I AM (Still) an Angry Black Woman
Black Feminist Autoethnography, Voice, and Resistance

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I AM (Still) an Angry Black Woman nine years after this essay was first published in Women's Studies in Communication (WSIC). Layer upon layer of everyday living has rendered my anger into a thick, sculptable entity. Visualizing its shape, I see a lion with sternly focused honey brown eyes and a jaw unhinged into an eloquent roar that shakes leaves off trees and rocks off mountains. My anger (still) blisters, (still) boils, (still) twists my spirit, and (still) challenges my faith. When I breathe, it breathes; when I lament, it laments—my anger is as much a part of my biracial Black woman self as my intelligence, vulnerability, bliss, compassion, and laughter. Making my rage and frustration a matter of public record is not as terrifying as it once was. The turbulence of fear has matured into the reverberations of the roar, and time has clarified who this chapter was intended for. First, other “blackgirls” (Boylorn, 2016, p. 47); second, women of multiple hues who find a “homeplace” (hooks, 1990, p. 42) between my lines; and third, every preposterous soul clinging to normative binaries, stereotypes, and caricatures—as if those frenzied dominant logics ever should have been forced into our global foundation to begin with. Word, anything that requires such barbarous force fails to be innate to humanity; Black women never merely were nor will we ever merely be who the dominant imagination thinks we are.

 Ironically, “I AM an Angry Black Woman” (Griffin, 2012a) was onerous to publish yet remains the publication that I receive the most correspondence about. I have received dozens of inquiries and notes of gratitude over the years; recently, an email titled “Another Angry Black Woman” that included an invitation to interview me for a podcast (Ralph, 2019). I commonly utilize this essay to also demystify the trials and tribulations of publication for graduate students. I wrote the first draft in 2010 as an Assistant Professor at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale while auditing Dr. Elyse Pineau’s Autoethnography course. That same year it earned Top Paper at a national conference and a biting rejection from Cultural Studies <=> Critical Methodologies (CSCM). Dr. Norman K. Denzin’s rejection letter as CSCM’s editor reads, “I am moved by your emotions but it is not clear how you advance autoethnography discussion.” The sole review enclosed only deepened my anguish as a young scholar still figuring out how to navigate both publishing and rejection. Comprising five points, the only review forwarded from the Editor singularly offered censure opposed to a combination of censure and constructive criticism. Numbers two, three, and four were particularly injurious to read as a biracial Black female academic:

2. She spends lots of time “telling” the reader repeatedly how angry she is, yet there is not even “one” personal lived experience example of “why” this is so …
3. She claims to use “anger” productively yet there’s not one example of this in this draft.
4. She references the reader as a generic “you” without ever clarifying who her audience is, so I am confused—is she addressing all Black women, all Black people, white folks, etc.?

Whenever I revisit the letter and review, I remember the swollen tears that I refused to let fall standing at my mailbox in the main office. Sometimes, tears (still) swell anew when I share them with students to help them grasp not only the difference between
a conference-ready versus publication-ready manuscript but also the significance of publicly sharing rejection to confront shame/embarrassment/defeat with communal support. Rather than the humiliation I initially endured at obviously being the worst-writer-in-the-history-of-forever, now my tears signify taking humbled pride in cheeky perseverance. Some students react to the arrant rejection with tearful eyes mirroring mine and most viscerally cringe at the rejection coupled with asking questions about my experience. I tell them about my knee-jerk decision not to submit the essay anywhere else for publication within five minutes of reading the rejection followed by how cherished colleague and friend, Dr. John T. Warren, challenged my decision and changed my mind. To be fair, the published essay is significantly different from the version CSCM rejected. Not so different that it warranted CSCM’s dehumanizing dismissal of Black Feminist Autoethnography and, more broadly, research authored by Black women about the emotionality of Black womanhood. However, the WSIC version is indeed a much stronger, more poignant autoethnography. Thus, another cherished colleague, Dr. Suzanne M. Daughton, compassionately taught me that even a Top National Communication Association convention paper needs work in order to become a publication-ready essay. To shift my rejected essay toward earning a revise and resubmit, I tightened its theoretical focus, sutured Black feminism and autoethnography to advocate for the particularity of Black feminist autoethnography as method and removed the lived experiences that didn’t resonate as strongly via the clarified theoretical and methodological lens. This allowed a more poignant argument and articulation of emotionality to emerge. Contrary to the dehumanizing CSCM review, I made each of these meaningful changes without stripping any of what the reviewer termed “empty telling about ‘rage/anger.’”

What I am most gratified by are the essay’s heuristic contributions. After reading it, Black women narrate feeling seen and heard in ways that remain too rare in academic spaces; women of color intuit a scholarly kinship that inspires interest in honing their own autoethnographic skills; and feminists value my own critical contributions. After reading it, Black women autoethnographers in communication. Whether it be via Black Feminist Autoethnography (Griffin, 2012a, 2014a, 2015; Hendrix, 2011), Blackened Autoethnography (Boylorn, 2013a), autoethnographic performance (Johnson, 2014a), Blackgirl Autoethnography (Boylorn, 2008, 2013b, 2016), autocríticothography (Johnson, 2014b, 2018), or poetry (Durham, 2004), we are determinedly resisting efforts to thwart our polyvocal narrative presence. Our voices join a formidable chorus of Black women writers, scholars, and activists documenting the abundant diversity of Black femininity in myriad venues. Brittany Cooper publishes via academic and popular press outlets; Laverne Cox acts on television and advocates in documentaries and the popular press; Roxane Gay pens fiction, nonfiction, and Marvel comics; Janet Mock authors memoirs and produces television and film; Issa Rae acts, writes, and produces a compilation of television, film, and podcast projects; and Dee Rees writes and directs television and film. Within and beyond the academy, Black women are invariably storytelling Black women’s lives.

To support Black women autoethnographers, those who identify as Black and female can produce Black Feminist Autoethnography (or an iteration thereof), and those who do not can read, cite, and teach our work to situate research authored by Black women about Black womanhood firmly within the epistemological canon. In service to this endeavor, what follows is an updated version of “I AM An Angry Black Woman” anchored by what society writ large should have always already known: Black Women MATTER.

Word, anyone who fails to read, cite, and teach our works is choosing to abide by and reproduce—at minimum—racism and sexism. Ignoring the academic and creative works of Black women is never an accidental choice; rather, doing so is always an intentional act of exclusion.

I AM (STILL) AN ANGRY BLACK WOMAN

I AM (Still) an Angry Black Woman. Unapologetically, rationally, and rightfully so! Issued as both an invitation and a response, this chapter invites understanding Black feminist autoethnography (BFA) as a scholarly trajectory for Black academic women to speak for ourselves in candid response to U.S. American society’s failure to fully reckon with racism and sexism. Formally fusing1 Black feminist thought and autoethnography necessitates a standpoint rooted in interrogation, resistance, and praxis. Aligning with Black feminism’s overarching commitments to subjugated knowledges derived from lived experiences and characterized by intersectional strategies of fugivity, empowerment, and refusal (Campt, 2017; Collins, 2009, 2013; hooks, 1981; Lorde, 1984), BFA is obligated to: raise social consciousness regarding the
struggles common to transgender, queer, and cisgender Black womanhood; embrace self-definition and self-determination as means for Black women to be labeled, acknowledged, and remembered as we wish; humanize Black women at the intersections of multiplicative forms of oppression; resist the imposition of controlling imagery; self-reflexively account for how Black women can reproduce systemic privileges; and engage with the broad emotional spectrum of Black women’s lives—including raw anger.

To be clear, Black women have much to be angry about in the academy. We remain inequitably represented among undergraduates, graduate students, faculty (especially tenure-line), staff, and administration (McChesney, 2018; The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2019). Moreover, our presence by no means routinely translates into being institutionally enfranchised as equal stakeholders deserving of collegial respect (Bernard, 2019; Goins, 2012; Griffin, 2012b; Harris, 2007, 2012; Jones, 2003; Mutua, 2012; Niles & Gordon, 2011; Patton, 2004). Rather, via the pet-to-threat model (Thomas, Johnson-Bailey, Phelps, Tran, & Johnson, 2013) we are frequently caricaturized as Angry Black Women. Initially, as newcomers, we are “beloved, cared for and often treated in a childlike fashion” (i.e., pets) when we prioritize dominant interests; however, once we resist our tokenized pet status and challenge the status quo we are often cast as threats (Thomas et al., 2013, p. 276).

Present-day fury at our continued maltreatment is not inventive, Black women have furiously contested injustice in education and elsewhere for centuries (Atwater, 2009; Campt, 2017; Chisholm, 1970; Cooper, 2018; Crenshaw, 1995; Gay, 2014; Lorde, 1984; Shange, 1975; Washington, 1987; Waters & Conaway, 2007). While I find hope in the power of repetition, my hopefulness feels tender up against the grim reality that past calls for equity and equality have yet to genuinely resonate with the hearts of most. Surprisingly, I remain optimistic in believing that if we step into the space that resistant cries have created that maybe, just maybe, something about my resistant voice in this moment will be heard; taken in and taken seriously. Embodying the prideful tenacity that Black womanhood brings forth, this chapter does the very things that Black women are discursively disciplined not to do. I will rant without a hint of regret and I will do so with my head held high believing that I am worth standing up for in a world that crudely tells me otherwise! Planting my feet in defiance, I will finish just as I have begun—wearied, depleted, “shaken, though not shattered” (Yancy, 2008, p. 2) and convinced that I am a brilliant woman of color who is worthy of sheer honesty, deep contemplation, and everlasting celebration. Say it aloud with me, again: Black Women MATTER.

READING BLACK WOMEN TO WRITE MYSELF

I began imagining the promise of BFA while reading the works of Black feminist writers and activists. The writings that I remember the most are the ones that seemed to read me as I read; each author created space for women who look like me to be remembered, considered, and fought for. These women took to the page with a sense of fury that left permanent impressions on my heart. As I read, I could feel their fed-up rage bolstered by a depth of frustration and loss that I have only let myself know in secret.

... The first time I read bell hooks’ Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism (1981), I got chills as she insisted that the world take notice of the historical and contemporary maltreatment of Black women. Titled in homage to Sojourner Truth, hooks expanded dominant confines of womanhood to include those who are not White, middle-class, and/or formally educated. She marked the ironic lip-service directed at Black women from within the (White) Feminist and (Male) Civil Rights Movements. Using words as her pedagogical arsenal, she forewarned me of the wars at the complex crossroads of race, gender, and class. Relieved by her intersectional mindfulness, I accepted the tension that I have always felt as a biracial Black woman as bona fide opposed to dismissing it as an oversensitive figment of my imagination. hooks (1981) not only found and affirmed me, perhaps most importantly she helped me unearth self-love to serve as my sanctuary in a world largely unwilling to grant me legitimacy as a human being.

Similarly, Angela Davis’s pen marked permanent discontent with the ways that Black women are silenced and erased in Women, Race, and Class (1981). As she heightened her refusal of ideological domination with each damning page, I felt inspired by her desire to mark our oppressors and their purposeful orchestration of Black female suffering as shameful. Her words changed me as she recounted the indignities of slavery, segregation, and struggles for equal rights to make certain that those who suffered beyond our contemporary imagination are not forgotten. After Davis (1981) came my first reading of Black Feminist Thought (2000); Patricia Hill Collins brought my pen to life in a way that I had never known before. As I turned each page, I scribbled in the margins to record all of the ways that I knew her words to be true. Her intellect tickled my heart; I laughed, trembled, and cried—sometimes all at once.
Having first found Black feminist thought beyond the field of communication, I eventually turned inward hoping to find more of what I had been missing. Encountering absence and invisibility at first glance, I then came to know the works of Brenda Allen (1998, 2002), Olga Davis (1998, 1999), and Marsha Houston (1992, 2000) followed by Joni Jones (2003), Soyini Madison (1994, 1995, 2009), and Tracey Owens Patton (2004). The first time that I held Centering Ourselves: African American Feminist and Womanist Studies of Discourse (Houston & Davis, 2002), I was struck with delight and dismay. I was delighted to find a book dedicated to exploring the communicative lives of Black women but dismayed at the ways in which I knew their words to be true when I read, “Black women’s texts are much more welcomed in higher education than Black women themselves” (p. 9). Reading this line over and over again, I felt my face get hot as a slideshow of memories crossed my mind. I remember the stark moments of being an “outsider within” (Collins, 1986) and an insider outside well; the ways that I have always been the “too Black to be White” and “too White to be Black” girl in school. The Oreo. The Zebra. The Mutt. Too loud to be feminine, too assertive to be appropriate, and too intense to be friendly. Defiance had long been the only viable raced/gendered trajectory to travel, yet Black feminism taught me to see and experience defiance differently—as an outcome of a bogus double bind rather than a character defect.

Centering Ourselves (Houston & Davis, 2002) led me to Houston (1992), who taught me how to academically defend marking the nuances of Black womanhood without using the typical “add Black women and stir’ approach” (Houston, 2000, p. 679). Teaching me about the significance of self-definition and self-determination, Lorde (2009) says “If I do not bring all of who I am to whatever I do, then I bring nothing, or nothing of lasting worth, for I have withheld my essence” (pp. 182–183). Having been barred from bringing my angry essence for so long—since angry emotions are outlawed for Black women who wish to be welcomed—I yearned for a medium through which my authentic voice could be heard. . . . Still academically immature, I craved more insight into the lives of Black women generated by communication scholars. I wanted to know how they theorized and what they felt. I was warmed and warmed by the transparency of Davis (1999), Jones (2003), Patton (2004), and Harris (2007), who politicized and publicized the ways that racism and sexism (at minimum) infiltrate their experiences as Black women in communication. Then a cherished mentor introduced me to Joni Jones and Soyini Madison, both of whom enriched my perspective on how to understand Black feminism as an embodied practice that had been, could be, and needed to continue to be written into our field. Meeting Miss Bertha on the page. . . . I learned that the bodies, experiences, and voices of Black women do the important work of communicatively carrying culture. Miss Bertha’s rhythmic voice, at the intersections of race, gender, class, and age, taught me to listen through my anger for stories of faith and progress . . .

Fueled by angry churns, I have no intention of keeping the personal private since treading lightly when it comes to multiplicative oppressions is killing me softly. To ensure that I do not die a slow death or at least do not pass away in silent demise, I am going to tell you all that I can about my anger; in anger, through anger, and with anger to contest the oft assumed notion that an angry Black woman is a dangerously domineering sapphire . . .

ANGRY BLACK FEMINIST AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Preparing to encounter my anger on the page, I imagine we will mutually (albeit likely at different moments and for different reasons) feel unnerved, upset, and unsettled; perhaps even bludgeoned by my candor. Nourishing the possibility that fury can bring, Lorde (1984) reminds us that angry emotions, “will not kill us if we can articulate them with precision, if we listen to the content of what is said with at least as much intensity as we defend ourselves against the manner of saying” (p. 131). . . . As her words dance between my ears, I garner a sense of agency. Swallowing her sweet candor like a lit match, my anger flares up. . . . I feel enraged that much of my daily labor is anchored in convincing others of my humanity and respectability. Every day, I encounter the price of resisting what we all have been socialized to believe I am: a hot mama, a money hungry whore, a loud mouth lacking gratitude, a public charge, and an Affirmative Action outcome. Crouching in the lonely corners of my heart, I detest the lesson that our histories and contemporary discourses (still) preach:

Cerebral Minds and Humanized Bodies of Black Women UNWELCOME HERE . . . Although forces of systemic oppression have been and continue to be imposed upon my life, voicing my anger reflects privilege alongside marginalization since many without
reprieve or recourse live with their anger ending their lives long before the promise of death delivers. Butressed by those who left a trail, I have reached a critical turning point in my personal/academic (Ono, 1997) life: I am more afraid of silence than I am of the harsh response my voice will beckon. At least I think I am. As I catch and release my anger through BFA, I speak not for all Black women but for myself in the hopes that my voice echoes and affirms women who look like me.

Tracing My Anger

Countless times in my life, I have been asked from someone using an exasperated tone, “Rachel, why are you so angry?” as if the expression of my anger should come with a warning sign, an apology, and a cleanup crew. On most occasions, my response is to pose questions in return, “Look into the world, how can I not be angry? How can you not be angry?”... Confronting these inquiries, I have discovered the usefulness of tracing my rage through and among the lives of women who look like me; their perspectives, experiences, actions, lives, and deaths. Here I offer the same, in case you too are wondering why I am (still) so damn angry.

I am angry at the White Europeans who implanted the roots of systemic violence and callous disregard in the United States when they decimated Native tribes and built the social institution of slavery under the guise of “democracy.” I am angry at the Black Africans who sold women who look like them into that same treacherous system. I am angry that the conditions of slavery were so vile that many Black mothers knew in their hearts that killing their babies offered more relief than living ever would. I am angry at Black men who maim and brutalize the bodies of Black transgender, queer, and cisgender women using racism as a justification for their violent choices. I am angry at the pacifying effort of society to offer remembrance as if it were an equal exchange for the stealing of potential, opportunity, and life. Moreover, I find the convenient presence of Blackness in the public eye during Black History Month troubling since our realities as people of color are shaped and shaded according to anti-Black racism all year round. I am angry that Black History Month can be more accurately titled “U.S. American Black, Heterosexual, Able-Bodied, Cisgender Male History Month” given the deep roots of normativity and remembrance of Black women on the margins of the margins. The example that strikes closest to my heart is that Dr. Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. who, as almighty as he became, was in high school when Rosa Parks began building the foundation for collective resistance that birthed the Civil Rights Movement (McGuire, 2010). Knowing that Parks, as one of few Black women nationally and internationally acknowledged for her advocacy, is most often remembered secondary to King brings forth the painful frustration that only erasure and loss can bring. Time and time again, the same normative pattern of prioritizing Black men’s lives and deaths governs our attention and remembrance. Take for example the national (re)mobilization of Black Lives Matter in the aftermath of Mr. George Floyd’s barbaric murder by police whereas Ms. Breonna Taylor’s murder by police a few months earlier—also barbaric—failed until recently to societally register as a Black woman’s life that mattered. Moreover, the lives of trans Black women are especially vulnerable, yet their murders almost never register as a matter of national and international significance. I am ashamed; we ought to be ashamed by the reality that only some Black lives actually matter even though all Black lives are lived in a constant state of precarity. I am angry and dismayed that we forget to remember but remember to forget Black women (e.g., Chisholm, 1970; Skloot, 2010)....

I AM Angry. I am angry at the absurdity of our absence.
I AM Angry. I am angry at my silence and yours; at my complicity and yours; at my world and ours.
I AM Angry.

My Body Is Not Your Mediated Playground

Turning toward a contemporary killing ground for the Black female body, the media is like an execution squad from which there is no escape. Everywhere I turn as a Black feminist spectator (hooks, 1992), I see images of my body held hostage as Other; entrapped in the controlling imagery of the mammy, jezebel, sapphire, matriarch, and the more contemporary welfare queen, hoardrat, freak, crazy Black bitch, superwoman, or some ridiculous combination thereof.... I am angry at every fan who buys any song that refers to any Black woman as a bitch, ho, or a trick. Who I am is up to no one other than me, regardless of what I say or how I look, and yet these stereotypes are scrawled upon the backs (and across the asses) of women who look like me day after day. I am also angry at The Princess and the Frog being celebrated as a sign of societal progress when Disney created the first Black princess character 72 years after the first White princess, Snow White, debuted. Yes, little Black girls can love her and
yes, the film can be entertaining but let us not forget that the exclusion of a Black princess was not accidental. Infuriatingly, Princess Tiana spent way more time on screen as a frog than a princess—doesn’t this make her more of a first “black” amphibian than a first Black princess? . . .

I am also angry at Tyler Perry for utilizing his talent to create a famous cascade of controlling imagery that unfolds in, most notably, *For Colored Girls* and all ten Madea films that feature Perry himself masquerading as a densely caricatured Black woman. Adding insult to Perry’s injurious character, he epitomized the flagrant disrespect everyday Black women endure when he said the following in reference to retiring Madea, “I am happy to kill that old bitch” (Yang, 2018). Of particular disgust is his screenplay adaptation of *For Colored Girls* because it is based upon Shange’s (1975) revolutionary choreopoems *for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf*. Her original work, celebrated as a “black feminist bible” (Tillet, 2010), was revived by Perry only to be invaded by his patriarchal privilege (Griffin, 2014b) . . .

Intellectually, I know the media labors to take Black female bodies down in reference if they did not chuck us into the spoils of inferiority and exile, then someone would have to explain the consistently negative representations of Black femininity. I also know that no one wants to explain themselves to my sorrowful rage; no one wants to answer to Black female disgust fueled by centuries of indignation, nor will they, because no one makes them. . . . In moments of recoil, my anger morphs into a bottomless ache for just, humanized representation. I want to turn on the television and *know* that I will see my radiant self reflected back to me . . . Rocking to an inner melody of desperation, I want someone, some show, or some song to intentionally tell me that I MATTER and make millions!

I AM Angry. I am angry at the repressive presence of Black women in the media.

I AM Angry. I am angry that the media has frowned upon my biracial Black female body my entire life. To those who oversee the institutionalized degradation of Black women in the media, you have just been served. Take note, my body is no longer your playground.

I AM Angry.

**Remembering Our Interdependence and Saying My Prayers**

I do not identify with organized religion and yet I do say my prayers often. I pray for mutual recognition, reciprocal appreciation, and joint resistance. I want people to gaze at each other with a wistful hope that guides their bruised hands and broken fingers, crushed by others before, to once again reach out across our differences . . . hooks (1989) told us long ago that “Certainly for black women, our struggle has not been to emerge from silence into speech but to change the nature and direction of our speech, to make a speech that compels listeners, one that is heard” (p. 6). In essence, Black women need to flood the universe with our pride, pain, and anger and to do so we need unconditional love and support from those who look like us and those who do not. While our voices will sound different at the intersections and be negotiated by the privilege (if any) we have access to, we have got to speak up at home, work, town hall meetings, protests, church, parent/teacher conferences, bus stops, conferences, courtrooms, clinics, gyms, and in the media—everywhere, all the time.

We need to get used to the sound of our own voices demanding space and respect because each one of us deserves both, and we must understand that we are all worthy of the energy of another. . . . Maintaining faith in humanity, Black women have got to resist, imagine, and insist upon cultural transformation. Between now and the time when *all* Black women are invited to thrive, Nala Simone Toussaint offers a heartfelt credo, “You matter . . . Allow yourself to be. Even when the world says no, allow yourself to be” (PBS, 2019). Say it aloud with me, again: Black Women MATTER.

If your tongue tingles with fear at the notion of speaking your resistant truths and your ears cringe anticipating the words they will hear in response, I want you to know that mine (still) do too. If your stomach feels ill at the thought of publicly ranting, I want you to know that mine (still) does too. I have cried until I felt cold inside trying to find my way home to myself and my cold tears have turned my cheeks hot trying to find my way home to you. Moving closer to my angry truth, I (still) really just want people to see ourselves in each other. A new sense of accountability to self and other rocks my soul when I understand myself as every Black woman who has been abused, forgotten, demoralized and murdered. I am every Black woman who craves to be cherished, protected, and loved only to be systemically scorned while praying to the high heavens that her mind, body, and spirit can withstand another brutal blow. Embracing the interconnectedness of shared humanity, I am part of her and you are part of me.

I AM Angry that the world remains locked in a scornful gaze upon Black women.

I AM Angry that marginalized populations remain entrapped in divisive politics that mask the
potential of building coalitions in the midst of our differences.

I AM Angry. Not a hysterical, ill, harebrained, eccentric, nutty, foolish, childish, juvenile, wild, savage, primitive, uncivilized, boorish, crude, inept, asinine, screwy, loony, cracking up, or crazy sapphire but justly and justifiably angry.

A MOMENTARY END

Exhausted as I near the end of this endless tirade, my rage is accompanied by the realization that what I want is for people to acknowledge with a sense of urgency that Black women—all Black women—MATTER . . . While BFA cannot rectify the repeated failures of dominant society to respect our humanity or eradicate the harm we continue to endure; what BFA can do is mark our determined presence within and beyond the academy, document our strength amidst the grind of imposed struggles, honor our fugivity, serve as an emotive release, and, perhaps most importantly, preserve the collective wisdom of our lived experiences.

While I am convinced of the power of BFA to flourish as an academic means to highlight and challenge the oppressive forces that Black women encounter in our daily lives, both its potential and power will be undermined if it is not used to build humanizing alliances at the intersections of marginalization and privilege . . . Alliance building is difficult, daring, and indispensable (Anzaldúa, 1990). This is not to say that certain identities cannot be rendered more or less salient, identity-based issues cannot be positioned as more or less significant, or people must ideologically agree to jointly resist, but it is to say that if systems of oppression work in unison then so should those who are disenfranchised . . .

The time has come for my Black woman self to rest and heal. My body as a bridge between private and public/personal and academic/self and other (Anzaldúa, 1990; hooks, 1989; Ono, 1997; Rushin, 1983) feels bruised and battered. My fingertips feel injured from punching the keyboard and my head hurts from racing to keep up with my heart. I feel drained to the max but remain committed now more than ever to continue to steer my anger toward praxis.

I want to see the day when bodies in all colors and shapes and sizes and textures are regarded as precious rather than projects to be worked on, up, and over.

I want to see the day when people hold themselves and each other accountable for thriving upon the pain and marginalization of Others.

I want all women of all colors to come together to speak for ourselves, bear witness to the damage we have done, and brace each other for the struggles that remain.

I AM (Still) an Angry Black Woman.

I AM (Still) an Angry Black Woman who feels hopeful, sees promise, and demands progress.

NOTE

1. The use of “formally” here is done so intentionally to mark that Black female activists such as Sojourner Truth, Harriet Jacobs, Fannie Barrier Williams, Maria Stewart, Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Zora Neale Hurston, Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker, Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, bell hooks, June Jordan, Angela Davis, Michelle Wallace, Audre Lorde, Barbara Smith, Barbara Ransby, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Patricia Hill Collins, and innumerable others have been engaged in the art of rhetoric, narrative, and autoethnographic writing for centuries without the use of formal academic labels. This list of Black feminist activists is by no means complete. For compilations of Black feminist works, please see Bambara (1970), Guy-Sheftall (1995), Hull, Scott, and Smith (1982), Lerner (1972), and Smith (2000).

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