusations:
The Duke University Lacrosse Team Party." *Journal Of Ethnicity In Criminal Justice* 10,
no. 4: 267-294

stereotype falls into similar pitfalls of narrowly addressing controlling images through heteronormative and respectability politics that fails to account for broader sexual and gendered identities (Bambara 1970, Collins 1989, Collins 2002, Davis 1990, Giddings 1985, Guy-Sheftal 1995, hooks 1981, White 1985).

Patricia Hill Collins' influential work details the historical and contemporary manifestation of controlling images and the consequences for black women. She states, "As part of a generalized ideology of domination, stereotypical images of black womanhood take on special meaning. Because the authority to define societal values is a major instrument of power, elite groups, in exercising power, manipulate ideas about "black womanhood" (2000). These processes of socialization hierarchize populations of people by framing the ways in which black women are perceived. Controlling Images of Mammy, Jezebel, or more recently, the Welfare Queen, constrict the social mobility of women while also reinforcing racist assumptions by producing visual, familiar and popular notions that affect material realities of black life. Scholars and works such as Robin Kelley's (1999), have taken these images and citing contemporary images, such as myths of the welfare queen or "crack-ho's," depict the prevalence and impact of representations in blocking access to health care and other state institutions and benefits. Additionally, research conducted across disciplines reveals that these stereotypes psychologically affect black women and lead to low self-esteem (Brown Givens, Sonja M., and Jennifer L. Monahan 2005, Thompson, Maxine S., and Verna M. Keith 2001).

While it is important to recognize static and simple constructions of black womanhood that are both socially and politically limiting, so too are the ways in which

black women have responded to the stereotypes by attempting to reposition respectability. BWHOJ's attempt to mobilize the stereotypes to advocate for access to health care and policy change rest upon normalized gendered expectations. In presenting an intentional use of the images, the coordinating committee sought to draw attention to health disparity and the needs of black women across age and class lines. In this way an organization is in part able to hustle a stereotype and provide salary to its employees, education information to its constituents, and engage with city officials. However, it fails as a strategy of social transformation precisely because it relies on the politics of respectability that produces secondary marginalization of black queer identities.
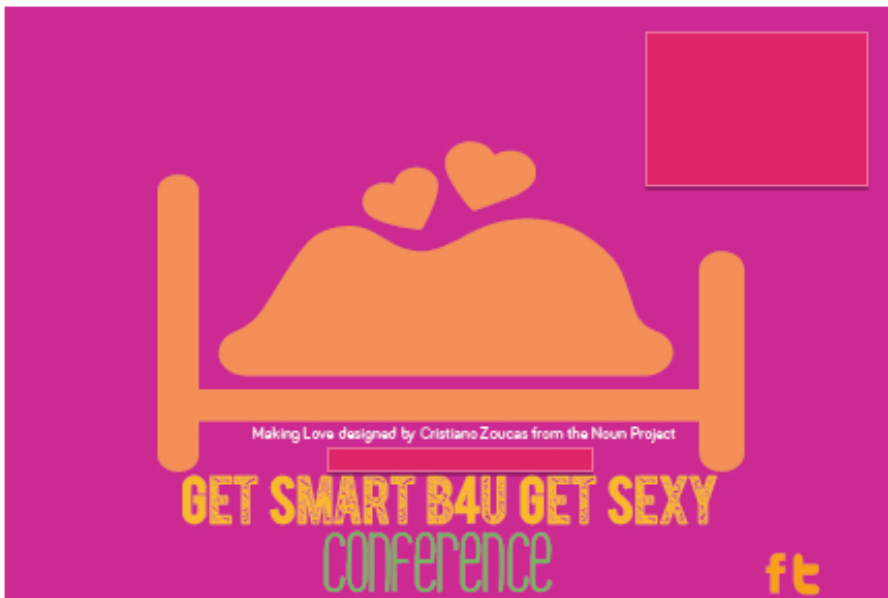
Figure 4.2: BWOHJ 2014 Conference flyer.

Figure 4.3 Cover of BWOHJ educational material depicts black woman with Afro 2011

SECONDARY MARGINALIZATION

The exclusion of black queer experiences in the service of sustaining or crafting respectability within nonprofit organizations is theorized as secondary marginalization. Cathy Cohen in her work on black political work of AIDS health organizations describes this phenomenon as, "In most cases those individuals deemed to be on the outside of 'acceptable blackness' - because of their addiction, their sexual identification, their gender, their poor financial status, or their relationship to the state - are often left with two choices: either find ways to conform to 'community standards' of membership or be left on the margins where individual families and friends are expected to take care of their needs" (1999). When operationalized within nonprofits, individuals may find themselves forced to assess their material needs by way of income or community solidarity. Working simultaneously with respectability politics, secondary marginalization moves towards group displacements that are forged on assessments of ethics, morality, and value that lead to exclusionary practices within nonprofit organization and collaboration. As Cohen elaborates, "Because of their outsider position, those individuals confront the denial of access not only to dominant resources and structures but also to many of the indigenous resources and institutions needed for their survival" (1999). Within the organization for Black Women's Health and Justice, secondary marginalization occurred at two levels: first, by way of programmatic exclusion and, secondly, through personnel conflict and push out of employees.

Though the women's reaction to the flyer seemed to present a final stance on the inclusion of queer communities, the incremental process of secondary marginalization in

fact occurred over several weeks throughout the course of the symposium's planning. The process revealed more than a brief moment of comedy and disgust towards the "Tongue to Tongue" flyer and instead showed the ways in which ambivalence became mechanized resulting in exclusion and dislocation of queer and LGBT experiences in reproductive health. For example, during the first week of planning for the summit, there were five tracks proposed of possible topics and workshops to be developed by the committee including: 1) AIDS and HIV within black communities, 2) reproductive health science and technology, 3) understanding the HPV vaccine, 4) education on contraceptives and birth control and 5) new sexualities. At this early point in the planning many of the time slots for presentations and workshop proposals were empty. The Executive Director felt that the 2008 development of the HPV vaccines warranted a cautious discussion of potential long-term health outcomes. These, along with the science and technology track, were to address how black women learn about reproductive health options through the course of their reproductive lives; meaning, how did black women and adolescents receive and understand information on menstruation, contraception, sexual health, prenatal health, and post natal and menopausal development. This insistence on the entire reproductive life cycle of black women was a departure from singular reproductive rights strategies that focus on abortion. In the development of reproductive justice framing, the whole woman was to be considered. This allowed for BWOHJ to implement a variety of programs and information that addresses a range of health disparities.

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Moving forward, the planning committee generated a list of speakers from local county health offices, universities, and nonprofits. Then individuals were invited to speak. The summer wore on and weekly meetings were established in the evenings. To prevent work conflicts, a core group of twelve women emerged as the planning committee. This committee would remain committed to planning the yearly conference for the next five years. During the fourth week of planning for "Serious Business," five tracks developed as speaker confirmations rolled in. However, the committee and Executive Director rearranged and framed these to the following: 1) Genetics, science and technology, 2) A balanced discussion on the HPV vaccine, 3) New methods in contraceptives, 4) environmental effects on women's bodies and 5) teen sexualities and relationships – let's talk about defining gay and lesbian. At this point, changes to the tracks were the result of speaker confirmation, funding developments and volunteer participation. To begin, Kelly, a youth health educator with the department of LA Public Health, adamantly felt there should be teens present at that symposium. As a health educator, she often found herself providing education and instruction to LA unified school districts. Kelly voiced that in her experience, teens had many questions about sexuality and this would be an ideal setting for education to be delivered. A second change to the information tracks occurred on the subject of HPV. Patricia secured a meeting with a representative from Glasko-Smith-Kline (GSK), the pharmaceutical company that was developing and marketing a prominent HPV vaccine. In her lunch meeting, Patricia secured a $15,000 grant towards the funding of the conference. However, this grant was contingent upon the ability of GSK representatives to present

information, answer questions, and host a panel of 'experts' at the symposium. Finally, a burgeoning interest in environmental justice prompted Patricia to add track four, on environmental effects on women's reproductive health which would feature a biologist from the University of California at Berkley who studied environmental effects on frog reproduction. This would later be combined with the sciences and technology track. With this development both Kelly, as a planning committee member, and Patricia, as the Executive Director, were able to highlight areas of concern that cut across age brackets and professional interests. While it was very clear LGBT discourses were important, their marginalization into teen confusion and inquisitiveness was indicative of changes that would appear in the following weeks

Though the planning committee offered consistent input, the Executive Director typically had the final say on the direction of the conference. This was made clear by the eighth week of planning when the symposium tracks were scaled back and modified into a final four including: 1) A balanced discussion on the HPV vaccine, 2) Environmental effects on women's bodies, 3) New methods in family planning and safe sex, and 4) Healthy relationships after 40: women and men relating to one another. At this point in the process, many of the speakers were confirmed and the organization was looking to fill in any gaps. It is important to note the several changes to the program. First, any mention or discussion of queer, LGBT, or sexuality was removed as an informative option on the track or in any of the concurrent workshops. The workshop on teen sexuality, which Kelly passionately advocated to be included as a standalone track, was erased and her single twenty-minute presentation on sex partners and protection was situated within the

family planning and safe sex track. This same path of information also transformed into a discussion of heteronormative relationships for women and men, further concretizing and validating the expectations of what consisted a healthy relationship. Finally, while science and technology was also removed as a standalone topical sub-theme, the presentation of genetic embryo selection and infertility treatments were now housed in the Family Planning track.

This incremental, yet deliberate, process of first marginalizing then excluding a queer discourse when combined with the women's reaction to the flyer reveals the ways in which the ambivalence and politics of respectability at times lead to secondary marginalization. After many weeks and months of planning, I approached the topic with Patricia. When I asked her about the organization's continued circumvention and lack of inclusion of queer reproductive health needs, she stated that she felt that topics and issues should be explored by those having those life experiences because they could bring points to the table others could not. Patricia later admitted, "I did not want to be that black woman doing programs and workshops in lesbian communities."

Thus, secondary marginalization is a process of exclusion of a subgroup of a marginalized community which exists outside the normative rules that determine community membership and power. "Secondary processes of marginalization can be exercised by more privileged members of marginal groups, as the management of marginal group members is negotiated daily by those we would call our own" (Cohen1999). Through the development of the conference themes and information, we see that marginalization was also reflected through the ways in which differing

sexualities were placed in the realm of teen and youth questions. This position suggested that variation in sexuality was something of an immaturity, meaning that teenage explorations of identity could be transformed into an acceptable representation with the help of adult socialization, subsequently relegating queer identity to a realm of adolescent confusion, which black you needed to be educated, mentored and led from, by the production of positive images of black womanhood. More importantly a focus on youth mentoring could be mobilized to produce funding options if it was framed as preventing promiscuity or STD education. Furthermore, it suggested that articulation, experiencing, and embracing differing sexual identities was part of an adolescent "phase" that requires educational realignment.

Over the course of my fieldwork and involvement with The Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice I observed the ways that queer discourse within reproductive justice remained, at best, on the periphery. When minimally engaged, as in the examples previously discussed, it was displayed how this topic is treated as comically grotesque or approached with an ambivalence that results in secondary marginalization through distancing and displacement. To specifically demonstrate how experiences of displacement unfolded within the organization, the cases of Anjali and Regina are particularly telling, as two queer black women who were employed by the nonprofit for a brief six and two months, respectively, during 2010 and 2011. After encountering

tension, stress, and conflict with Patricia and the nature of work, both women left the organization[38] and continue to keep their distance.

During their brief employment, these two women often disclosed concerns about the heteronormative nature of the organizational culture. This was most prominent in Anjali's story. Through several instances at the personal, organization and programmatic level, Anjali became the unwilling target of respectability politics and secondary marginalization within the organization. She was a recent college graduate and masters degrees recipient who became friends and was familiar with BWOHJ through Adasa, Patricia's daughter, who began working at the organization post graduate school. Looking to move to warmer temperatures, Anjali made the move to Los Angeles anticipating a position in the organization that would allow her to primarily utilize her photographic skills and, to a lesser extent, the health education of urban youth. However, when she arrived, Patricia informed her she would be in charge of all communications including development and the resurgence of the nonprofit's monthly newsletter, weekly email blast, blog posts, and social media updates in Facebook, Twitter, and Myspace. This additionally included the collection and editing of staff contributions as well as writing her own pieces. Anjali was also responsible for producing the organization's publications, which included creative content and developing design layouts for the project's event flyers, programs, and educational materials. Finally, her growing list of expectations included negotiating pricing with print companies and researching

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[38] Regina, however, was terminated without pay and later moved to the East Coast to pursue a productive career in reproductive justice organizing.

publication costs. Given BWOHJ's simultaneous running of eight programs and annual fundraisers, Anjali disclosed a feeling of being overwhelmed by the number of items to be completed, the expected publication timelines and her lack of knowledge of graphic design software, all of which proved to be quite stressful.

However, though the amount of work was a new challenge for Anjali, it was not her primary reason for seeking solace in other staff and interns. Though she and Adasa were graduate school colleagues and friends, Anjali only recently came out as a lesbian once she arrived in Los Angeles. This, she said, took a toll on their friendship as work life and lunch time conversations often flowed into the women's dating lives and weekend excursions. During these conversations, Adasa was, on more than one occasion, caught rolling her eyes at Anjali's retelling of her dates with women. In a conversation with Adasa, she revealed to me that she believed that Anjali's newfound lesbianism was strange since it never came up during the three years the women were in graduate school. She felt that it was an unnecessary act donned once Anjali moved to Los Angeles. Feeling that she could not discuss sexuality with her former friend, Anjali began to distance herself from Adasa. She instead cultivated jovial and chatty relationships with younger interns which Adasa deemed at times unprofessional[39] due to the cacophony of

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[39] In the current moment middle class for black Americans is most consistently an ideological construct and cultural aspiration that implies a set of behaviors that are indicative of economic gain or prosperity. In fact, consistently deteriorating material conditions (Oliver and Shapiro 2006) and economic inequality are vastly increasing amongst African-American communities. Additionally, a recent study by The Center for Economic and Policy Research found, "black college graduates faced an unemployment rate of 12.4 percent in 2013, whereas grads of other races saw an unemployment rate of 5.6 percent" (Jones and Schmitt 2014). This same report revealed that black graduates

laughter that flowed out of the office. This dynamic of frustration, irritation and the judgment received by Anjali began to seep into the office culture, producing tension during staff meetings.

During this time, Anjali proposed a project that would highlight and photographically depict the multiple forms of black families she observed on her bus rides through Leimert Park. She at times would walk into the office and exclaim, "Leimert Park is gay as shit! The gaybies (meaning young queer teens or gay babies) are so fly here, I love it." Although this was to be part of a statewide coalition effort to address the discrimination and stigmatization of young mothers, queer, single parents, or undocumented families through policy, Patricia instead suggested they depict positive images of black families including fathers and grandmothers, thus in effect vetoing this idea. This dismissal of Anjali's idea similar to the ambivalence and phasing out of queer sexuality during the Serious Business symposium years before reaffirmed BWOHJ's commitment to heteronormativity. Moreover, it expanded the growing chasm between Anjali and the organization.

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have the same changes of obtaining employment as a white high school graduate. This situation was quite clear in Adasa's case. She obtained a graduate degree yet upon her return to Los Angeles was unable to find stable employment or qualify for an apartment on her own. Subsequently, she found herself sleeping on the couch while sharing a one bedroom apartment and car with her mother for nearly two years. While the nonprofit's funding struggles played into Adasa's income challenges, she still exuded black middle class social norms couched within a politics of respectability and black bourgeoisie aspirations. This included chastising Anjali on her lack of modesty in sexual behavior. Additionally, Adasa's conservative style choices became a marker of professionalism. Furthermore her support of Michelle Obama's first mother politics became an ideal type of contemporary black womanhood, which she felt BWOHJ should strive towards.

This tension catapulted to great depths four months into Anjali's employment when Patricia solicited Adasa to have a conversation with Anjali about her weight, clothing choices, and appearance. Anjali could be modestly described as an ample bodied, full figured woman who enjoyed the latest trends in fashion, including multicolored leggings and neon tank tops, and did not view her weight as a hindrance to her sex appeal. In fact, Anjali developed a greater self-confidence in her appearance when she refused to apologize for her size when Adasa approached her suggesting her clothes were too revealing and perhaps she was not an ideal person to represent a woman's health organization. Given that three of the five staff members during this time were struggling with weight loss and health issues, including Adasa and Patricia herself, which had prompted programmatic changes to address diet and obesity, this critique was felt by Anjali to have little to do with her actual weight and more to do with her unapologetically queer identity. After this failed conversation, during a staff meeting Patricia addressed the staff, volunteer, and intern dress code as maintaining a respectable and professional appearance, which now required casual business attire during presentations and out of office meetings. Hurt and angered, Anjali mentioned she felt compelled soon after to look for another job and continued to dress as she saw fit. Less than six months after she began working with BWOHJ, Anjali secured employment at the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center in West Hollywood, stating that while she worked with fewer black people, in her opinion it was an enhanced work environment where she experienced less tension and judgment regarding her sexuality.

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The trifecta of politics of respectability, secondary marginalization, and compulsory heterosexuality is mobilized by BWOHJ in an attempt to produce a normalized image of blackness. However, these actions and practices have consequences leading to displacement of black queer reproductive experiences. By way of Anjali's story and the erasure of any information or programmatic inclusion of queer discourse, deliberate ambivalence leads to an institutionalized invisibility that, in turn, creates static representation of black sexuality. It is helpful to think through the ways in which compulsory heteronormativity can be explained as developing "pronouncements of normalcy that emerged to protect subjects from accusations of deviance continue to manifest themselves in the absences and omissions of 'deviant' sexualities and genders from Black history. All this is to say that from slavery onward Black women in the United States found themselves caught in a framework in which their very physicality equated them with hyperfemininity, mutant masculinity, and deviant sexuality" (Richardson 2003). In this way, not only does queer become invisible but so do the lives that exist between the strict confines of respectability politics on one hand and on negative controlling images on the other.

Additionally, what makes secondary marginalization and compulsory heteronormativity particularly troubling in the context of reproductive rights and justice are the ways in which black nonprofits' education and policy advocacy go hand in hand. That is to say, many times while black community members are aware of the lack of health resources and restricted access to free treatment of STI's, when changes to state and city policy or budgets cuts are proposed, activist black women find themselves

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engaging in a double education including: one, the specific bill that is being lobbied and, two, educating people in the process of lobbying. This as a process of policy change is what Patricia aims to sustain through the organization's yearly conference. She seeks to implement policy change by building from her network and utilizing the information that is provided and garnered from the various conferences. In this way the content, outcomes, and framing of conferences such as "Serious Business" and "Four Women" and each subsequent conference are key to future policy and campaign work the organization will take on. Given this goal, the consequence of deliberate ambivalence engaged by Patricia to the point of displacement perpetuates the ways in which queer bodies remain illegible to the protection of the state.

Codifying heteropatriarchy within civic realm through public policy marks this legibility. Following, Linda Hart, Jacqui M Alexander, describes heteropatriarchy, "as the twin process of heterosexualization and patriarchy" (2005). Therefore, communities that do not conform to the heterosexual reproduction of family do not receive the full benefits of state participation or protection. It is my suggestion that this dual process extends to practices that permeate respectability and secondary marginalization within reproductive rights advocacy, which in turn seeks to solidify womanhood and a family model. Thus conceived, womanhood and the heteronormative family define those who are best suitable to receive the benefits of the nation. Although for black families the protections and participation within the state are marginal at best, the use of controlling images or the adherence to producing respectable images further remove black queer communities from reproductive health, rights and justice campaigns which are narrowly tied to the ideal of

womanhood and sexuality. As Jacqui M. Alexander explains, "Legislative gestures fix conjugal heterosexuality in several ways, generally, they collapse identities into sexual bodies which, in the particular case of lesbian and gay people, serves to reinforce a fiction about promiscuity that sex is all of what we do and consequently the slippage is all of who we are. Yet, lesbian and gay sex, the 'pervert' the 'unnatural' are really indispensable to the formulation of the 'natural' the conjugal heterosexual" (1994). Though Alexander is addressing a piece of legislation from Trinidad and Tobago which makes sexual acts that are not procreative illegal, it is useful to think through the ways in which sex acts and the social constructions of sexual identity are made legible within policy. Queer identities are first marked by deficit within policy; they are without procreation, socially without morality and therefore without purpose. If, for example, sexual identities are simply constructed or defined by their ability to procreate, then any other sexual health outcome that could be addressed but is not fixed within reproductive health discourses that rely on heteronormativity to frame sexual health needs can then be rendered invisible. Therefore, the consequences of secondary marginalization as manifested through the deliberate ambivalence and erasure from conference agendas prove to be much more destructive. If the agenda of the conference sets the tone for the policy work to be carried out by women of the organization, erasure of any information relating to non procreative and queer sexual discourse then perpetuates social displacement and undermines social transformation by seeking recognition and use of normalized representations of black womanhood.

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CONCLUSION

> The more homophobic we are as a people the further removed we are from any kind of revolution. Not only must Black lesbians and gay people be committed to destroying homophobia but all black people must be committed to working out and rooting out homophobia in the black community Cheryle Clark.

How does this statement by Cheryle Clark, more than thirty years old, still resonate with fieldwork and observations in community organizing in South Los Angeles? To conclude, this chapter has revealed three potential outcomes. First, the reproduction of secondary marginalization limits coalition-building opportunities. Secondly, hustling of the politics of respectability and controlling images can lead to the displacement of individuals within an organization. Finally, the operationalizing of secondary marginalization and politics of respectability can potentially affect policy development and advocacy campaigns, which reproduces heteronormativity within reproductive justice communities.

Patricia illustrated her distance from black queer communities' reproductive health needs when she stated she did not want to be "that" woman organizing within the lesbian community. This declaration set lesbian reproductive justice agendas as distinct from the black women she considers herself to be and, by extension, the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice to represent. What can be further deduced from her statement is that little to no collaboration is an option. This is suggested by Patricia's positioning herself as a lone organizer within a distinct and distant community. Meaning, if she were to be *"that woman"* rather than a collaborative possibility with black queer organizers the responsibility falls on her alone. In this statement there is no recognition of

organization members or staff with whom she already engages that may be queer. Additionally, though BWOHJ and its members routinely collaborate with Latina or black male focused nonprofits, when it comes to explicitly queer communities there is a lack of accountability to address one's own practice of exclusionary politics. Patricia's suggestion that one must be gay in order to thoughtfully and critically engage queer issues is not only problematic and limiting in community social transformation, it also advances a political position that reproduces heterosexism and, by extension, patriarchy.

Chapter Five: I Want to Have a Life: Health and Well-Being of Activist Black Women

INTRODUCTION

If you called the office and spoke to Sasha, you would never know she had a belabored walk about her. Her voice was robust, yet smooth, oozing warmth and care. She says she keeps smiles in her purse, ready to offer them to anyone in need; there is enough to go around. As the voice and heart of the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice in Los Angeles, she is the reason most people came to volunteer; because they met Sasha at a meeting, at a community health fair, or even at the grocery store. Along with those smiles, she kept flyers in her purse, genuinely willing to talk up the work that the organization was taking on in South Los Angeles.

However, if you ever actually made it into the office from the health fair or the grocery store, on more than one occasion, you would notice the harried pace in her work. You might notice the furry cheetah print house slippers that were worn through the bottom that Sasha kept underneath her desk for the long days - the long days at the office, spent coming and going from one meeting to the next with little time in between. These slippers helped to ease the pain from her swollen feet that could no longer be squeezed into the pointed kitten heels she loved to wear. In 2006, she was diagnosed as pre-diabetic. By 2009, she was fully diabetic with a combined risk of a stroke from her skyrocketing high blood pressure. In late 2010 and early 2011, she was hospitalized twice so that a medical team could observe her vitals and reevaluate her medication regimen. In

five short years her health declined and her stress levels increased to the degree that she began to lose her already graying hair, becoming nearly bald.

This particular health decline involving diabetes and high blood pressure retains prevalence in black communities unparalleled in other demographics. Public health research cites multiple factors, including: poor diet, lack of access to healthy foods, a sedentary lifestyle, heredity, and stress as the nexus of this deadly duo.[40] However, most striking is that Sasha's sharp health decline would occur precisely during the time she began working at a black women's health organization. The irony in this development is equally common. My research shows that women who are involved in health organizing routinely develop their own health problems, which may include exacerbating or ignoring existing issues. Additionally, many women become involved in health advocacy and education based on personal experiences of illness and family death. This is, on one hand, a fact of blackness in the United States where racializing state processes of discrimination result in social economic inequalities that contribute to poor health. On the other, Sasha's health decline was due, in part, to the culture of black women's health organizing as it is carried out within the nonprofit industrial complex. I will argue in this chapter the culture of black women's health organizing as it is carried out within the nonprofit industrial

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[40] Nationally, the CDC reports just under 19% of African Americans have Diabetes and women are at double the risk of developing gestational diabetes. While locally in Los Angeles, according to the public health department, 1in 4 African women will develop Diabetes. Recent research on diabetes and hypertension within Los Angeles connects higher occurrences to environmental pollution. Please see Coogan, Patricia F., Laura F. White, Michael Jerrett, Robert D. Brook, Jason G. Su, Edmund Seto, Richard Burnett, Julie R. Palmer, and Lynn Rosenberg. "Air pollution and incidence of hypertension and diabetes mellitus in black women living in Los Angeles." *Circulation* 125, no. 6 (2012): 767-772.

complex is intensified by grim sleep. Additionally, there is a culture of silence and guilt that is experienced between generations of black women that perpetuates the trauma. Fortunately, a resurgence of 1980s black feminist thought and praxis through the ideology of self-care has resurfaced in younger black reproductive justice workers that are committed to both community survival and to individual health as well.

It then seems appropriate that we shall end where we began, with the condition of black women's health organizing, strategies, and challenges. This chapter takes a detailed exploration of the organization Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice in an effort to understand how, over the course of a fifteen-year history, it has confronted and engaged the health disparities discussed in Chapter 1; the shifts in nonprofit funding from Chapter 3; and the many forms of violence seen throughout this dissertation. This chapter explores the effect of a grim sleep on individuals' lives and argues that the structural violence and street violence we have seen takes a great toll on the relationship black women have with themselves and each other. While some may see this launched as a critique of the dynamics of the organization or the women, I offer instead an analysis that suggests, through a radical shift of approaches to intra-organization politics and understandings of structural violence as they are replicated, experienced, and imposed within organizations, the possibility of sustaining work of groups like the BWOHJ, which is desperately needed. It closes a gap in social interactions between generations, troubled as they may be.

WELL-BEING AND BLACK HEALTH

A key concept to the development of programs and the mission of the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice is well-being. Conceptual definitions and uses of well-being are loosely outlined across several academic disciplines and research models including: economics (Farr, Lord and Wolfenbanger 1998), psychology (Diener 2000, Taylor and Brown 1988, Harrell 2000) and sociology (Smock, Manning And Gupta 1999). Quantitative and qualitative research agendas have attempted to assess indicators or correlates of well-being through several axes including: wealth, happiness, access to care, relationship status, weight, and self-confidence in racial identity. I understand well-being through the work of BWOHJ as the total social, cultural, and spiritual health that is free from disease, stress, and poverty that limit a sustained healthy production of Black communities. Building from ethnographic and archival research, I move to conceptualize well-being by employing a reproductive justice lens to evaluate the quality of life.

During the 1990s within black communities, a cultural movement centered on Afrocentric premises began to reinvigorate pride within black identity and traditions calling forth an African perspective on life - health and healthy living, by way of incorporating holistic approaches to diets, exercise, and community engagement. Books such as African Holistic Health (1993), Heal Thyself (1991), and Sacred Women (1999) gained popularity among community based organizations through incorporating a racial and cultural self-help model approach to wellness.

There are two points of convergence driven from literature on African holistic health and Afrocentricity that are integral to how black communities developed and

mobilized well-being during the 1990s. To begin, focus was placed on African centered thinking that looks towards the agency of African people through political, cultural, and social processes as the starting point of analysis of social milieu. Doing so presents a path of solidarity that does not begin with the institution of slavery or African-American lives, nor does it seek to create a totalizing generic African identity or experience by specifying processes of power and domination in a particular location while building connections to other African societies. As both a method and analytic, it presents what Asante asserts is a, "black perspective" that builds upon 1960s black radical movements (Asante 2003, Asante 2011).

A second subject is the acknowledgement and retrieving of ancestral knowledge of African healing. This approach integrates mind, body, and spirit health from a non-western perspective that seeks to recover African cultural traditions. Through teachings and reading, emphasis is placed on cultivating herbal remedies and vegetarianism while seeking spiritual affirmation and using mediation to connect bodily experiences to what are seen as spiritual strength or ailments. While addressing historical conditions of oppression and the effects it has on bodies, both Llaila Afrika and Queen Afua present archetypes of African holistic approaches to health during this period. This combination of African centered analysis, western medicine's effect on healing and spiritual connection is what sets apart black and African discourses of well-being from those of Eastern Buddhist philosophies; by recognizing that historical and racial oppression and its effect on the healing of the body and the wellbeing of the community is not an

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individualized process. Rather, it is one that is drawn from ancestral traditions and that seeks to change racial conditions.

Literature on general well-being soared in the 1970s and again in the 1990s with two important distinctions from African holistic health - it reflected a marked distance from engaging race and racism as a factor and a separation from physical health. For example, while African holistic literature emphasizes the integrative impact of mind, body, and spirit health, in mainstream literature it is explained as, "well-being is not a single construct, but comprises three distinct and, to some extent, independent dimensions: a cognitive aspect; life satisfaction; and pleasant and unpleasant affect (moods and emotions)" (Eckersley 2001). Generally, understandings of well-being have become correlated to happiness and life opportunities which are perceived to have a primary impact on mental health yet remain separate from measure of mortality or life expectancy. The insistence of a measurable disease or a lack thereof as an indicator of health dominates public health research. It is this divergent approach to health and wellness with the additive of racism as a social stressor that African Holistic health advocates attempt to address through readings and workshops.

The mission and the early work of the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice was both greatly informed and influenced by this discourse of African holistic healing during the height of its popularity. The early influences of an African centered approach to health can be seen in the ways in which the organization framed much of its programming. During this time, profiles of women's health status in California from 1984 to 1994 indicated that black women had the shortest life expectancy, the highest

levels of mortality at every age, the highest mortality from heart disease and stroke, the highest prevalence of hypertension and obesity, the highest mortality rates from homicide and AIDS, and the highest incidence of other sexually transmitted diseases (Nelson & Dumbauld 1997). In response to the then-emerging health issues, the newly formed organization in 1999 responded through a holistic approach to engage women in the South Los Angeles area. For example, in an organizational newsletter, the Executive Director explained:

> Our plan for the October gathering included a ritual of healing and sharing some family recipes for conception. I was surprised: very few of the women had recipes for conception. Almost every woman in the room had experienced a miscarriage - some at least three. Did our grandmothers forget to pass those recipes for conception on? Perhaps being in this strange land where they stole our children at will and we seemingly had no recourse encouraged us to stop having children and wanting to have children. Slavery had an interesting impact on our lives (Metamorphosis 1999).

In both the analysis and method of gathering, the well-being of the women in the room was considered and moved upon. The meeting offered the women a place where they could share their stories and find support in the collective experiences of loss. Additionally, the Executive Director's questioning about the loss of "recipes" is also an implied loss of culture and care that resonates with what African holistic health discourses suggest are a reason for illness. This point is then driven back to the collective experience by attempting to understand how slavery and its legacies have affected childbirth. This initial step was furthered when the organization convened its first conference, Kindred Sisters in 2001, with goals to "develop a coalition of Pan African Women for communication of health barriers and access issues to health care service

providers" and "to identify issues of health access and health challenges of the international community of women in Southern California" (Metamorphosis 2001). The BWOHJ's deliberate use of *Pan-African* reveals the ways in which health disparity and healing were experienced by women throughout the diaspora. Doing so allows for Patricia and her program coordinators to draw from holistic literatures while situating Los Angeles' women's health within a larger perspective. The organization's engagement of well-being then encompasses social, spiritual, cultural and psychological health and has its roots within black radical and black women's social movements, yet relies heavily on the importance of sharing black women's stories as a part of radical social change. The following sections explore the dynamics and outcomes.

STORY TELLING AND BLACK FEMINISM

It was to be a ten-minute drive, but it turned into thirty minutes after a particularly long and drawn out meeting with Los Angeles County representatives from the public health department. It was suggested that I attend the meeting with the Executive Director so that I could take notes and observe the ways in which LA County and public health researchers addressed the needs of community stakeholders in attendance. What I observed was Patricia's growing irritation and impatience with the research team assessment of chlamydia and gonorrhea rates and interaction with black communities. It seemed to Patricia that the primarily white male research team was failing to understand the financial and social circumstances of the young girls encountering and contracting the virus. This was made obvious when she repeated her unaddressed question, "But why is this happening? What is their story and what is the story we are trying to tell them? How

do we get the information across without just mailing or sending them home with some do-it-yourself HPV testing kit[41]?" Though at this point Patricia was a seasoned community advocate in Los Angeles, these meetings seemed to leave her in an exhausted and contemplative mood.

During the ride back to BWOHJ's office, Patricia revealed several instances of emotional strength embedded in trauma that were all tied to her understanding of women and, in particular, black women's struggles. From being left at the airport in Ghana by a college lover to an abusive husband or her recollection of a young pregnant black woman with the chicken pox who nurses refused to touch or help, her experiences led Patricia to deepen her commitment to black women. It was through these experiences that lessons were drawn or later informed her organizing perspective. Though she firmly believed in the ideological and cultural construction of "the black family" as one that was made of a heterosexual couple, she understood that the moments from which she drew and the

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[41] Between 2007 and 2009 the Los Angeles County STD program sought to raise awareness of the increasing rates of HPV, Gonorrhea, and Chlamydia and launched a number of initiatives. The efforts were to increase education on treatable Infections and encourage women to get pap smears in prevention of the spread of HPV and cervical cancer. One such program, the "I Know" campaign, sought to engage young black and Latino women between the ages of 18 and 25 who had limited access to reproductive health care, services and treatment, yet have disproportionately high rates. The campaign introduced the use of "home testing kits' which delivered results via online web services and text messaging. "I Know" was promoted by a large-scale social marketing and outreach campaign, and was the first in the U.S. to use free home testing as part of a health department's overall STD control strategy For further reading se: Rotblatt H, Montoya JA, Guerry S, Kerndt P. "There's No Place Like Home: First year ussages of the 'I Know' home testing program for chlamydia and gonorrhea. American Journal of Public Health. 2013: 103: (8): 1376-1380

moments which she considered important in solidifying her commitment to community advocacy were from a rupture of those unions and the multivalent experiences of violence associated with black women's bodies. These moments, often recalled via story, provided her the strength to move forward. It was this that she sought to impart to me in this moment, but largely to black women across the city and the state. Patricia's storytelling and personal sharing often came to me as lessons of how to carry out work or as glimpses into why she continued to endure attempts to silence her question or the harsh financial strain of operating a struggling nonprofit.

The process of gathering women and sharing stories, then using these experiences, testimonies and declarations are part of black feminist traditions of "speaking truth to power" that have long informed grassroots activism. Early black female public speakers like Sojourner Truth, Anna Julia Cooper, and Fannie Lue Hamer developed protofeminist radical traditions (James 1999) through the use of public space to address oppressive experiences through the retelling of personal experiences of violence or discrimination and later developed social justice campaigns[42]. For example, early work and public speeches served to bear witness to the atrocities of slavery and living in Jim Crow segregation from the perspective of women, noting very early how the intersection of race and gender affected access to voting rights.

In what is now known as second wave feminism, black feminist voices emerged to challenge one dimensional depiction of gendered discrimination that marginalized

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[42] Early work of Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from The South: By A Woman From the South (1882)* early on established the importance of race and gender in advocating for women's rights in the post civil war era.

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black women's experiences of oppression (Cade Bambara 1970, Hooks 1982, Hooks 1984, Lorde 1984, Davis 1981, Smith 1983). The familiar form of storytelling reemerged as a black women's strategy to gather and transform communities. For example, scholar activist Audre Lorde wrote of her life through illness stating;

> My silences had not protected me. Your silences will not protect you. But for every real word spoken, for every attempt I had ever made to speak those truths for which I am still seeking, I had made contact with other women while we examined the words to fit a world in which we all believed, bridging our differences. And it was the concern and caring of all those women which gave me strength and enabled me to scrutinize the essentials of my living (1980).

In part, the abovementioned work of Lorde presents an analysis of black women's lives through narratives explaining social conditions while reaffirming her own. Likewise, scholars (Carby 2007, Diana 2007) have contributed to the early formation of black women's intellectual and activist traditions as a method to combat the misrepresentation and racism experienced in daily lives. Present in both fictive and counter-public narratives, black women's speaking of truths are key to understanding processes and quests to "scrutinize" existing forms of discrimination through racial, gendered, or economic social structures. Furthermore, biographic scholarly work such as that of Barbara Ransby (2005 and 2013) explores both the public and private lives of black radical women as potential blueprints for understanding the condition and possibility of black women's voices. For black women the retelling and sharing of personal stories or life histories functions as examples of lessons to be learned and can provide support during tragedy, or represent black women's resistance through triumph. They are developed, shared recognition of social oppression and dislocation.

Black women's working class culture through blues music illustrates how counter hegemonic storytelling of discrimination, intimate partner violence, and poverty at one time give testimony to the gendered and racial oppression faced while additionally providing a social explanation that seeks redress, recognition and action (Davis 1998, Rushin 1990, Adisa, 1990). Angela Davis explains, "The blues idiom requires absolute honesty in the portrayal of black life. It is an idiom that does not recognize taboos; whatever figured into the larger picture of working-class African American realities - however morally repugnant it may be to the dominant culture or to the black bourgeoisie - is an appropriate subject of blues discourse" (Davis 1998). Through this oral and cultural tradition, what is otherwise considered to be reprehensible or unseemly presents the social conditions that working class black women face. Moreover, by recording and retelling the story of a battered wife or a family member's inability to pay bills, [blues] elevates an individual situation to collective experience. By speaking to the harsh realities of poverty and gendered violence, black women's blues story telling reframes black middle class discourse of racial uplift and respectability as primary avenues for collective aspirational and transformative discourses. In the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice, story telling presents a two-fold method of community organizing that exemplifies both black feminist traditions of speaking of truths and blues social explanation. One such case, disclosed to me by Patricia, emerged during a 2003 early morning Sistah Connect meeting. The topic for discussion was breast cancer awareness. After a brief introduction to the development of the organization, Sasha demonstrated and walked meeting attendees through a breast self-exam. Patricia then confessed that the

meeting took her by surprise when two members found lumps, two others announced they were in remission, and much like with the stories of miscarriage, she wondered what was happening to black women and recommitted to making sure the work of BWOHJ continued to address black women and adolescent reproductive health. In a similar fashion to blues culture, the Sistah Connect collecting of the haunting accounts of black women's experience of miscarriages and breast cancer provide a space for black women to share tragedy and gain support from their collective sadness. Secondly, storytelling within the organization's events as evidenced in the Kindred Sisters conference presents an active response to health discrimination cultivating a counter hegemonic narrative to black women's health disparity and moves in the direction of social action via policy making. This dual process is best explained by feminist writer Opal Palmer Adisa who states,

> Some people think stress is like the blues, but it's not. *Blues* is medicine because it's not meant to depress or pull one down - it has the opposite effect. The blues heals. The more you listen to the moans, the more blues singers belt out their sorrows and hard times, our collective hard times, the more the blues leaves them, leaves us, giving us space to continue living. The blues helps us laugh at our misfortune, make light of our hazardous lives, and reaffirms that living is what life is about no matter how many hurdles we have to jump over. Stress doesn't do that (1990).

This twofold blueprint for action emerges from, first, the sharing of an individual's story and, secondly, through the collective recognition, then publicly draws on this experience to 'speak truth to power.'

Over the course of my fieldwork it became clear that the lives of Patricia, Sasha, and others were deeply connected to the livelihood of the organization and, in many

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ways, inextricably linked. While reproductive justice provided a lens, approach, and strategy to progress social justice agendas and policy, it also meant the reproductive health challenges encountered by Patricia and her peers through the course of their lives provided new insights into black women's needs. For example, when questioned by grant officers about the ever expanding range of health issues addressed by the organization's programs, Patricia explained that it came from her own needs and recounted how the period after the Sistah Connect gathering (when two friends found lumps and were later diagnosed with breast cancer without having any family history of illness nor fitting the mainstream profiles of at-risk breast cancer, which are based on white middle class profiles) led to the development of a breast health education program. It was also known organizational history that founding members, Akua and Sequestra, experienced multiple miscarriages and bouts with cancer. Additionally, Patricia was very candid about how her increased weight gain and diet challenges produced Sisters in Motion, an exercise support group and Kitchen Divas, a diet modification and healthy cooking program. These programs came on the heels of Patricia's increased interest in obesity and its effects on reproductive health, which were integrated via meetings and conferences. Thus, the organization developed a breadth of programming on one hand to combat underfunding, while on the other seeking to combat health concerns she and her circle of friends encountered.

BURN OUT

It is important to think back to Sasha and her emergent health concerns coupled with the demands of working at a nonprofit as it reveals one of the many trajectories of

burnout. A 2013 article by Allen and Mueller defines burnout as, "the occupational stress that results from demanding work-related tasks and relationships" (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993). This is partially developed through a set of conditions that increases stress between work, workplace environment, and career achievement. Factors that contribute to burnout include, but are not limited to, the following: job and wage dissatisfaction, commitment to a company's mission, high expectations in projected output, high employee turnover and role ambiguity (Maslaet 2007). The combination of these factors lead to burnout as it is manifested through emotional and physical exhaustion, depersonalization and diminished personal accomplishment (Srinivas 2002). Black women engaged in nonprofit work experience these conditions compounded by historical processes of race, gender, and class discrimination that intensify the workplace stress.

Furthermore, burnout is frequently observed and experienced by nonprofit volunteers and employees due to shifts in funding stipulations combined with high demands for the programming that nonprofits offer to address gaps in governmental social welfare services. Community based organizations rely on the support of volunteers to carry out advocacy campaigns that include phone banking or voter education workshops. In the case of BWOHJ in South Los Angeles, volunteers are crucial to the day-to-day running of the office during peak programming seasons, such as summer and fall, when multiple events are planned to galvanize the free time of youth or to initiate college students' service learning projects. Furthermore, larger events require more people and more time and intensify expectation. For example, a committee of ten women that volunteer with BWOHJ has, for the past seven years, undertaken the responsibility of

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planning a conference over a seven to eight month period, working nights and weekends. As volunteers, their work is invaluable and becomes a primary way that the small, underfunded organization presents a measure of capacity in an attempt to present itself as an ideal candidate for grant funding.

Though extensively studied in private corporations where competition fuels employee advancement, nonprofit groups present an ideal research site for the study of burnout. My research reveals that individuals employed at nonprofits vacillate between paid positions at a nonprofit workplace while volunteering at a separate organization. While conducting fieldwork I encountered no less than a dozen black women who in their professional lives held paid positions at one agency, volunteered service hours at a separate entity, stood in as community liaison positions on city or county office special commissions, and sat as board members to nonprofits' executive committees, all while maintaining their separate commitments to BWOHJ. The unbalanced relationship between their career path and community engagement is often their entry into a life of exhaustion. For example, Candice, a young health care professional in her late twenties who ran a community clinic, "Because my job is just so active, I'm always working, and I work a lot of weekends, I even had to take a break from BWOHJ. I just had a lot on my plate. I have three grey hairs now. Yes, girl, three. And that shit ain't cool." Though she is grasping for time to efficiently include her work responsibilities within her designated working hours without impacting her stress levels, which to her is represented by the emergence of grey hair, Candice continues to attend and contribute to meetings. Because the mission of BWOHJ resonates with her commitment to bettering the lives of black

women and adolescents, and while admittedly she has little time to herself, Candice's "break" in fact is not a break at all but a minor shift in engagement.

A contributing factor that leads to burnout is a combination of decreased job satisfaction and ambiguity of roles within nonprofits. For example, long time volunteer and employee of the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice, Sasha, recollects, "When I started working at BWOHJ... I was kind of just thrown in the fold and not given a definition of what a nonprofit was, what the goals of the organization were or anything. I was just thrown in the fold and I had to like kinda figure it out for myself." This is a common experience felt amongst the volunteers of the organization. It is in part due to the lack of administrative time, strategic planning, and training development that should be determined by the executive director. This continual need for time is a consequence of the type of hustling practices explained in Chapter Three where the breadth of programming and grants often dictate the amount of work required to keep the organization afloat. When questioned about her work within the nonprofit structure, Sasha further explains, "I don't think it was so much that I had a bad experience at the nonprofit, it was that I had a bad experience in being overwhelmed with [running] all the different programs at the same time. I love the work they [BWOHJ] are doing, I truly love their work but for one person to have to be doing all that work, that is what my being uncomfortable was about." The ever-increasing number of programs simultaneously without adequate staff requires a reliance on volunteer capacity. At any given point the organization may be preparing for two to three events, a half dozen meetings, a rolling number of grants and health fairs. It was not uncommon to meet women in the office who

wanted to volunteer a few hours in a month yet found themselves on several committees. In this specific situation, while Patricia often solicited feedback, changes to program rotation or policy actions to move forward were rarely implemented as funding dictated programming priorities and organization deliverables. While the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice's commitment to black women's reproductive justice necessitates a multifaceted approach to education and advocacy, reliance on volunteers requires an equally intricate training process of volunteers, interns, and staff that the organization forgoes. Though this is an outcome of over extension via grant expectations, it at times appears to staff and volunteers as a lack of professionalism or consideration for their quality of life.

However, long-term involvement with the organization creates emotional bonds with the women that are based on a shared vision of social transformation. This group, as they have all let me know on numerous occasions, is the *one* place where the health of black women and girls is put at the forefront, at the center. It provides them information and the space to address issues they care about most, issues that are overlooked in their day jobs. Some are the only black women in their departments or companies. It's wildly important to them to be present even when it is logistically impossible. They volunteer two to three hours of time multiple evenings late into the night *after* they've worked eight to twelve hour days at their paid job. Yet, on more than one occasion, outside of meetings a few of the women have shared, they often feel like unappreciated staff to the executive director. Consequently, reluctance to leave, violence in work demands and depression amongst volunteers creates a drastic move from health and well being.

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TRAUMA

"Most of us are empty wells that never get replenished. Most of us are dead inside. We are walking around dead" Billey Avery[43].

A pitfall of storytelling occurs when it resembles a perpetual retelling and reliving of racial and gender trauma. This presents an interesting conundrum within black women's lives and their experiences of the organization, which can have ramifications leading to burnout. Clinical psychologists, social psychologists, feminist studies, and cultural anthropologists have explored literature on trauma in the last two decades. At its most basic, trauma is understood as an "event generally involves threat to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death" (Herman 1992, 33). On one hand cognitive psychology literature looks to the cognitive changes when an individual experiences the event and the body responds including repressed memories, development of phobias, and post-traumatic stress (Lewis 2012). On the other, social and community psychologists explore the daily events tied to the individual and collective experiences of social institutions through multiple nodes including sexual violence, street crime, and early childhood abuse (Bessel 2003, 2012, Herman 1997). The effect is the development of trauma theory that creates disparate studies and definitions with little overlap or consideration to racialized dimensions of trauma.

A small but emerging field within trauma theory and psychology is the impact of race and racism in the mental health and socialization of black people. This phenomenon has a growing number of associated terms, including societal trauma, intergenerational

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[43] Billey Avery is the founder of The Black Women's Health Imperative one of the first black women's reproductive health organizations in the United States.

trauma, racist incident–based trauma, insidious trauma, psychological trauma, emotional abusiveness, and racism (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005; Carter, 2007; Carter & Helms, 2002; Daniel, 2000; Loo et al., 2001; Root, 1992; Sanchez-Hucles, 1998; Wyatt, 1990). Research reveals that everyday interactions and experiences of discrimination drawn from race and gender can compound over causing both physical and mental health conditions that are not traditionally treated or addressed trauma theory. For example, regarding long-term stress, Taylor (1998) noted "people can adapt to or experience strain as a result of ongoing stressful events. However, it is difficult for some people to adapt to these highly stressful events. Even after psychological adaptation to long-term strain from prolonged stress, physiological changes resulting from the long-term stressful circumstance may continue and can impact psychological well-being" (Carter 2007). When referring to the lives of black women involved in community organizing, one must consider the intersection of where their stress and discrimination occurs. In the case of the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice, the continual stress of underfunding and pressure to meet program goals in addition to encountering high health disparity presents a perpetually stressful situation. In this case the prolonged strain occurs from the predicament of black women's health, which the organization attempts to address while struggling to maintain the livelihood of the organization. Additionally, because each woman must contend with her own family history of illness or peers' development of sickness within the organization, the continual engagement with black women's health disparities can develop into emotional and informational burnout.

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Subsequently, racialized trauma circles in the individual, collective, and community lives of black women involved in health organizing can reflect intergenerational trauma. For this reason, I consider the intergenerational cycle of violence not through familial relationships, as previous studied, but through those that develop within social spaces that become home to multiple generations of black women.

While intergenerational trauma has been studied through individual recollection of large social events that may have been experienced by one generation and passed down through retelling and memory to the next, such as in the case of Jewish Holocaust or Hiroshima survivors, a smaller body of research looks to the effects of both slavery and racism as an additional social and largely collective social trauma that can be transmitted through social generations. For example, this is explained by the role that memory recollection of a pivotal trauma event plays in the lives of the witness or hearer of the memory. In this case the relation of the trauma need not necessarily be blood related, yet may experience a similar set of experiences or use the knowledge of social memory to create a "working-self" (Chaitin and Steinberg 2014, Eyerman 2013, Franlkin 2006, Graff 2014). Similar to this, developing and use of traumatic social and individual events are then mobilized to provide life direction as reaction to the memory of trauma. Community Psychologist Thema Bryant-Davis suggests, "the healing of psyches necessitates the dismantling and healing of the source of societal wounds of oppression; active perpetrators and passive privilege recipients of racial hierarchy require redress. As with all interpersonal traumas, individual recovery is not sufficient; collective acknowledgment, justice, and prevention are critical. (2007). This was best illustrated in

the life of Patricia who used both her personal stories of abuse and collective sense of social injustice to guide the organization's programming.

While I am specifically interested in black women's health in Los Angeles, I've found that decades of health activism as it affects black women above fifty and the trauma that goes along with it has implications across the United States as we see more women's organizations close down or women reentering school to find "stable" income after many year of living in precarious positions while building community organizations. For instance, a generation of activists who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s are faced with seeing a number of their peers die while they struggle to change health outcomes and maneuver around changing economic conditions in poor neighborhoods. Many have dedicated their lives to social justice, yet few black women executive directors over the age of fifty have managed to secure health and retirement plans. In fact, the struggle to keep their organizations economically viable is deeply imbricated with their own survival. Given these circumstance then, the relationship between just-mentioned Candice who is seeking to balance her professional goals and community work and Patricia, the fifty-five year old Executive Director, is fraught with both tension and transferred trauma leading to emotional exhaustion.

This was made apparent when, in preparation for the yearly conference at a meeting, Patricia used information from the Los Angeles Department of Public Health to visually depict the health disparity of black women in Los Angeles. Once the information is presented some heave weary sighs from the weight of this information, while for others the exasperated sighs come from the understanding of the work that must be undertaken.

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Still others struggle to makes sense of the disparity. The weight that falls on their shoulders is the recognition that these charts represent their families, friends, co-workers, neighbors and for a few, even themselves. In disbelief, Candice says, "it just makes such a difference to see the disparity in front of me like this. What is going on?" Patricia charges ahead with the certainty that her intention of showing the shocking information has garnered support and will build motivation for the health education and advocacy work that needs to be accomplished by the organization. Capitalizing on this moment she asks, "Well, who is going to stand up for black women if we don't? Who is going to do the work?" In a flood of chatter more projects, more white papers, additional lobby days, expanded community education and town hall meetings are suggested as a sense of urgency fills the room.

Nobody revels in the stark information but they continue with a renewed energy, pulling from sheer will, digging deep within to muster a few more ounces of strength to continue. Several of the women who volunteer with the organization work in public health agencies, manage community clinics, or are health educators. I've been told that they are often aware of data on health disparities in the city, within certain sectors, (HIV/STI/Poverty)[44] but the compounding of information is at times too much to bear.

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[44] According to the Los Angeles Department of Public Health (2011) and The Kaiser Community Foundations reports on the Social Determinant of Health (2009) Blacks have the lowest median household income at $31,905, compared to the median
for Latinos at $33,820, Asians at $47,631 and Whites at $53,978. African American women have the highest rates of infant and maternal mortality. In Los Angeles County, the African American infant mortality rate is 11.7 per 1000 live births that is more than double, when compared to their white counter parts (5.0 per 1000 live births).

They tire of looking at the charts and addressing the same issues. The Executive Director, now fifty-five with thirty years of women's community health organizing under her belt, with little sympathy asks them, "Well, how do you think I feel?" In moments such as these tensions are apparent between Candice who is seeking to take a "step back" but is emotionally pulled back into the fray and Patricia who is drawing from many years of struggle to indirectly shame the younger woman for considering a break from organizing. In many small moments like these, over time the responsibility to be present and involved is compounded by social processes of race, class, and gender inequity that black women face. For Patricia, her mission is partially accomplished in using her own frustrations to get the team of volunteers motivated and is simultaneously indicative of the ways emotional trauma is revealed and transferred.

One must be mindful of the ways in which the use of the blues or story telling can be draining on those expected to carry out community labor. Patricia's approach to soliciting volunteers and community engagement is felt by some to be shrewd. During the course of fieldwork a long time supporter,Jennifer removed herself from the coordinating council to finish a degree and because Patricia's demands for volunteer time became unmanageable. In another instance, frustration arose for a former board member who left the organization because she felt pulled in too many directions by Patricia's expectation of board duties. For instance, Candice notes, "the biggest thing is you can see [is] she

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Maternal Mortality is 60.3 per 100,000, compared to 10 for whites, 13.7 for Latinas, and 18.1 for Asian and Pacific Islander Women. African American Women have the highest prevalence of high blood pressure with over half (53.8%) diagnosed in the age bracket from 45 to 64 years of age.

toes-the-line and always goes over the line. What is the line for volunteers, what is appropriate, and what is actually what her staff should be doing. But you know she doesn't actually have a staff and that is why she needs extra volunteers but she should just be up front about it and say, 'ok this is what we need and I just need some help here and this is what we need your resources to do,' but she won't do that." In this instance, while clearly invested in activating a plan to address the disparity, Candice is also disgruntled by the way in which Patricia seeks to round up support for her programs. While the frustration is felt throughout the room there is a refusal to speak to the trauma in black women's organizing. Candice, Sasha, Makeda and others over the years communicated their exhaustion and weariness of participating with the organization. Yet, while they at times attribute it to Patricia's increased need of unappreciated labor, it is also evident they are in fact feeling fatigue from the trauma they are encountering through the interplay of individual memory recollection and social traumas from race and gender discrimination. Ultimately, we see the insidious ways in which grim sleep then affects black women's organizing by creating a fatigue.

SELF CARE

Much like the concept of wellbeing, the use of the term self-care has emerged from multidisciplinary health and psychology literature into lay person popular readings to better one's life (Abel and Nelson 1990, Eckersley, Dixon, Douglas 2001). Very broadly, "self-care refers to the active process of recovering, maintaining and improving one's health." (Ziguras 2004). Although ideas concerning control of life's circumstances, beauty, performance, happiness, and enjoyment are primary goals to be achieved through

self-care, Ziguras argues that this approach to healing is too individualized and located in the realm of privilege to be measured effectively on a collective or community basis.

Not unlike African holistic health where the health of an individual is achieved through a collective healing or against an historical backdrop, black feminist conceptualization and praxis of self-care diverges from individualized experiences. For example, Hooks explains, "Black female self-recovery, like all black self-recovery, is an expression of a libratory political practice. Living as we do in a white-supremacist capitalist patriarchal context that can best exploit us when we lack a firm grounding in self and identity (knowledge of who we are and where we have come from) choosing wellness is an act of political resistance" (1993). A cursory search of black women and health reveals a number of studies where black women are the subjects of studies concerning drug rehabilitation, various health ailments, sexual practices, and mental health challenges. Black women entering these discourses through a point of self-actualization is largely absent. To this end, literature that attempts to address black women's approach to health, healing and self-care emerges from a collective experience of racialism and capitalist exclusion that is most readily available though creative writings of poetry, fiction, short stories and early feminist multi-vocal and edited volumes exploring black women writ large (hooks 1983, Lorde 1983, Bambara 1982, Shange 1982).

These writings built upon the black feminist standpoints have for decades inspired grassroots activism. Audre Lorde stated, "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" (1983). Given the stark health

data and the ever changing financial strain on nonprofits, black activist women of all ages have drawn from the teachings of Audre Lorde and the early work of bell hooks to reinvigorate the concept of self-care. Broadly defined, self-care can include attention to the mental, spiritual, and physical needs of an individual. Though there has been a thirty-year time gap from the publication dates of work such as *Sisters of the Yam, The Black Women's Health Book,* and *The Cancer Journals* among several other ground breaking texts, black activist scholars and organizers are engaging old ideas to transform new models of work.

While the search for a work-life balance is desired by most women involved in the organization, it is most often voiced and acted upon by the younger women in their late twenties, who are juggling budding careers and intimate partner relationships. For example, this comes to light when Candice mentions her growing number of grey hairs, yet, later states proudly,

> I'm pretty young for what I've accomplished so far. I get reminded of that a lot. Then I'm black, so there's always that pressure of having to be 110% better than everyone else. There is also the pressure of validating myself but most of the time it's not coming from me. I've been questioned. I've had a huge staff and I've had women that are older than me, working with me, working for me, and I've heard things they've said and I've been questioned. There is just a lot to do and when you do well, then they expect you to do well, they give you more on top of what you are already supposed to be doing.

Later, she confesses that the growing number of hours worked and meetings is her most frequent argument with her partner, who worries and questions when she will start to create space in her schedule for personal time and relaxation. This growing concern for her work-life balance is a difficult experience that Candice attributes to her position as a

young black professional woman in her field of public health and demography. For example, after spending several nights in tears while counting grey hairs and commiserating with a white female colleague who has held a similar position at a community health clinic and is also a graduate from UCLA School of Public Health, Candice applied, interviewed, then pulled her application from a job offer as a senior programs officer for a large foundation. Her friend, however, left the community based program, found a new job with a higher pay grade and less stress. Reflecting for a moment about her colleague's choice and career transition Candice insists, "I've had those moments and I'm like fuck this! I love my people but I also want to be able to take a lot of vacations. I also want to be in a better home or buy this, that, and the other. But at the end of the day, I can't. I wouldn't feel right doing that, even though I'm not feeling this [increased work responsibilities and low pay] right now. I honestly and truly feel I cannot leave until I create something that is ground breaking and sustainable and somehow shows an impact in lowering these STD rate. I can't." This commitment to community betterment is a primary motivating factor in Candice's work with black women's sexually transmitted infections education and prevention. It additionally fuels her at times frustrating relationship with Patricia and the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice. In these instances while Candice acknowledges her work within black communities as both rewarding professionally and draining in her personal life, by referencing the toll that time commitments are taking on her relationship, the exhaustion and frustration leads to Candice taking a "step back" from the organization.

Similar to Candice's desires for an elevated quality of life, Makeda, a young volunteer turned active board member, has taken measures that echo Candice's time concerns while seeking to maximize her output for both the organization and her personal life. Makeda began her tenure with the organization when she was just 22 years old, as a doctoral student in early research towards her occupational therapy degree. As part of her research, Makeda developed a program that targeted baby boomers' diet plans and their quality of care needed in outpatient therapy. This began her eight-year relationship with the organization. While her position as the board secretary requires her to be present at meetings and quarterly retreats, Makeda, who works four to sometimes five jobs including operating a private therapy service which requires her to drive to patients' homes in various locations in the city, will sometimes drive two hours battling Los Angeles traffic to be present in a meeting. When that will not suffice she will often call in via Skype or phone. While she is only a year or two younger than Candice, her personal stance of not believing in burnout fuels both her career and personal achievements while maintaining a work-life balance.

In 2010, Makeda came to be on the board when the Executive Director insisted she help plan a membership drive. Unbeknownst to Makeda, her presence and presentation of the membership proceedings ushered in her first action as an at-large officer, which was announced by Patricia at the close of the meeting. Both confused and angered, Makeda later revealed to me that she felt manipulated into the transition. However, it was through this new position that she was better able to understand the work of Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice and its impacts on black women's

lives by insisting that black women's high rates of disease and sexually transmitted infections deserve prioritized attention. Still, Makeda, by utilizing her networks of social and professional support, has drawn clear boundaries by refusing to work on Sundays, maintaining a workout schedule and letting Patricia know in no uncertain terms that every night is not available for BWOHJ planning meetings. This at first came as a surprise to Patricia who initially indicated that Makeda should contribute hours to both volunteer and board duties. Abuse of time commitments of board, staff and volunteers, is fueled by unclear roles and ambiguous titles and guilt and are primary reasons for a declining interest within the organization. Although many of the women felt deeply compelled by the mission and purpose, several felt BWOHJ had moved too far from its initial goal to be a caring place of support. This shift was dramatically apparent in the Executive Director's treatment of Sasha.

During the summer of 2011, Sasha began to take steps to better her quality of social life. Numerous times she lamented that she was tired of working every weekend and that she too wanted to "have a life." Though her growing medical concerns were prominent in our daily conversation over lunch, in these moments Sasha was referring to her increasingly non-existent social life. In moments like this she would often repeat her tale of migration from Akron, Ohio to Los Angeles by laughing and stating, "Yes, I was one of those women. I followed a man out here. I came to California to be with a man, and less than a year later we broke up." While Sasha decided to stay in the city she noted that her life was once filled with so many social engagements and commitments that she grew tired of choosing. An avid football fan and music lover, Sasha never lacked a new

story or engagement to attend. Yet, over the course of her five-year tenure at the organization, she began to rapidly lose touch with her social groups. This was on one hand due to her deep commitment to educating black communities on breast health while, on the other, complicated by the demands that Patricia levied her way. This constant struggle for time and balance would come to be a frequent topic of conversation in the office.

The conversation between Patricia and Sasha concerning staff working hours and personal time reached a breaking point in early 2011. During the late fall of 2010, Sasha worked for twenty-one days without a scheduled off-day. Preceding this, it had been three weeks of continuous work. Sasha also noted that she worked for six weekends, only taking a single day of rest on Sunday. According to Sasha, after her twenty-one days of coordinating meetings, events and volunteers for outdoor tabling at health expos, she was summoned for jury duty. Within that same week her mother fell ill. Sasha completed jury duty and immediately traveled to Akron for three days. Upon Sasha's return, she received her payroll check for the period and noticed it was several hundred dollars less than her weekly wages. When she brought the matter to Patricia's attention, Sasha was curtly informed that the organization in fact did not cover days spent at jury duty nor did they cover personal vacation days. Although it was not office protocol at the time, Patricia further stated that as an hourly worker, Sasha was required to submit a time sheet which she had not done and several hours could not be adequately accounted for. Upon hearing this, Sasha was extremely furious and hurt; so much so, that she has relayed the story several times to me and to others as a warning of office practices. Part of her warning

also revealed that office protocol and administrative changes were carried out on the whims of the Executive Director and while the board was to serve as an intermediary, they often were unaware of the daily trappings of the staff.

The hurt Sasha experienced was twofold, one being emotional and the other financial. First, as several of the women indicated, they often feel the organization provides a familial comfort that is both welcoming and disconcerting. This was uniquely true for Sasha and Patricia, who are first cousins through their matrilineal side, meaning that it was Patricia's maternal aunt who had fallen ill and required assistance. Incidentally, it was also this aunt who encouraged Sasha to volunteer and later become staff at the women's organization by urging her to help a family member in need. Patricia's failure to evoke any leniency in paid sick leave was emotionally damaging and devastating to Sasha above an administrative relationship. Second, the financial hardship left Sasha unable to pay her rent or purchase diabetes and high blood pressure medications. This seemingly miserly and unscrupulous act left Sasha's health emotionally and financially vulnerable. In Sasha's account, this incident was felt to be uncalled for, "just plain nasty." In the months following, Sasha began as she stated, "Taking back my weekends, because Juli, I want to have a life. I do. This is too much. We do too much and it's too much work for the number of people we have here." Since this time she has meticulously logged every hour and consciously noted when events required a weekend staff member. Sasha then modified her weekly schedule, if she worked during the weekend Sasha then took the following Monday off. While she continued to work for the organization, Sasha refused to work more than one Saturday

per month. This incremental distancing from the fast-paced, unending, and quickly accumulating work would be her first step in leaving the organization as a paid staff member.

Reflecting to the earlier moments when Patricia knowingly reveals stark health data, overworking of staff and volunteers and finally Makeda's entrance to the executive board, we can see that preventing burnout and self-care are imperative to not only working conditions but to the way the work is carried out and how information is delivered. Self-care is then a necessary strategy at the organizational level and financial stress of nonprofits within the "starvation cycle" of funding - the trickle-down effect becomes and embodies experience of staff and volunteers. Thus, mobilizing trauma, guilt and shame to motivate participation becomes detrimental to both organization and person. This feeling is not lost upon younger black reproductive justice workers that are committed to both community survival but also to individual health, who engage self-care as a way to sustain their involvement within community based organizations. As such, women like Candice, Makeda, and Sasha are seeking alternatives to the organization and personal models of time, care, and engagement then those they see by revitalizing self-care as praxis.

LIFE, DEATH AND GENDER IN LOS ANGELES

Through the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice, the lives of Patricia, Sasha, Candice, Makeda, and others have converged to transform the lives of other black women. However, in many ways it was their own lives and relationships that were equally transformed. The underfunding of black or Black Women's organizations

required nonprofits to become creative in funding development, in effect, 'hustling' a breadth of programming. The combination of the nonstop programming and Patricia's continual use of storytelling to garner volunteers began to push volunteers, staff, and board members to their limits, eventually leading to a number of women stepping back from the organization. Unfortunately, burnout as evidenced by the dynamic between Sasha and Patricia, palpable tension and animosity, emerged from extensive demands on people's time. The increased expectations not only negatively affected Sasha's health and irrevocably changed her relationship with Patricia, but created feelings of guilt amongst other volunteers.

Nonprofit culture work that utilizes passion for social change to sustain engagement also creates a climate where trauma, stress, and exhaustion become normalized within work culture. Although in black women's organizing this condition of antagonisms fueled by perpetual financial need and unending work that ultimately falls upon the shoulders of executive directors has been described as "founder's syndrome" (Silliman 2005), it instead can be viewed as an outcome of grim sleep.

Whereas, founders' syndrome explores the ways in which one person becomes the 'face ' and representative of the organization leading to burnout, Grim Sleep points to the racial negligence experienced through social processes of exclusion. In the case of The Black Woman's Organization for Health and Justice, the women are enmeshed in a nonprofit culture that ultimately confronts violence and grim sleep through funding slumps, health disparities, and grueling work schedules, though they insist on continuing their participation while bettering their own life through self-care.

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CODA

"49 % of black women in Los Angeles ages 24 - 49 have herpes"

"3 out of 4 black women between the ages of 15-25 will contract gonorrhea"

"Black females experienced higher rates of rape or sexual assault in 2008 than white females or females of other races (2.9 compared to 1.2 and 0.9 per 1,000 females age 12 or older, respectively."[45]

These are just a few of the numbers that have provided statistical examples to a number of the chapters. On one hand it seems plausible a black woman will contract a sexually transmitted infection and can have some other reproductive health issues; yet, women living within these same social geographies experience gendered street violence and they become marked as isolated instances of inequality, urban blight, or crime. Rather than demonstrating a state department's concern for the health of black Angelinos, these numbers, at best, measure the depth of racial oppression. The separation of these "indicators" of health masks the ways in which the concomitant development of racism, violence, and spatial segregation affect black lives. Black women experience multivalent violence at several points of convergence, yet these statistics only offer a limited view into their lives. Moreover, how often are their stories told? Rarely.

Beginning in 2006, Nefertiti became an occasional, yet consistent, volunteer at BWOHJ. As a single mother she appreciated the familial-like support the older women of

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[45] *See:* Catalano, Shannan. 2013. "Intimate Partner Violence, 1993–2010." Bureau of Justice and Langton, Lynn , Michael Planty, Jennifer L. Truman. 2013. "For second consecutive year violent and property crime rates increased in 2012." Bureau of Justice.

BWOHJ offered during events. These events provided opportunities for Nefertiti to build her professional skills and conduct workshops while the organization provided free childcare. In 2011 she became a program manager of a black infant health organization similar to BWOHJ. The nonprofit required long nights and weekend work hours. In early April 2011 after one night of meetings, Nefertiti parked her car and walked into her Western Avenue home. Upon entering her house she was grabbed from behind and thrown on the ground. The man was waiting in her apartment. The assailant punched Nefertiti in the face and ripped her clothes. After a brief struggle, she managed to gain the upper hand by striking him in the groin and then ran back to her car.

After this incident, I spent several days attempting to confirm her attendance to a BWOHJ meeting. When I was finally able to reach Nefertiti she explained her distance, stating that after the attack she felt embarrassed and withdrew from social engagements, work, and volunteer commitments. Nefertiti also revealed that her trauma was compounded by the fact that her attacker was a man who often volunteered with her organization and whom many of her coworkers often flattered. Speaking more to herself, she offhandedly mentioned that her attacker once offered her a ride home and asked her out on a date, to which she refused. Nefertiti later believed this was his reasoning for the sexual assault. The situation was so traumatic that she felt unsafe both at home and at work. Though Nefertiti recounted the narrow escape from her would-be rapist to her supervisor, the woman, rather than empathize, instead commented on the amount of work that was left unattended in Nefertiti's three consecutive sick days and suggested that perhaps she was not capable of managerial work. Justifiably angered and unable to

expediently procure new employment combined with her co-workers' uncritical praise of male volunteers and her inability to afford counseling, Nefertiti relocated to another state.

I was not privy to Nefertiti's' survival story until several weeks after the attack when I finally reached her. As she recounted her story I was struck with my own familiar pangs of terror from my violent encounter during late April 2011, occurring just a week before our conversation.

After a long day of staff meetings, the small and stuffy office was beginning to feel unseasonably hot. On this evening, I left the office feeling a little bit frustrated about the number of meetings. Additionally, the increased number of grant reports that needed to be completed were becoming a hindrance to program coordination. Finally, the need to move forward with my dissertation research while maintaining my commitment to the organization became an aggravated concern. However, the 2011 report on black maternal mortality[46] had just been released and LaPatricia called an emergency meeting to discuss its implications for BWOHJ. She additionally wanted op-eds to be submitted to several Los Angeles newspapers within 24 hours. After twenty months in Los Angeles working with the organization I had grown tired of never-ending meetings and escalating expectations from the director. Though I understood programming and multiple grants were necessary to the survival of the organization, I, like other volunteers and staff, began to feel burnt out.

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[46] The California Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Review. Report from 2002 and 2003 Maternal Death Reviews. Sacramento: California Department of Public Health, Maternal Child and Adolescent Health Division; 2011.

Feeling weary that warm spring evening, I left the Leimert Park office beleaguered and distracted. Walking out the office I dialed my friend and colleague Damien, also an anthropologist working in LA to discuss advocacy and the challenges of conducting fieldwork in our hometown. Less than a minute into the conversation our exchange was cut short. As I stepped across the busy street heading towards my car I was struck down from behind. I don't remember screaming (I was later told by Damien that all he heard was my screaming when the phone cut off). The pain in my head and face was hard to ignore. All I could seem to hold on to was the burning and searing pain that was radiating from my ear. By the time I realized what had happened, the young man who brutally whacked me in the face and stole my phone was far down 43rd street. Shaken, I took the final steps to my car parked on Crenshaw Boulevard. Though the street was busy and people were sitting at the nearest bus stop and heavily populated McDonalds, the intersection of Crenshaw and 43rd Street remained unfazed, buzzing with rush hour traffic. I looked around to see if anyone had seen what had happened to me. There was no one, not one person, who looked concerned or offered help. I suppose, a screaming woman on a South LA avenue really isn't anything new.

It is strange what happens to a body and mind in distress. After retreating to the enclosed safety of my car, I immediately thought about how I could best warn the rest of the women in the office who were parked on the same street and would soon be leaving the office. I was most concerned about my young interns, in particular Angelique, who crossed the same street a month before and was hit by a car that sped away. I moved quickly and within several minutes I walked into my Inglewood apartment without

remembering the drive home. Within the next minutes I hurried up the stairs, called the office, emailed the staff, cancelled my credit cards, and reported my phone stolen. It was not until I saw my roommate that I collapsed into a heap of tears, inaudible words, and gasped for air. Within a few minutes, I could not move my head without experiencing intense pain, within a few hours the welts turned into bruises. By the end of the night there was no amount of Tylenol that could quell my headache and body aches. Like Nefertiti, without health insurance a trip to the emergency room was not an option and follow-up care or counseling costs remained on the forefront of my mind. Seeking medical attention would create a financial stress and debt that would be differently brutal. Though I intended to stay home for a few days, the next morning I received an email from Patricia, which stated she was glad I was ok, then mentioned it could have been worse. She promptly questioned if the previously discussed op-ed on maternal mortality would be ready by the end of the day and mentioned a late afternoon meeting I should attend. Though she is not an uncaring individual it was quite clear that there was no time to waste in the nonprofit industry on self-care. Within a few days I was calling Nefertiti to confirm her attendance to a planning meeting.

I suppose it could have been worse. Neither Nefertiti nor I were raped, shot in our chests, or left like garbage in a dark alley. But it is disturbing that our stories reflect normalized violence and terror which black women encounter daily within society. These violent moments are instances of time forged on the mind and body characterized as

violent crime[47] and sexual assault coupled with the structural violence of inadequate access to health care and other forms of structural social inequality. They are then compounded by the demands of fledgling nonprofits during the state's worst economic downturn.

My project is an ethnographic exploration of the ways in which black activist women navigate the violence of racism, gender, health and space while operating a nonprofit. By weaving together an historical archive of black women's anti-violence work during the 1980s in South Los Angeles with contemporary experiences of violence and inequality, a rich picture of black life and death in South Los Angeles emerges. I argue that black activist women's organizing is best understood within the context of structural violence as manifested through grim sleep. As a consequence, the dark matter of their organizing goes unrecognized yet through a reproductive justice framework, continues to shape potentially transformative initiatives.

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[47] Though the Bureau of Justice reported that, "2010, rates for both white non-Hispanics (6.2 victimizations per 1,000) and black non-Hispanics (7.8 per 1,000) females had declined by about 61%. During the same period, the rate for Hispanic females declined by 78%, from 18.8 to 4.1 per 1,000." (Catalano 2013) these rates fail to account that black women not only experience high level of intimate violence but also report sexual assault far less than their Latino and white counter parts. Additionally, intimate partner violence is broadly defines as including rape or sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault committed by current or former spouses, boyfriends, or girlfriends, which may not include neighbors or co-workers. These individuals may be familiar but not partners. Consequently, assault committed by those categorized as such and would instead fall under violent crimes. However, according to a different Bureau of Justice report, "violent crime rates increased slightly in 2012 for blacks but remained stable for whites and Hispanics" and , "In 2012, residents in urban areas continued to experience the highest rate of violent crime." (Langton 2013). It is through the juxposition of these categories and the reliance on police reports attacks such as Nefertiti's and my own become unexplored.

This dissertation embarked on a series of questions set to understand and evaluate the nature of black activist women's reproductive justice work in South Los Angeles. In developing my argument of grim sleep, the historical and contemporary violence experienced by black women within South Los Angeles, I revealed the dialectical relationship between grim sleep and dark matter of black women's activism which are couched within a discourse of antiblack racism resulting in death and resistance that popular media outlets fail to address. Each chapter then offers a provisional discussion into the conditions of work and life that take place in Black LA.

Chapter One presented the historical spatial evidence of gendered body dumps through the prism of race, space and gender. My definition of Grim Sleep recalls the impact of structural violence while suggesting the incremental racial and oppressive marking of black bodies and spaces as disposable produce deadly living conditions. It is under these gradual declines that shifts can be conflated with stagnant or no change in socio-economic statuses.

The remainder of the dissertation then makes the case that while living under multifaceted forms of violence, via grim sleep, black activist women's work is best understandable through dark matter and reproductive justice. Chapter Three presents the concept of the nonprofit hustle as a working class strategy of survival as a response to the economic downturn and cuts to social services. An influential element behind the need for multiple funding streams is the reliance on foundation giving and governmental grants that at times requires a reformulation of programming. Chapter Four and Five evaluate

the practices of the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice from a reproductive justice standpoint. By drawing on oral histories and ethnographic data to explore the limitations of respectability politics Anjali's experiences in chapter four reveal the displacement of black queer identities within the Black Women's Organization for Health and Justice. While chapter five explores the effects of nonprofit grant hustling on black women's health that results in burnout and for some dramatic health decline. Thinking back to the Combahee River Collective's statement of a need, "to address a whole range of oppressions," suggests the practices of social engagement within black activist women's nonprofit work must too be as varied as the range of oppression experienced (Smith1983).

As such, the political project of The Black Women's Organization For Health and Justice is one that is indeed social justice oriented. The emphasis on healing, enhancing, and changing the ways that reproductive health is understood continues paramount to the existence black communities. BWOHJ's continual development of programming reflects the activist pivot the violence of grim sleep necessitates. In this way Patricia's use of personal story telling to entice funders or to galvanize volunteers during a precarious economic situation draws upon radical traditions of black activism. Yet, it is though the cultural reproduction of respectability politics within office dynamic and policy politics that can limit the impact of the organization.

IMPLICATIONS

My research speaks to the ways that health advocacy, violence, and space converge upon black women's bodies in the African diaspora. This dissertation is part of

an emerging body of diaspora scholarship that takes seriously reproductive justice organizing of black activist women. Instead of placing a focus on a single reproductive health disparity I examine the social conditions and intersectional organizing practices of black activist women. Experiences of the women in BWOHJ reveal persistent social inequality they face with community organizing and tireless commitment to enhancing black women's lives.

The works of anthropologists (Rocha 2014, Cole, 2014, Dos Santos 2012) address the dominant ideologies, social structures, and phenomena of representational violence that inform black women political practices and subjectivities. What becomes noteworthy is the commitment activist women have to address state oppression on black life through a black feminist lens that is consistent with the Combahee River Collective statement that states;

> Our politics initially sprang from the shared belief that Black women are inherently valuable, that our liberation is a necessity not as an adjunct to somebody else's may because of our need as human persons for autonomy. This may seem so obvious as to sound simplistic, but it is apparent that no other ostensibly progressive movement has ever considered our specific oppression as a priority or worked seriously for the ending of that oppression (1979).

Black women's reproductive justice politics in the diaspora address the multifaceted watch that state control, oppression, and social inequality are disproportionately affect women's health. These are built upon hegemonic heteronormative racial ideologies that seek to reify black women's bodies as merely sexual deviants or surplus bodies. However, it is the shared experience of oppression and belief in the "inherent value" of

black women's worth that reproductive justice organizing draws from across the diaspora.

The potential significance of the contributions that this project makes to the field of anthropology occurs within three parameters. First, ethnographic work on reproduction and reproductive rights traditionally occurs or focuses on abortion, family planning, and clinic operations. My project presents an alternative and comprehensive look into the ways in which reproductive justice organizing impacts community agendas and larger quality of life issues. Moreover, this project centers not on the nature of care or living with health disparity, but rather on black activist women's experiences engaging social change through nonprofit organizing. Secondly, Anthropology of reproduction and women's health traditionally focuses on communities outside of the United States. By centering this dissertation within one of the largest states and cities domestically, the potential for cross diasporic comparison can be made. Third, this project contributes to the anthropology of violence. Anthropological work on structural violence has detailed the outcome of state policy in the aftermath of structured inequality and health disparity. Farmers' work on detailing the ways in which oppression is experienced over time is particularly helpful for historical analysis. Yet it leaves the contemporary moment tenuous by presenting structural violence as a fixed experience. Through, grim sleep I aim to show how an incubating violence rather than a fixed structure of racial neglect advances incremental oppression. Through this black women reorganize their

reproductive justice efforts to respond to a changing system of health care while focusing on well-being.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Though my project aims to understand the conditions in which black women engage state policy and reproductive health through nonprofit organizations a larger set of issues manifest among discourses of health, violence, and gender. Amongst these areas there is a substantial amount of research to be done. To begin, the normative use of gender to point to women as a fixed category within reproductive justice organizations limits both coalition opportunities with gender justice[48] activists by displacing black queer and trans people. Additionally, black trans queer communities are encountering legal challenges in conception and parenting rights while negotiating unequal access to reproductive health technologies and care. Finally, a more complex evaluation of violence as it related to health access and crimes is needed to fully address the context in which black urban communities experience disproportionate health and mortality outcomes. It is not enough to evaluate social justice work without considering the conditions within work is undertaken and, as we saw in chapter five, evaluating the working conditions it creates.

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[48] Gender justice refers to a social justice movement of transgenedered people to increase awareness, visibility, health access, and community safety of female to male (FTM) and Male to Female (MTF) identified people. A key aspect of this approach is expanding identities discourses beyond a normalized body and gender classification.

Appendix

Partial List of South Los Angeles Organizations and Goals

1. FACTS: Families to Amend California's Three Strikes. Our mission is to support, educate, and empower those who are striving for proportionality in sentencing and fairness and justice in the criminal justice system by building a movement based in the communities and families most affected by California's Three Strikes law. Www.Fact1.com

2. Black Worker Center: The mission of the Los Angeles Black Worker Center is to increase access to quality jobs; reduce employment discrimination; and improve industries that employ Black workers through action and unionization. The center seeks to promote economic and racial justice, peace, and prosperity for all of Los Angeles by developing policies and corporate practices that perpetuate equality in the labor market and end inferior jobs in the Black Community. http://lablackworkercenter.org/

3. Bus Riders Union: The Bus Riders Union, a project of the Labor/Community Strategy Center, is a progressive civil rights and environmental justice membership organization. Our work begins with the mass transit and public health needs of the Black community, the multiple communities of the African Diaspora; Chicano, Mexicano, Salvadoreño, Guatemalteco, Nicaraguenses and other Latino Americanos; Korean, Pilipino, Chinese and other Asian/Pacific Islanders; Indigenous communities; and working class whites who are transit dependent in Los Angeles. http://www.thestrategycenter.org/node/5877

4. CAPA: Coalition Against Police Abuse the stated aim of organizing marginalized groups such as the poor, homosexuals, blacks, and Latinos to prevent, expose, and resist abuse by police and seek legal redress for such abuse.

5. YJC: The Youth Justice Coalition (YJC) is working to build a youth, family and prisoner-led movement to challenge race, gender and class inequality in Los Angeles County's and California's juvenile injustice systems - See more at: http://www.youth4justice.org/about-the-yjc/history#sthash.X1MbapMk.dpuf

6. SAJE: Our mission is to change public and corporate policy in a manner that provides concrete economic benefit to working-class people, increases the economic rights of working class people, and builds leadership through a movement for economic justice. In the process, SAJE also creates models of economic democracy that are replicable and sustainable. http://www.saje.net/

7. BWW: Black Women for Wellness is committed to healing, educating, and supporting Black Women! As grandmothers, mothers, aunties, daughters, and sister we found we had no choice but to take on the plethora of health issues Black women encounter.

8. Community Build: Community Build, Inc. is dedicated to the revitalization of South Los Angeles communities through investment in youth and commercial economic development. http://www.communitybuild.org/

9. Africa House: At Africa House, we are a dedicated group of volunteers with a love of people and a love for helping others. We are teachers, mothers, fathers, nurses, doctors, musicians, cosmeticians, business owners, waiters, engineers, taxi drivers, therapists, and children – for they must learn to serve others as well. http://www.africahouseus.org/

10. New Way of Life: A New Way of Life Reentry Project provides housing and support services to formerly incarcerated women in South Central Los Angeles, facilitating a successful transition back to community life. www.anewwayoflife.org/

11. Villiage Health Foundation: The Village Health Foundation is more than a complementary medical clinic. We are a community center committed to improving our clients' physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being. In addition to offering individual treatment and educational programs, we hold group activities, public lectures, workshops, social support seminars and fundraising events such as concerts, fashion shows, and casino nights. http://villagehealthfoundation.org/

12. UMMA: Community clinic To promote the well-being of the underserved by providing access to high-quality healthcare for all, regardless of ability to pay. www.ummaclinic.org/

13. SCL: The Southern California Library documents and makes accessible histories of struggles that challenge racism and other systems of oppression so we can all imagine and sustain possibilities for freedom. http://www.socallib.org/

14. LA CAN: The mission of the Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN) is to help people dealing with poverty create & discover opportunities, while serving as a vehicle to ensure we have voice, power & opinion in the decisions that are directly affecting us. http://cangress.org/

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