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African-American Women and Social Mobilization : A Misrepresented Activism

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African-American Women and Social Mobilization: a Misrepresented Activism

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Abstract

African-American women, for being both black and female, suffer from interlocking systems of oppression, among which racism and sexism. During the decades of upsurge activism in the United States, their specific identity has put them at a standing point within both the civil rights and the feminist movements. Scrutinizing their involvement in those movements opens the way to an analysis of their representation, at the time and retrospectively. The role of the media and education in the construction of a biased historical narrative has resulted in the advent of Black Women's Studies, which aims to recast African-American women's representation.

Keywords

African-American women
Blackness
Civil rights movement
Feminism
Gender
Institutional oppression
Politics
Race
Racism
Representation
Second Wave Feminism
Sexism
Womanhood

Contents

Introduction

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise

Maya Angelou, "Still I Rise" from *And Still I Rise: A Book of Poems*.[1]

[1] Maya Angelou, "Still I Rise," in *And Still I Rise: A Book of Poems* (Random House, 1978),

Thanks to a first-person narrative, Maya Angelou's poem sounds like an ode to African-American women, their uniqueness, their resilience, and their power. Embodying black women, her poem acknowledged how she rose above stereotypes, a burdened past and interlocking systems of oppression. Oppression, which can be defined as "unjust situations where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society,"[2] encompasses issues related to sexuality, ethnicity, class, race and gender. This research thesis focuses on racism and sexism as institutionalized structures of oppression.

The former, understood as any attitude, belief, behavior that tends to favor one race or ethnic group over another, relies on institutional arrangements and a social organization that fosters inequalities between races in various areas of society.

> Institutional racism goes beyond individual and/or group thoughts and actions. In this case, social institutions such as family, church, school, business and government create patterns of injustice and inequality based on the color of a person's skin. Often individuals involved with these institutions may be unaware that they are participating in racism.[3]

Beliefs pervade both personal and institutional levels of oppression maintaining biased race-relations. African-American people, for instance, are thought to be sexual beings, violent, lazy and ignorant. Perpetrated through a misrepresentation in the media and education curriculum, such myths tend to be internalized, hence the need to deconstruct models of thinking *i.e.* shedding a light on the ideological patterns of a concept rather than taking it at face-value as a simple reflection of reality. Debunking ideological patterns aims to understand that although they do not stand for a universal reality, they still represent one reality for a specific time. African-American people have been discriminated against since they were brought to the continent through legalized systems of oppression, namely slavery and segregation. Opposition has risen over time, from individual or group initiatives. From the first half of the twentieth century associations emerged advocating for black people's rights; these took the form of an activist movement from the early fifties onward. Among other movements of the rebellious decade of the sixties, the black freedom struggle spawned mass involvement specifically from the African-American community. Their demands broadly encompassed social, economic and politic interests, which they conveyed through peaceful marches, sit-ins and protests even though some riots (Harlem, July 1964; Watts, August 1965;

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[2] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought : Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Routledge, 1991), 3, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203900055.
[3] Gerald Newman and Eleanor Newman Layfield, *Racism* (Enslow, 1995), 10, http://archive.org/details/racismdividedbyc00newm.

Newark, July 1967) erupted as a result of a growing discontent regarding political responses to their demands.

Sexism, like racism, can be understood as a set of behaviors, habits and attitudes that perpetuate the idea that one sex is superior to the other, usually men to women, constraining the latter to specific gendered roles. Once institutionalized, such behaviors maintain a patriarchal system that oppresses women and girls with men using their power to their own advantage.[4] Sexism also hinges on myths, such as those portraying women as child-like, passive, emotional and unable to govern themselves. All in all, those myths are implicitly meant to convince minorities of their inferiority.[5] In this research, the use of the term "sexism" and its derivatives stems from findings that mostly acknowledge its existence on an institutional level in the United States. Feminist movements have emerged not only to offset the effects of this institutional sexism but also to offer a counter narrative. Broadly defined as the belief in social, economic and political equality of all genders, feminism in its "Second Wave" sought to liberate women from the constraints imposed by the patriarchal system. In this research, when feminism is said to be radical, "it simply means grasping things at the root."[6] In other words, radical feminism aims to instrumentalize its activism as a means to fight the systems of oppression by debunking the dominant thinking patterns.

African-American women, by being both black and female, stand at a key cross-roads in American society. They are discriminated against because of their race and their gender, as Crenshaw pinpointed, "because of their intersectional identity (…) within discourses that are shaped to respond to one or the other, [the] interests and experiences of women of color are marginalized within both."[7]

While acknowledging women from other ethnic minorities also suffer from multiple oppressions, this research will focus on the experiences of black women between 1954 and 1978 as they belonged to activist movements advocating for both civil and women's rights. Without demeaning black males in their commitment and white women in theirs, it aims to shed a new light on the roles African-American women held in various groups and whether their identity shaped their activism. For the sake of clarity their experiences will be further

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[4] "Patriarchy," in *Cambridge*, accessed April 6, 2019, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/patriarchy.

[5] *Sexism and Racism: Gloria Steinem and Margaret Sloan*, accessed April 7, 2019, http://archive.org/details/pacifica_radio_archives-BC2781.

[6] Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983).

[7] Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in *The Public Nature of Private Violence* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 436.

discussed as results of group dynamics, yet recognizing that the conclusions drawn from the research cannot encompass the reality of each individual. This observation also stands for comments on white people and black men, who are mentioned as embodiments of systems of oppression and not as individuals. Furthermore, while many associations, committees and sub-movements came forth during the two decades of activism that shook American society, this thesis will not consider the specificities of each entity but rather endeavors to outline general tendencies.

In order to better understand how African-American women sought to rise above the interweaving patterns of oppression, this research ponders on the following issues: How did the specificities of African-American women's struggles lead to a misrepresentation of their activism? To what extent did a lack of visibility – both inside and outside of the activist sphere - prevent them from overcoming the discriminations they faced? How far did political achievements such as the Civil Rights Act passed in 1964 or the National Advisory Committee for Women, established by President Jimmy Carter in March 1978, affect their lives and activism?

After having seen how they found a voice against discrimination in grassroots activism the difficulties around their representations will be analyzed. Eventually a greater interest will be given to the scholars' awakening on the connection between black women's lack of representation and their relative advancement.

1. African-American women: Grassroots activism

African-American women, within a society that has been shaped by centuries of overt oppression against black people and implicit oppression against women, found themselves at the cross-roads of discriminatory practices. Their specific experience during the decades of activism this research will focus on is not much different from what it was for the first half of the century, however, it can be argued that the important activist movements that emerged – the Civil Rights Movement and Second Wave feminism – offered a specific environment for African-American women to express their opinion. After having examined how they got involved in the movements advocating for civil and women's rights, their leadership within those movements will be analyzed.

1.1 Being proactive against discriminations: finding a voice

On the one hand, the upsurge of activism within the black community that started, according to some historians with the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott (Alabama), was a movement that broadcasted women's involvement more widely thanks to the diversification of media. Indeed, Zinn, Jones, Gitlin, the Alberts, and Kamensky et al. [8] attributed the establishment of "the power of non-violence"[9] to Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat to a white passenger on a segregated bus. Following her act, the Women's Political Council, an association of black women campaigning for civil rights, launched the boycott of the bus company. On the other hand, it was roughly fifteen years later that a second awakening occurred in the feminist movement, triggering a second wave of feminist activism – a continuity of the "first wave" during which they fought for the right to vote. White middle and upper-class women became aware of their condition, that is to say, oppressed by the patriarchal system. No longer focusing on the right to vote, they wanted to take back control over their own bodies and lives: reproductive rights and the abolition of the canon of domesticity were at the center of their battles.

In both instances, African-American women had their place and their say. However, the specificities of each movement prevented them from identifying with either of their discourses.

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[8] Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, Revised and updated edition. (New York: Harper Perennial, 1995), 450; Judith Clavir Albert and Stewart Edward Albert, eds., *The Sixties Papers: Documents of a Rebellious Decade* (New York: Praeger, 1984), 2; Maldwyn Allen Jones, *The Limits of Liberty: American History, 1607-1992*, 2nd edition., The Short Oxford History of the Modern World (Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 537; Jane Kamensky et al., *A People and a Nation: A History of the United States*, Tenth Edition (Cengage Learning, 2015), 850.

[9] Todd Gitlin, *The Sixities Years of Hope Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Book, 1987), 39.

African-American male activists tended to seek white men's approval and mostly longed to acquire the same privileges the latter had kept for themselves. To support this argument, bell hooks[10] asserted in *Ain't I Woman*,

> Many black men who express the greatest hostility toward the white male power structure are often eager to gain access to that power. Their expressions of rage and anger are less a critique of the white male patriarchal social order and more a reaction against the fact that they have not been allowed full participation in the power game.[11]

In the same way black men seized patriarchal stereotypes to fit their discourse, women who identified as feminists, widely represented by the white community, sought to obtain the same rights and privileges white men had denied them. In her essay "To a White Male Radical," an activist who decided to remain anonymous claimed that,

> Long ago, earlier feminists wanted to be tough like you. Only fifty years later did they realize how they had assumed the role of the oppressor. Like many Blacks, they had silently slipped into the oppressor's habits and therefore truly failed. That is why you are the enemy.[12]

Having emerged in the wake of the black rights movement, the white feminist movement is broadly recognized to have drawn upon the successes of the former and to have used its dialectic of oppressor/oppressed to succeed; often comparing their struggle as white women victims of the patriarchal system to those of African-American people – and other minorities. Ti-Grace Atkinson in her essay "Declaration of War" juxtaposed both oppressions to prove her point "The feminist dilemma is that it is as women – or "females" – that women are persecuted, just as it was as slaves – or "blacks" – that slaves were persecuted in America."[13] It was an argument used as a legitimization of women's oppression. Historically speaking, however, this rhetoric sounds unconvincing. In fact, if we concentrate mainly on the comparison of African-American's experiences and white women's ones throughout the nation's history, it would seem inaccurate to affirm that both groups faced the same degree of discrimination and violence. Despite the fact they both faced discriminations institutionalized by law, and both were denied rights from the same group, white, upper-class men, women did not have to endure as much violence as slaves did. Within the patriarchal system, their place was still higher in the hierarchy than that of black people. They had access to a certain degree of comfort granted by marriage for instance. To clarify, the comparison is drawn between slaves and middle, upper-class women; poor white women were more discriminated against

[10] bell hooks, figurehead of black feminist research, insists on her name spelt with lower cases.
[11] bell hooks, *Ain't I A Woman : Black Women and Feminism* (London: Pluto Press, 1982), 94.
[12] A Berkeley Sister, "To a White Male Radical," *The Berkeley Tribe*, May 15, 1970.
[13] Ti-Grace Atkinson, "The Declaration of War," in *Amazon Odyssey* (New York: Links Books, 1974), 47–55.

because of their class. Twentieth century feminists, by comparing their oppression to black people's, excluded a wide part of an eligible audience: African-American women. As it happens, according to bell hooks such comparisons tended to ignore two obvious facts, "one, that in a capitalist, racist, imperialist state there is no social status women share as a collective group; and second, that the social status of white women in America has never been like that of black women or men."[14] She went even further arguing that this constant comparison drew attention away from the extreme victimization of black women because of both their race and their sex, "a fact which, had it been emphasized, might have diverted public attention away from the complaints of middle and upper class feminists."[15] hooks' arguments therefore appear to back the idea that black women did not find a voice in a movement that did not acknowledge their specific identity but rather instrumentalized it against black women themselves. The dichotomy of white feminists' discourses discredited their activism towards black women as the latter were hence perceived as "others." Audre Lorde once wrote "I am defined as *other* in every group I'm part of."[16] However, other scholars such as Barnett nuanced hooks' theses by saying that the feminist movement failed to represent black women's interests mainly because "women's liberation means different things to different women," citing Lerner (1979, 81-81) she argued, "women, as all oppressed groups, perceive their status *relatively*, in comparison with their own groups, with their own conditions, with their own expectations."[17] Simply put, white women sought liberation in having a job while black women could "define their own 'liberation' as being free to take care of their own homes and their own children."[18]

Accordingly, African-American women were also excluded from the rhetoric of the civil rights groups. As a matter of fact, most groups were led by men who bolstered a sexist model of organization. Because of their gender, several African-American women activists recalled having been relegated to a second role position within organizations. Patriarchal and sexist dialectics had been observed and internalized by African-American communities to the point that both men and women did not realize at first, and even when they did, mostly did not care, that they perpetuated a model that exerted a certain form of discrimination on behalf of its population. Some men verbalized their non-consideration for their feminine counterparts

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[14] hooks, *Ain't I A Woman : Black Women and Feminism*, 136.
[15] hooks, 140.
[16] Audre Lorde, *A Burst of Light and Other Essays* (Dover Publications Inc., 2017), 17.
[17] Bernice McNair Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement: The Triple Constraints of Gender, Race, and Class," *Gender and Society* 7, no. 2 (1993): 164, http://www.jstor.org/stable/189576.
[18] Barnett:164.

by holding discourses that subscribed to a sexist dialectic. It might have been a result of centuries of observation of the white organizational system. While acknowledging black men's agency in the construction of their identity as a militant group, their quest for power superseded gendered considerations. Black male leaders such as Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Martin Luther King, Elija Muhammed or Amiri Baraka have, according to bell hooks, not only supported but entertained patriarchal schemes. To explain their point of view, she cited an essay by Baraka, published in an issue of *Black World*,

> We do not believe in the 'equality' of men and women. We cannot understand what the devils and the devilishly influenced men when they say equality for women. We could never be equals… nature has not provided thus.[19]

Calling upon religion and the allegory of nature, Baraka legitimized a sexist hierarchy even among black people seeking more liberty. bell hooks insisted on the internalization of these processes by highlighting how insidious they were to the fact that they transformed the racist stereotype of the black man being a rapist because of his strength, his virility and his primitiveness, into a figure of powerful manhood.[20]

Furthermore, it seems as if they sought to reaffirm themselves in their masculinity. Subscribing to the representation of masculinity promoted in the media, they wanted to reassert their strength and their ability to lead and to decide. This model of masculinity designed for black men was shaped alongside the construction of black womanhood, which was defined in contrast to white womanhood and domesticity. All these stereotypes have to be understood as an interlocking set of social constructs that have been woven into the American understanding of social interactions between groups.

White women's rights tended to be benefits that imposed duties rather than political rights while men's rights were liberties that allowed choices.[21] Embedded into a patriarchal society, the definition of the canon of domesticity for white women dates back to the mid-eighteenth century, alongside which the canon of true womanhood was defined. Though well articulated and documented, they are still constructions of an ideal, used to create social mobility, or rather immobility. White women of a specific class had to stick to a set of implicit rules which divided their duties into the public and the private sphere. According to Welter, the attributes of True Womanhood are divided into four cardinal values: piety, purity,

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[19] hooks, *Ain't I A Woman : Black Women and Feminism*, 95.
[20] hooks, 96.
[21] Nancy F. Cott, "Introduction," in *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 7.

submissiveness and domesticity. [22] Though these norms had evolved by the mid twentieth century, it could be claimed that they were still culturally present in a society that maintained patriarchal patterns. In opposition to those well-established norms of womanhood for white women, three main myths regarding black women were constructed. The Jezebel image, defined by White as "a person governed almost entirely by her libido. (…) In every way Jezebel was the counter-image of the mid-nineteenth-century ideal of the Victorian lady."[23] The Black Mammy embodied the personification of the ideal slave. She was supposed to be truly dedicated to the white family, in charge of domestic management. In opposition to the former myth, she was asexualized. In the wake of the Civil War, the Sapphire image emerged. This stereotyped vision of African-American women is described by White as,

> A domineering female who consumes men and usurps their role. Her persona is not sexual but is as indomitable as Jezebel's and equally emasculating in effect. While Jezebel emasculates men by annulling their ability to resist her temptations, and thus her manipulations, Sapphire emasculates men by usurping their role. Her assertive demeanor identifies her with Mammy, but unlike Mammy she is devoid of maternal compassion and understanding. Sapphire is tough, efficient, and tireless as Mammy…As Sapphires, black women were placed beyond the pale of womanhood and violated with impunity.[24]

The Sapphire and the Jezebel images were echoed in Angelou's stanzas that mentioned "sassiness," "haughtiness," and "sexiness;" while she ironized the Mammy image by writing, "Did you want to see me broken? / Bowed head and lowered eyes?"[25] By seizing back the stereotypes imposed on black women, Angelou countered their effects. She resorted to rhetorical questions and a repetition of the pattern in order to insist on the spuriousness of such ideas. By straightly addressing her audience, "you," she put into perspective the pervasiveness of these stereotypes; which bolstered through the years, not only crystalized a competitive relationship between white and black women, but also altered the relationship between black people. African-American men felt diminished in their masculinity since women were given man-like attributes. As opposed to the canon of womanhood for white women, black women had been forced to work and sometimes to execute harsh tasks. Their male counterparts, if they subscribed to the images of masculinity provided in society, would think that they were unable to provide for them. Patricia Robinson in her pamphlet *Poor Black Women* further explained this concept in those terms,

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[22] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1966): 155, https://doi.org/10.2307/2711179.
[23] Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York, 1999).
[24] White.
[25] Angelou, "Still I Rise."

> Historically, the myth in the black world is that there are only two free people in the United States, the white man and the black woman. The myth was established by the black man in the long period of frustration when he longed to be free to have the material and social advantages of his oppressor, the white man. On examination of the myth, this so-called freedom was based on the sexual prerogatives taken by the white man on the black female. It was fantasized by the black man that she enjoyed it.[26]

The impact of the white patriarchal system seemed to have soured every layer of societal relationship, but, as Dorothy P. Hughes affirmed on the television program *Woman*, hosted by Samantha Dean, both African-American men and women have to get over the attitude or the idea that men are supposed to be the total wage earners, to take care of the family, in order to be seen as "real men." She further claimed that white men who take care of their whole family often had had money handed down to them. Thus, African-American men who did not have the privilege to have inherited money or land should manage to abandon this vision of having to be the sole bread-winner of the family for the women to feel less threatened.[27]

Nevertheless, African-Americans were united in the struggle regarding most of the discrimination they faced. Since the end of the nineteenth century and the steady implementation of Jim Crow Laws in southern states that affirmed the concept of "separate but equal," black people had to deal with economic, social and political prejudices. For instance, by implementing literacy tests, or what was referred to as the grandfather clause (one could vote only if one's grandfather had the right to vote in 1867), black people were indirectly denied the right to vote that they acquired after the abolition of slavery with the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment. The disenfranchisement of black people was one of the first grounds on which civil rights activist movements were built, considering that having access to the ballot would help them acquiring more agency. In the fifties and the sixties the battle over enfranchisement was still raging and prompted the involvement of women in grassroots activism. The concept of grassroots activism is defined by the online encyclopedia *Britannica* as a "type of movement or campaign that attempts to mobilize individuals to take some action to influence an outcome, often of a political nature. (…)

> The distinguishing features of grassroot movements or campaigns are that they mobilize masses to participate in politics (…) and they are conducted through narrow communications rather than broadcast media such as television or radio."[28]

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[26] Patricia Robinson, *Poor Black Women* (Boston: New England Free Press, 1968):3.
[27] "025: Black Women," *Woman* (Boston, MA and Washington, DC: WNED, March 29, 1973), American Archive of Public Broadcasting (WGBH and the Library of Congress), http://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip_81-59c5b5nr.
[28] "Woman 025: Black Women" (Boston, MA and Washington, DC: WNED, March 29, 1973), American Archive of Public Broadcasting (WGBH and the Library of Congress), http://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip_81-59c5b5nr.

African-American women found a political voice and an activist purpose in this model of movement as they could operate from within their communities. Indeed, Howard Zinn mentioned in his work *A People's History of the United States*,

> Poor women, black women, expressed the universal problem of women in their own way. (…) Without talking specifically about their problems as women, many women, among the poor, did as they had always done, quietly organized neighborhood people to right injustices, to get needed services.[29]

With regards to the access to the ballot, this form of women's activism is well represented by the contribution of Septima Clark in raising awareness regarding the issue through education programs. She set up a program, the Citizenship Education Program the primary task of which was "to provide the potential rural constituents with the necessary information to persuade them to join the movement. One of [her] successes as a bridge leader was her ability to connect the politics of the movement to the needs of people."[30] Robnett goes on asserting that Septima Clark considered that "literacy was the only way to enlighten the rural masses about their citizenship rights, and the best way to do this was to become actively involved in the pupils' lives." [31] Clark therefore embodies the concept Robnett coined as "micromobilization," which differs from the concept of grassroots activism in the way that not only would individuals take part in the organization of the movement but they would also tend to identify with its issues and its goals. Acting on a local level, Clark drew upon her own experience to educate children in the hope of providing them enough knowledge to be allowed to vote. The unfit education offered to African-Americans led to a certain ignorance of their history and their rights. Clark hence instrumentalized their shared legacy to bridge the gap between their daily lives and the movement's purposes. Among the African-American community, Clark is just an example among others, such as Elizabeth Keckley, Frances E. Harper, Pauli Murray and Shirley Chisholm, who, according to LaVerne,

> Have demonstrated a strong and persistent commitment to promote civil rights and equal opportunities for themselves, their families, and their race. African American women have petitioned the courts; formed abolition and self-help societies; published newspaper, poems, and stories, fought against lynching, and forged the modern civil rights movement.[32]

African-American women were often asked, whether they identified more with blackness or more with womanhood, or if they felt more oppressed by their race or by their

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[29] Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, Revised and updated edition. (New York: Harper Perennial, 1995): 508.
[30] Robnett: 1663.
[31] Robnett:1670.
[32] LaVerne Gyant, "Passing the Torch: African American Women in the Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of Black Studies* 26, no. 5 (1996): 630, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2784888.

gender. By assessing black women's identity within a dichotomic vision that divides their proper selves into two different entities, their activism within both movements is devalued since they are portrayed as not being either fully black or fully women. Margaret Sloan Hunter, one of the first afro-feminists of her time and also a co-editor of *Ms. Magazine*, answered her host (Sandra Elkin) on a *Woman*'s set that she came to feminism logically by being black and female. After this clear statement, she was still asked whether she considered herself first as being black or being female, she proudly answered,

> I don't think myself as black or female. I don't think the oppressor is saying on Wednesday we're going to discriminate against her because she's female and the rest of the week because she's black. I am a black and female person in a country that is sexist and racist and so for me it would be impossible to separate my oppressions out that way. I'm perceived as a black woman and that's how I live my life.[33]

One could assume that thinking that African-American women could withdraw from one form of oppression or the other withdrew their agency from their activism but also denied the necessity they found in launching their own platforms of expression, their own movement. Simply put, it could be assumed that having two distinct groups that defended their rights was enough, hence the futility of creating a movement of their own. They sought to find a voice of their own in these decades of prime activism, among other factions that at one point or another ignored the specificity of their experience. Sloan-Hunter spearheaded the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) in 1973. Its main objectives were mostly similar to those of other feminist organizations, *i.e.* fighting the oppression and working on priorities in local areas. In fact, Sloan-Hunter further explained that it is not an organization that works in opposition to the feminist but truly within, as black feminists had always been part of it, the media had just not focused on them. They felt the need to promote black women's agency namely because all women were oppressed but black women were more oppressed. NBFO was not the only black-directed organization to have emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1968, Frances Beal founded, with other colleagues from the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Black Women's Liberation Committee, later renamed the Third World Women's Alliance.

> These activists thought Black women needed a forum to talk about their unique problems, their relationships with men and children and their role in the Black struggle. The BWLC maintained that the black community needed to deal with women's inequality while struggling for black liberation because without the complete equality of

[33] "Margaret Sloan on Black Sisterhood," *Woman* (Boston, MA and Washington, DC: WNED, August 4, 1974), American Archive of Public Broadcasting (WGBH and the Library of Congress), http://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip_81-47rn8v5q.

> women, Black people could not achieve liberation since half of the community would remain unequal and unfree.[34]

Shedding light on the importance of achieving women's equality while seeking race equality put into perspective the new path the SNCC had been taking for the last years, *i.e.* the promotion of an ideology promoting Black consciousness and a moving towards black nationalism. However, it was white women who belonged to the organization who first moved away from SNCC in 1964, by trying to have it merge on a more feminist path, for instance, by publishing two papers expressing their views on the sexist issues they faced. At first black women SNCC members did not feel concerned by their motion since, as later explained by Cynthia Washington, black women's "single-minded focus on the issues of racial discrimination and the Black struggle for equality blinded [them] to other issues."[35] According to Anderson-Bricker, for African-American women to ponder on the interlocking levels of discriminations they faced, they had to recast the understanding of Black nationalism within its international context as well as to root the black freedom struggle in institutional racism, and in the capitalist and imperialist system. Doing so "provided the intellectual environment necessary for Black women in the SNCC to identify themselves not only as Blacks but also as women and workers."[36] It is from this awareness that the BWLC emerged.

After having established why African-American women got involved in various activist movements, namely groups fighting the triple oppression of racism, sexism and classism, and also having established how they managed to find a voice within the meanders of daily struggles both within and outside of the militant sphere, we will reflect on the roles they took or were given in their respective groups. Indeed, by understanding mobilization as a way of finding one's political voice, getting involved, getting oneself seen and heard – at least by the local community – one may question to what extent leadership matters to seek those purposes but also what is the meaning of leadership for African-American women activists.

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[34] Kristin Anderson-Bricker, "'Triple Jeopardy' Black Women and the Growth of Feminist Consciousness in SNCC, 1964-1975," in *Still Lifting, Still Climbing: Contemporary African American Women's Activism*, NYU Press (NYU Press, 1999), 58, Google Books.
[35] Kristin Anderson-Bricker: 55.
[36] Anderson-Bricker, 59.

1.2 Leading from within

To shed new light on African-American women's activism, one has to confront oneself to the understanding of the concepts of leadership, to dig into its meaning both during the decades of activism and retrospectively, and eventually to weigh in on its importance towards the achievement of equality. Barnett stated that "during the period of more than thirty years of scholarship since the heyday of the civil rights movement, [African-American women's] leadership roles have virtually been neglected, forgotten, or considered inconsequential or of secondary importance relative to those of men."[37] Hence, on top of the negative stereotype of the Sapphire for example, the image that is often relayed is that poor African-American women are apolitical, or political passivists. Through this and other stereotypes, the roles of Black women have been disregarded in most of the research on leadership in modern social movements that tended to put forward the spurious image that "all of the women are white, all of the Blacks are men."[38] Robnett is one of the scholars who has explored the meaning and the different degrees of mobilization and leadership within the black freedom struggle and more specifically of African-American women. She noted that leadership is often framed between formal and informal. While formal leaders assumed visible roles and dealt with the media for instance, informal leaders took part in the movement by bridging the gap between their political, activist convictions and their communities. As for women's roles within civil rights organizations, Robnett noted that "numerous studies of women's involvement in grassroots mobilization suggest that women, even when they outnumber men in participation as they did in the civil rights movement often initiate and lead movement activities but later recede into the background."[39] By drawing upon the example of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, she supported her argument by explaining that women were the main bridges between the will of the community and its leaders. It was women who mobilized both the masses and the formal leaders to take action against segregation in Montgomery. Nevertheless, few women were given as much recognition from the movement as, for example, Martin Luther King. The fact that it was women who did not get the media recognition for their involvement and not men is symptomatic of the patriarchal system that ruled many social relations.

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[37] Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement.": 165
[38] Barnett: 166.
[39] Robnett, "African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965.": 1673

In order to reflect on the degree of decision-making power positions African-American women held, their leadership is analyzed. Occupying a leadership position does not mean the same thing at a national or local level. Barnett therefore pleaded, "leadership is multidimensional and embedded within a structural context. Thus the best approach to studying leadership in the civil rights movement is to analyze the specific roles that individuals or categories of individuals performed."[40] As a case study to highlight arguments presented regarding the agency of civil rights activists, more attention will be given to organizations like the SNCC or the SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) and to some major activists like Fannie Lou Hamer, Septima Clark, Jo Ann Robinson and Ella Baker.

In her essay "Hearing the Missing Voice" Teresa A. Nance dwelled upon the Montgomery Bus Boycott by acknowledging how Jo Ann Robinson and her students built its framework firstly by complaining to the mayor a year before Rosa Parks took action, and secondly by printing and passing out leaflets calling for a boycott. In 1954, Robinson had already sent a letter to Montgomery's mayor threatening to boycott the buses in response to the mistreatment of Black women onboard these facilities. Regarding the actual organizing of the boycott, in a video interview entitled "Eyes on the Prize; America They Loved You Madly," she recalled that the Women's Political Council organized the boycott and it had to get approval from the men – the ministers of the Montgomery Improvement Association - before anything was launched.[41] However, historians seldom credit Robinson and the WPC's actions for launching the boycott, while their actions "take on even greater significance when it is recalled that the Montgomery bus boycott is often thought of as the symbolic beginning of the modem civil rights movement."[42] Robinson was far from the only African-American woman pushed to the back stage of the movement due to her gender. While Septima Clark recollected years after her involvement in the SNCC her leadership role had been called into question by one minister, Ella Baker had always had conflicting views on the issue. The latter's ideal of leadership differed from the one framed by the organization she belonged to, the SCLC. "For Baker, the role of the leader was to empower those with whom she worked. For King and the staff of the SCLC, the role of the leader was to exercise power over those

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[40] Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement," 167.

[41] *Eyes on the Prize, They Loved You Madly: Interview with Jo Ann Robinson* (Boston, MA and Washington, DC: Film and Media Archive in Washington University in St. Louis, 1979), http://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip_151-wh2d796b02.

[42] Teresa A. Nance, "Hearing the Missing Voice," *Journal of Black Studies* 26, no. 5 (1996): 547, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2784882.

who worked within the movement."[43] She often summed up her theory by saying "strong people don't need strong leaders." As Barnett developed, Baker and others advocated for a decentralize leadership and therefore did not want to lead in the traditional sense of public spokesperson or central figure. Regarding her activism, Baker once explained,

> You didn't see me on television, you didn't see news stories about me. The kind of role that I tried to play was to pick up the pieces or put together pieces out of which I hoped organization would come.... I had no ambition to be in the leadership. I was only interested in seeing that a leadership had the chance to develop.[44]

There were indeed two opposing conceptions of leadership within those groups: to instrumentalize one's power over one's community, or to use one's power to emancipate one's brothers and sisters. Bate referred to the latter as "a feminist conception of power" *i.e* "becoming powerful to accomplish your goals and spreading the power you possess so that other people become able to accomplish their goals as well."[45] It seems worth noting that even though Clark's and Baker's vision on gender exclusion seem to coincide, the former's account had been shaped by further experiences and might therefore be distorted by memory. After having lived through the heyday of the second wave feminism she might have developed a new perception on her relationship to men in the movement.

While exploring the idea that leadership theories were divided by gender at least within the two movements previously mentioned, a question arises: were Black women aware of this exclusion? If so, was it problematic? Robnett suggested that because the women's liberation movement only developed later in the sixties and the early seventies, notions of feminism and equal representation were not considered in movements' participation. It seems to be a reasonable argument especially if we take into consideration the quarrel that emerged among SNCC members when white women members wrote their manifestos calling out the sexist behaviors that were polluting the movement. In their position paper, stating eleven points to highlight the unfair treatment of women in the movement, they argued for instance that "capable, responsible and experienced women who are in leadership positions can expect to have to defer to a man on their project of final decision making."[46] From a broader perspective it seems they were making a good point, but black women at the time, as already stated, had other concerns and therefore did not consider that sexism was a factor in their relationships with men in the movement. The other belief that shaped this rationale was that

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[43] Nance, 553.
[44] Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement," 176.
[45] Barbara Bate, *Communication and the Sexes* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 39.
[46] "SNCC Position Paper: Women in the Movement," in *The Sixties Papers, Documents of a Rebellious Decade* (New York: Praeger, 1984), 114.

"Black men were more endangered by racism than women were by sexism."[47] Accordingly, it was assumed that white women suffered more from sexism than women of color did. As a result, positions of leadership were kept by those who thought to best represent the interests of the group at large.

Within the early times of different groups of the black freedom struggle, many black women activists considered the liberation from racism as more urgent than the one from sexism and therefore adapted to the sexist structures of the groups. Prioritizing racism enabled them to cope with sexism from their male counterparts. Both black women and men activists longed for a united community – or at least a representation of unity – to broaden the impact on society. This unity also called upon an acknowledgment of the indispensable nature of their work to set the African-American community free. bell hooks went even further in her justification of black women's acceptance of sexism, arguing that their behavior at the time implied: "we are not one another's enemy. We must resist the socialization that teaches us to hate ourselves and one another."[48] She thought black women used internalized stereotypical social schemes to legitimize their non-reaction to sexism within those groups. Nance nuanced this idea by claiming that bonding between black women and men was indeed inherent to the movement and enabled its success. She also referred to this argument as an explanation of African-American women's absence from leadership visibility, pleading they did not demand it because they felt represented by their male colleagues.[49]

The conceptions of leadership and the roles assumed by black women varied within the activist sphere. Nance postulated that these roles could be roughly categorized into three overlapping types: the "Mama," who contributed by offering food and a place to stay to other civil rights workers, "the activist," who organized within her community for social justice, and finally "the friend," who provided support and help within the community to cope with domestic responsibilities.[50] The role of the "Mama", not to be confused with the negative image of the Mammy depicted earlier, is further explained in these terms,

> The mama knew that she and her community were living with the ravages of stifling oppression long before the first civil rights worker arrived on the scene. Many mamas had done battle with racist oppressors before the start of the movement. Consequently, the arrival of the civil rights volunteers in their communities was not a beginning of the fight for freedom but the continuation of one. (…) The mama is the center of the community

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[47] Nance, "Hearing the Missing Voice," 551.
[48] hooks, *Ain't I A Woman : Black Women and Feminism*.
[49] Nance, "Hearing the Missing Voice," 551.
[50] Teresa A. Nance, "Hearing the Missing Voice," *Journal of Black Studies* 26, no. 5 (1996): 543 http://www.jstor.org/stable/2784882.

> and, as such, embodies the strength of its collective past and the hope of its uncertain future.[51]

This rationale points out that questioning leadership is a matter of perception. Before the black freedom movement came to the front scene of the media, work was already done on a community level to soothe the daily struggles of oppression at a local level. It was also because of the urgency of the situation that the mama role, working on a community level, merged to an activist role – which could indeed be seen as being inherent to their experience. Black women described as "activists" by Nance were women who led, organized, planned and shaped the movement to address their personal and community needs. In her article "Beyond the Human Self," Crawford put forward that black women "were intrepid, working individually and collectively to empower rural people. Their civil rights work began with community building and self-sustaining efforts that would help to free blacks from the severe economic dependence on whites."[52] As for the image of "the friend" it was defined by Nance as the care, support and protection they provided for one another. "Many of them shared in taking care of one another's children, exchanging responsibilities and offering financial support when it was needed."[53]

Though restrictive, these definitions of the different roles held by black women during the Movement could be used as a prism of analysis for the actions of Ella Baker, Septima Clark, Jo Ann Robinson and Fannie Lou Hamer. The latter would certainly be associated to "the Mama" because of her actions and the account she made of them in an article published in Ebony in 1966, entitled "Builders of a New South – Negro Heroines of Dixie play major role in challenging racist traditions." She is usually known for being one of the delegates from the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party who disturbed the 1964 Democratic National Convention or for a sit-in at the Congress in Washington in 1965, both actions aimed to ask for a fairer representation of Mississippians in Congress. However, beyond those politically committed actions, it is on a daily basis that she made a difference. In the interview she gave to Ebony she accused teachers and ministers of "failing to do the job [she was] trying to do, like getting out here finding some clothes for these kids so they can stay in school. (…)

> And there are the young, who come eagerly to [my] house for news of the Movement, or gather on a Saturday night to sing with [me] the freedom songs that bolster their hope. I love them and I want to help them, for they are the leaders of tomorrow. I see some little kids just 6 years old and they already look defeated. (…) If I left there would be so many

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[51] Nance, "Hearing the Missing Voice": 546.
[52] Vicki Crawford, "Beyond the Human Self: Grassroots Activist in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement," in *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941-1965* (Indiana University Press, 1993), 14.
[53] Crawford, 25.

> children who'd have no way of knowing life doesn't have to be a tragedy because they're black.[54]

Regarding her relationship to the children of her neighborhood, one may easily argue Fannie Lou Hamer embodies the "mama" figure depicted by Nance.

It is because of her numerous actions and evolutions throughout the movement that Ella Baker could be seen as the quintessence of "the activist." From member of the NAACP, to leader of a local chapter and then founder of the SNCC, Baker never stopped her fight against inequalities.

> Ella Baker created SNCC's nonhierarchical structure and group-centered philosophy of leadership. Leadership took the form of rotating chairs and executive committees. The idea was for SNCC to build leadership within a respective community but not to become its leader. Baker's philosophy became the cornerstone for SNCC efforts at community mobilization.[55]

Her selfless and committed activism had a tangible influence on her community even when she decided to recede from the front stage, as recalled by a male activist in an interview given to Barnett, "You take women like Ella Baker, they were indispensable… Besides Dr King she was one of my heroes. She had a way with us [young Blacks students] … We knew she cared and she understood that we didn't want any compromises."[56] This statement points out that one label may not encompass the whole dedication of one's activism as Baker could as well be portrayed as the "mama" or the "friend". Even though these labels are efficient to dismantle the common vision of African-American women activists, they should not be taken at face value. The commitment of famous figures like Clark, Baker, Robinson or Hamer is characterized by their will to put the community's sake and liberation at the heart of their task.

Based on that statement it can be argued that, beyond the bonding between men and women activists, it was thanks to this strong community basis that the movement prevailed. It shaped a culture of resistance by teaching adults and children how to protest peacefully against injustice, by teaching basic literacy in order to have a political voice. By relying on solidarity, they managed to rally people to their cause. It might therefore be argued that this form of leadership, on a local level, was the most effective. Robnett, in her study of leadership highlighted that they tended to operate as "bridge-leaders" who "established a sense of group identity, collective consciousness, and solidarity between rural and small town communities

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[54] "The Negro Woman 'Builders of a New South - Negro Heroines of Dixie Play Major Role in Challenging Racist Traditions,'" *Ebony*, August 1966.
[55] Robnett, "African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965," 1678.
[56] Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement," 176.

and the movement and they did so by bridging the gap between the message of the formal movement organization and the day-to-day realities of the potential constituents."[57] She assumed that the gender exclusion that demoted women to bridge-leadership facilitated the setting of a strong base leadership. It might be argued that it is their identity as both black and women that enabled this form of leadership - not exclusively reserved to women, but rather the only one available to them[58] - to live on. Barnett shares her analysis by arguing that,

> Leadership is multidimensional, however, [research] also indicate that those role dimensions are differentially valued or recognized and that those differences are gender linked. (…) Typically, positional leaders, and spokespersons were, in fact, males and may have been more highly respected not only by Black and white supporters but also by white opposition. [While] in the Southern social structure of the 1950s, women were expected to adhere to the adage that they should be seen, not heard, Black women performed some of the most important roles within the community and local, state, and national organizations.[59]

The local based leadership, *i.e.* micromobilization through bridge leadership gave depth and significance to the civil rights movement. Collins argued that "Black women are in a very profound sense the "something within" that shaped the "culture of resistance," the patterns of consciousness and self-expression and the social organizational framework of local and national expressions of community."[60] It could be claimed that this "something within" has been perpetrated from one generation to another, as some activists affirmed their resilience came from one of their ancestors. Fannie Lou Hamer for instance qualified her mother as being a "strong woman, [who in the state of Mississippi] didn't let no white man beat her kids and sometimes when things were so bad I'd start thinking maybe it would be better if we were white, she'd insist we should be proud black, telling us, "Nobody will respect you unless you stand up for yourself"."[61] Following her mother's directive she went on to be a dedicated activist, as much as her colleagues, even though they did not get a fair recognition of their commitment.

The first part aimed at demonstrating to what extent black women were involved in activism. It was then concluded that not only were they members of activist groups in the civil rights movement, but many also led actions from within and for their communities. However, it can be argued that their involvement was wrongly relayed since few black women activists have been recognized for their work.

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[57] Robnett, "African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965," 1683.
[58] Robnett, 1683.
[59] Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement," 180.
[60] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 140.
[61] "The Negro Woman 'Builders of a New South - Negro Heroines of Dixie Play Major Role in Challenging Racist Traditions.'"

2. Activist movements, media and politics: an impossible representation of African-American women's struggles

According to Britannica Encyclopedia, representation is defined as "the method or process of enabling the citizenry to participate in the shaping of legislation and governmental policy through deputies chosen by them."[62] In this regard, one may wonder whether black women were represented politically in America.

Representation may also be understood as what is chosen to be shown to a broad audience via different mediums. Racial, gender and class identity along with personal experiences shape the perception one has of an event or a group of individuals, thus defining the portrayal of black women made in the media. Through this scope I intend for this second part to first demonstrate how representation in the media might have been shaped by structural stereotypes hence allowing this misrepresentation and second to ponder on the effects this biased representation had on black women's activism and advancement.

2.1 Media representation shaped by ideology and structural stereotypes

While Gyant argued that the Jim/Jane Crow Laws "helped to socialize many people into accepting a world of structural discrimination as normal;"[63] in their essay "We Make Freedom: An Exploration of Revolutionary Black Feminism," Neville and Hamer outlined a more developed definition of structures and their effect on black women,

> The interlocking systems of power that serve to oppress Black women are complex and consist of both structural and ideological components. By structural, we mean the systems in which society is organized (…) [that] maintains and perpetuates political and economic domination by men, especially White elite men and, conversely, discriminates against racial and ethnic minorities, especially women, in institutional participation and access.[64]

Further, they cited Althusser who defined ideology as "a system (with its own logic and rigor) of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts) endowed with a historical existence and role within a given society." [65] One might therefore assume that the media worked as one of these structural components as its organizational system is based on society's one, thus

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[62] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Representation," in *Britannica*, n.d., https://www.britannica.com/topic/representation-government.
[63] Gyant, "Passing the Torch," 631.
[64] Helen A. Neville and Jennifer Hamer, "We Make Freedom: An Exploration of Revolutionary Black Feminism," *Journal of Black Studies* 31, no. 4 (2001): 441, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2668025.
[65] Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (New York: Radical Thinkes, 1969), 231.

fostering its preconceived ideas. The latter, understood as an ideological component, is said to be,

> Manifested and perpetuated by false representations of women as inferior (especially in the areas of intellect, emotional stability, technical knowledge and skill, and conceptual thinking) and the simultaneous representations of men, particularly White men, as superior. These false representations are characterized in media images, educational practices, and public discourse. (…) Ideology thus reflects the interplay among race, class, gender, and sexual identity.[66]

This rationale seems to echo that of Kate Millet, a white American feminist who claimed in 1970 in her book *Sexual Politics*,

> [Women] do not hold office, are represented in no positions of power, and authority is forbidden to them. The image of women fostered by cultural media, high and low, then and now, is a marginal and demeaning existence, and one outside the human condition – which is defined by the prerogative of man.[67]

While Millet did not mention the double constraint lived by black women in their representation, Neville and Hamer took a step further by connecting both oppressions under the scope of one ideology. Understanding the misrepresentation of women via the specificities of each group might open the way to a better understanding of black women's relationship to their own image and therefore their own activism. Various studies read for this research thesis noticed the absence of African-American women from the media. Barnett affirmed, "Although gender, and class constraints generally prohibited their being the articulators, spokespersons, and media favorites, these women did a multiplicity of significant leadership roles."[68] Margaret Sloan underlined that one of the impetus for the creation of NBFO was that in the early days of second wave feminism, "in the newspapers, there were tons of articles depicting the relationship of black women to white women but none were written by black women,"[69] before affirming, "black women have always been there, been a part of the movement, it is just that the media has not focused on us." Her arguments put into perspective two main issues: black women were not represented in the media, and when they were, they did not partake in the choices of representation.

Two guests of the television program "Woman: Image of the Woman in Media" used advertising campaigns as a case study to highlight how women were objectified for selling purposes. Assuming that women would not listen to other women, it was thought that

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[66] Neville and Hamer, "We Make Freedom," 449.
[67] Kate Millet, "Sexual Politics: A Manifesto for Revolution," in *Notes from the Second New Year* (New York: Radical Feminism, 1970), 111–12.
[68] Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement," 171.
[69] "Margaret Sloan on Black Sisterhood."

advertisers aimed to keep the power and the indulgence in the hands of men in order to seek other men's approval. Hence they argued that while men were put in an authority role, ninety-nine percent of the voiceovers in television and radio advertising were male voices; women were kept in a submissive role where their body was sold as much as the product. [70] This rhetoric might seem tangible regarding the examples provided,[71] nevertheless, it lacks consideration for black women and their portrayal in advertisement that appeared to be influenced by both sexism and racism. Actually bell hooks pinpointed the absence of black females in commercials as a result of the "sexist-racist Americans' [perception] of the black male as the representative of the black race. So commercials and advertisements in magazines may portray a white female and a black male but feel that it is enough to have a black male to represent black people."[72]

Margaret Sloan further elaborated on the matter claiming that there were "no positive images for black women: most images stem from stereotypes," by referring to "the stereotypical negroes' image on pancakes that has been concocted by white people or in more recent times black men."[73] The image on the pancakes is a reference to the brand Aunt Jemima which backed its advertisement marketing on the stereotype of "the Mammy." Dedicated to the family she works for, Aunt Jemima goes out of her way to provide an easy enough recipe for her white employer to bake pancakes for her family when Jemima is absent. While perpetrating the sexist idea that women are confined to the domestic sphere and domestic tasks of caring for their families, it also entertained stereotypes on African-American women: corpulent maids, positively eager to help the white family, wearing an apron and a kerchief and failing at using adapted grammar.[74] In a chapter dedicated to the devaluation of black womanhood, bell hooks weighed in on these stereotypes,

> [The mammy's] greatest virtue was of course her love for white folks whom she willingly and passively served. The mammy image was portrayed with affection by whites because it epitomized the sexist-racist vision of ideal womanhood – complete submission to the will of whites.[75]

Sloan therefore put forward that it was a very damaging image and went further arguing, "you can't organize a meeting or a march if you think your lips are ugly or your hair

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[70] "Image of Women in Media," *Woman* (Boston, MA and Washington, DC: WNED, August 27, 1979), American Archive of Public Broadcasting (WGBH and the Library of Congress), http://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip_81-52w3r77q.
[71] cf. appendices 1 & 2 – Women in advertisement
[72] hooks, *Ain't I A Woman : Black Women and Feminism*, 66.
[73] "Margaret Sloan on Black Sisterhood."
[74] cf. appendix 3 – *Aunt Jemima*
[75] hooks, *Ain't I A Woman : Black Women and Feminism*, 84.

looks bad." Indeed, up until the late sixties, African-American women were implicitly told by advertisers that their natural physical appearance did not fit the canons of beauty usually set for white women. She said, "the whole concept about what is beautiful until recently was so limited that only white women could fit into it." [76] Various commercials found in *Ebony* magazine encouraged black women to straighten their hair or to use wigs.[77] It supports her idea that black women's natural hair was thought to be unattractive and should be transformed to fit an appearance closer to the one of white women. As stated in an article "The Natural Look" from *Ebony*'s June 1966 "for the girl in the street (…) who had been born with "bad" or "kinky" hair, the straightening comb and chemical processes seemingly offered the only true paths to social salvation."[78] To challenge this social constraint, some women, interviewed for the writing of this article, decided to go natural and to leave their hair as is. For many it arose from a political consideration thus conceding "a woman shouldn't wear a natural if she doesn't feel comfortable with it, but she should have the right to make a choice."[79] Alluding to the prejudices they had faced when going natural, being called evil at church or being laughed at and hit in public places, they emphasized the social pressure black women were subjected to on their personal physical choices.

The debate triggered by this new trend and this article was also tangible in the "Letters to the Editor" inset of *Ebony*'s issue of August 1966,[80] in testimonies from readers: "It's about time we Negro American women appreciated our natural attributes. The white man has been trying to mold us into *his* image for centuries;" "The "natural" look is not only appealing to the eye. It gives us a much needed sense of identification;" "There are some misguided young ladies who are enchanted by your magazine cover of "The Natural Look." The young ladies who are practicing this look are just plain lazy, nappy-haired females." The selection of letters subscribed to two dialectically opposed visions: disagreement and support. These reactions put into perspective the challenging relationship between Americans and black women's appearance, more specifically between the image given of black women and their self-recognition. Whatever their choice regarding their physical appearance, it seemed to always trigger debates and remarks, as a reader wrote to *Ebony*,

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[76] "Margaret Sloan on Black Sisterhood."
[77] cf. appendices 4 & 5
[78] Phyl Garland, "The Natural Look," *Ebony*, June 1966, https://books.google.fr/books?id=Ql8CIGb9y5QC&pg=PA142&hl=fr&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false.
[79] Garland.
[80] "The Negro Woman," *Ebony*, August 1966.

> Such attitudes prove that we really have a battle on our hands. It is true that we are not Africans, but we are not "white" either. Rather than fashioning ourselves after our originals, we try to look like "white people" by pressing our hair and bleaching our skins. How long will it take before we open our eyes? I thank *Ebony* for the article and look forward to other article which will help us to see the truth and accept ourselves as we are, for then, perhaps, with this new pride in ourselves, we will become unified.[81]

Instrumentalizing physical appearance as a call for unity could be interpreted as an echo to Audre Lorde's famous comparison of self-care as an act of political warfare, "Caring for myself is not indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare."[82] Some African-American women seized back societal pressure on their image as a political tool of contest. As it was the case for "the jazz singer Abbey Lincoln, the folk singer Odetta, the actress Cicely Tyson, and the fictional Beneatha, heroine of Lorraine Hansberry's landmark play *A Raisin in the Sun*, who [among others] wore their hair in Afros in the late 1950s and early 1960s."[83] They got hold of the femininity they were denied, while in the meantime white feminists were prone to go against femininity standards. Some African-American women tended to use their hairstyle as a mean of emancipation from the stigmas that afflicted their representations. Margaret Sloan further suggested that they could achieve change not only by changing their hairstyle but also by boycotting brands that did not fit their own vision of themselves. According to her,

> Women don't realize how powerful we are in terms of dollars. (…) The most that oppressed people can do is to withdraw from the consent to oppression and I think that it is a real important start. And women have to realize that we are powerful. Numbers are powerful. We see a lot of things and we have to turn that power round and just shove it down the oppressor's throat.[84]

On top of their representation in advertisement that fostered a false image and entertained a lack of confidence, their activism was also broadcast in newspapers and on television, which by the beginning of the sixties was the dominant mass medium in the United States.[85] News entered the domestic realm and imported the civil rights struggle inside people's daily life hence the prominent importance of the dialectic of what can be seen, what is shown and what is looked at, as Asante suggested,

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[81] "The Negro Woman 'Builders of a New South - Negro Heroines of Dixie Play Major Role in Challenging Racist Traditions.'"
[82] Lorde, *A Burst of Light and Other Essays*.
[83] Ruth Feldstein, "'I Don't Trust You Anymore': Nina Simone, Culture, and Black Activism in the 1960s," *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 1, 2005): 1374, https://doi.org/10.2307/3660176.
[84] "Margaret Sloan on Black Sisterhood."
[85] Robert J. Thompson and Steve Allen, "Television in the United States," in *Britannica*, n.d., https://www.britannica.com/art/television-in-the-United-States.

> The civil rights movement was essentially a movement of nonviolent but active protest against invisibility. [Its] leaders had to understand that the answer to the question of visibility was contingent on who was doing the looking.[86]

Sloan referred to television as very powerful since, to a certain extent, one image broadcast nationwide could shape Americans' perception, for better or for worse. bell hooks claimed that "negative images of black women in television and film are not simply impressed upon the psyches of white males, they affect all Americans. Black [parents] constantly complain that television lowers the self-confidence and self-esteem of black girls."[87]

African-American women's involvement within the movement was also a matter of misportrayal in the media. Robnett advanced the idea that "the mobilization of smaller communities was, in many ways, more difficult than previous efforts in larger cities. The direct action efforts in the latter, while certainly dangerous, were at least visible to the media."[88] It would appear that she implied that being visible in the media was already an achievement. It has previously been stated that African-American women tended to be more involved on a local level in smaller communities than on a broader and more public scale, which would mean, according to Robnett, that their activism was not represented enough. The significant representation of black men activists on national media compared to women's could thus be explained by two factors: first, the media was based on the structural ideology of sexism; second, men were more inclined to lead national civil rights groups while black women activists tended to lead within their communities and local chapters.

What is more, when colored women held national-leading roles, hence being more visible in the media, it might be claimed that they were victims of false allegations and representation. Angela Davis could stand as an accurate example. Davis' commitment to the cause with its fair share of struggles put her on a pedestal: being both an icon of the troubled era and a scapegoat of the government and the media. A philosophy lecturer, a fervent militant, Davis fought against racial inequalities with a specific interest in the carceral system and its pervasive effects. In 1970, she was accused of being an accomplice in the abortive escape of the Soledad Brothers. While being sought by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as a number one criminal, she fled and hid before being caught and jailed in New York. An all-white jury eventually acquitted her of all charges *i.e.* kidnapping, murder and conspiracy. Her case triggered international interest. In the documentary *Free Angela and All Political Prisoners*,

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[86] M.K. Asante, "Rhetorical Alliances in the Civil Rights Era," *Negro Education*, no. 36 (1985): 9.
[87] hooks, *Ain't I A Woman : Black Women and Feminism*, 66.
[88] Robnett, "African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965," 1678.

the role of the media in the construction of the myths around Davis is salient. As Gyant affirmed "[her] significance has been obscured, denigrated, or minimized by sensationalized media portrayals of her involvement in a 'love relationship'."[89] It seems she was first portrayed as an enemy, then propelled to a heroic status. The documentary highlights this dichotomy thanks to archives photos and editing effects. The attention given to Davis might epitomize the media's role in the construction of a myth since it was when her case garnered national interest that her activism was brought to light. Collins echoed this idea remarking that beyond media "social science research [also] typically focuses on public, official, visible political activity even though unofficial, private and seemingly invisible sphere of social life and organization may be equally important."[90] It was Davis' alleged wrongdoings that made her an icon in the first place and not her long years of activism. Additionally, bell hooks affirmed,

> Although Angela Davis became a female heroine of the movement, she was admired not for her political commitment to the Communist party, not for any of her brilliant analyses of capitalism and racial imperialism, but for her beauty, for her devotion to black men. The American public was not willing to see the "political" Angela Davis; instead they made of her a poster pinup.[91]

The distorted vision of African-American women's involvement in activist movements was also tangible for feminism. In conversation with Dorothy Pitman Hughes and Julia Van Matre, Samantha Dean, host of *Woman*, asked, "Considering that black women are probably one of the most oppressed segments of society and therefore really active in the struggle for liberation why are many black women not particularly enthusiastic about the Women's Liberation Movement?"[92] The question prompted a heated answer from both guests who strongly disagreed with the allegation, arguing that it was indeed black women who started the movement,

> All of us, we have to remember our mothers, and other people, sitting on the porch in the evening, talking. And what were they talking about? They were talking about their problems and how they were dealing about sexism in their black homes. And there were black men in those homes. So many times you would pick up things like black men are copying the attitudes of white men.[93]

Their statement alluded to "consciousness raising" groups which were the backbone of second-wave feminist organization *i.e.* women gathering to share their daily issues in order to

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[89] Gyant, "Passing the Torch," 637.
[90] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 140–41.
[91] hooks, *Ain't I A Woman : Black Women and Feminism*, 181.
[92] "025: Black Women."
[93] "025: Black Women."

eventually become aware of their condition. Hughes further claimed that black women did not wait for white feminists to speak about their women's condition. By mentioning black men's sexism at home, the guests also spotted their behavior within civil rights organizations like the SNCC or the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), "when the movement progressed, women found themselves unable to seat in the group with men and developed political strategy. (…) We realized that men were saying in the bedroom "what do you think of this?" but when we get in the group with other men, we don't get to speak." [94] Their rationale was backed by Zinn who gave the example of a Freedom House, a civil rights headquarters where people worked and lived together, in McComb, Mississippi, where "the women went on strike against the men who wanted them to cook and make beds while the men went around in cars organizing."[95]

Indeed, African-American men's ideology appeared to follow sexist patterns, hence putting into perspective the responsibility of civil rights organizations in the biased, if absent, representation of black women's activism in the media. In this regard Nance claimed,

> Some of the pivotal factors contributing to Black women's invisibility during the civil rights movement were the attitudes toward women held by some of the powerful male leaders of the movement and the women's responses to them.[96]

As a matter of fact, several organizations copied church-like hierarchies and perpetrated religious gendered stereotypes: men were ministers, held formal leadership positions while black women "although they have traditionally performed crucial roles and have been considered the "back-bone" in the church, [they] have historically not been allowed the opportunity to become ministers, deacons, or trustees." [97] Both Barnett and Robnett nonetheless acknowledged that these beliefs did not mean black women were unfit or useless to the organization. Though capable of doing the job, there was "a general belief that they should not do it, "[98] their participation options were then just limited.

Robnett further noticed that the organizations' gendered hierarchy and their method of communication were inherently linked to the misrepresentation of black women's activism, leading to misunderstanding of potential recruits. For instance in correspondence sent to the SNCC office in 1962, a prospective woman volunteer wrote, "many of us are interested in the possibility of going to the South but are hesitant because from the information we have

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[94] "025: Black Women."
[95] Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 506.
[96] Nance, "Hearing the Missing Voice," 550.
[97] Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement," 170.
[98] Robnett, "African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965," 1675.

received about SNCC we could find only male students' names in the accounts of students working there."[99] Organizations' leaders tended to control what was broadcast to the media and how it was done, on the one hand further influencing the image that black women's commitment to the cause was limited and on the other hand shaping the image of the movement as they saw fit. Rosa Parks becoming the emblem of the movement seems to be a fair example. It was actually a young student, Claudette Colvin, who was among the firsts, to refuse to give up her seat to a white woman. Because of her age, her pregnancy and her social background she could not have been an appropriate image for the movement and it was therefore Rosa Parks, thanks to her long commitment to the NAACP, who took the action that triggered the boycott and became the icon of the movement.

Nance argued,

> The activities of Black women engaged in the grassroots southern civil rights movement did not generate the kind of rhetorical artifacts (policy statements, speeches, etc.) that would catapult their names or words into print. They were, however, the kind of activists who served as the catalysts for the civil rights movement throughout the country[100]

Still, it might be asserted that the understanding one had of African-American women's struggle was formed after their representations in the media, themselves based upon structures and ideologies which, according to Neville and Hamer "dialectically influence one another to sustain oppression of Black women."[101] In this regard, we will now ponder on the effects of this misrepresentation in terms of political, economic and social advancement.

2.2 (Mis)representation and its effect on advancement

Founded in 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is an interracial organization that aimed at abolishing "segregation and discrimination in housing, education, employment, voting, and transportation; oppos[ing] racism; and ensur[ing] African Americans their constitutional rights."[102] Their purposes could be taken as a relevant definition of advancement, also suitable for the advancement of women. The specific identity of black women having to overcome racial and sexist discriminations put them in a unique position in terms of progress. As bell hooks remarked,

> When the women's movement raised the issue of sexist oppression, we argued that sexism was insignificant in light of the harsher, more brutal reality of racism. We were afraid to

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[99] Robnett, 1676.
[100] Nance, "Hearing the Missing Voice," 548.
[101] Neville and Hamer, "We Make Freedom," 440.
[102] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "National Association for the Advancement of Colored People," n.d., https://www.britannica.com/topic/National-Association-for-the-Advancement-of-Colored-People.

> acknowledge that sexism could be just as oppressive as racism. We clung to the hope that liberation from racial oppression would be all that was necessary for us to be free.[103]

Burdened with double the work to achieve liberation, we will try to analyze how the conceptions formerly outlined impinged upon their relation with activism. Before proceeding to the study of black women and politics, the economic and social oppressions will first be examined.

It has been stated that African-American men in various organizations resorted to sexist behaviors that could be explained by structural ideologies and fostered an unbalanced representation of the movement and its leadership. For Barnett, family responsibilities and economic concerns were two interconnected constraints on black women's access to leadership roles, as a respondent told her,

> Many male leaders were really free to make contacts and relay information. Female leaders, many of whom were public school teachers, were constrained by family roles and more so by their jobs and the school superintendent. If he found out we were involved in any way, [he] could fire any of us any time he wanted to.[104]

Jo Ann Robinson in her interview[105] echoed the economic risks black women took while becoming militants, testifying of her own dismissal by one employer. Hence, to secure their jobs, they hid their actions, as Mary Bell, another activist, put it while in conversation with Barnett, she "work[ed] for the white folks in the daytime, and against them at night."[106]

While some put their economic status at risk for the movement's sake, African-American women at large faced severe discriminations prior to employment but also in their daily work. Frances Beale, in her essay "Double Jeopardy: to Be Black and Female" articulated the structural pressures on womanhood intertwined with blackness in the professional sphere,

> Women are systematically exploited by the system. They are paid less for the same work that men do and jobs that are specifically relegated to women are low-paying and without the possibility of advancement. (…) This racist, chauvinistic and manipulative use of Black workers and women, especially Black women, has been a severe cancer on the American labor scene.[107]

An idea supported by Neville and Hamer who mentioned how the work environment was segregated between 'gendered' and 'racial' jobs. Further developing on its pervasive effect on their economic status, in fact "as certain jobs become perceived as women's work and / or

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[103] hooks, *Ain't I A Woman : Black Women and Feminism*, 1.
[104] Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement," 170.
[105] *Eyes on the Prize, They Loved You Madly: Interview with Jo Ann Robinson*.
[106] Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement," 171.
[107] Frances Beale, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," in *The Black Woman* (New York: New American Library, 1970).

performed predominantly by people of color, they lose social and economic status and are allocated the lowest pay, the longest and most arduous days, and the most tedious tasks." [108] Therefore, concluding "within this 'genderized' and 'racialized' occupational hierarchy, women of color are generally relegated to the very lowest paying and lowest quality positions."[109] The example that comes to mind regarding this hierarchy is the one of domestic workers.

The *Woman* television program episode[110] of April 1973, hosted Edith Barksdale Sloan, the executive director of the National Committee on Household Employment (NCHE) and Josephine Hulett, a field officer of the organization who happened to have been a household worker for 20 years. Their testimonies give an insight on the conditions and the myriad of issues faced by workers in this field of occupation. First they alluded to their disapproval of the stereotypes that shaped the perception of household workers as people tended to expect a woman with "a ragtag on her head and she is supposed to be fat." Hulett did not fit this biased perception which tended to intrigue people, but she used it as a catalyst to raise awareness on the incoherence of these stereotypes. She went even further by arguing that people did not even consider household worker as a human; referring to her identity she said, "being a worker, being a woman and being black, I had three strikes going against me no matter what I did." Neville and Hamer gave the example of "working-class and poor women of color [who] are confronted with the greatest levels of structural sexism and racism; they are superexploited economically and are one of the most alienated groups from economic, political, and social institutions."[111] The intertwining and interacting oppressions they faced because of their identity and their social status were inherent to their condition *i.e.* household workers tended to be poorly educated, middle-aged, black women. Because they lacked education, they were compelled to work in white people's household to be able to provide for their own families; a situation that triggered a slavery-like relationship between the employer and the employee as E.B. Sloan stated,

> Slavery is very much alive in household employment and it hasn't changed much for the past 100 years. There is still this attitude that she is a girl even though she might be a fifty-four year-old woman who comes in to do the work that you don't want to do. And you

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[108] Neville and Hamer, "We Make Freedom," 449.
[109] Neville and Hamer, 450.
[110] "Household Workers," *Woman* (Boston, MA and Washington, DC: WNED, April 15, 1974), American Archive of Public Broadcasting (WGBH and the Library of Congress), http://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip_81-35gb5rct.
[111] Neville and Hamer, "We Make Freedom," 441.

> really don't have to pay her much for it because it is a woman's work and who pays for woman's work?[112]

She referred to the 'genderized' ideologies that insidiously undermined women, specifically black women's labor worth on the labor market. Indeed, as it is considered a 'woman's work,' since men would not pay their housewife to do it, why would they pay someone else any amount to do it? E.B. Sloan further argued that while ninety-eight per cent of household workers are women, the two per cent of men doing the same job but called differently are paid twice as much. She ironically concluded, "that's sexism if you have never seen it before."

It seemed nonetheless striking that it was usually white women who were in charge of the employment and management of household workers, implying that it was women who economically and psychologically oppressed other women. One of the missions of the NCHE was therefore to educate white women on the issue,

> You are not going to be liberated until that sister who is working in your kitchen is also liberated. If you exploit her, if you vent all of your frustration downward on her, you are just further exploiting another woman. And you are keeping yourself down. So in order to let yourself out you are also going to have to give her a decent wage, decent working conditions and respect her for the value of her labor. Don't denigrate her because she is doing your work. Indeed you're denigrating yourself and your work when you denigrate her.[113]

This rationale pinpointed the hypocrisy of some feminists who tended to complain about the shackles of sexism that prevented them from being free while conversely exploiting 'a sister' at home. It might be argued that this hypocritical attitude towards Women's Liberation was an explanation of the late involvement of black women in predominantly white feminist groups, or allegedly the emergence of black feminist organizations like NBFO in the early seventies. Frances Beale expected a wake-up call from her activists' counterparts – both black men and white feminists –

> It becomes essential for those who understand the workings of capitalism and imperialism to realize that the exploitation of Black people and women works to everyone's disadvantage and that the liberation of these two groups is a stepping stone to the liberation of all oppressed people in this country and around the world.[114]

Also, it could be argued that the biased image fostered by the media, maintained stereotypes that eventually led to a mistreatment of household workers.

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[112] "Household Workers."
[113] "Household Workers."
[114] Beale, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female."

To take actions against this economic exploitation in the household working sphere, the NCHE and its representatives travelled the country holding conferences for both workers and employers to clarify the whys and wherefores of laws that oversaw the profession. Indeed, they outlined that too many employers did not pay the monthly social security fee leading to inhumane working conditions. For instance fifteen per cent of all household workers were over the retirement age of sixty-two and a large number of women had worked full-time for several years in a row with no paid vacation or no paid sick-leave. The laws passed in 1951 and 1974 that guaranteed fair treatment were often not respected despite the fact employers could get fined. The organization therefore proposed a code of standards that promoted an open conversation about wages, benefits and working conditions. It also outlined principles to follow regarding relationship between employers and employee, for example if the worker had to address her boss by 'Mrs Jones', she should call her 'Mrs Hulett' in return, and the like for children as well who should use the last name, not only the first. Regarding tasks, they advised women to establish rules and lists of duties, cooperatively outlining the missions of the worker. Such principles would ensure a relationship based on equal grounds and mutual respect. They also promoted the need for a change of customs on top of an evolution of the law, which is not enough to ensure the progress of a society's mindset.

By highlighting the disregard of law, E.B. Sloan and J. Hulett shed light on another issue central to representation: African-American women did not believe in the laws meant to protect them and therefore the politics meant to represent them. As laws proved to be inefficient regarding employment for instance, several activist lost faith in their political power as a way towards change.

Fannie Lou Hamer, in an interview given in 1965, shortly after the passing of Voting Rights Act, affirmed her disbelief towards political representation and law enforcement arguing that there was "no point in passing a voting bill when they are not enforcing the voting rights of the 15th Amendment. When Mississippi got readmitted in the union in 1870 they promised they would do whatever it takes to integrate the negroes. Since then the 13th, the 14th and the 15th Amendments are violated."[115] Because of the amount of freedom taken by states on a state-level and the lack of reaction from the federal government, local activists had gradually lost faith in the system. A conviction supported by Julia Van Matre who, when asked whether the Equal Rights Amendment would help black women, answered, "What do

[115] "Fannie Lou Hamer Interview" (Boston, MA and Washington, DC: Pacifica Radio Archives, September 24, 1965), American Archive of Public Broadcasting (WGBH and the Library of Congress), http://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip_28-bg2h70895r.

you mean? That piece of paper? I don't need it. (…) We still have a Bill of Rights and what does it do to it? It's just a piece of paper."[116] Her sister, Dorothy Pitman Hughes, nuanced her opinion. She legitimized its necessity regarding many people who could not see themselves moving for their own freedom. Such laws are meant to make the American people aware that women are still left out but also to make women gain strength and consciousness. Furthermore she referred to the Constitution in order to explain why strategies should be developed for the kind of change that was needed. The men who wrote it could never have dreamt of meeting empowered African-American women like them, it is therefore not surprising that such a document did not grasp their needs; making it impossible for part of the nation to relate to the document which should thus be regarded as a "piece of history."

Tackling political representation for black women hence puts forward the examination of Shirley Chisholm's role and achievements. She became the first black woman in the House of Representatives in 1968 and served in Congress for fourteen years (1969-1983). In 1972, she ran to become the Democratic Party Candidate for the presidency and came fourth at the Democratic National Convention. Anastasia Curwood in her essay "Black Feminism on Capitol Hill: Shirley Chisholm and Movement Politics" noted,

> Coming to national elected office at the same time that institutionalized black feminism came of age, Chisholm interwove antiwar, civil rights, women's, and poor people's movement issues into her political priorities. However, unlike other black feminists, Chisholm sought transformation from within the heart of the Democratic Party and Capitol Hill politics.[117]

However this personal and political achievement did not come without its lot of obstacles, sexism being one of the hardest to overcome. Because of her political involvement her opponents wielded to sexist stereotypes to discredit her, as she wrote in *Unbought and Unbossed*, "To the black men – even some of those supposedly supporting me – sensitive about female domination, they were running me down as a bossy female, a would-be matriarch."[118] An argument that relied on a well-relegated, though biased, point of view that black women were strong individuals looking to emasculate the black man. Therefore this theory "gave the black male a framework on which to base his condemnation of working black women. Many black men who did not feel at all personally de-masculinized, absorbed sexist ideology and regarded wage-earning black women with contempt," bell hooks explained. Though challenged because of her womanhood, Chisholm went beyond the stereotyped attacks to connect the

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[116] "025: Black Women."
[117] Anastasia Curwood, "Black Feminism on Capitol Hill: Shirley Chisholm and Movement Politics, 1968–1984," *Meridians* 13, no. 1 (2015): 205, https://doi.org/10.2979/meridians.13.1.204.
[118] Shirley Chisholm, *Unbought and Unbossed* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970), 71.

dots between the people's differences, hence founding her political action on discourses of unity. In the speech she delivered at the first NBFO conference in 1974, she argued,

> This rhetoric [the black matriarch] keeps black women hopelessly retarded. Our men are coming; our race needs the collective power of black men and black women. We by the 'enemy' who tells us black women are keeping black men back. The black women must work side by side with her man.[119]

In terms of political actions, Chisholm did her best to channel black and white feminists to work together despite the lack of trust or perception of a common objective from either side. She specifically prompted black women to coalesce with white women with regards to the Equal Rights Amendment, which she had personally introduced in 1969 and was passed by the House and Senate in 1971. While many presumed the law would only benefit middle-class white women, Chisholm affirmed it would also affect black women. "She reminded black women that feminism applied to them, too. Despite not having racial identity in common, she implied, black women and white women had coinciding interests concerning expanding employment opportunities." [120] Brown nuanced this analysis by claiming, "Chisholm mainly classified black women's concerns as pragmatic, white women's as more ideological." [121] She further affirmed at a congress of black businesswomen, "It is my contention that you have the right to benefit from all events and activities that can further your own personal and community development."

Chisholm was mostly portrayed by the media as a strong-willed politician who broke down boundaries to access national political recognition. To a certain extent, however, she seemed to have been the master of her own representation. In fact, as previously demonstrated, African-American women used their hair as a protest tool. Brown outlined how the different trends shaped – or did not – Chisholm's style. The natural hair stood for radical identity activism and was prone by younger activists such Angela Davis, Kathleen Cleaver, or Assata Shakur. Conversely, some black women conformed to white standards of beauty and straightened their hair. Chisholm, to avoid any political assimilation to either of these trends, wore large, pile-high curls. Brown further affirmed, "Chisholm's carefully chosen attire, signature wigs, and slender physique image of the quintessential lady perhaps to salve the reception of her aggressive style and hard-lined pragmatism."[122]

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[119] Tammy L. Brown, "'A New Era in American Politics': Shirley Chisholm and the Discourse of Identity," *Callaloo* 31, no. 4 (2008): 1017, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27654956.
[120] Curwood, "Black Feminism on Capitol Hill," 218.
[121] Brown, "A New Era in American Politics," 1018.
[122] Brown, 1023.

Regarding political representation, the executive power gradually took into consideration the feminists organizations' call for more rights. To that intent, President Jimmy Carter established in April 1978 the National Advisory Committee for Women, aiming to promote equality for women in cultural, social, economic and political life.[123] One year prior to the creation of that Committee, the National Women's Conference was held in Houston.

> Because eighteen thousand observers came to Houston from fifty-six other countries, and because delegates were chosen to represent the makeup of each state and territory, it was probably the most geographically, racially and economically representative body this nation has ever seen – much more so than Congress. (…) Issues to be voted on in Houston also had been selected in every state and territory. It was a constitutional convention for the female half of the country. [124]

Bella Abzug initiated the project, with the help of Congresswomen Patsy Mink and Shirley Chisholm, a piece of legislation was written to ask federal funding. The conference resulted in the voting of a National Plan of Action regarding women's needs in American society. The event and its outcomes could be regarded as a political achievement for minority women as they took part in the conference on an equal footing. Delegates from the Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native caucuses managed to draft a united plank advocating for the recognition of their specific interests as victims of double systems of oppression. Because they managed to bridge their various struggles, the plank reached consensus.

The objective of this second part was to reflect on the portrayal of African-American women by the media and in politics, inside or outside the activist sphere, and to determine whether this was fair. It showed that while some women strived to seize back their image by breaking down the stereotypes afflicting their daily lives, changing the prevailing mentality of the American nation with regards to these stereotypes was a long-term process. This process is still ongoing as of today as illustrated by the new fields of studies developing which aim to tackle this legacy.

3. Scholars and the awakening on the relationship between lack of representation and lack of success

After having assessed how African-American women got involved in activist groups and their degree of leadership, their representation – or rather their lack of – was examined. Misrepresentation fosters stereotypes that perpetuate discriminations and therefore

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[123] Jimmy Carter, "National Advisory Committee for Woman," Executive Order 12050 § (1978), https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/executive-order-12050-national-advisory-committee-for-women.
[124] Gloria Steinem, *My Life on the Road* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2015), 54.

inequalities. To understand the origins of these biased perceptions of black women, an analysis of education and historiography will be conducted.

Historiography is defined as the critical study of history and the development of historical method.[125] In the 20th century onward, technological and ideological evolution in the field of history has shifted the interest from statesmen, upper-class, literate people to lower class men,

> And virtually all women were excluded from history because they were unable to write. In essence all that was known about them passed through the filter of the attitudes of literate elites. The challenge of seeing through that filter has been met by historians in various ways. One way is to make use of nontraditional source.[126]

Whilst the renewed interest in women in history at large has been well noted, the representation of African American women in both Black and Women's studies is still lacking. In order to counter this, scholars and activists reinvested history to rewrite this common narrative.

After having seen how the historiographical evolution correlates the evolution of customs, *i.e* from a male and white-centred perspective to an intersectional analysis, the role of education in the recasting of African-American women's representation will be considered.

3.1 Evolution of historiography correlates evolution of customs: from a male-centred analysis to a broader analysis

Barnett affirmed, "Most of the leadership recognition and pioneering research covering the civil rights movement of the 1950s and early 1960s, in particular, has concentrated on the leading roles and charisma of elite male professionals within the Black community." Such premise seems to correlate the construction of a myth around civil rights leaders as Martin Luther King or, to a different degree, Malcolm X. King often embodies the black freedom struggle, as he was portrayed as its figurehead, thanks to his "I Have A Dream" speech or his involvement in the organization of the Selma to Montgomery March. Furthermore, his assassination turned him into a martyr, which only further enhanced his mystified portrayal. This image was double-folded as he symbolized a rising anger through non-violence. On one hand some followers praised his communication skills and representations as they conveyed a positive image for opponents, whilst on the other hand, some argued his ambivalence towards the struggle was not radical enough to be efficient. Indeed, Fannie Lou Hamer twice argued in that regard. In an interview for Ebony she

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[125] Richard T. Vann, "Historiography," in *Britannica*, accessed March 30, 2019, https://www.britannica.com/topic/historiography.
[126] Vann.

claimed that the NAACP is "the National Association for the Advancement of *Certain* People;"[127] while in another interview she stated, "MLK can't make a decision for me because he actually can't know how. A person that was born in the middle class never had to suffer like I did. He doesn't know what I went through."[128]

Still, King's peaceful leadership embodies the whole movement up until today. In fact, Barack Obama relied on King's image in various speeches to call upon commitment and freedom, sometimes without even mentioning his name, as in his acceptance speech (November 5th, 2008). When mentioning the long life of Ann Nixon Cooper, an African-American woman, he said, "She was there for the buses in Montgomery, the hoses in Birmingham, a bridge in Selma and a preacher from Atlanta who told a people that We Shall Overcome." By resorting to antonomasia, Obama acknowledged that King was so well-known among his audience that mentioning his name was unnecessary. To portray him as an iconic figure of the movement was a way to draw unity between people and to create a common identity.

Rosa Parks is also often referred to as a symbolic figure of the movement, though her involvement is often reduced to her stand against segregation in the Montgomery buses. Not only is her long-term role in the NAACP ignored, Claudette Colvin's identical action one year prior to the Montgomery bus boycott is merely unknown. In an article entitled "The Ladies Before Rosa: Let Us Now Praise Unfamous Women," Hendrickson unfolded how Parks had been instrumentalized as an icon while prior to her actions Colvin and others also refused to let themselves scorned by an unjust system. Colvin recalled, "They didn't want me because I didn't represent the middle class… They didn't want me involved because of where I lived and what my parents' background was."[129] Parks is thought to have instigated a movement that had been simmering for several years; her social class, her civic activism and the time chosen to take a stand fostered the righteous image of her action. It could be argued that without the prior actions of women like Colvin, Aurelia Bowder, Viola White and Geneve Johnson, Parks' actions may not have received such attention. As Jo Ann Robinson recalled in an interview, "Intermittently, twenty to twenty-five thousand black people in Montgomery rode city buses, and I would estimate that up until the boycott of December 5, 1955, about 3

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[127] "The Negro Woman 'Builders of a New South - Negro Heroines of Dixie Play Major Role in Challenging Racist Traditions.'"
[128] "Fannie Lou Hamer Interview."
[129] Paul Hendrickson, "The Ladies Before Rosa: Let Us Now Praise Unfamous Women," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 8, no. 2 (November 7, 2005): 288, https://doi.org/10.1353/rap.2005.0076.

out of 5 had suffered some unhappy experience on the public transit lines."[130] Rosa Parks came to embody, and even overshadow other women's roles in the civil rights movement.

bell hooks argued that through their manifestos or their research white feminists of the Second Wave also tended to disregard black women's experiences by referring to the white Americans woman's experience as *the* American woman's experience.[131] In her chapter "Racism and Feminism" she resorted to different examples to illustrate white feminists' dialectic towards black women, *i.e.* urging them to join the movement while paradoxically excluding them from their rhetoric when comparing women's sufferings to that of the blacks',

> This constant comparison of the plight of "women" and "blacks" deflected attention away from the fact that black women were extremely victimized by both racism and sexism – a fact which, had it been emphasized, might have diverted public attention away from the complaints of middle and upper class white feminists.[132]

Besides, most white feminists focused their attention on the liberation of women through work, further excluding African-American women from the cause. Indeed, the implicit assertion in this emphasis was "a refusal to acknowledge the reality that, for masses of American working class women, working for pay neither liberated them from sexist oppression nor allowed them to gain any measure of economic independence."[133] It therefore appears logic that such discourses first paved the way for the emergence of black feminist groups and served to maintain the previously mentioned dialectic that "all blacks are men and all women are white"[134] even in the historical accounts of the era.

If the quote, commonly attributed to Churchill, "History is written by the victors" is taken for granted, then American history was written by white and black men, and mostly white women. History is subject to interpretation and influenced by its author's experiences and perceptions. As bell hooks said, there is nothing racist in writing a book about white women, nor it is sexist to write a book solely about black men. What ends up being interpreted as racist and sexist is pretending to write a book about a whole group - "women" or "blacks" - without taking into consideration race and gender specificities. The American civilization's work *A People and a Nation: A History of the United States,*[135] written by several scholars could stand as an example, since it fails to mention the specificities of the black women's experience in the

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[130] *Eyes on the Prize, They Loved You Madly: Interview with Jo Ann Robinson*.
[131] hooks, *Ain't I A Woman : Black Women and Feminism*, 137.
[132] hooks, 141.
[133] hooks, 145.
[134] Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement," 26.
[135] Kamensky et al., *A People and a Nation*.

era. It seems *The Limits of Liberty*[136] is also restricted to a male-centered and white-centered interpretation of history. Indeed its chapter dedicated to "American Society and Culture, 1940-1980" is split into eight subparts among which are "Minority Problems: Blacks, Chicanos, and American Indians"[137] and "The Women's Movement."[138] By dividing the analysis between minorities and women, the interlocking struggles faced by black and native women and chicanas are ignored.

However, Howard Zinn's *A People History of the United States* stands as a counter-example. It aimed to provide a history of the common people, the unheard, unsung, uncelebrated Americans. From this perspective, while dealing with the rebellious decades that shook American society, Zinn managed to encompass black women's struggles in the civil rights groups not only by mentioning hidden figures of prominent importance as Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker or Gloria Richardson, but also by pointing out the sexism they endured. He quoted Baker, "I knew from the beginning that as a woman, an older woman in a group of ministers who are accustomed to having women largely as supporters, there was no place for me to have come into a leadership role."[139] By mentioning the women's strike in civil rights headquarters, he drew a link with Betty Friedans' theses on womanhood, "the stirring that Friedan spoke of was true of women everywhere, it seemed."[140] This attempt to bridge the gap between white feminist leaders and black women's cause did not undermine his commitment to encompass most layers of American society, since he also cited Patricia Robinson's pamphlet *Poor Black Women*, which pledged for a "rebellion by poor black women, the bottom of a class hierarchy heretofore not discussed, places the question of what kind of society will the poor black woman demand and struggle for."[141] Published in 1995, Zinn's account of American history came right in the advent of African-American Women's studies, which were in expansion.

Still history becomes powerful when it is widespread and create a common accepted narrative, which usually only briefly allude to African-American women's roles in the movements. The way in which history discloses a biased image of the era permeates thinking up until today. For example, in a speech honoring the fiftieth anniversary of the Selma to

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[136] Jones, *The Limits of Liberty*.
[137] Jones.
[138] Maldwyn Allen Jones, "The Women's Movement," in *The Limits of Liberty: American History, 1607-1992*, vol. 2nd edition., The Short Oxford History of the Modern World (Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 584–86.
[139] Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 494.
[140] Zinn, 495.
[141] Robinson, *Poor Black Women*.

Montgomery march; Barack Obama praised the bravery of the hundreds of people who defied authorities to have their voices heard. "Because of what they did, the doors of opportunity swung open not just for black folks, but for every American. Women marched through those doors." Though recognizing African-Americans fought for human rights and not only their own rights, he copied some second wave feminists' dialectic, thus denying the involvement of black women in the said peaceful protest. Regarding historical erasure from feminists' studies, Neville and Hamer mentioned the case of Frances Beale and her work in the TWWA, claiming that it "has been essentially erased from discussions of the civil rights and Black power movement of the 1960s and 1970s."[142]

Since the late eighties, an advent of African-American Women Studies along with a greater focus on black women's agency arose from the observations of their erasure from the prevailing historical discourse of both the civil rights and the second wave feminist movement. It does not deny the mentioned discourses, but rather offers another perspective on iconic events or characters while shedding a new light on their participation in the mainstream movement. Barnett pinpointed this evolution in historiography,

> During the period of more than thirty years of scholarship since the heyday of the civil rights movement, their experiences and their leadership role virtually have been neglected, forgotten, or considered inconsequential or of secondary importance relative to those of men. (…) The invisibility of modern Black women leaders and activists is in part a result of gender, race, and class biases prevalent in both the social movement literature and feminist scholarship.[143]

Collins supported the same idea and went even further by claiming that such processes were embedded within power relation hierarchies, "suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group makes it easier for dominant groups to rule because the seeming absence of dissent suggests that subordinate groups willingly collaborate in their own victimization."[144] This argument could therefore explain why African-American women scholars seized back the history of their sisters, their ancestors to write their own history. Indeed, it is a field of study that is dominated by black women, as if they aimed to echo Margaret Sloan's comment about the creation of NBFO: black women first gathered to talk about the treatment of their struggle in the mainstream media made by and for whites.[145] However, it seems important to emphasize that "recent scholarship in Black women's studies and sociology is turning its attention to Black feminist organizations as a parallel development to the predominately white

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[142] Neville and Hamer, "We Make Freedom," 461.
[143] Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement," 163.
[144] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 113.
[145] "Margaret Sloan on Black Sisterhood."

women's movement, rather than merely a reaction to racism."[146] As argued by Dorothy Pitman Hughes, black women did not wait for whites to create consciousness raising groups to feel and to talk about sexist oppression.[147]

In order to give black women a historical agency several scholars interviewed former and current activists advocating for the black women's cause. Robnett's study placed them "at the center of the analysis and focused upon the movement within the context of their organizational participation."[148] It relied on qualitative data sources, archived materials and personal interviews, using the "snowball method," *i.e.* the build up of testimonies to gather enough data. Her strategy aimed to allow participants to define leadership in their own terms.

As for Barnett, she conducted thirty-six interviews with activists who decided to remain anonymous; among them only thirteen were women. It might seem odd to interview more male-activists than women while writing a paper that aims to give back credit to women activists, however, most of the accounts celebrate women's involvement and concede their lack of recognition.

The research paper "Voices from the Southern Oral History Program 'I train the people to do their own talking': Septima Clark and Women in the Civil Rights Movement" is an analysis of two interviews of Septima Poinsette Clark, found in the Southern Oral History Program Collection. From Clark's responses, Hall and her colleagues examined the role of women in the Movement. Robnett also analyzed Clark's education program and argued that, "although scholars [like Morris or Couto] either credit Myles Horton or Esau Jenkins with the development of the Citizenship Education Program, it was Clark who developed much of the educational program, [which] had achieved a tremendous amount of success in the area of voter registration." [149] This remark pinpoints the erasure of Clark's role in some discourses, therefore explaining why there was a renewed interest in her work with the advent of black women's studies.

LaVerne Gyant also based her research "on interviews from women who were recognized leaders in their communities during the civil rights movement."[150]

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[146] Kimberly Springer, "The Interstitial Politics of Black Feminist Organizations," *Meridians* 1, no. 2 (2001): 163, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40338461.
[147] "025: Black Women."
[148] Robnett, "African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965," 1662.
[149] Robnett, 1679.
[150] Gyant, "Passing the Torch," 629.

In order to honor Claudette Colvin's agency, Paul Hendrickson met and interviewed her as well.

Kimberly Springer, an African-American woman scholar, conducted twenty-three oral history interviews with Black feminist activists form 1995 to 1998. "These tape recorded interviews, (…) covered the activists' personal and political histories, organizational structure of their groups, group objectives, significant events, ideological disputes, coalition work, organizational accomplishments, and factors of decline."[151] As her counterpart, Robnett, she resorted to the snowball method, meaning that activists often referred her to acquaintances who held similar political views. Hence, to avoid altering the results of the study, Springer nuanced the interviews with archived primary source material "as a more accurate reflection of events and disputes than interviews given in hindsight."[152] Also, she deliberately chose to keep the real names of her interviewees, which was not that common for historians, as she believed that regardless of how we in the present might interpret their actions or thoughts at the time, they should be recognized for their role in the making of feminist history.[153]

Eventually, to support arguments of this thesis, several radio and television shows have been analyzed. The American Archive of Public Broadcasting collaborates with WGBH, a Boston-based public broadcaster, and the Library of Congress to digitize most significant public television and radio programs of the past 60 years. The platform therefore offers a unique opportunity for scholars, teachers and students to dig into the media of the last century to better understand to what extent it might have impacted society. In hindsight, these programs could be investigated as oral history in the making.

The reliance on interviews of African-American women activist is not innocuous when we take into consideration the legacy of the oral tradition of this community. Indeed, since Africans were brought to the American continent, they depended on oral tradition first because they were not granted the privilege to read or write, second because even though they had both the training and the tools to write, most slaves would not dare record their actual thoughts about their treatment in any way their masters could have found.[154] Oral accounts of history are however ambivalent, as first person accounts are filtered both by the tellers and the

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[151] Springer, "The Interstitial Politics of Black Feminist Organizations," 157.
[152] Springer, 188.
[153] Springer, 188.
[154] Darwin T. Turner, "African-American History and the Oral Tradition," *Books at Iowa* 53 (November 1990): 9, https://doi.org/10.17077/0006-7474.1186.

historians analyzing the stories. Still it could be claimed that it is exactly because of this subjectivity that oral tradition is substantial for oppressed communities. Indeed, from the perspective that the mainstream history of the American nation is usually written by whites, minorities' narratives are relayed through the biased scope of whites' interpretation of their struggle. A historiographical realization of this tendency enabled a rethinking of the making of history, passing by a return to the oral tradition. All the scholars previously mentioned elucidated their methods by acknowledging the interpretative guidance of their research, which they counterbalanced, nuanced with archived primary data or personal knowledge. As Turner affirmed in his article "African-American History and the Oral Tradition," oral history is important also because "recalling memorable events that will never be inscribed in history books, reminds us that history is the story of the lives of human beings — not merely the record of great battles, changes of authority, and momentous discoveries."[155]

As African-American women's voices, both in the civil rights and mainstream feminist movements were unheard or unlistened, re-writing history through their perception, relying on their hindsight analysis of the era, seems to stand as an effective method to shed a new light on their involvement. Hall and her colleagues outlined that,

> In the beginning they were listeners only. They did many things to help in the Civil Rights Movement, but you'll never see it put down anywhere in any of the reports. I don't know why it is, but they don't give the women any of the glory at all. It's just starting to come now.[156]

This quote shows the evolution of women's relationship to the movement as well as the historiographical progress. Instead of writing about the African-American women's experience through the interpretation one has of theirs, Women's Studies scholars (and others) made the choice to give back their voices to the unsung figures of the movements. In this regard, Nance asserted,

> The importance of this kind of historical refocusing is not simply to add women's names to the litany of civil rights heroes. Rather, the activism of Black women reflects a usefully unique orientation to the process of political organizing for the purposes of changing social policy. Even more important, recognizing the work of civil rights women (and the conditions under which the work was enacted) adds to an understanding of Black women's collective experiences.[157]

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[155] Turner, 11.
[156] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall et al., "Voices from the Southern Oral History Program: 'I Train the People to Do Their Own Talking': Septima Clark and Women in the Civil Rights Movement," *Southern Cultures* 16, no. 2 (2010): 50, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26214111.
[157] Nance, "Hearing the Missing Voice," 544.

Above all, reinterpreting the social movements' history from African-American women's perspectives, does not mean that all previous ideas should be invalidated to the prevalence of those of blacks and women – which is what is often feared. What it means is a call for diversity as,

> [First] they offer a new and different body of scholarly knowledge as a result of their historic position as intellectual and political critics of American society and its culture; [second] they provide a link between the emerging radical thinking of African American men and European American women.[158]

As a matter of fact, from the observation that "within discourses that are shaped to respond to one *or* the other, the interests and experiences of women of color are frequently marginalized within both,"[159] stemmed the idea that there was "a need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social work is constructed."[160] In other words, instead of delimitating discourses to one or the other body of oppression, *i.e.* race or gender, intersectional approaches should be led. Without negating one over the other or giving a greater importance to one over the other, intersectionality offers a recognition of differences, weaves them together by means of analysis to eventually provide a more accurate representation of black women, and other minorities' experiences.

Giving back a voice, a visibility, a recognition to African-American women activists – or not – in historical research, not only expands the state-of-the-art and the perception of the era, but it also recasts a renewed representation of black women to eventually provide a more accurate education for all Americans.

3.2 Reshaping representation: paving the path to a better education

In her essay "African American Women Education for What?" Patricia Coleman-Burns defined education as "that process and institution designed to prepare members of the next generation to take their rightful place as tomorrow's leadership."[161] In that regard, the African-American community is argued to have given a specific importance to the need for education, or used education as a means of revolution.

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[158] Patricia Coleman-Burns, "African American Women — Education for What?," *Sex Roles* 21, no. 1 (July 1, 1989): 158, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00289733.
[159] Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color."
[160] Crenshaw.
[161] Coleman-Burns, "African American Women — Education for What?," 152.

Among other points which are based on the need to bring back justice for the black community, which ties them and their struggle together, The Black Panther Party Platform and Program, entitled "What We Want, What We Believe," advocated for a better education.

> We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society. We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.[162]

Put on the same level as demands regarding housing, employment, police brutality and fair justice, education was thought to be a lever towards freedom. The demand for education also implicitly brought forward the failure of the American schooling system to teach African-Americans. Septima Clark initiated the argument by mentioning that prior to 1920 "all the public schools had white teachers teaching black children."[163] Though in principle equal educational opportunity had to be provided for each citizen, schools in the South were legally segregated up until 1954 and the *Brown v. Board of Education* case during which the Supreme Court ruled that such segregation was unconstitutional. Even after this ruling, it still took several years before blacks could attend integrated schools without facing discrimination. Indeed, while bell hooks argued, "for black folks teaching – educating – was fundamentally political because it was rooted in antiracist struggle," [164] she charged the integration process for fostering an education "that merely strives to reinforce domination." [165] Prior to 1954, black teachers "were committed to nurturing intellect, [to teaching] that devotion to learning as a counter-hegemonic act, a fundamental way to resist every strategy of the white racist colonization."[166] In contrast, hooks referred to integrated schools as a place where only obedience was expected from students, and no longer critical thinking. Her arguments give the general impression that school integration altered, or even lowered the standard of her education. However, Swartz offered a challenging perception, arguing that whether it be due to the lack of funding of black schools or the lack of opportunity to attend higher education, the black community was mostly un- or mis-educated.[167] Either way, prior or post integration, it appears that most African-Americans did not receive an acceptable education. On top of that, as Jones affirmed in spite of the Supreme Court 1954 ruling, in the Southern and border

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[162] Albert and Albert, *The sixties papers*, 159.
[163] Hall et al., "Voices from the Southern Oral History Program," 37.
[164] bell hooks, *Teaching To Transgress* (Routledge, 1994), 2.
[165] hooks, 4.
[166] hooks, 2.
[167] Ellen Swartz, "Stepping Outside the Master Script: Re-Connecting the History of American Education," *The Journal of Negro Education* 76, no. 2 (2007): 180, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40034555.

states where schools had been segregated by law, compliance was slow, grudging and incomplete. They adopted effective tactics of delay and evasion resulting in having only two percent of integrated schools by 1964 in Texas and Tennessee for instance. [168]

The lack of (adapted) education entailed a perpetuation of stereotyped views of society. In that regard, though acknowledging black women's sympathy towards the rise to power of black men, seeing in it the eventual liberation of all black people, Frances Beale underlined that it should not mean "you have to negate one for the other. This kind of thinking is a product of miseducation: that it's either X or it's Y. It is fallacious reasoning that in order for the Black man to be strong, the Black woman has to be weak."[169] She hence seemed to presume that education could alter stereotypes towards change and the erasure of sexist stereotypes within the black community.

Another result of this failure to educate black people adequately was their disenfranchisement. As laws and customs prevailed in the South to prevent them from casting their ballots, the African-American community suffered from the effects of their lack of education for the whole of their adult lives. As a matter of fact, one of the ways that black people were disenfranchised was by being asked to take literacy tests. Fannie Lou Hamer recalled in an interview that on her first attempt to register in 1962, she was asked to copy and interpret part of the Mississippi constitution. Though she could copy it, she could not interpret it as she did not even know Mississippi had a constitution, "we didn't learn nothing about it in school," she said. This experience triggered her will to attend voter registration workshops that trained and taught people how to pass the literacy tests. She trained enough to spread the word, to teach other members of her community how to make the most of their constitutional rights.[170] Indeed, she ended up working for SNCC, even when the organization had no money to compensate her involvement, leading citizenship classes within her community, until she could eventually cast her first ballot in 1964 for her own candidacy for the U.S. Representatives for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. Hamer used her own experience of a lacking education as an impetus for hers. She rose above her condition and was committed to have children of her community rise above theirs thanks to education, which was a focal point of the movement at the time and in the writing of its history.

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[168] Jones, *The Limits of Liberty*, 588.
[169] Beale, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female."
[170] "Fannie Lou Hamer Interview."

Septima Clark also hinged on the observation that citizenship needed to be taught to liberate the black community from the structural discrimination of a representative democracy that failed to represent its whole citizenry. Clark developed a citizenship education program to help people to pass the literacy tests in Southern states by providing them with the correct tools but also with the knowledge of citizenship responsibilities to eventually get the skills to apply their citizenship on behalf of a broader community.[171] She created a Citizenship School in 1957 in South Carolina, the program later moved to the SCLC. The program also relied on network of grassroots teachers who would train prospective ones "how to recruit students, gauge their educational levels and develop lesson plans."[172] They were also expected to provide information about the voter registration office, healthcare and employment opportunities. The training curriculum adapted to political outcomes, for instance the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was "incorporated it their reading lessons, along with instructions for accessing the federal benefits that accompanied the antipoverty legislation Johnson signed that same year."[173] This detail emphasized the on-going processes of the movement, which did not stop because of the passing of laws. The Citizenship program therefore did not stop its effort to train community members to exert their civil rights.

Although education is often perceived to be women's work, Clark's program appealed to women for additional reasons, including her emphasis on "the everyday experience in the political preparation process." [174] Grassroots activists could therefore rely on training sessions that allowed them to assess the local problems they reckoned were the most important while the Movement itself provided a vehicle for addressing them. In the long run, the program enhanced "women's self-confidence in their leadership; as they turned their attention solving community problems, they helped to expand the Movement's goals beyond voter registration." [175] This notion of self-confidence, self-reliance, self-empowerment through education is sustained by Coleman-Burns who, after having outlined how education was a purpose of socialization for all women in patriarchal America, highlighted,

> By the early 20th century, the black community had begun to express a need to train black people for potential leadership roles. (…) This change in attitude came mainly as a result of a growing awareness among black, particularly women, of the need for self-reliance and independent black action towards their own liberation.[176]

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[171] Hall et al., "Voices from the Southern Oral History Program," 33.
[172] Hall et al., 34.
[173] Hall et al., 34.
[174] Hall et al., 35.
[175] Hall et al., 35.
[176] Coleman-Burns, "African American Women — Education for What?," 140.

Julia Van Matre, in a conversation with Dorothy Pitman Hughes and Samantha Dean, echoed this idea when she claimed, "you don't need no law, you liberate yourself."[177] Nevertheless, one could be tempted to say that to be able to liberate oneself from the outside structural bodies of oppression, one needs to be aware of one's condition and to verbalize one's awareness. Coming through those steps is more likely to happen after having received sufficiently relevant and adequate education. Claudette Colvin stands as an example in this regard. In fact, when she reminisced about the events that occurred in 1955 she gathered, "it felt as though Harriet Tubman's hands were pushing me down on one shoulder and Sojourner Truth's hands were pushing me down on the other shoulder. I felt inspired by these women because my teacher had taught us about them in so much detail."[178] Colvin strived for self-liberation but her action was prompted by her knowledge of former African-American women activists' deeds. It could be claimed that her education triggered her reaction against discrimination.

Education served as a catalyst for grassroots mobilization. While "too often, the importance of their deeds [about black women activists] was minimized because their work did not hurtle them onto the front page of newspapers or onto the early television news,"[179] their local, formative roles had served as bridge-leaders between members of their communities and formal movements' leadership. Nance's mention of their lack of representation sounds like a gateway to understand the call of black women's studies scholars to recast the historical accounts of their history. Indeed, as Hall highlighted "their advocacy continued into the following decades. (…) Their Civil Rights Movement did not "end"; rather it became a way of life." [180] Continuing the initiatives pioneered at the height of the movement could be argued to be double-folded: firstly, they pursued the education of the community; and secondly their commitment paved the way for a new field of study. Since indeed, "feminist scholarship, until recently, has focused almost exclusively on the activism of white women."[181] Collins accordingly suggested,

> African-American women have created independent, oppositional yet subjugated knowledges concerning our own subordination, contemporary U.S. Black women intellectuals are engaged in the struggle to reconceptualize all dimensions of the dialectic

[177] "025: Black Women."
[178] Taylor-Dior Rumble, "Claudette Colvin: The 15-Year-Old Who Came before Rosa Parks," March 10, 2018, sec. Stories, https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-43171799.
[179] Nance, "Hearing the Missing Voice," 558.
[180] Hall et al., "Voices from the Southern Oral History Program," 35.
[181] Barnett, "Invisible Southern Black Women Leaders in the Civil Rights Movement," 164.

> of oppression and activism as it applies to African-American women. Central to this enterprise is reclaiming Black feminist intellectual traditions.[182]

As it happens, black women studies' legacy dates back to the early nineteenth century with the works of Maria Stewart for instance or Zora Neale Hurston; yet it is argued that maintaining their ideas invisible "has been critical in maintaining social inequalities."[183] Maria Stewart laid the basis of the black feminist thought when she theorized the necessity of community-based reliance and education as a mean of protest, quoted in Collins' work,

> Let every female heart become united, and let us raise a fund ourselves; (…) the higher branches of knowledge might be enjoyed by us. (…) Turn your attention to knowledge and improvement; for knowledge is power.[184]

According to Nance, the culture of African-American women is a vehicle for change, since, "the interlocking oppression of racism, sexism, and classism has worked to garble and constrain the cultural lessons, sometimes affording Black women little opportunity to fully control what they are or what they can become."[185] Reassessing the location of black women's culture as a group would both counter the conveyed mainstream images and legitimize the value of black feminist thought. Collins further specified,

> The need for such thought arises because African-American women as a *group*[186] remain oppressed within a U.S. context characterized by injustice. This neither means that all African-American women within that group are oppressed in the same way, nor that some U.S. Black women do not suppress others. Black feminist thought's identity as a "critical" social theory lies in its commitment to justice, both for U.S. Black women as a collectivity and for that of other similarly oppressed groups.[187]

This field of study gradually developed from 1970 onward, when Toni Cade Bambara published *The Black Woman: an Anthology* that gathered black feminist manifestos.

Regarding access to education for African-American women, Coleman-Burns affirmed that thanks to a growing awareness of the need for self-reliance and independent black action toward their own liberation, "the black community's priority on education for black women has been unprecedented from any similarly oppressed class. [Resulting in] the opening up - real or perceived - of white institutions of higher education to larger numbers of blacks in the 1960s."[188] Nevertheless, although they had access to higher education, Collins argued that until recently they were denied leadership positions in social institutions of knowledge. What

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[182] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 13.
[183] Collins, 3.
[184] Collins, 2.
[185] Nance, "Hearing the Missing Voice," 557.
[186] Italics originally in the text
[187] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 9.
[188] Coleman-Burns, "African American Women — Education for What?," 146.

stems from this observation is that "black women's exclusion from positions of power within mainstream institutions has led to the elevation of elite White male ideas and interests and the corresponding suppression of Black women's ideas and interests in traditional scholarship."[189] Consequently stereotypical images of black women pervaded popular culture, accounting for the call of Margaret Sloan for instance, to offer a "healthier visibility." [190] While acknowledging that efforts have been made to increasingly represent African-American women, she expressed her reservations towards the series and movies coming out that used "humor to ease the guilt of America as to what is done to oppressed groups."[191] In the same way, she denounced the lack of black-female screenwriters and directors, a result of structural discriminations that hence limited the positive exposure of African-American women.

By implying that if given the opportunity, black women artists would produce works that challenge the status quo and the mainstream representations of their group, Sloan put into perspective the role artists had towards change. Creating contents that would fit their own vision of their own group was first of all a form of activism and furthermore helped nurture the idea of a group-culture, essential for the awareness towards liberation. Indeed, as Coleman-Burns claimed, "black women, like all women, have been viewed as the carriers of culture (…) in the society, and are seeking an equal role in determining the direction of our society and creating that culture."[192] LaVerne supported this argument by arguing, "They have maintained the culture, heritage, and strength of their people in a society that has continually oppressed them."[193] In order to do this, not only did African American women build up an increasing presence in academia, they also redefined the notion of what intellectualism is. Through a process of deconstruction, *i.e.* "exposing a concept as ideological or culturally constructed rather than a natural or a simple reflection of reality," Collins affirmed that "doing intellectual work of the sort envisioned within Black feminism requires a process of self-conscious struggle on behalf of Black women, regardless of the actual social location where that work occurs."[194] If not all intellectuals work in academia, and those who hold said functions in universities are not all intellectuals; it leaves room for a broader understanding of the makers of culture. This idea is supported by Coleman-Burns when she claimed, "African American women cultural workers (including scholars, writers, artists,

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[189] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 5.
[190] "Margaret Sloan on Black Sisterhood."
[191] "Margaret Sloan on Black Sisterhood."
[192] Coleman-Burns, "African American Women — Education for What?," 157.
[193] Gyant, "Passing the Torch," 630.
[194] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 15.

philosophers, authors, artistic performers, and teachers) represent a potentially new genre of American intellectualism."[195] By challenging the terms of intellectual dialectic, the recasting of black women's culture stems from various means of expression, hence addressing a wider audience. Imani Perry stated, "the music of Black women music artists serves as a new site of Black women's intellectual production."[196] Because it is more likely singers were more widely listened to than fiction authors like Alice Walker and Toni Morrison were read, music was a productive channel of culture which relied to a return on oral tradition.

Nina Simone appears to be an accurate example of a music artist who used her art as a means to an end, to send out a committed message about freedom. Nevertheless, Ruth Feldstein argued, "she has largely fallen through the cracks of scholarship—on music, on civil rights, and on women's activism."[197] Her invisibility within the academic field of Black, Women's and Music studies results from the overlap between them when considering Simone's contribution to the era. Still, her songs rose above expectations and served as a catalyst for several civil rights groups, especially when she offered her name as a sponsor to perform benefit concerts for organizations like the SCLC, the CORE and the NAACP.[198] Beyond her performances, she produced songs that broke down gendered lines in black freedom's advocacy, especially in the album *In Concert* which, indicate with particular clarity how gendered strategies of protest were consistent parts of Simone's repertoire.

> Indeed, rejecting any singular definition of African American womanhood was part of the album's racial politics and remained central to Simone's participation in black activism beyond *In Concert*. (…) She challenged the notion that certain kinds of gender roles were a route toward improved race relations. (…) In both songs ("Mississippi Goddam" and "Go Limp") elements that potentially repressed black activism – nonviolence – and elements that potentially repressed female sexuality were linked in ways that challenged liberalism itself.[199]

Because her songs appealed to African-American women's specific struggles, because they highlighted the prevalence of their experience within both the black freedom and the women's liberation discourses, Nina Simone's art could be taken as a prism of analysis of the development of Black women's studies and the recasting of their narrative.

Since the emergence of black women studies and the academia's awakening with regards to black women's partial erasure form mainstream narratives, African-American women seized back their own narrative to provide a renewed body of culture that relied both

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[195] Coleman-Burns, 146.
[196] Imani Perry, *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop* (Duke University Press, 2004).
[197] Feldstein, "I Don't Trust You Anymore," 1351.
[198] Feldstein, 1360.
[199] Feldstein, 1363.

on intellectual works and pieces of art. Whether addressed to the elites or a wider audience, it expanded the location of culture and the teaching possibilities. In fact, it could be suggested that what matters is for diverse representations of black women and their struggles to permeate mainstream images. Coleman-Burns sustained this idea while further developing on diversity,

> What diversity does mean is that society must encourage the emergence of American radical intellectualism wherever it reveals itself. The society cannot be antagonistic toward any intellectual thought. Particularly to be encouraged is the thought represented by African American women, which bridges the fundamental questions of American society, race, class, and sex. (…) Through the embracing of a new American intellectualism, created by African American women, we might be able to find answers and create a new culture of life-sustaining relationships and ways of living.[200]

hooks is one scholar who has intensely participated in the creation of this new curriculum. In her introduction of *Teaching to Transgress,* she traced back the origins of her radical teaching methods. She referred to her undergraduate and graduate school years (within a span of ten years as of 1973), recollecting that only white women professors were involved in developing Women's Studies programs who "were not eager to nurture any interest in feminist thinking and scholarship on the part of black female students if that interest included critical challenge."[201] Yet, she underlined that though not always well received, critiques were allowed therefore stimulating her involvement. That acceptance of critical interrogation "was a crucial challenge inviting [them] as students to think seriously about pedagogy in relation to the practice of freedom, to interrogate pedagogical processes."[202] Coupled with her experiences in secondary school prior to desegregation, she envisioned teaching beyond the traditional boundaries. Thus, she rested her methods on *excitement*, meaning that she had a flexible agenda allowing students' singularities to shift the classes' critical thinking, to do so "students had to be seen in their particularity as individuals (…) and interacted with according to their needs."[203] By drawing from her experiences as a student, hooks remodeled teaching methods. She tried her best to adapt her language to her audience, to make herself understood but mostly to make herself available to learn from her students as much as they learnt from her.

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[200] Coleman-Burns, "African American Women — Education for What?," 151.
[201] hooks, *Teaching To Transgress*, 6.
[202] hooks, 7.
[203] hooks, 7.

Education regarding African-American women's experience goes beyond the usual borders of intellectual academia. A case study of Ava DuVernay's art supports this idea.

After having praised the work of prominent figures in the sixties and seventies black art movements, Martin affirmed, "in her or his own way, each filmmaker counseled a social advocacy role for film on behalf of black self-empowerment," paving the way for Ava DuVernay art that "continues in this advocacy, practicing the ongoing precept and tradition in the long history and struggle for black representation."[204] During her conversation with Martin, she put into perspective her position as an African-American filmmaker. She faced opposition from the industry, but instead of trying to insert herself in a place that might not be welcoming, she carved out another place where she could concentrate on "what was really beautiful, and organic within [her] own community and culture that started to ignite interest from the outside in."[205] The first part of the interview highlights how she went "against the odds," by outlining her six principles to pursue a career as an activist film-director. Three concepts echo African-American women studies' awareness about the recasting of their narratives: "work with what you have, rather than what you want;" "engage in creating something personally and / or politically meaningful," *i.e.* "affirming sisterhood and the beauty of the black women;" and eventually, "be self-determining."[206] DuVernay further explained how she relied both on her own experiences and her community's "to bridge the gap between what happens when I make a film and how does it actually reach an audience."[207] She reclaimed codes of social movements' to create the African American Film Releasing Movement, a collaboration with a variety of colleagues, or as she said "brothers" and "sisters," which aims to distribute African-American-made films according to their needs and their standards of distribution. Such initiatives put into perspective the usual place given to African American-made films in the mainstream film industry.

Moreover, not only does DuVernay's work cover a diverse scope of interests: hip-hop music, family relations, societal issues and historic events but it also comprises various genres from documentaries to music videos, series' episodes and fantastic fiction. The common thread of her creation is African-American's lives. She seems to draw from her own experience as a black woman to interpret society or history before adapting it to her own

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[204] Michael T. Martin, "Conversations with Ava DuVernay—'A Call to Action': Organizing Principles of an Activist Cinematic Practice," *Black Camera* 6, no. 1 (2014): 57, https://doi.org/10.2979/blackcamera.6.1.57.
[205] Martin, 62.
[206] Martin, 59.
[207] Martin, 66.

narrative. For instance, for the writing of *Selma*, she relied on research on the civil rights movement and voting rights campaigns. From her research stemmed her motivation to raise awareness about who was behind the icon of Martin Luther King. She explained the necessity of the project as follows,

> This is a project I never thought about or would have gone after. I thought I knew everything about the subject until I drilled down and started thinking about how I would approach it. You know Martin Luther King, Jr. (…) was great, nonviolent. He's got a statue and a holiday. What else do we need to know? That's such a homogenized view of this radical activist who was a strategist able to construct campaigns and create coalitions with a bunch of people with different ideas about how to reach goals under the threat of violence and loss of life. It's incredible. The story needs to be told and, once people know even a little bit of the truth, they will be riveted as I am.[208]

This remark seems to give prominence to the necessity to relearn, reinterpret mainstream "homogenized" perspective on history in order to provide another narrative. She educated herself about the subject as a mean to educate others through a film. Since *Selma* was praised in the media, it could become a cornerstone for future generations' education about the black freedom struggle and especially about this event. She made a fictional film based on true events, bringing back humanity in history thanks to dialogues, music and drama techniques. It could therefore be argued her interpretation of history is more attractive and more adapted for a broader audience to perceive the subtleties of the events. While paying attention not to take her work at face-value because her interpretation and representation have been shaped by her own narrative, it still repositions the audience regarding history while shedding a new light on the ambivalent character of Martin Luther King. In this regard, it still seems to follow what some African-American scholars have advocated to make education of black history evolve. In fact, DuVernay's work seems to echo Collins' theorization of the evolution of Black women's intellectual work,

> Musicians, vocalists, poets, writers, and other artists constitute another group from which Black women intellectuals have emerged. Producing intellectual work is generally not attributed to Black women artists and political activists. Especially in elite institutions of higher education, such women are typically viewed as objects of study, a classification that creates a false dichotomy between scholarship and activism, between thinking and doing.[209]

DuVernay has therefore managed to relocate culture by reinterpreting traditional narratives through her art.

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[208] Martin, 70.
[209] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 18.

After having examined the social mobilization of African-American women roughly from 1954 to 1978, their representation was analyzed. This last part hence aimed to study the historiographical evolution regarding black women's representation in education at large. The advent of black feminist thought correlated with the growing interest in the African-American women's experience. Scholars seized back the usual narratives, which entailed a renewal in traditional education discourses. While education had always been at the heart of the African-American community's advocacy for more rights, the recasting of its curriculum put into perspective the prevalence of education towards change. Last but not least the recasting of education is an ongoing process as much as the movement itself.

Conclusion

Words of Maya Angelou initiated the reflection first on African-American women's role during the prime years of activism in the United States and second on their representation both at the time and retrospectively. On one hand, this research thesis strived to analyze to what extent they were involved in the various movements that have shaped both the civil rights movement and the second wave feminism; on the other hand it aimed to ponder the connection between representation and advancement. In sum, this research looked into black women's experiences to understand if they rose beyond the interlocking systems of oppressions that constrained them to the lower ladder of the American's society hierarchy.

The form of their activism was first analyzed. It revealed that they got involved in the struggle, whether individually or within associations, to obtain more rights. Since it was the black community who, from the second half of the twentieth century, first organized to challenge racist patterns, African-American women first mobilized within the black freedom struggle. Out of sexist and racist stereotypes that constrained them to specific roles in society, they found their voice in the advocacy for civil rights and subsequently in the women's movement. Though they were mostly denied national and official leadership positions, yet they splayed a significant role in this revolutionary era. Referred to as grassroots activism they led from within their communities by gathering members and maintaining the movement thanks to their commitment, their organizing, and their teaching.

These observations brought about another query: while African-American women were involved in activist movements of the time period, few have been recognized for their work. It was hence argued that a lack of fitting representation of black women's experience both inside and outside of the activist sphere prevented their role from being given the deserved recognition. The influence of the media on their misrepresentation was considered and led to the conclusion that because it was predominantly controlled by whites, it perpetrated stereotypes about black women and their activism. The connection between their specific leadership and their representation in the media was also pinpointed as an explanation of their absence in the media. Regarding political representation, although some African-American women participated in nation-wide elections and some laws were passed to prevent discriminations, as a group they mostly did not benefit from enough representation to have their voices heard.

Even though this research thesis mainly focused on two decades of activism, the last part aimed to assess the historiographical evolution of representation of African-American women's commitment to the advancement of their cause. Out of these examination, it was concluded that more and more interest is given to African-American women's mobilization both in the civil rights movement and in the second wave feminism movement therefore seeing the emergence of a new field of research: Black Women's studies. Previously the academia, as a body of analysis of society, was accordingly divided between Black studies and Women's studies. African-American women's experiences were then confined to the margins of analysis. In order to provide a more relevant discourse, an interpretation of history that encapsulates black women's specific narrative, scholars came back to the roots by relying on oral stories of activists themselves. Such stories stand as a starting point to redefine and recast education of the civil rights and women's movement. Education served as a catalyst for activism at the time; reciprocally the education curriculums have evolved to comprise broader narrative in order to eventually change mindsets.

Throughout this research thesis the roles, actions and contributions of several women have been brought to light among whom Ella Baker, Frances Beale, Septima Clark, Claudette Colvin, Angela Davis, bell hooks, Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, Jo Ann Robinson, Patricia Robinson and Margaret Sloan-Hunter. They were named not only because they have participated in the recasting of the history of the period but also because at some point they made a difference. While embodying African-American women's experiences, each of theirs was shaped by their own socialization and life story. It therefore seems relevant to emphasize

that many other women's partaking in the movements is still, if unknown, not put in the foreground. It is also for the sake of clarity that a greater interest was given to only some of them.

Those African-American women as leaders of their community, as representatives of their cast, found a voice of their own. From grassroots activism to scholar research passing by the arts, it seems black women made history and rewrote history to rise above racial and sexual prejudices. Indeed, Angelou's words resonate both as an acknowledgement of past struggles and a call on hope for the future of African-American women.

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

(…)

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

(…)

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise

(…)

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise

Maya Angelou, "Still I Rise" from *And Still I Rise: A Book of Poems*.[210]

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[210] Angelou, “Still I Rise.”

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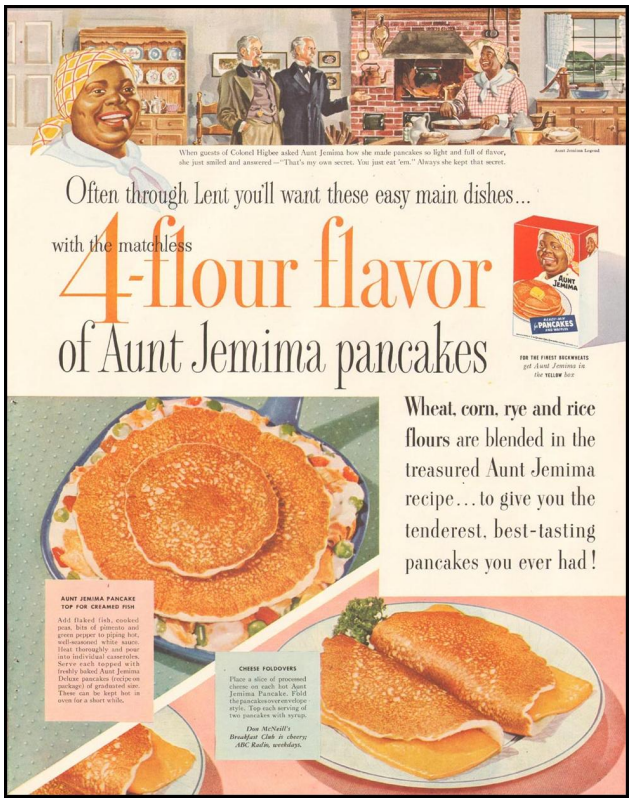
APPENDICES

Appendices 1 & 2 – Women in advertisement

Appendix 3 – Aunt Jemima




Be the girl with the turned·on hair
Turn off dull, dry lifeless hair.
Turn·on smooth, sleek, live·to·the·touch tresses.
A daily touch of Ultra Sheen
conditioner and hair dress
will turn you and your hair on.
ULTRA SHEEN
conditioner & hair dress
by Johnson


Carousel
adds that bit of magic
for a really super you!
Carousel
FASHIONS, INC.
New York City

SÉQUENCE PÉDAGOGIQUE

Introduction

A la lumière des apprentissages tirés de ce mémoire, il semble pertinent de monter une séquence pédagogique autour du thème de l'activisme des femmes noires américaines. En effet, nous avons vu que l'historiographie, c'est à dire la recontextualisation d'une pensée, a évolué sur la question et met désormais davantage en avant le rôle et la place que les femmes noires américaines ont tenu à travers l'histoire dans les combats pour les droits civiques et féministes.

Le caractère double de l'oppression vécue par ces femmes et de fait leur rôle joué à la fois dans le *Civil Rights Movement* et dans le *Second Wave Feminism* est rarement abordé dans les manuels scolaires. On ne mentionne pas la question de l'intersectionnalité des luttes. Généralement les séquences portent soit sur les droits civiques, soit sur le féminisme. Les manuels de première *Diversity* (Nathan) et *Community* (La Maison des Langues) abordent le thème du féminisme via des approches originales et actionnelles mais ne mentionnent pas la spécificité de l'intersectionnalité. *New Meeting Point* 1ère (Hatier) ainsi que *Password English* 1ère (Didier) proposent des séquences sur l'histoire des afro-américains. Il convient toutefois de souligner que ce constat n'est pas un jugement de valeur mais qu'il m'a amené à proposer une une séquence sur ces thématiques.

Dans chaque thème, les spécificités inhérentes à leur identité et de fait leur implication dans ces mouvements ont tendance à être ignorées. Il semblerait donc qu'un défi soit à relever en construisant et enseignant une séquence qui, de manière didactisée, pourrait amener les élèves à une connaissance et une réflexion sur la pertinence de l'intersectionnalité. A l'instar des propositions pédagogiques mentionnées, il a fallu faire des choix d'axes de travail et de documents puisqu'il n'était pas envisageable d'attendre d'élèves de première de se saisir de toutes les subtilités de la cause des femmes afro-américaines.

La classe et les objectifs de la séquence

J'ai décidé, au vu de la complexité, de la subtilité du propos, de construire cette séquence pour une classe de première (1ère SSI6). Les vingt élèves membres de cette classe sont de bons élèves tant d'un point de vue linguistique que réflexif. Précédemment dans l'année nous avons abordé les thèmes de la publicité (*Advert-Teasing),* de la place du anti-héros dans les films et les séries télévisées (*No More Good Guys*), et de la surveillance de masse (*Under Control*). Les enseignements linguistiques de la classe de première sont régis par les notions de Lieux et Formes du Pouvoir, d'Espaces et Echanges, de Mythes et Héros et d'Idée de Progrès. C'est par le biais de cette dernière que nous sommes entrés dans l'étude des documents de la

séquence. En effet, bien que chaque autre notion puisse également permettre un prisme d'analyse du thème, c'est bien sur la notion de progrès et d'évolution - ou non - à la fois de leurs droits mais aussi de leurs représentations, que je souhaite axer l'analyse. Cette dernière s'articule autour de la problématique suivante : *How can we use the experiences of black women as a starting point for understanding the 1950s and 1970s activism in the US ? How did African-American women fought against oppression in the second half of the twentieth century?* La séquence s'intitule « African-American Women in the Sixties : Activism & Representation ».

Le cahier des charges est ambitieux, de fait plus de temps sera consacré à cette séquence qu'aux autres, une quinzaine de séances. Nous nous voyons deux heures et demie par semaine dont une session d'une heure trente, ce qui s'avère être particulièrement opportun pour la mise en place, entre autre, de séances en pédagogie différenciée. Lors desquelles les élèves peuvent construire davantage, et de manière personnalisée, leurs apprentissages et leurs compétences. En effet, d'ici la fin du cycle terminal, il est attendu des élèves d'atteindre un niveau B2 dans toutes les compétences linguistiques (compréhension de l'écrit et de l'oral, expression écrite, oral en continu et en interaction). Puisque la séquence en question est enseignée en cours de première, le niveau visé est à mi-chemin entre B1 et B2. La nuance entre les deux niveaux est fine, les élèves de cette classe oscillent généralement entre les deux en fonction des compétences. De manière générale, plus la compréhension et l'expression sont fines, plus l'élève s'approche d'un niveau B2 ; un objectif atteignable pour la majorité des élèves de la 1ère SSI6. Chaque compétence sera travaillée au fil de la séquence, avec une insistance particulière sur l'expression écrite puisqu'elle sera évaluée lors de la tâche finale. Cette dernière consiste en la rédaction d'une quatrième de couverture d'une biographie d'une des éminentes figures étudiées en classe. Le sujet ainsi que la grille d'évaluation se trouvent en Annexe 1. La tâche intermédiaire repose sur la mise en voix d'un texte à propos de Ruby Bridges afin de créer la voix-off d'une vidéo déjà existante. Ces deux tâches visent donc la compétence de production écrite. Le second objectif communicationnel de cette séquence pourra être atteint grâce à une prise de parole en continu lors des phases de *warm-up*. En effet, chaque séance de cette séquence débute par la présentation orale d'une bande-annonce d'un film à partir de quelques notes en suivant des critères précis. Grâce à cette mise en œuvre les élèves ont pu découvrir un large panel de films au sujet de la lutte pour les droits civiques, la lutte féministe, et la culture afro-américaine en général. Les films étudiés, le guide d'analyse et la grille d'évaluation sont en Annexe 2.

Cette séquence visera également à renforcer les connaissances culturelles des élèves quant à la question des droits civiques et du féminisme dans le contexte états-unien analysés

par le prisme de l'activisme des femmes noires américaines. Pour ce faire, une déconstruction des connaissances précédemment acquises est nécessaire, spécialement celles associées au mouvement des droits civiques, thème généralement davantage maitrisé par les élèves. A terme les élèves devraient être capable d'adopter un regard critique sur la culture populaire et la représentation qu'elle fait de l'histoire. Au regard du « Parcours Citoyen » qui couvre tous les cycles d'enseignement du CP à la Terminale et qui vise entre autre à l'enseignement de l'égalité Femme-Homme, lors de cette séquence les élèves seront familiarisés avec la notion de féminisme intersectionnel. A l'échelle des compétences linguistiques, les élèves pourront d'une part approfondir leur lexique relatif à la lutte activiste, au juridique, à la vie quotidienne dans les années soixante ; et d'autre part se familiariser davantage avec l'emploi de la voix passive, du *past perfect* et du prétérit modal dans des énoncés en *if* et *wish*. Enfin ils seront amenés à travailler sur leur prononciation des *–ism* (/ˈreɪ.sɪ.zəm / ; /ˈsek.sɪ.zəm /), ainsi que sur les groupes de sens et les groupes de souffles afin de rythmer leur écrit oralisé lors de la tâche intermédiaire.

Déroulé des supports

Le choix des documents et l'ordre de leur étude suivent une logique chronologique dans la mesure où il semblait primordial de construire progressivement les connaissances des élèves quant au thème. Afin de planter le décor, trois publicités authentiques qui représentent des domestiques noires américaines sont comparées. Au terme de cette étude, menée en une séance, le thème et les problématiques d'analyse sont explicités. Nous débutons ensuite une étude successive de différentes activistes noire américaines via une variété de média et de compétences travaillées : Ruby Bridges grâce à une analyse d'image couplée à une compréhension de texte avant de conclure par une vidéo, Claudette Colvin à l'aide d'une compréhension écrite, Nina Simone et l'une de ses chansons, Ella Baker via une étude comparée d'une vidéo et d'un article de presse, des extraits du roman et de son adaptation filmique *Les Figures de l'Ombre*, bell hooks et le féminisme intersectionnel par l'étude d'un extrait l'introduction d'un de ses ouvrages. Chaque document a été didactisé pour que les élèves affinent petit à petit leur compréhension des enjeux de la séquence. De surcroit, dans le but d'évincer un maximum de difficultés pour l'analyse du dernier document, des indices sur le sens du mot « intersectionnel » sont donnés petit à petit ; par exemple les séances de travail sur Claudette Colvin permettent de poser les termes *oppression, racism, sexism, discrimination*. Par ailleurs, pour les préparer à la tâche finale, les élèves doivent au fur et à mesure, remplir des

cartes d'identités des personnages étudiées, à l'aide d'un site internet préalablement choisi. Les documents distribués aux élèves se trouvent en Annexe dans l'ordre d'étude.

Anticipation à la séquence

Pour la séance d'anticipation à la séquence, trois publicités sont présentées aux élèves qui travaillent en binôme. Trois binômes travaillent sur la publicité du lave-vaisselle, trois sur celle de frigidaire, et enfin trois sur celle de la poudre à pancakes. Les difficultés lexicales (I's = *I* am ; *dis* = this ; *dey* = they) sont levées dès le début de l'étude des publicités. Après une phase de repérage en autonomie pendant laquelle ils doivent remplir un tableau qui guide leur analyse, les élèves s'échangent leurs grilles d'analyse afin de pouvoir déduire les concordances et les discordances entre les publicités. A terme, et lors d'une phase de mise en commun en classe entière, les élèves sont amenés à réfléchir aux stéréotypes sur le rôle des femmes noires américaines dans les foyers blancs, de s'interroger sur l'époque et sur la représentation de leur rôle. Une rapide mise au point historique sur la ségrégation permet de poser le thème et la problématique de la séquence.

The Problem We All Live With ; From segregation to integration

Afin de commencer une étude plus théorique de la ségrégation et de son influence sur la société américaine, la deuxième et la troisième séance sont menées en pédagogie différenciée. Une analyse des trois documents par trois différents groupes sert de base à un échange oral entre les élèves pour découvrir les informations des documents non-étudiés avant d'en tirer une synthèse globale. Par ordre de complexité les élèves étudient : la peinture de Norman Rockwell *The Problem We All Live With*, un extrait de *The Story of Ruby Bridges*, de Robert Coles, illustré par George Ford, un extrait de National Park Service sur les lois Jim Crow ainsi que des explications historiques des lois mettant un terme légal à la ségrégation de 1954, 1964, 1967. Au cours de la séance d'une heure et demie, les élèves étudient d'abord un des trois documents en fonction de leur capacité de compréhension avant de passer par une phase de mise en commun par groupe de niveau. Cette phase d'inter-correction permet également aux élèves de se préparer à la mise en commun en classe entière de la prochaine séance en réfléchissant à des questions dont les réponses permettraient de remplir un tableau lacunaire de synthèse d'analyse de tous les documents. Cette séance de mise en commun a lieu sur un créneau d'une heure. Les tables sont placées en « U » pour que tous les élèves puissent se faire face, chaque groupe s'installe à une branche du « U », facilitant de fait l'interaction entre les groupes. Il est bien précisé aux élèves que la parole doit être partagée

entre chaque membre du groupe. Ils se posent donc des questions pour une quarantaine de minute, puis chaque groupe rédige une phrase de synthèse d'un document qui n'était pas initialement le leur afin d'établir ensuite en classe entière une trace écrite récapitulative.

Ruby Bridges and her legacy

Dans le but d'ancrer les connaissances acquises lors des séances précédentes et de faire un lien avec les conséquences historiographiques de la déségrégation, les élèves étudient la vidéo officielle de la rencontre entre Ruby Bridges et Obama à la Maison Blanche. Puisqu'ils sont en classe de première, les élèves doivent se préparer petit à petit aux épreuves de langues vivantes de l'ancien modèle du baccalauréat. L'épreuve de compréhension orale se décline ainsi : trois écoutes successives interrompues par une minute de pause, à la fin desquelles les élèves disposent de dix minutes pour rédiger un compte-rendu en français de leur compréhension. La mise en oeuvre de l'analyse de la rencontre enter Ruby Bridges et Obama a donc suivi ce modèle sous une forme adaptée, les élèves ont rédigé leur compte-rendu de leur compréhension en binôme. Une restitution globale est ensuite menée pour s'assurer que tous les élèves aient le même contenu. A la fin de cette séance les vidéos supports de la tâche intermédiaire sont diffusées afin que les élèves puissent commencer à préparer leur script.

Claudette Colvin : The Young Girl that Came before Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks est une figure emblématique du mouvement social pour les droits civiques qui est généralement connue des élèves. Néanmoins un des objectifs de cette séquence est de les familiariser avec des femmes de l'ombre de cette période, ainsi plutôt que de leur faire étudier une nouvelle fois des documents sur Rosa Parks, c'est l'action de Claudette Colvin et son incidence qui sont analysés. Pour commencer la photo d'une peinture murale en l'honneur de Colvin est projetée de manière didactisée, c'est-à-dire qu'une partie est d'abord cachée afin de permettre aux élèves d'émettre des hypothèses sur le contenu. Après l'analyse de cette image, les élèves lisent une conversation entre Colvin et un journaliste de la BBC. Bien que dense, une didactisation et une lecture progressive du document permettent aux élèves d'accéder à une compréhension exhaustive de cette conversation. Au terme de cette lecture, nous revenons à la peinture murale pour les laisser imaginer le reste du texte sur le graffiti. Cette activité constitue de fait une phase récapitulative propice également à l'étude du *past-perfect*.

Nina Simone : « I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free »

Nina Simone est célèbre pour sa musique puissante mais moins pour son activisme. La chanson *I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free* permet de travailler sur les deux aspects de la figure emblématique du jazz américain. Bien que d'autres chansons auraient pu être choisie comme « *Four Women* », « *Young, Gifted and Black* » ou encore « *Mississippi Goddam* », celle-ci permet de travailler sur l'implicite de l'effet des discriminations mais aussi sur le fait de langue *wish* + prétérit modal. Pour axer la compréhension de la chanson, une photographie de Nina Simone est préalablement projetée au tableau, en espérant qu'ils la reconnaissent, à défaut, la chanson est jouée directement. Nous écoutons le document quatre fois. Pour la première écoute les élèves doivent se concentrer sur la musique (les instruments, la voix, le rythme, le ton, les chœurs) ; pour la seconde écoute ils doivent se concentrer sur les paroles pour repérer les mots qu'ils comprennent ; la troisième est une écoute guidée pendant laquelle les élèves doivent repérer les mots liés à la liberté. Ces trois phases se concluent par une mise en commun analytique de leur compréhension, suivie d'une dernière écoute pendant laquelle les élèves remplissent le script lacunaire des paroles. Grâce à ce script, les élèves peuvent ainsi analysé la forme de la chanson (les rimes, les figures de style, les réductions) mais aussi repérer la forme grammaticale w*ish* + prétérit afin d'en induire la construction et le sens.

Ella Baker : The unsung hero of the civil rights movement

Les élèves sont amenés à découvrir Ella Baker, une figure iconique des mouvements civiques des années soixante. Pour anticiper la lecture d'un article à son propos, nous visionnons une vidéo de l'interview de Diane Nash (autre activiste de l'époque) qui parle d'Ella Baker et de son impact dans le mouvement. Un premier visionnage se fait sans le son alors que la classe est divisée en deux groupes, l'un se concentre sur les personnages, l'autre sur les pancartes et les slogans. Suite à une mise en commun de leurs repérages, ils écoutent la vidéo avec pour consignes de repérer le nom d'Ella Baker ainsi qu'une date. Ces différentes activités permettent de faciliter la compréhension du texte qui fait l'objet d'une étude en pédagogie différenciée. Une lecture commune de l'introduction de l'article permet d'identifier le type de document, son auteur, le thème général et l'objectif du document. Ensuite les cinq parties qui structurent l'article sont données séparément aux élèves, ils ont donc des textes plus courts permettant ainsi, grâce à un guidage, une compréhension plus détaillée. Des groupes de cinq élèves sont ensuite constitués pour qu'ils puissent mettre en commun les informations qu'ils ont apprises dans chacune de leur partie. Nous écrivons ensuite une trace écrite en

classe entière pour s'assurer que tous les élèves aient le même contenu et la même compréhension.

The Hidden Figures

Margot Lee Shetterly a commencé des recherches sur les femmes noires américaines qui ont travaillé pour la NASA pendant la conquête de l'espace en 2010. Ses recherches ont abouti à la rédaction d'un livre *Les Figures de l'Ombre*, adapté en film en 2017. Tant pour son propos que pour l'aspect artistique, ces œuvres sont particulièrement propices à l'étude des discriminations sexistes et racistes dans l'institution américaine. Nous prenons donc deux heures et demie pour étudier un extrait du livre et des extraits du film.

Nous anticipons la lecture de la quatrième de couverture du livre par l'analyse iconographique de l'affiche du film, ce à quoi ils sont davantage préparés au vu des *warm-up* proposés depuis le début de la séquence. Nous révisons alors du vocabulaire descriptif (identifier le genre du film, décrire les personnages et leurs attitudes, décrire la mise en scène) et analytique grâce à un travail sur le titre et son double-sens (*figures* = chiffres ; *figures* = icônes). Le thème est posé, les élèves sont donc prêts pour la compréhension de texte qui débutera par une analyse de la forme afin d'identifier le type de document avant de se poursuivre par une lecture guidée et progressive du texte. Une phase récapitulative en classe entière conclue la séance.

Afin de pouvoir balayer différents extraits du film en une séance, cette dernière aura lieu en salle informatique (facilement réservable au lycée Récamier). Le film se concentre sur la vie de trois femmes, Katherine, Mary and Dorothy. Cinq extraits de difficulté croissante permettent une analyse de différents extraits : Katherine sur les femmes dans la NASA, Katherine sur la ségrégation au travail, Katherine et le calcul final, l'audience de Mary, la demande de promotion de Dorothy. Bien que les documents soient différents, les élèves suivent tous les mêmes consignes. Ils identifient en premier lieu les personnages, les lieux, le temps de l'action, la situation. Dans un second temps de compréhension, ils relèvent des mots ou des images qui se rapporte à l'(in)égalité et à l'émotion des personnages. Le dernier temps de travail est un temps d'analyse pendant lequel les élèves sont amenés à s'interroger sur la relation entre la société et les femmes noires américaines, leurs progrès et leurs actions. En fin de séance les élèves se mettront par groupe de cinq pour partager les informations glanées lors de l'écoute des vidéos.

Ain't I a Woman? - bell hooks & intersectionality

Ce dernier document est très dense tant sur la forme que sur le fond, une compréhension non-exhaustive est donc attendue. Afin de faciliter et d'orienter la lecture de l'extrait de bell hooks, nous commencerons par analyser une illustration sur l'intersectionnalité. Les élèves découvrent petit à petit ce document et doivent après chaque étape imaginer la suite. En phase récapitulative ils rédigent leur propre définition d'intersectionnalité, qu'ils étayeront suite à l'analyse de *Ain't I a Woman*. Cet extrait est divisé en sept parties qui sont distribuées et projetées progressivement afin de favoriser l'implication des élèves. Les consignes visent à une compréhension globale du document. Ce texte est également propice à une révision des points grammaticaux préalablement réalisés.

Analyse de l'enseignement

Au moment de la rédaction du mémoire les cinq premiers documents ainsi que la tâche intermédiaire ont été étudiés.

La majorité des séances se sont déroulées comme prévu. Les élèves ont aisément cerné les enjeux de la séquence. Effectivement le caractère raciste des publicités de la séance d'anticipation a été identifié tant par les images que par la caricature grammaticale. Ils ont su remobiliser des connaissances préalablement acquises quant à la ségrégation et son impact sur les noirs américains.

Je profite de cette année de stage pour expérimenter diverses mises en œuvre de la pédagogie différenciée. Habituellement je propose plusieurs niveaux de difficulté sur un même type de document et seulement sur une séance ; ainsi il était inédit de proposer trois documents différents travaillés de manière transversale sur deux séances. Au vu de la densité informationnelle des documents, il aurait été préférable de leur laisser davantage de temps de travail individuel, permettant ainsi à chaque élève de se saisir des nuances de son document avant la restitution en groupe. Il est en effet recommandé pour les enseignants de langue de s'effacer pour laisser au maximum la parole aux élèves, pour ce faire il faut veiller à proposer des activités propices à l'interaction entre élèves, comme la phase de mise en œuvre en classe entière des documents étudié en pédagogie différenciée. Cette séance était un réel défi car c'était la première fois que les élèves étaient confrontés à une interaction à cette échelle, c'est-à-dire en classe entière. Bien qu'ils aient préalablement préparé les questions, les élèves ont eu du mal à interagir de manière autonome sans mon intervention. Les consignes avaient été répétées en début d'heure ainsi savaient ils qu'ils devaient remplir le tableau lacunaire à leur disposition au fil des échanges. Afin de s'assurer que la prise de note soit efficace, il aurait été

préférable de demander à un élève de prendre le rôle de scribe pour la classe, il ou elle aurait alors pu remplir numériquement le tableau. Cela aurait seulement été plus facile pour les élèves plus faibles de saisir la subtilité des supports et leur lien. Effectivement, au terme de l'étude comparée de ces trois documents, les élèves devaient avoir cerné que la petite fille sur le tableau était Ruby Bridges, ainsi qu'elle subissait les conséquences de la déségrégation légale du système scolaire américain. Certains élèves du niveau le plus avancé ont réussi à poser les bonnes questions qui leur ont permis de créer le lien entre toutes ces informations.

Puisqu'il a pu être difficile pour certains élèves de se saisir des subtilités de l'histoire de Ruby Bridges, un dernier document à son propos a été proposé aux élèves. Ils ont su remobiliser les connaissances des séances précédentes mais il leur a été difficile de comprendre en quoi la rencontre avec Barack Obama était historique.

Grâce à l'étude des documents à propos de Claudette Colvin les élèves ont compris que Rosa Parks n'était qu'une figure emblématique du mouvement mais qu'elle n'était pas la seule à avoir agi contre la ségrégation. Il s'est avéré qu'il manquait une étape récapitulative de reformulation à la fin des questions de compréhension du texte afin que je puisse pleinement m'assurer de la compréhension des élèves. De plus, cette séance a été pour le peu déconcertante car les élèves ont posé des questions sur la place des personnes métisses, albinos, et autochtones dans la société américaine. Bien que très intéressantes, ce sont des thèmes qui demandent d'être appréhendés de manière subtile, et auxquelles je ne m'étais pas suffisamment préparée. Pour une prochaine mise en œuvre de cette séquence, je proposerai aux élèves de faire des recherches sur les différentes minorités.

Les élèves n'ont pas l'habitude d'étudier des chansons, de fait ils étaient particulièrement intéressés par celle de Nina Simone. Le *warm-up* de cette séance était sur le film *What happened : Miss Simone* ce qui a permis d'introduire l'artiste, que les élèves ne connaissaient guère. Les élèves devaient à la fois analyser la musique et comprendre les paroles, ce qui s'est révélé être plus difficile que prévu pour certains élèves. Une fois que nous sommes passés à l'étude de la forme de la chanson les élèves ont su remobiliser des connaissances stylistiques de leur cours de français pour analyser la chanson. Ils ont formulé de très bons énoncés comme : « *The metaphor of the chains refere to segregation, racism and feminism but also to her past. » ; « She calls for all black people to raise their voices, against injustices. »*

Enfin la tâche intermédiaire a été mené en deux temps : une séance en salle informatique et une séance de restitution orale. La première a permis aux élèves de travailler en binôme sur une de deux vidéos. Nous avions préalablement établi ensemble les étapes à suivre pour réussir cet exercice.

De manière globale, à l'issue de l'enseignement de ces séances force est de constater qu'ils ont su se saisir des enjeux de la séquence. Néanmoins il a été parfois nécessaire de faire des points sur l'histoire des Etats-Unis qu'ils ne maitrisent presque pas. J'étais donc partagée entre la volonté de respecter les recommandations officielles de m'effacer pour laisser les élèves interagir et la nécessité de leur apporter les connaissances théoriques nécessaires pour comprendre la subtilité des documents. A l'avenir pour faire face à cette difficulté il pourrait être envisageable de proposer une séance d'introduction à la séquence durant laquelle les élèves travailleraient sur les grandes lignes de l'histoire américaine : indépendance, constitution, guerre de sécession, abolition de l'esclavage.

Enjeu des séances à venir

La construction des apprentissages se fait de manière progressive ainsi les trois derniers documents de la séquence sont les plus difficiles. Ils sont néanmoins essentiels à la compréhension des enjeux d'une part de l'activisme des femmes noires américaines, d'autre part du féminisme intersectionnel.

L'étude de la quatrième de couverture de la version originale du livre *Les Figures de l'Ombre* est une étape particulièrement critique puisque les élèves devront remobiliser les notions étudiées pour leur tâche finale. Il faudra donc s'assurer d'expliquer les tenants et les aboutissants de ladite évaluation avant l'étude de ces documents afin de leur permettre de mieux appréhender les enjeux tant théorique que pragmatique du document. Pour s'assurer qu'ils maitrisent les spécificités de la rédaction d'une quatrième de couverture, il serait envisageable de proposer des exercices supplémentaire de lecture et d'analyse de ce type de document, voire de rédaction comme phase d'entrainement avant la tâche finale. En outre, il semble également important de proposer un tutoriel récapitulatif des éléments clés à remobiliser lors de la rédaction d'une quatrième de couverture.

L'extrait de *Ain't I a Woman* est particulièrement complexe, son étude présente donc plusieurs obstacles. En effet, bien qu'introduit par une illustration explicative, bell hooks n'utilise jamais le terme *intersectionality*, ce qui pourrait ainsi induire les élèves en erreur. Il n'est pas attendu des élèves de comprendre le document de manière exhaustive, d'autant plus au vu de la difficulté du lexique. Il semble ainsi nécessaire de prendre le temps de travailler ce texte sur deux séances. Plusieurs conversations publiques, des sortes de conférence, en partenariat avec une université américaine que bell hooks a mené sont en ligne sur YouTube. Dans l'éventualité où les élèves rencontrent énormément de difficulté sur le texte, il peut être envisageable de proposer un extrait d'une de ces conversations. Passer d'une compétence de

compréhension écrite à une compétence de compréhension orale pourrait valoriser les élèves en fonctions de leurs capacités et permettre à chacun d'accéder au sens.

Pour terminer, la tâche finale se fera en classe sur un créneau d'une heure trente pour leur laisser le temps de rédiger l'intégralité de leur quatrième de couverture. Il aurait été envisageable de leur proposer de le faire de chez eux, toutefois je ne souhaite pas renouveler cette option qui avait été un échec la première fois qu'elle avait été mise en place puisque plusieurs élèves avaient triché en recopiant des sites ou en utilisant des sites de traduction. Malgré tout, l'objectif de cette tâche finale n'est pas de leur faire retenir des informations mais bien d'évaluer leur capacité à s'exprimer. Il est donc envisageabe de les autoriser à se référer à la fiche de tutoriel préalablement construite en classe, ou encore aux cartes d'identité qu'ils auront rempli au fil des séances. Lors de la mise en œuvre de tâches finales, les élèves ont parfois tendance à s'éparpiller, à ne pas comprendre la finalité de la tâche ; dans le but de pallier ces difficultés je leur communiquerai préalablement la grille d'évaluation.

Conclusion

L'élaboration et l'enseignement de cette séquence ont été des étapes particulièrement constructives tant dans la rédaction du mémoire que pour ma future carrière.

Il me tenait à cœur de didactiser le sujet de mes recherches pour mes élèves puisqu'il est rarement abordé sous cet angle. Que ce soit par le prisme de l'étude des mouvements pour les droits civiques aux Etats-Unis ou celui du féminisme, l'expérience des femmes noires américaines a tendance à être ignorée ou moins représentée, comme au sein des curriculums américains. Les choix opérés concernant les axes de travail et les supports semblent avoir permis de construire une séquence cohérente pour les élèves. Avec le recul, en prenant en considération le niveau de cette classe, il aurait été possible de travailler davantage dans la subtilité, d'approfondir sur la spécificité de l'activisme des afro-américaines dans les années soixante plutôt que de n'offrir qu'un panorama de figures emblématiques du mouvement.

A la lumière des séances déjà menées, il semblerait que cette séquence ait plu aux élèves qui ont adopté une attitude particulièrement enjouée pour chaque support étudié. Même s'il a été parfois difficile d'osciller entre une approche actionnelle des enseignements et l'apport de connaissances brutes, les élèves ont tout de même pu développer des compétences civilisationnelles, linguistiques et pragmatiques.

ANNEXES

Annexe 1 – Tâche Finale

Imagine you are a writer. Pick an African-American women activist we have studied and image **the back cover** of a book retracing her story. *Ruby Bridges, Claudette Colvin, Nina Simone, Ella Baker, the 4th Hidden Figure Christine Darden, bell hooks.*

CRITÈRES	ELÉMENTS OBSERVABLES	NIVEAUX DE MAÎTRISE		
		FRAGILE	**SATISFAISANT**	**TRES SATISFAISANT**
		A2	**B1**	**B2**
Pragmatique Respect des consignes	- mise en page et organisation *tagline*, *blurb*, *testimonials* - prés. d'une activiste + exactitude des infos	2	3	4
Richesse du vocabulaire	Suffisant Adapté Précis Prise de risque	2	3 / 4	5 / 6
Orthographe	- Fautes élémentaires - Prise de risque	2	3	4
Correction grammaticale	- respect des temps - prétérit modal - past perfect - voix passive	2	3 / 4	5 / 6
NOTE : **/ 20**		**Commentaire :**		

Annexe 2 – Warm-up

Present a movie trailer and convince your classmates to watch the movie

- *The Hate U Give*
- *Dear White People*
- *BLACKkKLANSMAN*
- *Green Book*
- *Selma*
- *Free Angela*
- *If Beale Street Could Talk*
- *The Butler*
- *Loving*
- *13th*
- *I Am Not Your Negro*
- *The Black Panthers: Vanguard Of The Revolution*
- *American Violet*
- *Chisholm '72: Unbought & Unbossed*
- *Dreamgirls*
- *Insecure*
- *Feminist What were They Thinking?*
- *The Help*
- *Dark Girl*
- *Kevin Hart's Guide to Black History*
- *What happened Miss Simone?*

Title:	
Directed By…	
Produced By…	
Release Date:	
Movie Type:	
Starring…	
Main Characters	
Plot (context, plot twist, resolution…)	
Imagine the end	
Convince your Audience (film reviews & personal opinion)	

Grille d'évaluation Warm-up : *Present a movie trailer*	
Critères	**Commentaires**
Respect des consignes Suivre les étapes et transmettre les infos	
Vocabulaire limité - suffisant - précis et adapté	
Grammaire Qlqs erreurs sur des notions élémentaires Peu d'erreurs Bonne maîtrise Prise de risque	
Prononciation Compréhensible mais pas assez idiomatique De clairs efforts malgré quelques erreurs Peu d'erreurs, se rapproche d'un accent natif	
Aisance Lecture de ses notes, s'exprime pas assez fort, débit de parole saccadée S'exprime librement avec un ton, un rythme et un volume intelligible	
NOTE: /10 **+ 1 bonus : prise de note et attitude**	

Annexe 3 – I.D.

NAME & BIRTH NAME	
BIRTH	
DEATH	
STUDIES	
JOB(S)	
FAMOUS FOR...	

Annexe 4 – Ads

	Ad n°1	Ad n°2	Ad n°3
Characters			
Brand			
Product			
Situation			
Aim			

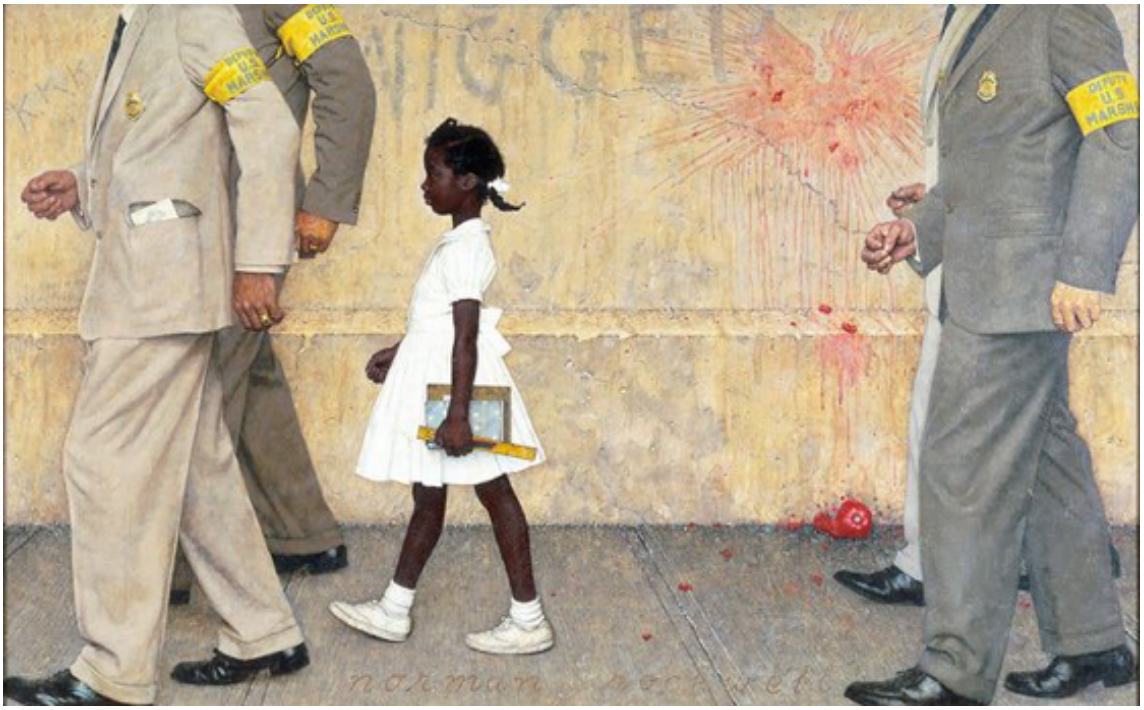
COMMON POINTS	DIFFERENCE

1 "I'se quittin'," announces Mandy heatedly one day last month. "Can't sleep nights on account of the rumbling of that ol' refrigerator. Then just when I'se makin' ice cream, it stops en-tirely!" "John," warns my wife, "if Mandy leaves, we're sunk. We need a new refrigerator . . . *right away!*"

2 "I know one that can't make a noise," she continues. And with that she rushes me downtown to the Servel showroom. There I see a refrigerator . . . *without machinery* . . . with only a tiny gas flame doing the work. Naturally, it's always silent. And having no moving parts, there's nothing to wear.

Annexe 5 – Ruby Bridges & Laws

Niveau 1



Norman Rockwell, *The Problem We All Live With*. 1964

1. Look at the image and identify :
- Artist:
- Title:
- Date:
- Type of document (pick the right answer) :
  an advert - a cartoon - a still from a film - a painting - a photograph

2. Use the following words to caption the image:
pristine white dress ; hair ribbon ; shoes and socks ; schoolbooks ; ruler ; armband ; badge ; tomatoes ; graffitis : US Marshalls

3. Complete the grid with the missing information:

At the bottom	The artist's signature
	The main character → describe her: ……
On the left-hand side & on the right hand-side	…… → describe them: …… ……
	Graffittis —> write them down: …… & Exploded tomatoes —> identify its shape: ……

4. Look at the pictures and pick the corresponding sentence for each :

1. White people are protesting against school integration, which is having black and white children together in the same school.
2. 3 US Marshalls going out of the school with a little black girl.
3. A little black girl going inside the William Frantz Public School
4. A little white girl who holds a sign to protest in favour of school segregation

5. Read the text and highlight the dates, underline their corresponding events.

Norman Rockwell painted this oil on canvas (91 cm × 150 cm) to illustrate the central double page of the magazine "Look" of January 14, 1964. It takes part in the hyper-realism movement, an American movement born in the 1950s, which tends towards quasi-photographic realism. Anyone who observes a hyper-realistic work inevitably comes to wonder whether it is a painting or a photo.

On November 14, 1960 federal marshals escorted a little girl to her first day of kindergarten. She was the only black child to attend the school, and after entering the building she and her mother went to the principal's office while the white parents came in and took their children out.

6. Using the graffitis and the signs, pick out the reason why the little girl was surrounded by US Marshalls.

- ☐ She is surrounded by US Marshalls because she has hurt someone and is dangerous.
- ☐ The little girl is escorted to go to school because she is a famous actress.
- ☐ To protect her from an angry mob of people who disagree of the presence of a little black girl in a white school, four US Marshalls walk her to school.

7. In your own words, explain the title of the painting « The Problem We All Live With »

- What is « the problem » ?
- Who are « we » ?

8. Recap all the information in the chart below :

Type of document + author	
Dates (publication + events)	
Place	
Characters	
Describe the painting in a few words (colors, shapes, angle, background, etc.)	
Message / Purpose	

NIVEAU 2

Adapted from *Special Anniversary Edition – The Story of Ruby Bridges*
by Robert Coles, illustrated by Georges Ford

Celebrate Ruby's story of courage, faith, and hope with this special anniversary edition!

It's 1960, and Ruby Bridges and her family have recently moved from Mississippi to New Orleans in search of a better life. When a judge orders Ruby to attend first grade at William Frantz Elementary, an all-white school, Ruby must face angry mobs of parents who refuse to send their children to school with her. This moving picture book captures the spirit of a little girl standing alone in the face of racism.

1. Read the text and identify:	**Find a synonym for :**	**2.Highlight:**	**3. Underline**
• The author: • The illustrator: • The title: • The name of the main character:	Crowd	• The date • The states • The place	• The other characters • Their behaviours • Imagine why

In 1957, the family moved to New Orleans. Ruby's father became a cleaner, Her mother took care of the children during the day. After they were put to bed, Ruby's mother went to work washing floors in a bank.
Every Sunday, the family went to church.
« We wanted our children to be near God's spirit, » Ruby's mother said. « We wanted them to start feeling close to Him from the very start. »

4.

A. Read and pick three adjectives that describe Ruby's family :

Disappointed - Lazy - Adventurous - Poor - Exhausted - Religious - Atheists - Hard-Working

B. Who is ...

A cleaner: A caretaker: Him:

5. Read and replace events on a timeline

At that time, black children and white children went to separate schools in New Orleans. The black children were not able to receive the same education as the white children. It wasn't fair. And it was against the nation's law.

In 1960, a judge ordered four black girls to go to two white elementary schools. Three of the girls were sent to McDonogh 19. Six-year-old Ruby Bridges was sent to first grade in the William Frantz Elementary School.

6. Rephrase what happened to Ruby Bridges in one sentence.

7. Read and match each character with his/her actions

Ruby's parents were proud that their daughter had been chosen to take part in an important even in American history. They went to church.

« We sat there and prayed to God, » Ruby's mother said, « that we would all be strong and we would have courge and we would get through any trouble ; and Ruby would be a good girl and she would hold her head up high and be a credit to her own people and a credit to all the American people. We prayed long and we prayed hard. »

Ruby's parents 1.	a. They were proud of their daughter, because her story will change the face of history.
White people 2.	b. They were sent by the president to prevent the white parents to attack Ruby.
Ruby's parents 3.	c. They did not try to stop people to harass Ruby.
The city and state police 4.	d. They prayed and hoped for Ruby to be fine.
The Federal marshals 5.	e. They protested against Ruby. They held signs and insulted her because she was black.

Every day, for weeks that turned into months, Ruby experienced that kind of school day.

She walked to the Frantz School surrounded by marshals. Wearing a clean dress and a bow in her hair and carrying her lunch pail, Ruby walked slowly for the first few blocks. As Ruby approached the school, she saw a crowd of people marching up and down the street. Men and women and children shouted at her. They pushed toward her. The marshals kept them from Ruby by threatening to arrest them.

Ruby would hurry through the crowd and not say a word.

On Ruby's first day, a large crowd of angry white people gathered outside the Frantz Elementary School. The people carried signs that said they didn't want black children in a white school. People called Ruby names; some wanted to hurt her. The city and state police did not help Ruby.

The President of the United States ordered federal marshals to walk Ruby to school, to protect her from the angry mob.

The white people in the neighborhood would not send their children to school. When Ruby got inside the building, she was all alone except for her teacher, Mrs. Henry. There were no other children to keep Ruby company, to play with and learn with, to eat lunch with.

But every day, Ruby went into the classroom with a big smile on her face, ready to get down to the business of learning.

"She was polite and she worked well at her desk," Mrs. Henry said. "She enjoyed her time there. She didn't seem nervous or anxious or irritable or scared. She seemed as normal and relaxed as any child I've ever taught."

So Ruby began learning how to read and write in an empty classroom, an empty building.

8. Underline in • **Blue : the behaviour of the crowd** • **Green : the behaviour of the marshals** • **Red : the reaction of Ruby**	**9. Read the text below and imagine what happened next. Write one sentence using « may »**

Then one morning, something happened. Mrs. Henry stood by a window in her classroom as she usually did, watching Ruby walk toward the school. Suddenly, Ruby stopped — right in front of the mob of howling and screaming people. She stood there facing all those men and women. She seemed to be talking to them.

10. Look at the pictures and choose one sentence for each :

- « The mob shouted at her and hit her. »
- « I didn't stop and talked to them. I was praying. I was praying for them. 'Please God, try to forgive those people, because even if they say those bad things, they don't know what they're doing- So you could forgive them.' »
- « Then Ruby stopped talking and walked into the school. »

11. Underline the reason why some boys joined Ruby & its consequence.

12. Highlight the decision of the law. & Explain its consequences.

Later that year, two white boys joined Ruby at the Frantz Elementary School. Their parents were tired of seeing the boys get into mischief around the house when they could have been in school and learning. The mob became very angry when the first white students went back to school. But those boys were soon joined by other children.

They all did get their education, Ruby and a growing number of boys and girls who went to school with her. By the time Ruby was in the second grade, the mobs had given up their struggle to scare Ruby and defeat the federal judge's order that New Orleans schools be desegregated so that children of all races might be in the same classroom. Year after year, Ruby went to the Frantz School. She graduated from it, then went on to graduate from high school.

13- Recap :

- **Pick words that best describe Ruby.**

Adorable - Clever - Arrogant - Angry - Nervous - Proud - Faithful - Brave - Thoughtless - Immature - Lazy - Embarrassed - Jealous - Famous

- Recap all the information in the chart below :

Type of document + author	
Time of action	
Place	
Characters	
Situation	
Consequences	
Evolution	

NIVEAU 3

From segregation to integration

adapted from: https://www.nps.gov

From the 1880s into the 1960s, a majority of American states enforced (= implemented) segregation through "Jim Crow" laws. In 1896, the Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court case determined that "separate but equal" was constitutional. From Delaware to California, and from North Dakota to Texas, many states (and cities, too) could impose legal punishments on people for associating with with members of another race. The most common types of laws forbade intermarriage and ordered business owners and public institutions to keep their black and white clientele separated. Here is a sampling of laws from various states.

1. Read the text and underline the main topic. Pick in the following list the best definition:

- ☐ Jim Crow Laws enacted the equality between all races but not between men and women.
- ☐ Jim Crow Laws were federal laws that separated black and white people.
- ☐ Jim Crow Laws were a system of legal and local segregation. States and cities created laws that ignored blacks' constitutional rights, therefore being separated from whites.

2. Read the following laws and classify them in the chart below:

1. *Alabama* - Every employer of white or negro males shall provide for such white or negro males reasonably accessible and separate toilet facilities.

2. *Alabama* - All passenger stations in this state operated by any motor transportation company shall have separate waiting rooms or space and separate ticket windows for the white and colored races.

3. *Alabama* - It shall be unlawful to manage restaurant or other place for the serving of food in the city, at which white and colored people are served in the same room, unless such white and colored persons are effectually separated by a solid partition extending from the floor to the ceiling.

4. *Arizona* - The marriage of a person of Caucasian blood with a Negro, Mongolian, Malay, or Hindu shall be null and void.

5. *Florida* - Any negro man and white woman, or any white man and negro woman, who are not married to each other, who shall habitually live in and occupy in the nighttime the same room shall each be punished by imprisonment not exceeding twelve months, or a five-hundred dollar fine.

6. *Georgia* - It shall be unlawful for a white person to marry anyone except a white person. Any marriage in violation of this section shall be void.

7. *Louisiana* - Books shall not be interchangeable between the white and colored schools, but shall continue to be used by the race first using them.

8. *Mississippi* - Separate schools shall be maintained for the children of the white and colored races.

9. *Mississippi* - Any person...who shall be guilty of printing, publishing or circulating printed, typewritten or written matter urging or presenting for public acceptance or general information, arguments or suggestions in favor of social equality or of intermarriage between whites and negroes, shall be guilty of an offence and subject to fine or not exceeding five hundred dollars or imprisonment not exceeding six months or both.

10. *Missouri* - All marriages between...white persons and negroes or white persons and Mongolians...are prohibited and declared absolutely void...No person having one-eighth part or more of negro blood shall be permitted to marry any white person, nor shall any white person be permitted to marry any negro or person having one-eighth part or more of negro blood.

11. *New Mexico* - Separate rooms [shall] be provided for the teaching of pupils of African descent, and [when] said rooms are so provided, such pupils may not be admitted to the school rooms occupied and used by pupils of Caucasian or other descent.

12. *North Carolina* - The...Utilities Commission...is empowered and directed to require the establishment of separate waiting rooms at all stations for the white and colored races.

13. *Oklahoma* - Any instructor who shall teach in any school, college or institution where members of the white and colored race are received and enrolled as pupils for instruction shall be found guilty of an offence, and shall therefore pay a fine between ten and fifty dollars each offense.

14. *South Carolina* - No persons, firms, or corporations, who or which furnish meals to passengers at station restaurants or station eating houses, in times limited by common carriers of said passengers, shall furnish said meals to white and colored passengers in the same room, or at the same table, or at the same counter.

15. *Texas* - Any white person may use the county free library under the rules and regulations ordered by the commissioners court and may be entitled to all the privileges. A proper and separate branch shall be made for the negroes at the county free library, which shall be administered by a librarian of the negro race under the supervision of the county librarian.

16. *Virginia* - The conductors or managers on all transports shall have power, and are hereby required, to assign to each white or colored passenger his or her respective car, coach or compartment. If the passenger fails to reveal his race, the conductor and managers, acting in good faith, shall be the only

THEME	LAWS
Bathroom Facilities, Male	
Cohabitation	
Education	- -
Intermarriage	- - -
Libraries	
Promotion of Equality	
Restaurants	- -
Teaching	
Textbooks	
Transportation	- - -

4. Read the following laws and match the underlined words with their synonyms

ground-breaking : larger impact : bloody riots :

reversed : trouble : owners :

1954: Brown v. Board of Education – 1st Segregation Ruling Reversed

On May 17, 1954, the law was changed. In the landmark Supreme Court decision of Brown v. Board of Education, the Supreme Court overturned the Plessy v. Ferguson decision by ruling that segregation was "inherently unequal." Although the Brown v. Board of Education was specifically for the field of education, the decision had a much broader scope. Although the Brown v. Board of Education decision overturned all the segregation laws in the country, the enactment of integration was not immediate. In fact, it took many years, much turmoil, and even bloodshed to integrate the country. This monumental decision was one of the most important rulings handed down by the United States Supreme Court in the 20th century.

1964: Civil Rights Act

Congress passes the Civil Rights Act, establishing a federal policy that prohibits racially segregated public toilet facilities and imposes penalties for racial discrimination in the workplace. Although the law has remained in effect for nearly a half-century, it remains highly controversial to this day.

1967: Loving v. Virginia

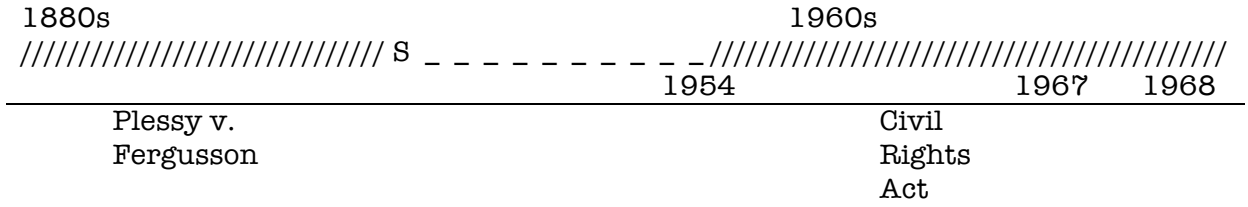
In Loving v. Virginia, the Supreme Court rules that laws banning interracial marriage violate the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution which aimed at protecting the civil rights of every American citizen.

1968: Civil Rights Act

Congress passes the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which includes the Fair Housing Act prohibiting racially-motivated housing segregation. The law has been only partially effective, as many landlords continue to ignore the FHA with impunity.

5. Recap everything you learnt!

a. Complete the timeline



b. Fill in the grid

Type of document	
Time of action	
Place	
Situation	
Consequences	
Evolution	

Annexe 6 – Claudette Colvin

Claudette Colvin told her story to a BBC journalist in March 2018

« There was segregation everywhere. The churches, buses and schools were all segregated and you couldn't even go into the same restaurants.

For me going to a segregated school had *one* advantage, my teachers gave me a good grounding in black history. We learned about negro spirituals and recited poems but my social studies teachers went into more detail. They lectured us about Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth and we were taught about an opera singer called Marian Anderson who wasn't allowed to sing at Constitutional Hall just because she was black, so she sang at Lincoln Memorial instead.

Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth were both African Americans who sought the abolition of slavery.

Tubman was well known for helping 300 fellow slaves escape slavery using the **Underground Railroad**.

Truth was a passionate campaigner who fought for women's rights, best known for her speech **Ain't I a Woman?**

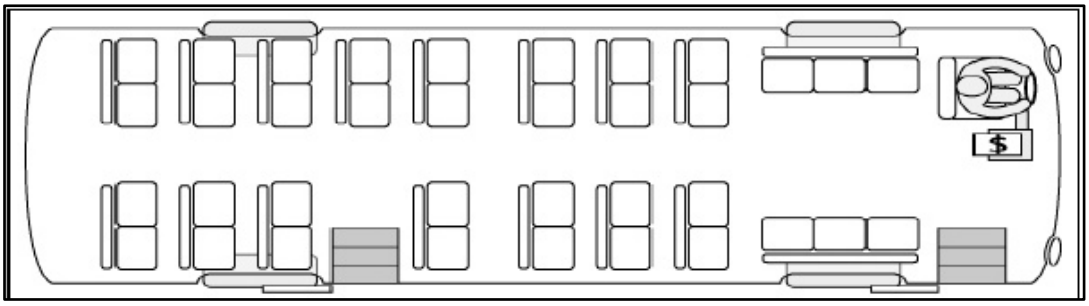
On 2 March 1955, my friends and I finished our classes and we were let out of school early. We walked downtown and my friends and I saw the bus and decided to get on, it was right across the road from Dr Martin Luther King's church. The white people were always seated at the front of the bus and the black people were seated at the back of the bus. The bus driver had the authority to assign the seats, so when more white passengers got on the bus, he asked for the seats.

The problem arose because all the seats on the bus were taken. We were sitting in a row a little more than half way down the bus and a white passenger was standing in the aisle between us.

The driver wanted all of us to move to the back and stand so that the white passenger could sit. (…)

1. Read and highlight historical elements (events, dates, characters, places)

2. Focus on lines 14 to 24 and place the main characters on the bus plan



3. In pairs, imagine what happened next.

(…) He wanted me to give up my seat for a white person and I would have done it for an elderly person but this was a young white woman. Three of the students had got up reluctantly and I remained sitting next to the window. And I told the driver I had paid my fare and that it was my constitutional right to remain where I was.

Whenever people ask me: 'Why didn't you get up when the bus driver asked you?' I say it felt as though Harriet Tubman's hands were pushing me down on one shoulder and Sojourner Truth's hands were pushing me down on the other shoulder. I felt inspired by these women because my teacher had taught us about them in so much detail. I wasn't frightened but disappointed and angry because I knew I was sitting in the right seat.

The driver kept on going but stopped when he reached a junction where a police squad car was waiting. Two policemen boarded the bus and asked me why I wouldn't give up my seat.

I was more defiant and then they knocked my books out of my lap and one of them grabbed my arm. I don't know how I got off that bus but the other students said they manhandled me off the bus and put me in the squad car. But what I do remember is when they asked me to stick my arms out the window and that's when they handcuffed me.

Instead of being taken to a juvenile detention centre, I was taken to an adult jail and put in a small cell with nothing in it but a broken sink and a cot without a mattress.

I was scared and it was really, really frightening, it was like those Western movies where they put the bandit in the jail cell and you could hear the keys. I can still vividly hear the click of those keys.

I had waited for about three hours when my mother arrived with my pastor to bail me out. My mother knew I was disappointed with the system and all the injustice we were receiving and she said to me: 'Well, Claudette, you finally did it.'"

After I was released from prison, there were fears that my home would be attacked. Members of the community acted as lookouts, while my father sat up all night with a shotgun, in case the Ku Klux Klan turned up.

4. Read §6 and pick the sentence that best paraphrases the § :
   - ☐ Claudette agreed to give up her seat to the white woman because she was pregnant.
   - ☐ Claudette refused to give up her seat because the woman was not old and it was her right to be seated in the bus.
   - ☐ The bus driver asked the white woman to sit somewhere else.

5. Read the end of the text and highlight in one color the new characters in the story. In another color the new places mentioned.

6. Explain the quote "*I say it felt as though Harriet Tubman's hands were pushing me down on one shoulder and Sojourner Truth's hands were pushing me down on the other shoulder.*" What's the link between Tubman, Truth and Colvin?

7.From previous knowledge, does this story make you think about someone else? Think about the chronology of events, Imagine why her story was less known?

I was the first person to be arrested for challenging Montgomery's bus segregation policies, so my story made a few local papers - but nine months later, the same act of defiance by Rosa Parks was reported all over the world.

Like me, Parks was commuting home and was seated in the "colored section" of the bus. When the white seats were filled, the driver, J. Fred Black, asked Parks and three others to give up their seats. Like I did, she refused, and was arrested and fined.

At the time, Rosa was a seamstress in a local department store but was also a secretary of the Montgomery chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

I knew her very well. I became very active in her youth group and we use to meet every Sunday afternoon at the Luther church. Ms Parks was quiet and very gentle and very soft-spoken, but she would always say we should fight for our freedom. I think she had the right image to become the face of resistance to segregation because of her previous work with the NAACP. The organization didn't want a teenager in the role. Also I got pregnant and they said they didn't want to use a pregnant teenager because it would be controversial and the people would talk about the pregnancy more than the boycott.

On the night of Parks' arrest, the Women's Political Council (WPC), a group of black women working for civil rights, began circulating flyers calling for a boycott of the bus system. Soon afterwards, on 5 December, 40,000 African-American bus passengers boycotted the system and that afternoon, black leaders met to form the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), electing a young pastor, Martin Luther King Jr, as their president.

The boycott was very effective but the city still resisted complying with protesters' demands - an end to the policy preventing the hiring of black bus drivers and the introduction of first-come first-seated rule. To sustain the boycott, communities organized carpools and the Montgomery's African-American taxi drivers charged only 10 cents - the same price as bus fare - for fellow African Americans.

A year later, on 20 December 1956, the US Supreme Court ruled that segregation on the buses must end.

The legal case turned on the testimony of four plaintiffs, one of whom was myself.

The NAACP had come back to me and my mother said: 'Claudette, they must really need you, because they rejected you because you had a child out of wedlock.' So I went and I testified about the system and I was saying that the system treated us unfairly and I used some of the language that they used when we got taken off the bus."

After the Supreme Court made its decision, things slowly began to change. However, some white passengers still refused to sit near a black person.

When I moved to New York many years later to become a nurse, I didn't tell many people about the part I played in the civil rights movement because New York is a completely different culture to Montgomery, Alabama. Most of the people didn't have problems with us sitting on the bus, most New Yorkers cared about economic problems. I didn't want to discuss it with them.

In 2009, the writer Phillip Hoose published a book that told my story in detail for the first time. He said he wanted the people to know about the 15-year-old, because really, if I had not made the first cry for freedom, there wouldn't have been a Rosa Parks, and after Rosa Parks, there wouldn't have been a Dr King. »

8. Read and put the following affirmation in the right order.

a. Parks' act was reported all over the world.
b. Nine months later, Rosa Parks followed Colvin's act of defiance and refused to resign her seat to someone else.
c. Colvin moved to New York city and never spoke about her involvement in the movement.
d. In December 56 the US Supreme Courte ruled against bus segregation and ordered it must end.
e. Colvin knew Parks very well because she went to her youth group every Sunday afternoon.
f. Colvin did not become the face of the movement because she got pregnant while Parks had already worked for the civil rights movement with the NAACP.
g. A writer decided to write a book about her in 2009 because without her the civil rights movement would not have been launched.
h. Right after Parks' arrest a boycott of the bus system was launched. 40'000 African-Americans boycotted the buses on December,5th 1955.
i. The boycott worked even if the city still refused to change the law to follow the protesters' requests.

Annexe 7 – Nina Simone

I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free

Nina Simone, October 1967

I wish I knew how
It would ……. to be free
I wish I ……
All …… holdin' me
I wish ……..
All the things that I should say

Say 'em ……., say 'em ……
For the whole 'round world to hear
I wish I could share
All ……. that's in my heart
……. all the thoughts
That …….. apart

……..
What it means to be me
Then you'd see and agree
That every man ……..

I wish I could give
All I'm…… to give
I wish I could live
Like I'm longing to live
…….
All the things that I can do

And though I'm way over due
I'd be startin' anew
Well I wish I could be
……..
How sweet it would be
If I found …….

I'd soar up to the sun
And look down at the sea
And …….. 'cause I know yeah

And I'd sing 'cause I know yeah
And I'd sing 'cause I know
I'd know …….
I'd know how it feels ……., yeah-yeah
I-I'd know how it feels
Yes, I'd know
I'd know how it feels, how it feels
To be free, no no no

Annexe 8 – Ella Baker

ELLA BAKER: THE UNSUNG HERO OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

By William DeLong - www.allthatsinteresting.com

Published October 2, 2018 - Updated December 19, 2018

She galvanized the individual's role in the Civil Rights Movement, influenced Martin Luther King and taught Rosa Parks how to resist peacefully. But history often forgets to mention that.

Ella Baker had an enormous influence on the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Without her deft touch, several African-American organizations at the time might not have been so successful.

All the odds were against her as a black woman in her time. But Baker utilized her personal past to promote the first nonviolent grassroots organizations in the Civil Rights Movement. She informed leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. on how to proceed in the resistance and brought power to each individual fighting for their freedoms.

a. Find the synonyms of:

unrecognized; stimulated ; expert ; chances

b. Identify: the author, the date of publication, the source.

c. Rephrase the main theme

1. ELLA BAKER: EARLY LIFE

Ella Baker was born on Dec. 13, 1903 in Norfolk, Virginia, and she grew up in North Carolina. Her grandmother was a slave. She told young Ella stories of the cruelties she endured at the hands of white slave owners.

Her grandmother was once even whipped repeatedly for refusing to marry the man chosen for her. But she bore the beatings with pride and resilience. Baker's grandmother's silent resistance to the brutality of slavery inspired her own philosophies for the Civil Rights Movement.

As Baker entered college at Shaw University in Raleigh, N.C., she challenged school administrators to change policies that she thought were unfair to students. She subsequently graduated in 1927 as valedictorian of her class.

a. Read and place the two states on the map.

b. Find the words corresponding to the following definitions:

- to be beaten with a long piece of leather or rope
- to accept an unpleasant experience because you are unable to do anything about it
- the ability to recover easily from damaging events
- the student who has the highest marks in their class when they graduate and gives a speech at their graduation ceremony

c. Explain in your own words the experience of her grandmother and its incidence on Baker's activism.

2. Ella Baker: Community Organizer

Following graduation, Baker moved to New York City. By 1930, she had organized the Young Negroes Cooperative League, a group designed to advance the causes of businesses owned by black and colored citizens. As the Great Depression grew deeper, Baker realized that young African-Americans particularly faced dire economic situations. Not only were they discriminated against, but now they faced horrific conditions of poverty, homelessness, and unrest.

Baker saw the economic hardships as a catalyst for change. As she organized groups for women in New York City, one of her frequent sayings became, "People cannot be free until there is enough work in this land to give everybody a job."

In 1940, she joined the NAACP. (…) She rose from a job as field secretary to national director of various branches and from 1943 to 1946, her role was to fundraise for the organization. She traveled all over the country, trying to convince people that they deserved a voice. Like her, many of the people she met had grandparents who were slaves, and they had trouble understanding what a nationwide organization could do to help them.

Baker decided she could best mobilize and inform the public through more local organization. She felt grassroots organization instead of national leadership within the NAACP could better benefit their constituency. (…) She had a gift for listening and picking out leaders in the groups she met. At various workshops, Baker would train people on how to organize and lead grassroots groups of the NAACP.

One person who attended Baker's workshops in the 1940s was a woman named Rosa Parks. Like Baker, Parks adopted a philosophy of nonviolent protesting. It was Parks' refusal to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Ala. on Dec. 1, 1955, which sparked even more fervor among the Civil Rights Movement.

Baker resigned her post at the NAACP in 1946, but she still maintained her passion for advancing the Civil Rights Movement. Her contacts within the NAACP proved to be a valuable resource as the freedom movement garnered momentum.

a. Read and find the synonyms of:

terrible	stimulant / incentive	triggered
instability	merited	

b. Pick the meaning of NAACP:

- ☐ National African-American Cooperation for the People
- ☐ National African Acknowledgment of Civil Prejudice
- ☐ National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

c. Analyze the word "grassroots" and guess its meaning

d. Explain Baker's role in the NAACP and her vision of activism.

3. Ella Baker And Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Baker eventually rejoined the NAACP's local chapter in New York in 1952. Naturally, she rose to director of that branch and became the first female leader in that chapter's history. (…)

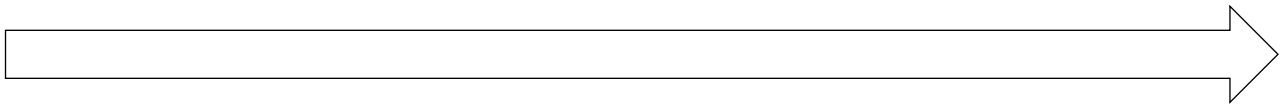
Baker's organizational skills and her prominent role in New York's NAACP movement led her to Atlanta in 1958. There, she worked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to organize the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. For two years, Baker trained leaders of local chapters in resistance, planned protests and held events to further the SCLC's aims.

Baker often clashed with King, though. King balked at the notion that a woman may have ideas beyond his own. An early SCLC member said of King's behavior that it was just a consequence of his time and circumstance: "unless someone was male and a member of the inner circle of the church, it could be difficult to overcome the preacher ego." But Ella Baker persisted.

a. Read and find the words corresponding to the following definitions:

- moved upward
- a branch of a society or a club
- to make something progress
- was strong against something
- to defeat or succeed in dealing with something

b. Place on the timeline events of Baker's life. Imagine what happened before.



c. Explain how and why Baker's relationship to MLK was special.

4. Ella Baker Organizes Again

Baker left the SCLC in 1960 to help local movements in Greensboro, North Carolina. She encouraged King to donate $800 to start a group there to support the protests. After speaking to a conference in April 1960, Baker (with King's approval) formed the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

Diane Nash, a prominent member of the Civil Rights Movement, said, "I could count on Ms. Baker to be truthful. She explained many things to me very honestly. I would leave her feeling very emotionally picked up, dusted off and ready to go. She became a mentor to me."

It was here that Baker's connections with the NAACP bore fruit. She called on members of the NAACP to help register voters, train local leaders, and provide support to people staging protests and sit-ins in Greensboro and elsewhere.

Baker's idea, in her own words, was that "Strong people don't need strong leaders."

Her thinking was that once people were shown the way, they could take the reins themselves to maintain local groups. All they needed was to be given a little guidance, training, or light, first. "Give light and people will find the way," Baker said. She believed that every person had ability to lead and engage in the resistance.

a. Read and highlight the two events that happened in 1960. Underline the use of the 800$.

b. Find the synonyms for:

strengthened recovered

succeeded

c. Highlight Baker's mottos.

d. Explain her conception of activism

5. Ella Baker: Unsung Hero

The Civil Rights Movement is often remembered in regards to King and Parks. Hardly anyone mentions Ella Baker, but she had accepted her anonymity: "I found a greater sense of importance by being a part of those who were growing," Baker told filmmaker Joanne Grant in her 1981 documentary *Fundi: The Story of Ella Baker*.

"Fundi" is a Swahili word, and Baker's nickname, meaning someone who passes on her wisdom on to other generations.

Baker certainly lived up to that nickname. Baker died on Dec. 13, 1986. It was her 83rd birthday.

John Hope Franklin, a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, called Baker, "probably the most courageous and the most selfless" of the activists in the 1960s.

The Ella Baker Center for Human Rights continues her work today. The organization aims to combat the difficulties of mass incarceration of minorities, as well as to strengthen communities and improve the lives of low-income civilians.

a. Read and highlight a quote from Baker. Rephrase it.

b. Analyze the word "selfless" : from its construction, guess its meaning.

c. Explain the meaning of "Baker certainly lived up to that nickname"

NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE FROM TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

THE PHENOMENAL TRUE STORY OF THE BLACK FEMALE MATHEMATICIANS AT NASA WHOSE CALCULATIONS HELPED FUEL SOME OF AMERICA'S GREATEST ACHIEVEMENTS IN SPACE

Before John Glenn orbited the earth, or Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, a group of dedicated female mathematicians known as "human computers" used pencils, slide rules, and adding machines to calculate the numbers that would launch rockets, and astronauts, into space.

Among these problem-solvers were a group of exceptionally talented African American women. Originally math teachers in the South's segregated public schools, these gifted professionals answered Uncle Sam's call during the labor shortages of World War II. With new jobs at the fascinating, high-energy world of the Langley Memorial Aeronautical Laboratory in Hampton, Virginia, they finally had a shot at jobs that would push their skills to the limits.

Even as Virginia's Jim Crow laws required them to be segregated from their white counterparts, the women of Langley's all-black "West Computing" group helped America achieve one of the things it desired most: a decisive victory over the Soviet Union in the Cold War, and complete domination of the heavens.

Starting in World War II and moving through to the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement and the Space Race, *Hidden Figures* follows the interwoven accounts of Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, Katherine Johnson, and Christine Darden—four African American women who participated in some of NASA's greatest successes. It chronicles their careers over nearly three decades as they faced challenges, forged alliances, and used their intellect to change their own lives, and their country's future.

MARGOT LEE SHETTERLY grew up in Hampton, Virginia, where she knew many of the women in *Hidden Figures*. She is an Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Fellow and the recipient of a Virginia Foundation for the Humanities grant for her research on women in computing. She lives in Charlottesville, Virginia.

margotleeshetterly.com @margotshetterly

READING GROUP GUIDE INSIDE

FOX 2000 PICTURES PRESENTS A CHERNIN ENTERTAINMENT / LEVANTINE FILMS PRODUCTION "HIDDEN FIGURES"
TARAJI P. HENSON OCTAVIA SPENCER JANELLE MONÁE KEVIN COSTNER KIRSTEN DUNST JIM PARSONS
MUSIC BY HANS ZIMMER & PHARRELL WILLIAMS COSTUME DESIGNER RENEE EHRLICH KALFUS EDITED BY PETER TESCHNER PRODUCTION DESIGNER WYNN THOMAS
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MANDY WALKER, ASC, AGC EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JAMAL DANIEL RENEE WITT IVANA LOMBARDI MIMI VALDES KEVIN HALLORAN
PRODUCED BY DONNA GIGLIOTTI PETER CHERNIN JENNO TOPPING PHARRELL WILLIAMS THEODORE MELFI BASED ON THE BOOK BY MARGOT LEE SHETTERLY
SCREENPLAY BY ALLISON SCHROEDER AND THEODORE MELFI DIRECTED BY THEODORE MELFI
www.HiddenFiguresMovie.com #HiddenFigures

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ISBN 978-0-06-236360-2 1216
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§1

a. Circle the tools used by « human computers »

b. Explain « human computers » in your own terms.
.....

§2

c. Pick out the synonyms of :
talented = ... to strive = ... the lack of work-force = ...

d. Who is « Uncle Sam » ?
.....

§3

e. Choose the right synonyms for « counterparts » :
managers - peers - enemies - equivalents - friends - colleagues - acquaintances

f. The heavens » stands for... Choose the right option.
The earth's core - The sky - The religious paradise

§4

g. Name the main characters. Contrast with the movie ?

h. Highlight historical events and place them on a timeline. Add other information you found in the text.

Recap !

- Recap the blurb in two sentences

- List all the elemens of a backcover and their definition


INTERSECTIONALITY
a fun guide
this is Bob.
hi!
Bob is a stripey blue triangle.
AND SHOULD BE PROUD.
yay me!
SADLY SOME PEOPLE DO NOT LIKE BoB. BoB FACES OPPRESSION FOR BEING A TRIANGLE, & FOR HAVING STRIPES.
DOWN WITH STRIPES
GOD HATES TRIANGLES
LUCKILY, THERE ARE LIBERATION GROUPS! BUT THEY AREN'T INTERSECTIONAL.
SO THEY LOOK LIKE THIS
WELCOME Δs!
WELCOME ≡s!
THEY DON'T TALK TO EACH OTHER. IN FACT, THEY COMPETE.
I'M MORE OPRESSED!
NO, I AM! I DESERVE MORE!
BoB CAN'T WORK OUT WHERE TO GO.
AM I MORE STRIPE OR TRIANGLE?
BoB WISHES THAT THE TRIANGLES AND STRIPES COULD WORK TOGETHER.
OPRESSION OF ONE AFFECTS US ALL.
NO LIBERATION WITHOUT EQUAL REPRESENTATION!
INTERSECTIONALITY IS THE BELIEF THAT OPPRESSIONS ARE INTERLINKED AND CANNOT BE SOLVED ALONE.

Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism. 1981, bell hooks

At a time in American history when black women in every area of the country might have joined together to demand social equality for women and a recognition of the impact of sexism on our social status, we were by and large silent. Our silence was not merely a reaction against white women liberationists or a gesture of solidarity with black male patriarchs. It was the silence of the oppressed – **1** that profound silence engendered by resignation and acceptance of one's lot.

When ? Decade? Why?
Highlight the reasons of black women's « silence ».

Contemporary black women could not join together to fight for women's rights because we did not see "womanhood" as an important aspect of our identity. Racist, sexist socialization had conditioned us to devalue our femaleness and to regard race as the only relevant label of identification. In other **2** words, we were asked to deny a part of ourselves – and we did.

Race < or > or = Womanhood?
Highlight the reason of this order

Consequently, when the women's movement raised the issue of sexist oppression, we argued that sexism was insignificant in light of the harsher, more brutal reality of racism. We were afraid to acknowledge that sexism could be just as oppressive as racism. We clung to the hope that liberation from racial oppression would be all that was necessary for us to be free. We were a new generation of **3** black women who had been taught to submit, to accept sexual inferiority, and to be silent. (…)

Racism < or > or = Sexism
Underline their hope

From the onset of my involvement with the women's movement I was disturbed by the white women's liberationists' insistence that race and sex were two separate issues. My life experience had shown me that the two issues were inseparable, that at the moment of my birth, two factors determined my **4** destiny, my having been black and my having been born female.

Underline in 2 ≠ colours the 2 ≠ problems she faced

When I entered my first women's studies class at Stanford University, in the early 70s, a class taught by a white woman, I attributed the absence of works written by or about black women to the professor having been conditioned as a white person in a racist society to ignore the existence of black women, not to her having been born female. During that time I expressed to white feminists my concern that so few black women were willing to support feminism. They responded by saying that they could **5** understand the black woman's refusal to involve herself in feminist struggle because she was already involved in the struggle to end racism.

Highlight in one colour what bell hooks considered as the reason of the absence of historical works on black women & in an another the reason given by white feminists.

As I encouraged black women to become active feminists, I was told that we should not become "women's libbers" because racism was the oppressive force in our life – not sexism.

6

Guess the meaning of « women's libbers ».
Rephrase the reason given by black women not to be feminists.
Imagine what solution bell hooks proposes.

To both groups I voiced my conviction that the struggle to end racism and the struggle to end sexism were naturally intertwined, that to make them separate was to both deny a basic truth of our existence, that race and sex are both immutable facets of human identity.

Pick the sentence that best paraphrases the last paragraph :

7

- *To both groups I strongly stated that all struggles against all forms of oppressions overlap / are interwoven ; and that in no way one could be separated from the other.*
- *I told both groups that even though black women's identity is shaped by both her race and her femininity, the struggles against oppression are independent*