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Hidden Voices: The Women of the Black Arts Movement and the Rise of the Ancestors

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree
Doctor of
Philosophy
in
Individualized Graduate
Program with an emphasis in
World Cultures

by

Kim McMillon

Committee in charge:
Professor Nigel De Juan Hatton, Chair
Professor Gregg Camfield
Professor Sean L. Malloy
Professor James Smethurst

August 2019

Hidden Voices: The Women of the Black Arts Movement
and the Rise of the Ancestors

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By

Kim Cheryl McMillon

The dissertation of Kim McMillon is approved.

Gregg Camfield

James Smethurst

Sean L. Malloy

Nigel DeJuan Hatton, Committee Chair

My Dissertation is dedicated to my mother, and my beautiful father who is now an Ancestor. I could not have done this dissertation without the joyous community of family and friends that have held my hand throughout this journey. Thank you, my dear brothers, Vincent and Chet. Thank you my dear friends Necola Adams, Shellee Randol, Teresita Chavarria, Vicki Underwood, Zerita Dotson, Stephanie Anne Johnson, and too many others to name. I love you all.

CURRICULUM VITAE

KIM MCMILLON

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GASP 153: Theatre & Social Responsibility (Teaching Fellow)	01/17/17 -05/09/17
ARTS 115: Theatre & Social Responsibility (Teaching Fellow)	08/25/16 -12/08/16
ARTS 115: Theatre & Social Responsibility (Teaching Fellow)	05/23/16 -06/30/16
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ARTS 100: History of World Arts (Teaching Assistant)	08/25/15 -12/14/15
Arts 115: Theatre & Social Responsibility (Teaching Fellow)	06/26/15 -07/03/15
S001: Introduction to Sociology (Teaching Assistant)	01/20/15 -05/09/15
SPAN 060: Intro to Chicano/a Culture (Teaching Assistant)	08/28/14 -12/13/14
ENG 31: Introduction to African American Lit (Teaching Assistant)	01/22/14 -05/09/14
ENG 20: Introduction to Shakespeare (Teaching Assistant)	08/27/13 -12/09/13
ARTS 115: Theatre & Social Responsibility (Teaching Fellow)	05/28/13 -07/03/13
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HIST 011: Introduction to World History (Teaching Assistant)	01/19/12 -05/06/12
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PRODUCTION/LITERARY EXPERIENCE:

- Produced the 2010 Ethiopian New Year Celebration, Enkutatash. Handled publicity, promotion, set-up, and breakdown of this event with an audience of more than 2000 in Berkeley's Martin Luther King Jr. Park with the support of the City of Berkeley, the Berkeley Police Department, and the Oakland Ethiopian Community and Cultural Center.
- Wrote grants, created and managed budgets, and produced PEN Oakland's playwriting series, 8 short plays, staged at Live Oak Theatre in Berkeley | 09/2008 - 8/2009
- Wrote, and produced stage readings of Carlos Diegues' 1984 movie *Quilombo dos Palmares* on 17th Century Slavery in Brazil. Stage productions at Laney College in Oakland, and Alameda College in Alameda, CA |4/2007-02/ 2009
- Produced the PEN Oakland sponsored literary series Oakland Out Loud at the Oakland Public Library in conjunction with the publishing of the Oakland Out Loud anthology |04/2007 - 09/2007

- Curated the poetry program for Chandra Garsson's exhibition, Insomnia [Awakening], which focused on the culture of violence that perpetrates child abuse and sexual abuse of women, as told through the personal experiences of one local artist. Poets reading included Ellen Bass, Teresa LeYung Ryan, Jennifer Stone, Alta, Shailja Patel, Mary Mackey, Leslie Simon, etc. | 02/2004 - 03/2004
- Produced, wrote, and starred the one-woman show, *Confessions of a Thespian*, directed by Margo Hall and staged at the Julia Morgan Theatre in Berkeley, CA. |10/1999 -03/2000
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PUBLICATIONS:
New Perspectives on Amiri Baraka, Anthology Contribution, Ohio University Press, Publication Date: 2021
Black Power Encyclopedia (1965-1975), a two-volume reference work that explores the emergence and evolution of the Black Power Movement in the United States. Contributed section on the Black Arts Movement. ABCCLIO: July 2018: 78-85.
Journal of Pan African Studies edited special edition on the Black Arts Movement, April 2018.
"The Black Arts Movement – Healing Systemic Racism," State of UC Blog, August 30, 2016.
Fightin' Words: 25 Years of Provocative Poetry and Prose from "the Blue-Collar PEN". CoEditor, Heyday Books, 2017.
Oakland Outloud, poetry anthology, Assistant Editor, Jukebox Press, 2007.
Words Upon the Waters, Publication Committee, Jukebox Press, 2006.
PRESENTATIONS:
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Funding by Center for Black Studies Research & the UC Consortium for Black Studies in California, Guest Speaker. |12/02/2016
UC Merced – Diversity and Inclusion graduate student panel, Facilitator. | 08/16/2016
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CONFERENCES:
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- Dillard University-Harvard's Hutchins Center BAM Conference| 09/09/16 - 09/11/16 Dillard University, New Orleans, LA. Organizer
- Social Justice in the Central Valley | 11/05/15 - 11/07/15

Utilizing the Theatre of the Black Arts Movement to Strengthen the Empathy Muscle, Stanislaus State University, CA. Guest Speaker

- 50 Years On: The Black Arts Movement & Its Influences 02/28/14 - 03-02/14 UC Merced, Merced, CA, Organizer
- Drama out West| 11/03/13 -11/05/13
  The Black Arts Movement in the San Francisco Bay Area, Presenter | 1960 – 1980
  Black Doctoral Network Conference, Philadelphia, PA. *Presenter*
- The Transformation of the African American through Black Theatre, |01/11/12 -01/14/12
  11th Annual Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities |1960 1980. Presenter

MEDIA EXPERIENCE:

- Civil Liberties Conversation, We are all Americans, panelist, Valley PBS | 07/19/2018
- Arts in the Valley, Host and Producer 1480 KYOS AM, Merced, CA |10/2010-07/2014

FIELD OF STUDY AND RESEARCH

Under the direction of Professor Nigel Hatton, I researched the history and major figures of the Black Arts Movement (BAM) with an emphasis on the women of the BAM.

EDUCATION:

UC Merced| School of Social Sciences, and Humanities, World Cultures| Ph.D. program, | Summer 2019

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AWARDS AND HONORS:

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- UC Consortium for Black Studies Curatorial Public Events Award. | 12/04/1016 ▪ Martin Millennial Award honoring contributions to Southern Arts and Letters. |09/09/2016
- The Soroptimist Ruby Award, Soroptimist International |04/10/2014
- Distinguished UC Merced Woman and Graduate Student Award. |3/14/2014

AFFILIATIONS/ MEMBERSHIPS:

- Graduate Student Representative on UC Merced's Spendlove Price Comm. |06/2016-05/2018
- PEN Oakland (Poets, Essayists, & Novelists) Oakland, CA (Board member) | 02/1995 – 02/2017

- National Council of Negro Women (Member) 10/2014 – 09/2016
- African Diaspora Student Association at UC Merced (President) 04/2013 – 12/2017
- Arts UC Merced Presents (Board member)| 2013-2015

It is the poet's task to sing.
John O'Neal, Co-Founder, Free Southern Theatre

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I turned 62 on June 18, 2019. In my wildest dreams, I never imagined that I would return to school for my doctorate in my later years. In 2010, it was suggested by a friend, Donell Williams, that I should enroll in graduate school at UC Merced. I was not working and had no idea what to do after losing my position as Allocator at Pacific Maritime Association in Oakland, CA because of the 2008 stock market crash. I was honored that Professors Gregg Camfield and Nigel Hatton agreed to be my advisors. I was unsure about my area of research until Professor Hatton said to do what I love. I love African American theatre, particularly the theatre of the Black Arts Movement (BAM). It opens my heart in a manner that almost nothing has before. The richness of language, culture, and personal empowerment in the theatre of the Black Arts Movement is powerful.

Having come of age during the Black Arts Movement, I felt strongly about its message of "Black is Beautiful," particularly as I grew up in 1950s and 1960s America where the message of Black Empowerment was not always welcomed. During this time period, I lived in San Antonio, Texas in an African American neighborhood where busing was the norm. I was very aware of segregation. My father, Frank McMillon, protested a major Texas department store refusing to hire Blacks. He was also a member of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and was involved in programs supporting Black liberation. My father passed on September 13, 2014. I know that I could not have entered graduate school without his and my mother's support. My ancestors are celebrating my receiving a doctorate with my father leading the festivities.

If we were in a theatre now, this would be the second act of a three-act play. The first act includes the road traveled towards my dissertation. The leading actors on my journey are Black Arts and Black Liberation men and women that acted as my mentors, and include: Ishmael Reed, Marvin X, Poetess Kalamu Chaché, Al Young, Askia Touré, Adrienne Kennedy, Charlotte "Mama C" O'Neal, Judy Juanita, Lakiba Pittman, Jimmy Garrett, Jerry Vanardo, Eugene Redmond, Tarika Lewis, Joyce A. Joyce, Jerry Ward, Dr. Nathan Hare, Adilah Barnes, the late Itibari M. Zulu, Amina Baraka, Dr. Doris Derby, and Avotcja. Their knowledge and abilities greatly enhanced my scholarship and understanding of Black Liberation Movements. Each of these wonderful men and women took time out of their schedules to be interviewed, attend conferences that I produced, and to sometimes hold my hand when I was too scared to move forward.

I want to acknowledge UC Merced faculty that acted in the role of producers of my play, "The Dissertation." This production commenced in August 2011 and is finally being presented in front of what I hope is an enthusiastic audience. The producers, who aided in the creation of this production are my committee members:

Nigel Hatton, Gregg Camfield, Sean Malloy, and James Smethurst. I could not have asked for a more informed and brilliant group of men. I was also honored to have Dunya Ramicova on my committee until her retirement. Dunya's knowledge of theatre and her kindness are inspiring. I was greatly motivated by the level of support that I received from my lead advisor Professor Nigel Hatton. He was able to help me frame my research in a manner that was exciting. Hatton understood my core message of the connection of African American women to the *Ancestors* and self-determination. He does not wear a cheerleading costume, but Professor Hatton has been my strongest supporter and an invaluable ally. I would also like to personally thank Professor Smethurst for his encouragement and willingness to share his information as a Black Arts Movement scholar. Professors Camfield and Malloy offered me unconditional support and helped finance my research efforts.

I am deeply indebted to UC Merced faculty and staff members Vice Provost Marjorie Zatz, Dean Jill Robbins, Professor Arturo Arias, Robin DeLugan, Elizabeth Salmon, Tonya Lopez-Craig, Anne Zanzucchi, Jayson Beaster-Jones, Kevin Dawson, Susan Amussen, and Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Gregg Camfield for their guidance and willingness to allow me to teach, research, and find my voice. In late 2013, I received $10,000 from the Center for the Humanities, $40,000 from the ASUCM, $3,000 from Provost Gregg Camfield, $5,000 from Building Healthy Communities, and inkind funding from the Merced Multicultural Arts Center and Merced County Office of Education to produce the 2014 *Black Arts Movement Conference, 20 Years On*. I am grateful for their support and the support of Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and his donation of $25,000, Dr. Kara Olidge and the inkind and financial support from the Amistad Research Center, Dean Jill Robbins, Provost Gregg Camfield, and Dean Marjorie Zatz's donation of $8,000+ for my 2016 Black Arts Movement Conference at Dillard University in New Orleans. I was also honored to receive a Graduate Dean's Dissertation 2017 Summer Fellowship to further my research.

There are people in your life that help you in ways that touch your very soul. Necola Adams has been my dearest friend along with Karin Tobiason, Vicki Underwood, Marilyn Johnson, Martha Acevedo, Dob Francise, Colton Dennis, Richard Gomez, Dob Francise, Dylan Odom, Stephanie Anne Johnson, Jim Chong, Bev Young, Heike Hambley, Adrian Richwell, Don Starnes, Marvin X, Carolyn Vara, Shellee, Randol, Shizuko Huston, Sherrie Spendlove, Teresa LeYung, and Teresita Chavarria, and her family. These dear friends have lent an ear, assisted with graphics, website design, fundraising, stage managing, videotaping, building sets, lighting design, proofreading, and sometimes just listening. Most of all, I want to thank my family, my nieces Marlena, Theresa, and L.A., my dear mother Janie McMillon, and my brothers Chet and Vince, and Vincent's wife Lisa. They are truly the ride or die family that always has your back and picks you up whether you are in mud or a bout of self-pity.

These last eight years have afforded me wonderful opportunities to explore the Black Arts Movement in ways that I could not have imagined.

The Dillard University conference offered me the opportunity to meet Dr. Doris

Derby and learn more about the contributions of universities, and individuals to the Black Arts Movement South. I want to particularly thank Kalamu Ya Salaam, a major contributor to the Black Arts Movement. Kalamu's writings on the Black Arts Movement proved invaluable. His willingness to share his scholarship was a gift. Along with southern authors Jerry Ward, Mona Lisa Saloy, Quo Vadis Breaux, Dr. Doris Derby, Zella Palmer, Bernadette Gildspinel, Amistad Center director Kara Olidge, and the late Reginald Martin, I was given a lesson in Southern hospitality, history, and heartcentered kindness.

Sometimes, we do not find our voice until later in life. My research has helped me find a voice that I did not know I had. It is like birthing a baby that you had not prepared for, but when it comes, there is so much joy. If not for the willingness of Dr. Doris Derby and Amina Baraka to share their lives and commitment to Black Liberation, this dissertation would not have happened. I am very grateful for Amina Baraka's generosity in permitting me to use her poetry, and Doris Derby's kindness in sharing her art and history that allowed me to tell her story. I am so grateful for their voices and for Professor Hatton's guidance in helping me to articulate their empowering stories.

One afternoon, I told Amina Baraka that sometimes I feel as if Amiri is looking over my shoulder, helping me to find the right words. She laughed, probably thinking as long as he doesn't walk through the door, it is alright. But, I feel as if so many of the ancestors have walked through the door, including my father, to say hello, or to tell me not to give up. They are saying, "tell our stories." It is what keeps culture alive, the stories, the storytellers, and those that hear them.

ABSTRACT

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Hidden Voices:
The Women of the Black Arts Movement and the Rise of the Ancestors

Kim Cheryl McMillon
Doctor of Philosophy in World Cultures
University of California, Merced 2019

Nigel De Juan Hatton, Committee Chair

The history and survival of the African American woman has depended on a central narrative described in my dissertation as *ancestralness*; whereby, the ancestral tools of poetry, art, music, and community allow women to discover their inner *mecca* beyond the intersectional oppressions of white privilege, patriarchy and colonization. In this dissertation, I argue that *ancestralness* negates the designation of African Americans as "other" by opening the door to ancestral DNA and an i*nnerness*, where art and community are privileged through the awareness and power in *blackness*. This same knowledge allowed women of the Black Arts Movement to move beyond the *liminal* space prescribed to the African-American women. My research seeks to deepen and add to a conversation monitored by men who claimed to have the authority to decide who was a part of the Black Arts Movement. The Movement has been framed by historical figures like Amiri Baraka, Larry Neal, Ed Bullins, Thomas Dent, Ishmael Reed, and Askia Toure while relegating women to the back of the literary bus. This gendered and racial invisibility is explored in the writings of Cherise A. Pollard, Toni Morrison, Toni Cade Bambara, bell hooks, Lorraine Hansberry, and women extending themselves beyond the boundaries placed by race. My research represents a nonlinear conversation aimed at creating new scholarship on race, gender, and the power of Black womanhood. This power of Black womanhood was delineated at the Dillard University-Harvard's Hutchins Center Conference in September 2016 where BAM female icons Avotcja, Charlotte "Mama C" O'Neal, Doris Derby, Tarika Lewis and others used their art, poetry, music, and research to acknowledge their *ancestralness*. My dissertation furthers this discussion through filmed interviews, questionnaires, and open discussions with Amina Baraka, and Doris Derby. These women epitomize communities, culture, historical narratives, and art that if left on the sidelines, similar to the history of Blacks in America, is never told.

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We are the African and the trader. We are the Indian and the settler. We are the slaver and the enslaved. We are oppressor and oppressed. We are the women and we are the men. We are the children. The ancestors, black and white, who suffered during slavery----and I've come to believe they all did. ---*Alice Walker, "In the Closet of the Soul"*

Chapter 1: Introduction – The Ancestors

A priestess dressed in white grabbed and held me in New Orleans' Congo Square. The Black Arts Movement Conference at Dillard University had ended. It was the evening of September 11, 2016, and as the organizer of that conference, I still had bills to pay. The priestess rocked me back and forth and in a voice that spoke of Black bodies long gone said, "The ancestors are pleased." She held me tight as tears mingled with dreams unrealized. "Don't worry about the money. It is a distraction. You will be repaid a thousand-fold." I had not been held like that in forever. It was a holding of a soul space by a woman who knew me as no more than an acquaintance but was demanding an

Figure 1: Nana Sula (wearing glasses) Priestess of Light at Temple of Light - Ile' de Coin-Coin at Congo Square in New Orleans – Courtesy of Nana Sula

audience with my soul: soul-to-soul communications in a place long ago where slaves danced in freedom worship every Sunday. How appropriate that I was here on Sunday asking for my soul's freedom. The voices of the ancestors spoke through Nana Sula, and I listened.

This type of healing connection is discussed in Toni Morrison's essay, "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation;" she speaks of "…the way in which Black people looked at the world. We are very practical people, very down-to-earth, even shrewd people. However, within that practicality, we also accepted what I suppose could be called superstition and magic, which is another way of knowing things…. And some of those things were "discredited knowledge…" (61). The knowledge that

Morrison speaks of is an awareness of spirit, of the ancestors, of a need to communicate beyond that which is seen. The ancestors were speaking through Nana Sula.[1] Just as W.E.B. Dubois speaks of double-consciousness, Black women must speak of spirit consciousness, that connection to the ancestors that is always pulling Black bodies, particularly Black women, between two worlds as they negotiate a universe filled with racialized minefields.

These minefields can take the form of symbols that cause the mind to travel to dark and desperate places where home, culture, and Black bodies are not safe. The festering legacy of chains is one of those symbols. Africans stolen from their homeland, crowded ships with bodies piled, the auction block, and mass incarceration are all linked by chains. Shackled from one generation to the next, raped Black bodies birthing babies, sharecropped to extinction, mass migration, servants, redlining, gerrymandering, and the invisible chain that stretches as far back as 1619 and the first enslaved Africans touching American soil speaks to the history of Blacks in America. This invisible chain is the guide to Black women in America. However, it is in the 1960s and 1970s that the chain similar to the term "Black" is redefined with the words, art, music, dance and literature, written by Black women, telling their stories, their sorrow songs through art that shouts: "Black Power," and cries in the night wrapping Black bodies in blankets tinged with anguish and rocked by hope. Their voices are submerged but whispering, "Art is freedom. Follow me." This invisible chain forever connects us to our ancestors allowing the Black woman to rebirth our history and stand in its power. It is in that history that those Hidden Voices, the women of the Black Arts Movement emerge.

In this dissertation, I examine these Hidden Voices through the lens of Black Feminism with a narrative of resistance through art. What does it mean to be a Black woman in America, and how does the experience of Black womanhood from slavery to present time define the African-American woman? I identify the link between the enslavement of the African female and the dominant society's placement of the Black woman in the role of "other," thereby ensuring the usurpation of her physical body and voice. I argue that the Black female artist has reclaimed the essence of Black womanhood and empowered the entire Black race through the art, poetry, theatre and prose of the women of the Black Arts Movement (BAM). My research focuses on the art and lives of Amina Baraka, the wife of the late Amiri Baraka; and civil rights icon and photographer Dr. Doris Derby. I approach my research in an interdisciplinary manner that examines the re-telling of the history of the Black Arts Movement through the eyes of the women that were a part of the struggle. I research hidden voices that have not been privileged, voices in communities, families, and academia. My work explores their survival and renegotiation of space through the filter of slavery, the Civil Rights, the Black Liberation, and the Feminist Movements. How did these women walk a tightrope in a highly politicized cultural environment, and how did this affect their work as well as their survival? What or who influenced the creation of their art, which will be discussed in terms of the political act of being an African-American woman and the use of space, art, and culture as a form of resistance?

The purpose of my dissertation is to reassess how the Black Arts Movement is taught as well as "othered" through its historic neglect in academia. Kalamu Ya

Salaam in *The Magic of Juju: An Appreciation of the Black Arts Movement* makes the point that books on The Black Arts Movement compared to its level of importance are few (276). He also makes the claim that "…the absence of books on the Black Arts Movement is not an accident but rather part of a systemic effort at erasing our history" (276). The argument can be made that research on the BAM has led to a greater number of academic articles and books, but Ya Salaam rightly points out that compared to the Harlem Renaissance, there is a lack of scholarship. Ya Salaam approaches his dialectical argument with the belief that the Black Arts Movement was seen as discriminatory towards whites (277). The Black Arts Movement was nationalistic, but life affirming to Blacks that saw themselves as a colonized people demanding their full rights as United States citizens and using art to express their demands. Was the Black Arts Movement discriminatory towards whites? I would ask the question, "Does a caged lion greet its oppressor with a smile?" As a nation, we are still grappling with issues of race and gender and it is through teaching and understanding the history of Blacks in America that our nation heals. My research seeks to broaden and create a more holistic view of the movement with the goal of new generations discovering why the Black Arts Movement mattered and still matters.

By infusing a narrative that speaks to the power of the Black women as not just a support system for the Black male, but as a dynamic partner in the creation of the movement, those Hidden Voices are re-remembered and offer a clearer vision of the historic impact of the Black women and the movement itself. For a people that were forbidden to read during slavery, the process of memory takes on new meaning. Kalamu Ya Salaam points out that "In Black culture the common tongue is first music and then oratory and kinetics, and only at a tertiary level, literacy (279). If that is so, then memory is of the upmost importance. Our first memories as slaves were not books, but sounds, and skin upon skin in the slave ship hulls. In Toni Morrison's essay, "The Site of Memory," she speaks of "emotional memory---what the nerves and the skin remember as how it appeared" (77). For Blacks in America the trauma of slavery has marked an entire race with a binding wound that absorbs memory after memory and holds generational pain. It is through addressing that pain that the Hidden Voices emerge.

1.1 The Chapters

Chapter one, my introduction, establishes the theoretical framework for my research on how the Black Arts Movement opened the door for the exploration and celebration of Black womanhood. To strengthen my thesis, I conceived of the term *ancestralness* as a means of exploring the Black female's DNA linkage to the gifts of the ancestors. A detailed description of the methodology and literature used to support my research is also included. Chapter 2 seeks to explore the historical connection between the Harlem Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement through the work and life achievements of Doris Derby. Derby's work connects the Black Arts and the Civil Rights Movements through her involvement with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Albernathy, Andrew Young, Septima Clark, Margaret Walker and others. As one of the founders of Free Southern Theatre, Derby's voice made a difference in the development

and advancement of theatre as a tool for social change in African American communities throughout the south. Chapter 3 examines the life of Amina Baraka and her husband's legacy as the founder of the Black Arts Movement. What my dissertation establishes is Amina's historical importance as the woman that supported the work of Amiri Baraka, and yet, is a major voice in the Black Arts Movement in her own right. Chapter 4, the conclusion of this dissertation, redefines the historical role of the movement and explores how the women of the BAM have re-written its history through interviews, memoirs, poetry, art, and having their say.

1.2 Ancestralness

Ancestor, a word that calls forth humans connected to us, but unseen, is described in The Oxford English Dictionary as "A person, typically one more remote than a grandparent, from whom one is descended." Its origin is "Middle English: from Old French ancestre, from Latin antecessor…."[2] In this dissertation, Ancestor is used as a root word. Grounding the subject, "Black Women," most particularly Black women writers and artists to their historical placement in the Black Arts Movement, acknowledging the invisibility that comes with being Black and female, and the refusal to remain hidden. The word ancestor highlights the spiritual connectedness of the Black woman to her past. Her present reality represents the gathering, the *ancestralness*, the linking of that past to the here and now, rooted with one foot in spirit, and the other in the world. It is there that she creates art challenging preconceptions of what it means to be Black and female. It is the *ancestralness*, the communing with the ancestors, conscious and unconscious, that moves the Black female beyond a liminal space.

In *Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. defines the importance of ancestral culture and its psychic attachment to the souls of Black folks. Gates maintains that Africans were not alone during the Middle Passage inferring that their culture, their cloak of Ancestors travelled across the waters bringing their traditions and beliefs. It is Gates' assertion that "…they chose, by acts of will, not to forget: their music (a mnemonic device for Bantu and Kwa tonal languages), their myths, their expressive institutional structures, their metaphysical systems of order, and their forms of performance" (24-25). This represents the pull of the ancestors that greet the soul at birth and journey back home at the person's death. It is in this world from birth to death that the ancestors become our guides and help us survive. The Africans sold into slavery persisted because they were not alone.

My research interrogates the Black female's relationship to the ancestors in the creation of her art. I specifically examine the roots of *ancestralness* and its relationship to Africa. In his book, *The African Genius*, historian and Africanist, Basil Davidson writes of Africa as a continent with a rich history damaged by colonialism, and a "racialist mythology" (26). Davidson argues that much of the ignorance of beliefs with regards to Blacks has changed since the twentieth century (26). He discusses his placement of the ancestors as vital to African culture, stating:

> …the history of the Africans is nothing if not the 'handing on of the torch' from generation to generation. It is quintessentially concerned with the

> accumulation of ancestral wisdom, with the demonstration of a tabula fiena of ancestral knowledge. For it is the appointed ancestors who have given peoples their identity and guaranteed the onward movement of life.
> (46)

It is ironic that African American slaves given identity through the ancestors lacked the knowledge of that identity. And yet, the ancestors were always there, invisible, but "handing on of the torch." Davidson brings awareness of the cultures of Africa and the importance of the ancestors to these cultures. As African Americans the knowledge of our ancestors is an anomaly. The ability to trace generations of family was eliminated due to slavery and the selling of Blacks like chattel. The continuity is not there. The peddling of slaves limited the ability to know your mother, father, or even brothers and sisters since whole families were often sold separately. However, with websites like Ancestry.com and 23andMe, Blacks have a greater opportunity to locate their ancestors. But, the family connections, the knowing your history, is not there. As African Americans, we are continually in search of identity. There is a saying that the universe abhors a vacuum. *Ancestralness* fills that void through the ancestors opening a door to allow the words, and the art touched by spirits to come forth.

In her essay, "The Site of Memory," Toni Morrison gathers words that form place setters conjuring the spirits, the *ancestralness*. Morrison describes it as "…a kind of literary archeology: on the basis of some information and a little bit of guesswork you journey to a site to see what remains were left behind and to reconstruct the world that these remains imply" (71). While Morrison describes "literary archeology" in terms of the use of the imagination, in my research, I would argue that "literary archeology" is a bridge linking generations to the rich soil of African Genius, the gifts of art, literature, and the spoken word. The Site of Memory opens the door to the ancestors and an imaginative history aided by *ancestralness*, the gathering of spirits to facilitate the process of spirit genealogy.

Ancestralness represents an inner cosmology linking the African American female to her personal mythology. These are the myths of the soul that guide the Black female into the heart space. My introduction links the Black woman as the heart of the planet as she represents the planetary heartbeat for all humanity. It is the brutality of slavery, rape, loss, and generational abuse that has led her heart to become the healer of the most wounded. The ancestors carry the Black woman as she walks through darkness, healing the physical and emotional scars that are generational. And just as the Black woman is the heart, she is circled by women of all races, nationalities, and cultures, each bringing their own truth, their own gifts to the planet. But it is the heart that beats with absolute love, that allows a slave to nurse children of the master, to love children born of rape, and to survive the Middle Passage and the Black Holocaust. It is only through *ancestralness*, the holding of the space of survival, an in-between world where the Black soul is healed of the pain and darkness of racism and abuse--that the Black female is held by the ancestors. It is also in that in-between world that souls arise, becoming ancestors engaged in the healing process, and other souls return to the world of the living ready to bear witness. In historian Robert Farris Thompson's *Flash of the Spirit: African &*

AfroAmerican Arts & Philosophy, Thompson speaks of the in-between world in his discussion of Tenwa Nzi Kongo: The Kongo Cosmogram. Thompson cites Kongo civilization scholar Wyatt MacGaffy in his discussion of the importance of this Cosmogram, describing it as, "…the Kongo cruciform, a sacred "point" on which a person stands to make an oath, on the ground of the dead and under all seeing God." The cross is not connected with Christian religion, but rather the Kongo people believed that "man's life has no end, that it constitutes a cycle…. The sun, in its rising and setting, is a sign of this cycle and death is merely a transition in the process of change" (108). This progression represents the human beings' connection to the ancestors. It is in the transition space, the in-between world that the ancestors commune with those souls in need of healing, wisdom, and vision. I would argue that the sacred point is the crossing over, the connecting with spirit, and the applying of that connection to the art and literary realms. Thompson further explains the Cosmogram asserting that:

> A fork in the road…can allude to this crucially important symbol of passage and communications between worlds…the point of intersection between the ancestors and the living…. God is imagined at the top, the dead at the bottom, and water in between. The four disks at the points of the cross stand for the four moments of the sun, and the circumference of the cross the certainty of reincarnation…The summit of the pattern symbolizes not only noon but also maleness, north, and the peak of a person's strength on earth. Correspondingly, the bottom equals midnight, femaleness, south, the highest point of a person's otherworldly strength. (109)

Thompson's explanation of the male's power on earth, and the female's in the world of spirit explains the Black woman's connection to the ancestors, and the cosmology of *ancestralness*. The symbolism of the male on top and the woman on the bottom speaks to the terminology often equated with the woman's status on earth. She is at the bottom, and yet, there is power in the world of the unknown. The world of the unseen which is connected to all. The female unites the world of spirit, the intuitive world, the world nurtured in the womb, the world where life is born. It is in that *ancestralness* that the female creates. Art becomes life. During the Black Arts Movement, art, Black Art is reborn, a new consciousness of creation, one that travels beyond the masculine in its search for art that speaks of the Black women's journey.

In *Words of Fire an Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, feminist theorist Barbara Smith speaks of the Black woman's journey, asserting:

> There is not a black woman in this country who has not, at some time, internalized and been deeply scarred by the hateful propaganda about us… Until black feminism, very few people besides black women cared about or took seriously the demoralization of being female and colored and poor and hated.[3] (262)

This quote articulates the life experiences of African American women coping with internalized oppression due to living in a world where her value is questioned. It illustrates the importance of the ancestors to uplift that which is crucified on an artificial cross strung up by the disease of worldwide racism. This does not negate the Black male's experience of *everyday racism*, but rather acknowledges the Black female, the womb of the Black race, as a creative force seeking to change the nature of Blackness on the planet through and with the ancestors. The cause of this internalized oppression stems from the history of the Black female in America and is highlighted in a speech given by Alice Childress at "The Negro Writer's Vision of America" Conference held at the New School for Social Research in New York City in 1965. Childress states that after the Emancipation of the Black race, the south created laws to protect white slave owners from Black descendants and Black men angered at the possibility of being named the father of mix-raced children. "State after state passed legislation declaring that all children born to Black women during slavery shall be known as the legitimate children of their mothers only" (99).

The Black mother therefore becomes the mother-father raising children that she apparently created by herself. These types of laws go beyond the marginalization of a human-being and become a form of erasure. The Black woman and parts of her life are literally erased. It is then that the pen becomes a weapon used by generations of African American women from Harriet Jacobs in *The Life of a Slave Girl* to former Black Panther Elaine Brown in her autobiography, *A Taste of Power*. The Black woman is negating her invisibility and writing herself into history. In my chapter on Amina Baraka, Amina speaks on the pen as a weapon for social change. Through Amina's poetry, she addresses issues of abuse, gender, racial intolerance and the need for societal change.

In Clayton Eshleman's translation of the Founder of the Negritude Movement Aimé Césaire groundbreaking poem, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, Césaire speaks of the power of Blackness with the words:[4]

> My negritude is not a stone its deafness hurled against
> The clamor of the day
> My negritude is not a leukoma of dead liquid over the earth's dead eye
> My negritude is neither tower nor cathedral[5]
> It takes root in the red flesh of the soil
> It takes root in the ardent flesh of the sky
> It breaks through opaque prostration with its upright patience (35)

This poem is a call to Blackness and a hurling of Blackness based on colonized images. It is a song of Blackness, sung in the key of liberation. It is the rootedness that Toni Morrison speaks of. It is the soil that the bones of the dead rest in before journeying to the homeland to be greeted by the ancestors that have waited patiently. It is the voyage of the Black man and woman and the refusal to be anything less than human, than flesh, not in the need to be raised as great, but rather to be acknowledged as human.

1.3 Research and Examination

As with any research project, I have been asked why I chose to explore the writings and history of Amina Baraka, and Doris Derby. I have researched the contributions of these women for the last three years. What they have in common is a belief in the historical importance of the Black Arts Movement as part of a continuum stretching back to the Harlem Renaissance and moving forward to inspire future generations. Each woman represents a point in time of major historical importance, from Amina and Amiri Baraka's activism and innovative contributions to mid-twentieth century jazz and poetry, to Derby's connection to the Harlem Renaissance, the Civil Rights and the Black Arts Movements. I am writing about fierce Black women that have experienced segregation, Jim Crow Laws, and profound injustice. I chose to write their stories rather than those of more well-known Black Arts Movement iconic figures such as Sonia Sanchez, Gwendolyn Brooks, Maya Angelou, or Carolyn Rodgers. While they are brilliant women that have paved the way for writers like me, their words are in countless books, and they are admired nationally and internationally, but Baraka, and Derby have transformed me, taken me into their lives, and taught me history that is not in our textbooks, and may never be unless our society changes how Black history is taught. Amina Baraka opened her home and a door to the rich history of the Black Arts Movement. Derby illustrates how ordinary people became history makers through answering a call for social and economic justice. While Sanchez, Angelou and so many others enhanced the literature and narrative of the Black Arts Movement, my two muses represent Black history that is not being taught in the schools. I remember my mother telling me about Black women in neighbourhoods sitting together telling their tales as young people looked on. With Baraka, and Derby, I was that young person, sitting and listening. I was gazing into a mirror framing Black faces, Black history, and Black culture. The mirror needs to be raised so that all people that wish to see this history and learn about Black culture can gaze at these women telling their stories, their truths.

These women of the BAM are similar to a painting that when viewed from different angles establishes a different picture. They are opening a door to a more inclusive view of the movement and its importance. The pedagogy of the BAM, when identified through a Black feminist lens presents new voices that unpack a history and knowledge of the movement that is being rediscovered and given new life.

Similar to a garden, my dissertation plants new ideas about the movement while contributing to existing research that has parallels to Carmen L. Phelps's *Visionary Women Writers of Chicago's Black Arts Movement*. Phelps's groundbreaking book explores the poetry of Johari Amini, Carolyn Rodgers and Angela Jackson in the context of the marginalized Black female voice that "…queered the conventions of the Black Art" while changing "…the aesthetic for which their male peers have been credited with constructing" (4). Phelps offers new research opening the door to the sexual fluidity of the women of the BAM, Black feminism, and the Black female's refusal of misogyny, and celebration of Black female identity. Phelps' research is analogous to Lisa Gail Collins and Margo Natalie Crawford's *New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement* in its opening a window to a more comprehensive view of the Black Arts Movement. While

there are similarities in our research, my methodology seeks to directly explore the voices of Baraka, and Derby through taped conversations, their writings and questions aimed at investigating their re-remembering one of the most artistically relevant times in American history.

Baraka, and Derby represent the ideals of the Movement in their creation of art that rose out of the shadows of Black bodies seeking to resist society's hegemony, and yet fully aware of the price of their resistance. These women were and are aiming at the bigger picture of the total liberation of the Black man and woman through art and self-determination. These cultural workers represent Black feminism with a central narrative described as ancestralness; whereby, the ancestral tools of poetry, art, music, and community allow the Black woman to discover her inner mecca beyond white privilege and colonization. This ancestralness negates the African-American women as "other" by opening the door to ancestral DNA and an innerness where art and community are privileged through an awareness and power in Blackness. Former Black Panther and international artist Charlotte "Mama C" O'Neal clarifies this term with Kenyan hip-hop artist Kamau Ngigi, who maintains that, "Wahenga could be ancestralness" as described in the Kiswahili language of the Swahili people. "In the dictionary they describe it as an elder who sits on a native council, but *Wahenga*, according to the people, are long gone ancestors." I use this African term as a means of honoring the African Americans' African roots. These "long gone ancestors" are embedded in our being, in our Blackness. Ancestralness and the term Wahenga are one in that they unite the Black spirit, the ancestors of the past with the present-day Black woman seeking through art a means of empowering herself. The Black woman calls upon the ancestors to strengthen her creative life force that allows her to stand in her power, in her ancestralness, united by the spirit lineage that leads back to Africa, negating hundreds of years of servitude, slavery, and beliefs that have held Black bodies in bondage. The horrendous past of Black Americans is not forgotten, but rather the *Wahenga*, our long-gone ancestors, bring the past to the surface so that it can be healed. The ancestors hold the records of our pain. The collective memory remains so that we honor our ancestors and acknowledge our present selves no longer encumbered by the shadows of our past.

In order to document the Hidden Voices of the BAM, I walk with my ancestors and those of the Black Arts Movement so that I am granted permission and knowledge to tell their stories with the hope that my words bring justice to the long gone and presentday women of the Black Arts Movement. Their stories, their lives, are written in the earth, hidden yet in plain sight for all that thirst for the knowledge enfolded in the hearts and minds of Blackness. That rich Blackness that carries the ancestral voices of ancient African culture is intertwined in the DNA of Black America. It is a giant that when awakened is all encompassing with knowledge of the survival of Black Americans. As a race, we could not have survived the Middle Passage, Slavery, Jim Crow Laws, and mass incarceration without that DNA.

This DNA is centered in the Black womb that has been problematized to the point that the image of the Black woman negates her existence; whereby, she endures in a liminal space, crowded by images of Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire, Welfare Queen, and the angry Black woman that borders on psychotic in its depiction of rage and violence. Who

is the African American woman? My research illustrates how the Black female is recreating her image based on her historical past beyond colonization. Using the images and writings of African American women past and present, the ancestors guide me in the telling of the hidden stories, opening doors that have been closed, marked with the worn threads of life. The power behind these doors has been left unclaimed, until now. The writings of Maya Angelou, Audre Lorde, Gwendolyn Brooks, Wanda Coleman, Mari Evans, Jayne Cortez, and others connect to the present-day oracles Sonia Sanchez, bell hooks, Angela Davis and others as we enter the ancestral circle of female voices that have risen above the fray, and the Hidden Voices, joined by a thread weaving the history and lives of these women into the tapestry of the Black Arts Movement.

In the telling of these stories, scholars like Melissa V. Harris-Perry testify to life in America for the African American woman. In her acclaimed book *Sister Citizen*; HarrisPerry speaks to life in America for the Black woman as living in a "Crooked Room." She maintains that "…[B]lack women are standing in a crooked room, and they have to figure out which way is up. Bombarded with warped images of their humanity, some black women tilt and bend themselves to fit the distortion" (29). She insists that "…To understand why black women's public actions and political strategies sometimes seem tilted in ways that accommodate the degrading stereotypes about them, it is important to appreciate the structural constraints that influence their behavior. It can be hard to stand up straight in a crooked room" (29).

Harris-Perry's vision of the crooked room in which African American women stand speaks to the negative imagery placed on Black bodies. For hundreds of years, the Black woman has been told that her color, her body, and her very being were not her own, and lacked worth. My work seeks to tear down that crooked room through the power of the art and words of the BAM women creating Black Female Wholeness. Just as the burden of slavery was overwhelming, the burden of privileged views of what is Blackness carries the weight of a lack of authenticity brought about by belief systems whose roots reflect an absence of substance. My research illustrates how the Black woman goes beyond this limited placement by the dominant society and those adhering to its narrative. I would argue that this ancestralness negates the "crooked room" by opening to ancestral DNA and an innerness where art and community are favored through an awareness and power in Blackness.

This power has been monitored by men who claim to have the authority to decide who was a part of the Black Arts Movement. The Movement has been framed by historical figures like Amiri Baraka, Larry Neal, Ed Bullins, Thomas Dent, and Ed Bullins while relegating women to the back of the literary bus. However, bus drivers and riders change, making room for new voices that refuse to be marginalized by gender politics. Patricia Hill Collins, author of *Black Feminist Thought* asserts that the suppression of the Black female is shaped by "…three interdependent dimensions… the exploitation of Black women's labor…. the political dimension of oppression and the controlling images of Black women that originated during the slave era…" (6-7). I would argue that this suppression of the Black female has its origins in fear, fear that is contained in the ideology of the need to suppress that which is ultimately power unrealized as the Black woman is cloaked in gendered as well as racial invisibility.

The Black woman has been marginalized to the point that she is viewed from stereotypical images so that her truth and existence is mitigated.

Imagine a space much like the auction blocks of 18th and 19th century America. In that setting, Black women are caught in a gendered and racialized gaze that says, "You are the problem," and their lives immediately change. They are wary of what they say in public and of laws that can and have been enforced to limit their rights. They are aware that by going outside of their communities they will often be judged by the color of their skin. This is what Harris-Perry describes as the "crooked room," and that room has its origins in the auction blocks, ritualized places where a Black women's body is abused and shackled, where she was without voice and agency. In this crooked room, because of her DNA, which houses the horrors of slavery and all that it entailed, she experiences Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome as described by Dr. Joy DeGruy- Leary in her groundbreaking book, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing*. Dr. DeGruy-Leary describes P.T.S.S. as:

> …a condition that exists when a population has experienced multigenerational trauma resulting from slavery and continues to experience oppression and institutionalized racism today. Added to the condition is a belief (real or imagined) that the benefits of society in which they live are not accessible to them. This, then, is Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome. (121)

Multigenerational trauma is built into Black bodies from cradle to the grave. It is the reason why Black fathers and mothers must sit with their children explaining that they do not have the luxury of speaking to the police as equals because they live in a society where moving a hand too swiftly or not clearly explaining each of their actions beforehand could mean the loss of their life. The Black female has dealt with P.T.S.S. and its effects on the Black family since first touching foot in the Americas. P.T.S.S. is similar to a haunting, only it is within the body. Shadows and whispers by a society that has abused Black bodies since they first stepped onto American soil. The African American experiences P.T.S.S. when confronted with images of police brutality, statistics on the abuse of Black bodies by our penal system and everyday racism. While race is now viewed as a construct, it continues to be tied to negative perceptions about women and men of African descent. Slavery in the United States has ended, but the results of enslavement linger. It is easy to dismiss the claim that slavery, something that happened almost four-hundred years ago, no longer has an effect on Black bodies, but in Saidiya Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, she likens slavery to the loss of a limb, and yet the "traces of memory" that function as a phantom limb hold that record of slavery. Hartman observes the need to recognize that loss as a way of "redressing the breach introduced by slavery." She states that it is the "working through of the past" that allows those of African heritage to redress the pain and sorrow of the Middle Passage (73-74).

This inherited pain, while long gone, is still part of American history with little done by the dominant race to address the impact of slavery. It can be likened to a wound

that has not been cleaned and continues to fester. African Americans have used literature to write about, discuss, and clean these invisible wounds, to heal that which is seen and unseen. Water hoses, jail cells, sharecropping, rape, and beatings speak of a legacy that has yet to be healed. Fannie Lou Hamer and countless others laid their bodies down so that our lives were made easier. For every beating that Fannie Lou Hamer took in the Winona, Mississippi Jail, a line of ancestors was holding the space so that her pain would not be in vain.[6] The writings of Cherise A. Pollard, Toni Cade Bambara, Alice Childress, and women extending themselves beyond the boundaries placed by race have opened, bandaged and dressed these psychic wounds. However, what is not spoken of is that these wounds are not just carried by women and men of African ancestry. When such pain is inflicted upon a people, the entire planet is affected.

The title of my dissertation is *Hidden Voices* because parts of the United States are still not safe for Black Bodies, and many voices demanding an end to oppression still remain hidden. Women and men of Black ancestry have moved through a society that has often proved alien. Worse still, Black women have remained in the shadows when necessary for their survival. During the Black Arts Movement, Black women rose in protest and are again rising with organizations like *Black Lives Matter* to denounce a racialized United States. Although Baraka, and Derby created literary and artistic works during and about the Black Arts Movement, the power of their art has only strengthened as people of color look to their rich past for answers.

As a playwright, teacher and an artist, I see a clear need for discussions on race. In my classroom, the pedagogy connecting racial issues and the Black Arts Movement was vital. From 2013 until 2019, I taught Theatre and Social Responsibility at the University of California, Merced using the plays and poetry of the men and women of the Black Arts Movement. I discovered that the writings of Ed Bullins, Marvin X, Ntozake Shange, Amiri Baraka, Mari Evans, Martin Luther King, Jr., Margaret Walker, Ishmael Reed, Ben Caldwell, Malcom X, Carolyn Rodgers, Alice Childress, Judy Juanita, Langston Hughes, Avotcja and more could be used to help students develop their empathy muscle. Students of all races performed plays and poetry before live audiences and then discussed how the words and views of these artists affected them.

Figure 2: UC Merced Arts 115 Students Performing Robert Alexander's A Preface to the Alien Garden, July 2, 2015, Opening Night at the Merced Multicultural Arts Center (photographer: Professor Sonia Gutierrez-Palomar College)

Figure 3: UC Merced Arts 115 students performing George C. Wolfe's *The Colored Museum*, Exhibit – Git on Board, July 2, 2015, Opening Night at the Merced Multicultural Center. (photographer Professor Sonia Gutierrez-Palomar College)

It is very clear that the BAM writers did not intend for their work to be used in this manner. It is also evident that these writings are helpful in healing racism. It is harder to speak in racist terms when you have performed as a Black man jailed for no reason other than skin color or as a Black woman reacting to Jim Crow Laws. In E.

Patric Johnson's *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity*, he uses a quote from Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. to show the importance of opening the door on a more inclusive worldview: "No human culture is inaccessible to someone who makes the effort to understand, to learn, to inhabit another world" (3). Dr. Gates is affirming that as humans, we have the ability to empathize and to create art and literature that enhances our humanity by reaching out and accessing in an internal and external manner that which represents the art and humanity of others. The students are not appropriating another culture, but rather they are standing in that culture's truth and allowing the audience to hear that truth. I was nervous about White, Chicanx, ArabAmerican, Asian, and African American students performing as Blacks in plays dealing with the United States' racist past.

Figure 4 : Scene from Luis Valdez's *Los Vendidos*. Play was part of the December 8, 2016 Arts 115 student production, *Voices of the Revolutionary Theatre Collective* performance at the Merced Multicultural Center. Photographer Felicia Roberts-Central Valley Voice

However, participants chose the plays they performed and committed to the characters with the understanding that they were a collective seeking to heal issues of race within themselves and their audience.

After a performance, a theatre-goer said to me, “This was better than professional theatre because the students believe what they are saying.” I was stunned by his remarks but knew that this was an experiment that should be continued. In the classroom, students spoke of family members being beaten by the police in front of children, the awareness that they were judged by the color of their skin rather than their character and wanting to live in a world without racism. They faced their own unconscious biases with regards to race and assumptions about what it means to be Black in America. It was inspiring to watch them realize the impact of race and racism on their lives. One of the major issues they continually addressed was colorism. Students of all races spoke of the difficulties they experienced because of their skin color. It had taken many of them years to realize the beauty of their rich brown hues.

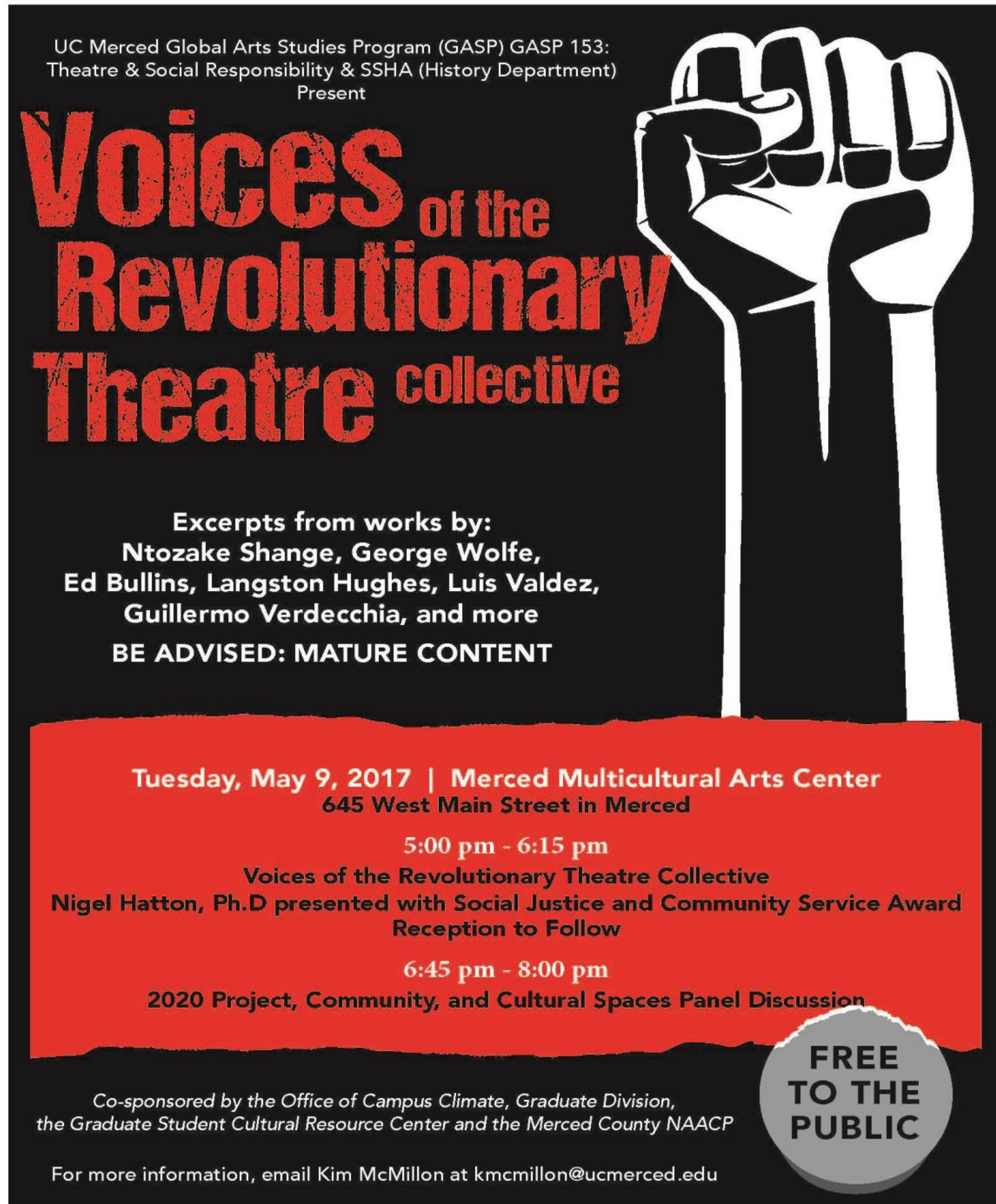

Figure 5: Flyer for GASP 153 production of *Voices of the Revolutionary Theatre Collective*.
Designer: Shellee Randol, Randol Graphics

It did not matter whether they were Asian, Black, or Latinx, the issues of race and darkness profoundly impacted their lives and their belief that it limited their place in society. With each class, I hope my students feel that the world is a little better because of their greater understanding of the impact of race.

Figure 6: Big Chief Clarence A. Dalcour and the tribe of Creole Osceolas Indians giving the opening night prayer at the Dillard University BAM Conference, September 9, 2016, Photographer Eric Waters. Courtesy of Kim McMillon

1.4 Grounding Our Ancestralness

In September 2016, the Dillard University-Harvard Hutchins's Center Black Arts Movement Conference opened with prayer and ancestral worship. New Orleans Black Indians commenced with the prayer chant, *Indian Red*, that has Native American and African roots. Big Chief Clarence A. Dalcour led the tribe of Creole Osceolas Indians.

This was followed by an African Ritual Invocation with iconic Louisiana spiritual leaders Luisah Teish, Nana Sula, and Charlotte "Mama C" O'Neal handling the vocals with Avotcja on percussions. A ritual blessing took place at Dillard University with Mama C walking towards my brother, Vincent McMillon, with a small plant in an urn. The plant represented the holding of the space for the ancestors. She asked my brother to water the plant and call out the names of his ancestors. By this time, he was crying and calling out the name of my father who had died in September 2014.

Figure 7: Opening Night Performance with Charlotte “Mama C” O’Neal and Nana Sula at Dillard University, September 9, 2016. Photographer: Eric Waters. Photo courtesy of Kim McMillon

The entire room seemed to be wailing and calling out the ancestors as Mama C walked through the crowded auditorium. You could feel the ancestors as Mama C carried the urn shouting, “Call out the names of your ancestors. Say their names! Say their names!” People called out family members, Black icons, and whispered names too personal to shout. Tears covered the faces of the audience, strangers hugged, held hands, and joined voices in worship. This Wahenga, the communion with spirits, nurtured the bodies and souls of all those present.

Figure 8: Left to right: Gina Athena Ulysse, Nicole Stanton. Sydnie Liggett. Dillard BAM Conf Sept. 9, 2016. *Black Liberation Mash-up,* a short performance that weaves dance and spoken word, consisting of combined textual and movement vocabularies of liberation that explore self definition, memory, history, Black struggle, revolution and new visions. Photographer Eric Waters.
Photo courtesy of Kim McMillon

Figure 9: Mama C asking the audience to call out the names of their ancestors at the opening night of the Dillard University Black Arts Movement Conference, September 9, 2016, Photographer: Eric Waters. Courtesy of Kim McMillon

It is with ritual that community is created, gathering voices in bookstores, homes, community centers, churches, and neighborhoods. In her book, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Alice Walker writes about this phenomenon. Her description of her work as "womanist prose" speaks to the heart of ancestralness and community. Walker describes the term womanist as "A Black feminist or feminist of color…Appreciates and prefers women's culture women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female" (xi). Similar to *ancestralness*, there is a fluidity in the term. Womanist is not limited to one description. Its holistic approach to Black womanhood encompasses the complexity of Black female bodies that celebrate the Black male as much as their own solitude and female companionship. There is a wholeness to the term womanist, a feeling that the word was born in the womb and as such it offers protection and nourishment. Similarly, *Wahenga* speaks to the ancestors creating a sacred space of dialogue between two worlds, the world of spirit and the world of matter communing with Black bodies in search of home, a spiritual womb. *Wahenga* opens doorways to promote a healing of African bodies creating community.

Through the Black Arts Movement, African Americans created community that was predicated on the belief that "Black is Beautiful." The phrase "Black is Beautiful" represents a means of healing generational trauma. The words are the golden thread,

the chain, linking generations of Black bodies, removing hundreds of years of pain by acknowledging the beauty in Blackness, reaching back and connecting with ancestors that had not been told their skin was too Black, their hair was too kinky, their lips too thick, and their nose too wide. These are the ancestors that beheld the beauty of Blackness and sang songs and created art in celebration of that Blackness. These truths given to us by the ancestors that our Blackness is beautiful and rooted in Mother Earth, Gaia, healing timelines across generations of Black souls. The ancestors were merely waiting for messengers to say to the masses that their rich Blackness was a thing of beauty shining throughout eternity.

It was through community theatres and art that this new expression of blackness was propagated. Blacks were creating the "full flowering" of their images that went beyond the dominant society's depiction of blackness. Minstrelsy turned upside-down in the 1960s. Plays like *Dutchman* by Amiri Baraka were done in black and white face as representative of how African Americans were still seen from projected images of blackness created by the dominant culture. These African American artists believed they now owned the narrative and created African American art for and by Black Americans. Through the Black Arts Movement, Blacks en-masse realized that they were part of the African Diaspora. Lines of communication opened between AfricanAmericans and those of African descent throughout the world. This was visible in the theatre that touched on the interconnectedness of those of African ancestry. From Lorraine Hansberry's *Les Blancs* to Amiri Baraka's *Slave Ship,* Mother Africa shaped the existence of Black Americans. The community of those of African descent was larger and more diverse as it became apparent that their African roots were infinite.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

As stated earlier, the theoretical lens through which I focus my research is Black Feminism, which speaks to the marginalization of the Black female due to Black Male Patriarchy.[7] The conceptual framework of my research is a feminist approach to the Black Arts Movement in which I explore the hidden voices, the women of the Movement that created art with a narrative of resistance. I argue that the Black female reclaimed her voice through the use of the ancestral tools of poetry, music, literature and art, focusing my research on the work of Amina Baraka, and Doris Derby. These women were undervalued as artists and writers despite their enormous contributions to the literary canon. While each has had some measure of acclaim, I will illustrate how society's problematizing of the Black female led to the muting of their voices and the lack of acknowledgement of their work. It must also be said that the 1960s and 1970s were a time when women of all races were silenced by male hegemony. A present-day example of this is Representative Maxine Waters in a House Financial Services Committee Meeting in which Treasure Secretary Steven Mnuchin tried to bypass a finance question by using Representative Waters allotted time for questioning. In a moment of female empowerment, Waters insisted "I am reclaiming my time."[8] That is what African American women are doing and have done through the Black Arts Movement. They are reclaiming their time in history. Their powerful literature and art negate hundreds of years of painful images of what it means to be a Black woman in America. Those images,

like rotted fruit, will continue to wither until they are no more than the dirt beneath our feet.

When we seek to validate the existence of the African American woman, we have only to look to Africa and the ancestral bonds that influence all areas of Black life. What is of enormous import is the theory of ancestralness and its connection to Africa's Niger River in that *ancestralness* joins ancient Africa to the living, breathing bodies of the men and women of the African Diaspora linked in the waters of the Middle Passage and hundreds of years of slavery and racial pain. *Ancestralness* washes over the sorrow uniting Mother Africa to Black bodies on distant shores.[9] Just as the Niger joins two ancient rivers, Black lives are forever linked through history and the ancestral spirits.

While *ancestralness* does not apply to the Black female over the Black male, it is the double-edged sword of gender and race that moves the African American female to rely on the space of the ancestors. This connection to spirit, the worshipping of the ancestors, allows the African American woman to represent the heart of the planet. While this might appear to be hyperbole, let us look at the facts as they pertain to the historiography of the African American female. The DNA of the Black woman has been etched with the history of enslavement, the use of her body for breeding, her breasts to feed the master's children, the rape of her body for the pleasure of others, the hiring out of herself to feed her family, and the educating of herself and her children so that they might have more. All of these acts represent the ability to love when oppression is at every door. That love has been tested with the historical selling of her children into slavery and the building of prisons to enslave members of her family. And yet, the African-American woman has remained the part of the human anatomy that allows for the survival of all, the heart. The African American woman stands as a bridge repairing racial trauma through the heart. Former slave and Black feminist Anna Julia Cooper speaks of the Black female as a necessary voice in the healing of past trauma. In her essay, "Womanhood A Vital Element," Anna Julia Cooper argues that "Only the Black Woman can say when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole Negro race enters with me" (27).

This message of the Black female as the gatekeeper, opening the door, not just to Black womanhood, but to full personhood for all represents one of the core components of my research. The focal point of the Black woman as gatekeeper results from the perception of the African American woman as "other," and as such, when she walks through the door, there is no one left to enter. In my chapter on Amina Baraka, Amiri states in his introduction to the anthology *Confirmation* that Black women are seen as "the slaves of slaves" (16). The Black woman's place is perceived as the bottom of the bottom. As such, there is no one lower. When she enters the gate, she closes it for she is the last of the last. What is not understood is that as the gatekeeper, the Black woman is the healing connection that offers community and the building of structures that unite African American culture and family. This pattern of community is at the heart of contemporary Black feminism(s).

In this discussion of the theoretical framework, there is a need to explore the roots of the Black Arts Movement and its historic placement in United States history. In *The*

Magic of Juju, Kalamu Ya Salaam has this to say with regards to the early development of the movement:

> I mark BAM as beginning with a precipitating national event which stimulated local movement. From this perspective, BAM begins in 1965, when the assassination of Malcolm X in February of that year propelled a number of forces into action…In March of that year, only one short month after Malcolm's death, LeRoi Jones joined forces with other Black activists/artists to found the Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School (BART/S). Also the staff of *Black Dialogue* decided to dedicate their 1965 debut issue to Malcolm. Additionally, with the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the Civil Rights Movement was effectively ended, and the stage was set for "Black Power" which, by 1966 had already reached levels of national recognition. (Ya Salaam 13)

While my research does not come to the same conclusions as Kalamu Ya Salaam with regards to the beginnings of the Black Arts Movement, there is agreement that important events marked an awareness that led to major changes in how African Americans viewed themselves. Malcolm's death left an entire race vulnerable. Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. were separate beats of one heart in Black America. Malcolm represented our ability to fight an unjust system "by any means necessary" while Martin opened our hearts with the knowledge that through civil disobedience and walking together as one people moved to protest that we could create societal change. With Malcolm's assassination, there was the realization that our metaphorical father had died, and it was the duty of the children to pick up the mantle and to demand justice in his name. That mantle was homed in the Black Aesthetic and the realization that it was as much an inner journey as one that took place in the public sphere. We had to see our power and beauty as Black people and to create art that was for and by the Black race. The Black Arts Movement was not necessarily born with the assassination of Malcolm X, but rather it was illuminated for the masses of Black people seeking to validate and acknowledge their beauty and power as a people after centuries of being told that they were less than human.

While the narrative of Amiri Baraka's exodus from Manhattan's Lower East side to Harlem as the beginnings of the Black Arts Movement appears etched in stone, Amina Baraka is vocal about her belief that the movement began in the late 1950s with the Grandassa Models, Abbey Lincoln, and the Brath brothers. Civil Rights icon Doris Derby also speaks to differing views on the beginnings of the Black Arts Movement, stating:

> I am part of the link of the Harlem Renaissance Artists moving into the Black Arts Movement, and to me it is a continuum, and it's north, and south influencing each other. But it's also the Civil Rights Movement, and prior to the Civil Rights, it is the fight for African liberation. So, for me it was like continuing from the Harlem Renaissance. I was a part of that. I was very young, but I was involved in it. I was in high school when I was in the Harlem Writers' Guild. (Derby)

Derby's words are a testament to the work of African-American artists linked by history and culture from one generation to the next. Derby lived in New York during the latter half of the Harlem Renaissance and viewed the movement as one where African Americans had voice and agency particularly with regards to their literary output. I discuss her differing views in a later chapter. While history will probably always note the Black Arts Movement as starting with Amiri Baraka, I would argue that there is a fluidity to the Movement. Similar to Derby's assertion, it is a continuum of the art of Black America. The Black Arts Movement is a personal and creative artistic record by Black Americans celebrating the Black Aesthetic. The words and art of Black men and women are not limited to a movement or point in time; they are the eternal movement of art that speaks to the Black experience and our African roots.

As African Americans, we have a history of turning to Africa when seeking an understanding of who we are as a people. The term "Wahenga" speaks not just to the long-gone ancestors, but also to our awareness that they are still here, and we are guided by the ancestors. Maya Angelou's poem, "Still I Rise," addresses this awareness:

> 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. (Angelou 29-43)

In the poem, "Still I Rise," Maya Angelou has outlined Black Feminism--Its risings, forever seeking a grounded space rooted in the wombs, in the bodies, and the minds of Black females and in the divine feminine. This ANCESTORROOTEDNESS is in our beings, bringing the gifts of an unbreakable spirit that soars, no matter the circumstances. This is a definition of Black Feminism that has its roots in Blackness itself, dark and deep, so deep that it is often not apparent. The ancestor become the root. This is generational rootedness where the ancestor's lineage in the souls of Black folks is linked by a shared history that each seeks to heal. The ancestors are seeking their own freedom as well as ours, and we merge. They carry the memories of the Middle Passage, slavery, and oppression which become a part of our DNA, and it is through that ANCESTORROOTEDNESS that we seek freedom. Similar to a newborn that takes from the genetic make-up of its parents, we travel through the roots of our ancestors choosing what is needed for ultimate freedom. Just as the horrors of slavery can only be healed by a country through acknowledging the past and asking forgiveness at the root of that past, we as the Black race must seek to heal at our roots. The words, "Out of the huts of history's shame/I rise*,"* speak to one of the most problematic issues of the African American, the shame and stain of slavery, which still affects the Black race. In a 1987 August Wilson interview with David Savran, August speaks to the issue of slavery. Wilson says that an understanding of the history of Blacks in America grounds the African American culturally. He asserts:

> …the history of blacks in America has not been written by blacks. And whites, of course, have a different attitude, a different relationship to the history. Writing our own history has been a very valuable tool, because if we're going to be pointed toward a future, we must know our past. This is so basic and simple; yet it's a thing that blacks do not teach their kids --- they do not tell their kids that at one time we were slaves. That is the most crucial and central thing to our presence here in America. It's nothing to be ashamed of. (Wilson 27)

What is important about Wilson's quote is the line that Blacks should not feel ashamed of their history. For too long, African Americans have dealt with slavery as a sinful stain upon our very being, something to hide from, to ask, "Why did this happen to us?" Instead it is a badge of honor that we have survived and thrived through genocide. Those working towards the erasure of America's history of slavery, remind the public that Africans were the ones that first had slaves. However, in the PBS series, *Africans in America, Part 1*, Nigerian Professor Catherine Ancholou speaks on the difference between American and African slavery with regards to her research on former slave and abolitionist Equiano. Ancholou asserts:

> From research on the way slaves were treated in Africa, I know that slaves were treated almost like everybody else….But then, by comparison to what happened to people who were considered slaves in Europe and America, the people who were being handled as slaves in Africa were in heaven….Equiano himself must have been living with slaves, playing with the children of slaves in his father's compound, in his village…

Equiano's slave narrative similar to many others helps us to understand the inhumanity of slavery. August Wilson is correct. There is nothing to be ashamed of with having been a slave. The shame is in how slavery is addressed. Slavery is an American wound that has never healed because it has been left unattended. As African Americans, it is our duty to redress this issue with love and understanding for our ancestors and ourselves. It is through acknowledging our past, and lovingly embracing our entire history that we heal. With the racialized images of Blacks from Sambo to Aunt Jemima, African Americans have bathed in a sea of shame and a distorted history for far too long. Through the reremembering of our links to Africa, and our wholeness as a people, we create a new historicism that seeks to use our ancestors as historic sites of memory where the beauty of Blackness is passed on from generation to generation and the past becomes a parallel site of memory so that the images of Blackness are reremembered in wholeness. When I write about the Black woman, the Hidden Voices, I speak to my ancestors recreating these sites of memories that have been marginalized so that the Black woman is not seen, not heard, and not acknowledged for her contributions. However, the power in these sites of memory is that they carry our connection to the ancestors and our truth. My research seeks to uncover that which is in plain sight, the humanity of the Black race. In Toni Morrison's essay, "The Site of Memory," she affirms that the veil needs to be lifted on

our history of slavery where issues of sexual violence were seen as too delicate to be discussed in slave narratives. Morrison explains her position:

> For me-a writer in the last quarter of the twentieth century, not much more than a hundred years after Emancipation, a writer who is black and a woman…. My job becomes how to rip that veil drawn over 'proceedings too terrible to relate.' The exercise is also critical for any person who is black, or who belongs to any marginalized category, for, historically, we were seldom invited to participate in the discourse even when we were its topic. (Morrison 70)

Toni Morrison's acknowledging that we were not participants in our own history is powerful in that it allows us to reclaim, recreate, and re-remember our history from a point of power, Black Power. The history we would have acknowledged is a colonized version in which, we were the victims. The history that we are recreating is Black History, and it is powerful. An example of this is Doris Derby. What Derby has done with her research and activism is given herself a seat at the table among men telling their versions of African American history. From the continued issue of racism that permeates every aspect of life in the United States, we must claim our seats and use our voices to tell our stories. In my interview with Derby, she speaks of the vital work done by herself and others determined to fight against a system that sought to suppress the African American through denying them the right to vote and violence perpetrated by those that viewed Blacks as less than. Derby, similar to Maya Angelou, espouses a brand of feminism that pertains to Black women determined to exorcize a history that does not acknowledge the power of Black womanhood.

In *De Facto Feminism*: Essays *Straight Outta Oakland*, Former Black Panther Judy Juanita speaks of Black Feminism in the starkest terminology:

> Black women can't fake feminism, hide it or disappear into marriage. They do not do it for a season, dodge it, or veil it in a career. They cannot be faux feminists insulated by class privilege. De facto feminists stand between peace and every day in Detroit, Oakland, Harlem, Miami, Chicago, St. Louis, Dallas, the White House…--the Gaza Strips of the US ---without glorification…" (Juanita 146-147)

What is profound about these words is that they hold a space of Blackness that every Black mother embraces when her sons and daughters leave the safety of home. They hold that space of peace, that space of blessings in the hope of their safe return. This rethinking of Black Feminism goes to the heart, it nurtures and uplifts family and community. This is the Black Feminism that does not require the Black women to do anything but just be. Black women should not look to others for their truth. Black Feminism is like the jewels of Black Africa, it is carried in the heart, forever enshrined

with our *Wahenga*, our ancestors. When we journey home, we throw out the jewels so that they may touch our Black Sisters and Brothers as we walk the path home.

Additionally, my research speaks to the rethinking of Black feminism by moving past old paradigms of what it means to be a feminist. Amina Baraka is a feminist by virtue of being born into a Black body that fought to have a voice. In my conversations with literary icon Ishmael Reed on the Black Arts Movement, he describes Amina Baraka as the late Amiri Baraka's anchor. However, her work was often overshadowed by Baraka's iconic status. In my interviews with Amina Baraka, she states that Charlie Parker's *Confirmation* is her favorite piece of music. Amina told Amiri that she wanted to do an anthology and name it *Confirmation*. That is how *Confirmation: An Anthology of African American Women* was created. Amina did the work because it was her baby, and yet both their names are listed as the editors. Amina said she knew it needed his name to be published. The anthology includes Toni Morrison, Sonia Sanchez, Abbey Lincoln, Maya Angelou, Jayne Cortez, Alice Walker and so many other profoundly brilliant Black women. I do not believe it necessarily needed Amiri's name to be published. However, I do believe his celebrity was important to the book's publication at that time.

Perhaps it is the need of the human race to document its existence with words and yet realize that these very words are incomplete when defining our humanity through the limited concepts of race and gender. However, my research validates the existence of the African-American female as she continually redefines herself. The difference is the women of the Black Arts Movement represent scholarship that can be found in communities throughout the United States, created by women artists and writers whose voices have not been celebrated in the same manner as their male counterparts. By saying their names, articulating the importance of their work, we are giving voice to Black sisters whose art and literature define the power and promise of the Black Arts Movement.

1.6 Literature Review

The 21st century saw a new wave of discourse by the African American female on the marginalization of the women of the Black Arts Movement. My literature review illustrates that this issue is both complex, in that, yes, the women of the Black Arts Movement were marginalized, but the Black woman's resilience, her ability to move mountains in the form of Black men and the dominant culture has seen an awakening of her voice and agency. In Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider*, she says of the Black woman:

> What other creature in the world besides the Black woman has had to build the knowledge of so much hatred into her survival and keep going?... What other human being absorbs so much virulent hostility and still functions?... We are Black women born into a society of entrench loathing and contempt for whatever is Black and female. (Lorde 150-151)

Lorde's words represent the context in which my research is explored. The Black woman has had to absorb society's blow and yet continues to survive and thrive. The

lives and work of Amina Baraka, and Doris Derby are examples of Black female survival. The primary sources used in my research include video and taped interviews of Amina Baraka, and Doris Derby as well as articles and documentary films provided by Derby on her work as the co-founder of Free Southern Theatre, and as a member of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and leader of Mississippi's first Head Start program in the 1960s. Although Derby provided articles, videos, and taped conversations, what stood out in understanding her artistic and historical importance is attending an October 2017 ceremony in Atlanta, Georgia in honor of her life achievements. Derby's contributions to African American history are profoundly important and made a difference in the fight for Black Liberation. Just as vital were my conversations with Amina Baraka. We spoke for hours on Amiri Baraka, her children, her work as a dancer and vocalist, the biographical nature of her poetry and her commitment to honoring Amiri Baraka's legacy. One of the most important achievements in African American literature *Confirmation: An Anthology of African American Women* will be examined in terms of Amina's process of collecting the works of leading African American female writers for the anthology. In a conversation with BAM historian James Smethurst, we discussed the fact that *Confirmation* similar to *Black Fire* represents literary works that captured the voices and lives of the men and women of the Black Arts Movement. These seminal writings have become classics defining for generations to come the literature of the BAM. Secondary resources that were instrumental in delineating my research include the anthologies *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought* by Beverly Guy-Sheftall; *Colonize this: Women of Color on Today's Feminism* edited by Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman; *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua; *The Black Woman: An Anthology* edited by Toni Cade Bambara; *New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement* edited by Lisa Gail Collins and Margo Natalie Crawford; *African American Performance and Theater History* edited by Henry J. Elam Jr. & David Krasner; *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* edited by Kimberle Crenshaw; and *The Theatre of Black Americans: A Collection of Critical Essays* Edited by Errol Hill. Because of the exploration of performance in the art of Amina Baraka, and Doris Derby secondary source material includes: *The Problem of the Color [blind] Racial Transgression and the Politics of Black Performance* by Brandi Wilkins Catanese; *The Impact of Race: Theatre and Culture* by Woodie King, Jr.; *AvantGarde Performance and the Limits of Criticism* by Mike Sell; *Performing Blackness: Enactments of African American Modernism* by Kimberly W. Benston; *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom*, 1850-1910 by Daphne A. Brooks; and *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* by E. Patrick Johnson. Secondary sources used to explore Black Feminism, the Black Liberation Movement, the history of the Black Arts and Black Power Movements include: *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* by Aimé Césaire; *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon; *Conversations with Sonia Sanchez* edited by Joyce A Joyce; *Visions of a Liberated Future: Black Arts Movement Writings* by Larry Neal; *The Magic of Juju: An Appreciation of the Black Arts Movement* by Kalamu Ya Salaam; *The Autobiography of Leroi Jones* by Amiri Baraka *Taking Bullets:*

Terrorism and Black Life in Twenty-first Century America Confronting White Nationalism, Supremacy, Privilege, Plutocracy and Oligarchy by Haki Madhubuti; *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s* by James Edward Smethurst, *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* by Peniel E. Joseph; *A Taste of Power* by Elaine Brown; *Spectacular Blackness: The Cultural Politics of the Black Power Movement and the Search for a Black Aesthetic* by Amy Abugo Ongiri; *In Search of our Warrior Mothers: Women Dramatists of the Black Arts Movement* by LaDonna Forsgren; *Furious Flower: African American Poetry from the Black Arts Movement to the Present* edited by Joanne V. Gabbin; *Black Arts West* by Daniel Widener; *I'm Black When I'm Singing, I'm Blue When I Ain't: and Other Plays* by Sonia Sanchez; and *SOS-Calling All Black People: A Black Arts Movement Reader* edited by John H. Bracey Jr., Sonia Sanchez; and James Smethurst. My research examines literature and art representative of the historical importance of the women of the Black Arts Movement by placing them in conversation with major female figures of the Civil Rights, Black Arts, and Black Liberation Movements. Keywords in my research include Black Feminist Aesthetic, Voice of Color, Black Patriarchy, Intra-racial sexism, Intersectionality, Black identity, Gendered, Black Nationalism, Cultural Nationalism, Black Power, Ancestralness, Ancestors, Cultural Politics, Black Arts Movement, Rootedness, Black Masculinity, Intentionality, Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, Black Panther Party, Womanism, Black Women's Liberation, and Cultural Studies.

What these keywords have in common is their intersectionality in telling the story of the women of the Black Arts Movement. There is an uncertainty in perceptions of what it means to be Black and a woman in today's America. This has led to a renewed interest in the women of the Black Arts Movement and a redefining of their roles. In the past, there was a noticeable lack of scholarship on the movement, and what research was available invariably dealt with the African American male. This lack of definitive research is discussed in Daniel Lionel Smith's essay, "The Black Arts Movement and Its Critics." He asserts that not only is the Black Arts Movement held in low-esteem but that there is not enough substantial scholarship on the movement; and that many of the books are out of print (93-94). Smith's essay was published in 1991. Since then, there has been remarkable scholarship on the movement, and many of the books such as *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing* edited by Amiri Baraka, and Larry Neal are once again in print. However, Kalamu ya Salaam makes the point that *The Magic of JuJu* started as an article on the Black Arts Movement in 1995, and that he realized "..there was no book-length study of the Black Arts Movement" (ix). *The Magic of JuJu* was published in 2016. In a recent conversation, I asked Salaam if he still believed that there were few books on the Black Arts Movement. He unequivocally answered in the affirmative. I would argue that there are not enough books on the contributions of the African American female involved in the movement. Most importantly, there is still room for a great deal of needed scholarship. A critical point is that the number of women writing on their experiences with the BAM as well as female academics creating a feminist epistemology has served to redefine the movement.

This has led to a renewed interest in the earlier writings of the women of the BAM. Cheryl Clarke's *"After Mecca" Women and Poets and the Black Arts Movement* published in 2004 addresses the fact that the poetry of African American women does not figure strongly in the United States' literary lexicon (1). My research recognizes the absence of an entire body of history and literature. I highlight the Hidden Voices of African American women and place them in the forefront of the movement to illustrate the fluid nature of how we create as well as use history as a means of validating male patriarchy. A case in point, the literary mainstream has acknowledged Amiri Baraka as the founder of the Black Arts Movement when playwrights Lorraine Hansberry and Alice Childress have just as much right to the title. Lorraine Hansberry's groundbreaking play *A Raisin in the Sun* opened on Broadway in 1959 revolutionizing perceptions of what it means to be Black in America. In Woodie King, Jr.'s *The Impact of Race, Theatre, and Culture*, King discusses his first impressions of *A Raisin in the Sun, stating*:

> How to describe the effect *A Raisin in the Sun* had on most of us when it opened in 1959!... *A Raisin in the Sun* opened doors within my consciousness that I never knew existed. There I was in Detroit's Cass theatre, a young man who'd never seen anywhere a Black man (Walter Lee) express all the things I felt but never had the courage to express—and in a theatre full of Black and white people, no less! (125-126)

Woodie King's re-remembering of his theatre experience is not just powerful because Lorraine Hansberry changed how White America viewed the Black experience, but because Hansberry uplifted an entire generation of African Americans that had never been to the theatre or experienced a Black person on stage in 1950's America. King asserts that Walter Lee expresses all the things he felt, but never had the courage to say. This truth speaks to the life of the adult Black male in 1950s and 1960s America. My father had hundreds of stories about the humiliation he experienced on a daily basis in the United States, from waiters refusing to serve him to his boss in the United States Air Force stating that no matter what he did, his rank would never be upgraded because he was a "nigger." Thousands of Black men looked at Walter Lee, and in their hearts said, "I don't want to be a servant to Mr. Charlie." Walter Lee Younger represented men like my father who felt the hopelessness of living in a racist society. *A Raisin in the Sun* changed how African Americans were perceived on a worldwide level. The public saw an African American family that loved each other functioning in a separate and unequal world. Hansberry called attention to the racism and injustice that was and still is, at the core of African American life. That alone warrants the recognition of Hansberry's work as an important force in defining the Black Arts Movement. While some might say, *A Raisin in the Sun* does not represent the Black Nationalism of the BAM, I would argue that the most important tenet of the Black Arts Movement was the defining of the Black Aesthetic, art for and by Black people. Hansberry's work articulates life in America for Black Americans and defines the Black Aesthetic by the play's very words. Lena Younger says to her son, "In my time we were worried about not being lynched and getting to the North if we could and

how to stay alive and still have a pinch of dignity… (142). In 1950s America, every African American in that audience understood what Lena Younger was saying because the majority of them had someone in their family who had escaped genocide by fleeing to the North. Hansberry was having a personal conversation with her audience. Those that were White were finding out, perhaps for the first time, what life was like for most Black Americans.

To further delineate why Black women writers have just as much claim to founding the Black Arts Movement, consider Elizabeth Brown-Guillory's statement on playwright Alice Childress in *Their Place on the Stage: Black Women Playwrights in America*. Brown-Guillory asserts that "…Childress became the first black woman to win the Obie Award for the best original, off-Broadway play of the year with her production of *Trouble in Mind* (1955)" (29). Childress and Hansberry's accomplishments affirmed the importance of African American theatre. These were concrete achievements by African American women. However, it is unlikely that they will be found in history books. In fact, it is unlikely you will find information about the Black Arts Movement in United States' history books, which often represent a colonized and patriarchal version of the past. When the history of the BAM is told, all too often it expounds on the achievements of the men, detailing the work of Amiri Baraka, Larry Neal, Haki Madhubuti, Hoyt Fuller, Ed Bullins, Askia Toure, Thomas Dent, Ishmael Reed, etc. I am not saying that history books are incorrect in citing Amiri Baraka as the founder of the Black Arts Movement or the great achievements of the Black men of the BAM.

In fact, that is specifically stated by Amina Baraka in Chapter Three. What I am articulating is that a more inclusive vision of the Movement is needed, one that embraces the enormous achievements of the women. The Black Arts Movement represents a blueprint of African American exceptionalism that much like the history of Black America, is distorted, and not without its failings, but continues to rise because of the sheer magnificence of the artistic outpouring. I have taught in classrooms with English majors where the names Amiri Baraka, Gwendolyn Brooks, Sonia Sanchez, Askia Toure, and Bell Hooks are not known. However, by the end of the class, the students are able to speak about the contributions that these authors have made to American history and culture. If we limit how our history is told in order to placate male patriarchy, we are doing a disservice to students and our history. For history to make a difference it must be retold, spoken of, and allowed to be scrutinized.

Present-day research by female scholars on the BAM continues to emphasize the role of the Black male. There is still a need for definitive research where the Black woman is more prominent and embodies the revolutionary spirit not just in her poetry, but in her deeds, and her actions. Why are there not more books written about the movement from an entirely Black feminist perspective? What would a book look like that examined the movement from a strictly feminist point of view where the achievements of Black women are stressed, and Black female writers, poets, and artists throughout the United States are acknowledged? Kalamu Ya Salaam's *The Magic of JuJu*, published in 2016 postulates a theory that speaks to the importance of the Black Feminist Movement in

the later development of the BAM. He accepts the criticism that the movement was patriarchal, and male dominated, emphasizing:

> Black women's literature offered both the correction as well as the completion of a conception of Blackness that returned humanity and relationships to the center. BAM started off by seeking power, but Black women's literature taught us that true power was not "political" power but rather the power of human relationships-from the elemental embrace of two people to the multi-member extensions of family, friends, comrades and the world community. (178)

Salaam is speaking to one of the most important tenets of Black womanhood, community. However, the women of the Black Arts Movement were seeking power. The power that comes with having voice and agency. With the recognition of their work, the women of BAM were expanding the reach and viability of the movement. I would also add that this was the beginning of the Black woman's artistic revolution, one that at its core was heart-centered and reflected the revolutionary spirit of the women of the BAM. A revolution demanding equality and justice for all was started by Black, and Brown people in the mid-twentieth century. One wonders, what it would look like if retold by women. I am writing about cultural revolutionaries, and they have battled to save souls. But will gender bias ever allow our society to move beyond the complacent norms where compliant women and dominant men continue the practice of marginalizing women? In Carmen L. Phelps' *Visionary Women Writers of Chicago's Black Arts Movement*, Phelps speaks to the issue of gender bias:

> …as supportive as she was of all up-and-coming artists of the BAM, even Gwendolyn Brooks later admitted to her own gender biases in favor of male writers of this period. When Brooks was asked by writer Gloria T. Hull and Posey Gallagher about the subject, given that writers like Sonia Sanchez recalled that "black women (had been) told to take a back seat at the time," Brooks admitted that she had indeed celebrated male writers more often than women at the time…Although Hull herself stated that she didn't believe the BAM was inherently a "male" moment, she concluded that many black men conformed to the notion that women were subordinate figures during this period. "You're absolutely right about that," Brooks agreed once more. "I remember that when Haki (Madhubuti) was working with (Amiri) Baraka, they were both very forward about men being the leaders.…" (Phelps 42-43)

What is important about this quote is its narrative of conscious an unconscious bias by African American female writers. While many see this bias as male-centered, it needed the tacit approval of women involved in the movement. Often this approval is given by our hesitancy as women to voice our concerns in spaces of male dominance. The Black Arts Movement was very much male centered. In Carmen Phelps's discussion

on this subject, she quotes historian Manning Marable who admits, “From the very beginning of Black political activism in the United States, Afro-American men had real difficulty in considering the ‘triple oppression’ (race.class.sex) of Black women with any degree of seriousness” (qtd. in Phelps 43). A colonized people often live in a heightened state of anxiety, waiting for the next random act of violence or racism. In 1960s America, women were still treated by some as property without a voice unless connected to their husbands. What the women of the BAM were fighting for was to be seen in a society where the female was invisible beyond a set of norms associated with binary male-female relationships. In Chapter Three, Amina Baraka speaks about Black women finding their voices separate from Black males. Although, the women’s movement was gaining ground, and female college students were burning their bras, the majority of housewives were still making dinners and charging on credit cards with their husbands’ names listed. The Black Arts Movement took place in the sixties when society saw the male as the dominant figure and therefore women did not necessarily value their own voices. Gwendolyn Brooks was a major figure in world literature, and while Madhubuti, and Baraka’s literary outpouring was outstanding, Brooks was their equal.

African American women writers as equals to men was challenged in the publishing world as well as in the theatre. Elizabeth Brown-Guillory’s states “Plays by early twentieth-century black women are rarely anthologized and are infrequently the subject of critical interpretation (3). Why were the works of Black women writers not appearing in anthologies? This was the early part of the twentieth century when women were still fighting for the right to vote. Women’s rights were not being taken seriously, and plays by women, particularly women of color, were not the norm. These writers were not just being challenged by the need to find their voices, but also they had to ask themselves the question, “What did it mean to be a Black woman, and how do you write about that experience? How are things different for the Black female playwright of the twentieth and twenty-first century? Perhaps the biggest difference is the approach to playwrighting. Whereas Richard Wright, Amiri Baraka, Ed Bullins, and their male counterparts wrote plays and articles that sought to showcase the Black male as powerful and fighting for his manhood, the plays and writings of Alice Childress, Lorraine Hansberry, Ntozake Shange, and Maya Angelou examined issues of family, love, children, and life in America often in a more realistic framework. Brown-Guillory asserts the Black women had a different concept of the issues faced by Black Americans. “Unlike their male counterparts, Childress, Hansberry, and Shange have brought to the American stage a multiplicity of images of female heroines and have not confined themselves to such limiting images of black women as immoral, promiscuous, wanton, frigid, overbearing, or pathetically helpless” (Brown-Guillory 27-28).

Is the Black woman immoral, wanton and overbearing? In Ed Bullins, *Clara’s Ole Man*, the character of Big Girl is queer and written as a coarse portrayal of the African American woman. The play is set in the slums of South Philadelphia and offers a harsh examination of Black womanhood and ghetto life. While I commend Bullins for writing a play about a lesbian relationship in the 1960s, there is a sense of voyeurism in reviewing the interactions of Clara and Big Girl. Clara is uncomfortable and embarrassed by what is essentially an abusive relationship. Brown-Guillory points out the limited

manner in which Black womanhood is portrayed in the works of Louis Peterson, Lonne Elder, and Ted Shine as a means of stating the importance of the Black female writer's voice. In making this point, she further elucidates on the creative and unique manner in which Black women like Childress, Hansberry, and Shange portray Black women (28). In their hands, the Black women is uplifted. She is multi-faceted and seeking more for herself and her family often in dire circumstances. Ghetto life is given a different spin in Sonia Sanchez's *The Bronx is Next*. The character Black Bitch is asked by Charles, "How many kids you got Bitch?" Black Bitch says:

> Two. Two Boys. Two beautiful black boys…. They will know what a women is for. I'll teach them. I ain't educated, but I'll say—hold them in your arms--love them—love your black woman always. I'll say I am a black woman and I cry in the night. But when you are men you will never make a black woman cry in the night. You hear. And they'll promise. (524)

Sanchez's *The Bronx is Next* clearly articulates the level by which the Black woman is marginalized to the point that she has no name and lives a life of bottomless despair. She is the Black Bitch in the eyes of the men in the play. In this play's representation of inter-racial racism, Black Bitch has been "othered" by her own race. And yet, she refuses to raise young men that will not see the Black woman's humanity. That is the difference between the writing of Black women willing to explore all facets of Black womanhood and Black men who often use the Black female as a device to further Black masculinity. To expand upon this point, in his discussion of creating female characters, playwright August Wilson notes that his portrayal of Black women is somewhat narrow, and said in his interview with Nathan L. Grant, "Some people, particularly black actresses, want you to go further. I have to tell them, you have to write that part. I'm just doing the best I can" (182). Wilson is correct. Black women need to write their own plays, and, we of course have. And in that writing, Black women have created a larger and more inclusive picture of Black life. Black women and men were fighting for equality on different fronts. August Wilson has created warm and real Black heroines in his Pittsburgh Cycle Plays, but they are still told through a male voice that sometimes leads the Black female into taking a back seat.

Because of societal racism the beingness of having a Black body, particularly a male body in America has led Black men and women to seek out avenues of empowerment, particularly through the spoken word. We see this in the aggressive literary output and violent nationalism in Amiri Baraka's poem "Black Art":

> …we want poems that kill"/Assassin poems, Poems that shoot/
> Guns. Poems that wrestle cops into alleys/And take their weapons leaving them dead/ (L. 19-22)

Baraka's "Black Art" is brilliant in its call to Black people to use poetry as a weapon against their oppressors. Yet, "Black Art's" anti-Semitism, and racialist

elements overshadow its rich Black loveliness. At its base, this is a love poem to the Black race. It is a heart on fire committing its very soul to Black America. However, it is in the writings of Black females that we see a more balanced assessment of the struggle. In Mari Evans's poem, "I Am A Black Woman," we hear the pain of generations of Black women, but also the richness of language that imbues the Black female with a profound beauty:

> I/am a black woman/tall as a cypress/strong/beyond all definition
> still/defying place/and time/and circumstance/assailed/impervious/
> indestructible/Look/on me and be/renewed/ (L. 21-34)

Mari Evans' poem is one of celebration as well as acknowledging that the Black woman can and will survive. And yes, that she must be looked upon to see her strength. Don't look away as the Black woman renews herself. Similar to Audre Lorde, Evans speaks to the pain of living in a Black body in America and yet their readers understand the absolute love the Black woman has for herself in the midst of cultural and historic pain. She is asking that you say her name, "BLACKWOMANARTIST" with one foot in mainstream America and the other on African soil, its richness seeping into her writing, and designating that she carry the messages of her ancestors.

It is in the anthologies by African American women that we see the intentionality of the Black female determined to endure. In Toni Cade Bambara's *The Black Woman: An Anthology* published in 1970, Bambara speaks of unity and the gathering of African American female voices as a form of empowerment. The powerful Black woman is also on display in *Confirmation:* published in 1983 and edited by Amiri and Amina Baraka. While the introduction is not Amina Baraka's voice, make no mistake, this is her work. Amina Baraka personally chose each of the women authors highlighted in *Confirmation*. During that time period, Black women, as well as most women, saw the voice of men as the voice of authority. Amina's favorite jazz composition was Charlie Parker's *Confirmation*. She chose the title as a meaningful link encompassing the works of each contributor. Amiri Baraka wrote the introduction and says of the Black female, "Black women in the United States are at the very bottom of the American social ladder—as someone has said, "the slaves of slaves" (16). This line is as important in 2019 as it was in 1983. What has changed? Has the Black woman risen in status? Its very utterance should be enough to put the fire in the belly of all Black women demanding social and economic change. That is why this research is important, to move the dial on perceptions of the Black woman. By relocating the Black woman's history and literary works beyond the margins, she is illuminated. In my chapter on Amina Baraka, she speaks of the difficulties of marriage to a leading American author and the disappearance of her voice. This is being pointed out because until the African American female is seen as an equal partner by the African American male, true equality for the Black female will continue to be a struggle. Yet, how can the Black woman be seen as an equal by the Black male, when he is still struggling for affirmation of his manhood. This fight for equality needs to be done jointly by Black men and women.

Black love and Black life are richly told in *Confirmation*, which has a problematic history in that the introduction is written by a Black male and does not disclose the anthology's profound legacy. One can hope that if there is a re-printing that Amina Baraka will speak on the narrative behind this important work and her journey towards its publication. The significance of that journey cannot be understated as it is a testament to Amina's commitment to promoting works by African American women writers. What my dissertation seeks to illustrate is the importance of who fashions the narrative. Although the men were framing the narrative of Black male empowerment, they were not alone. In researching the women of the Black Arts Movement, a consistent pattern was conscious and unconscious bias. However, it was not just the men with this implicit bias. It is ironic that in the twenty-first century, we are dealing with the same issues, only the scope of this problem has widened. During the heyday of the BAM, there was a fear of acknowledging homosexuality. James Baldwin was a brilliant author, but his sexuality often limited how he was viewed. However, a new generation has begun to remove old paradigms of what it means to be male and female. I look forward to new research that may one day explore the Black Arts Movement in terms of nonbinary writers and artists. Just as we are revolutionizing the role of women in the Black Arts Movement, there will be a new uprising with regards to the LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans Queer or Questioning) Community and the Black Arts Movement. The Movement and how it is viewed is changing because we as a country and a people are changing. Audre Lorde acknowledged her identity as a gay woman while Lorraine Hansberry's sexuality was not publicly known until her death. This is important as we continue to celebrate the men and women of the Black Arts Movement.

In the past, decisions on who was a part of the Movement were based on key figures making those determinations. What this illustrates is the subjectivity of those deciding who was a part of the Movement. As artists, it is up to us to fight for our personal identity. Just as race is a construct, so is identity. If we were alone on an Island, would we say, "Yes, I am Black or gay?" Does a baby look at their skin and have an awareness of identity? No, they are taught race just as we are taught the nature of Blackness through our experiences. Today, we see women writing about Blackness beyond the words of Hansberry, Sanchez, Angela Davis, and more. As African American women, we are changing and creating a new body of work that celebrates what it means to be Black in America and yet, still calls upon our ancestors to open the doors to our history so that we may explore our past, and present as we create our future.

1.7 Methodology

The methodology for my research includes interviews, documentaries, primary and secondary resources. What will be examined is the construction of power as it relates to the BAM, the role of Black woman in the Movement, masculinity and femininity, historicism, and memory as it pertains to the women of the BAM, race and white privilege. Africa is also used as a focal point to a changing vision of Blackness.

My research design employs interviews from key figures of the Black Liberation Movements to glean an understanding of the Black female engaged in the struggle. The interviews were collected at Black Arts Movement conferences at UC Merced and

Dillard University in New Orleans. I also traveled to the San Francisco Bay Area, Georgia, New Jersey, and New York City to research how African American women made a difference in the struggle for Black liberation. The subjects of my dissertation, Amina Baraka, and Doris Derby are in conversation with major figures of the BAM and the Civil Rights Movement as a means of situating their importance to the Movements.

My research entails the re-remembering of historical events by African American men and women playing a major role in the struggle for Black liberation. Large sections of the videotaped interviews are included in my dissertation because of their historic significance. The research questions were designed to best elicit information about the 1960s and 1970s America and the women who participated in Black Liberation struggles. My research cannot be found in history books, in part because of the lack of awareness of the importance of the Black female voice. The research questions for the participants include a wide range of topics from their roles in the Black Arts Movement, the political and social climate, their connections to freedom fighters of all backgrounds, their hopes for the African American race, and their earlier experiences as Black women in a racist America.

I want to understand the spaces of black femininity and masculinity created during the Black Arts Movement? How do Black feminists speak to issues of intersectionality? How have the Black Power and Women's Liberation movements affected the development of Black feminism? Author Lisa Gail Collins' essay, "The Art of Transformation: Parallels in the Black Arts and Feminist Art Movements," discusses the role of the black male and white female in feminist and anti-racist discourse and the exclusion of the Black woman's voice in this environment. Collins asserts:

> The Black Power and Women's Liberation Movements as well as their cultural corollaries the Black Arts and Feminist Art Movements shared strikingly similar traits, tendencies, and goals. Activists in both struggles sought to create a politically and psychologically viable collective consciousness for their imagined allies and kin in order to overthrow white supremacy and male supremacy, respectively, and to heal from its dire effects. Yet the tone of unity and tenor of urgency in both movements made it difficult for women of African descent to articulate their own distinct histories, identities, experiences, and dreams to strong, calm, and attentive ears. (292)

In polite terminology, Collins points to the fact that neither movement addresses the needs of the African American female. The Women's Liberation Movement failed to create a sense of solidarity with the African American female because of the pervasive practice of viewing the African American woman as "other" and therefore separate from the agenda of the feminist movement. The writings of Ed Bullins, Amiri Baraka, Eldridge Cleaver, Marvin X, key figures in both the Black Arts and Black Power Movements, adhered to the image of the African American female as object. The need of the Black male to create future Black freedom fighters for the eventual revolution and emancipation of the Black race outweighed the potential of the Black woman as a writer, comrade,

and revolutionary. I also examine the use of hegemony by the Black male patriarchy to maintain control. A case in point is former Black Panther, Judy Juanita. In my interview with Juanita, she details the business of walking a tightrope between Black Male Power and not falling for as she describes it, "the Okey-doke, where female power is usurped in favor of sex and subjugation. Juanita speaks about her time with the Black Panthers:

> …there was a shootout with Eldridge Cleaver and little Bobby Hutton…. What happened was, we went to Mosswood Park which is in Oakland at Broadway and MacArthur…. Bobby Seale put on a tape recording from Huey in jail and basically, Huey restructured the party and restructured everything and gave everyone new chores. I'm just sitting just doing what I'm supposed to be doing, you know listening, and then he says, "So I want Judy Hart", that was my name, "Judy Hart to be the Editor and Chief of the paper, she's a together sister and I knew her from Oakland City College and she's a good writer." And just like that, you know I was the editor and chief of the paper.

The question must be asked, "What happens when agency is given to the Black female through the male?" Is she empowered? Judy Juanita's story is unique in its new historicism. Juanita's world was peppered by such historical figures as Huey Newton, Eldridge and Kathleen Cleaver, Bobby Seale, Emory Douglass, Elaine Brown and Bobby Hutton. As a young writer, how did this influence her own writings as well as her views of Black womanhood? I would argue that the power given by Huey Newton was a tethered power, meaning that the rope could only go so far.

This tethered power is examined from the viewpoint of the men and women of the Black Arts and Black Power Movements who saw themselves as a nation within a nation, believing that only through revolution could true freedom be won. Yes, there is power in the word revolution, but how far were these revolutionaries willing to go? Amiri Baraka wrote "The Revolutionary Theatre." Larry Neal created the "Black Arts Movement Manifesto," and writers James T. Stewart, Emory Douglas, and Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) wrote essays and books titled "The Development of the Black Revolutionary Artist,'' "On Revolutionary Culture," and *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*. These were not armchair revolutionaries, but rather men who believed that a drastic and perhaps violent response was needed to counteract America's racism. Revolution was continually threatened during this time period. However, did the female also speak of revolution, and if so, how powerful was her voice? The African American female was sitting at a table where the Black Nationalist and White feminist agendas were paramount. There was little or no room for the black woman, except as an appendage to the black male, and as hired help for the Women's Movement. More painful for the Black female was that the focus on the Black male led to her objectification. The Black men of the movement created idealized versions of Black womanhood that competed with the dominant society's focus on the Black woman as a sexual creature or as angry, sometimes both. In a radio interview with Marvin X, one of the founders of the west coast branch of the Black Arts Movement, I

asked about the treatment of women by the men. Marvin X states in unequivocal terms, "We were macho, patriarchal, male chauvinist pigs" (artsinthevalley.wordpress.com). It would be easy to agree or disagree with Marvin X, and leave it at that. However, the issue is larger than male chauvinism. The issue of femininity and masculinity is at the heart of the Black Arts and Black Power Movements. What constituted femininity and masculinity for the men and women of the movements? This was a time in history when many Black women and men took up the mantle of revolution. For many women involved in the Liberation movement, the binary roles of male and female did not apply. In this question of revolutionary power, freedom fighter Elaine Brown stands as a pivotal figure. In her autobiography, *A Taste of Power*, Brown lets the rank and file know that she was the head of the Party as Huey Newton was in exile:

> …I have control over all the guns and all the money of this party. There will be no external or internal opposition I will not resist and put down. …So, if you don't like it, if you don't like the fact that I am a woman, if you don't like what we're going to do, here is your chance to leave. You'd better leave because you won't be tolerated. (5)

So, the women of the Black Liberation Movements were seen as revolutionaries, but similar to Judy Juanita, Elaine Brown's power was given to her by a male. How does a woman articulate and identify with this type of power? What must be realized is that masculinity and femininity are social constructs, and power is an aphrodisiac. Throughout Elaine Brown's autobiography, women are shown as revolutionaries prepared to die for what they saw as freedom "by any means necessary." Women were being told that their bodies were to be used as a vessel for future revolutionaries, and that "Our gender was but another weapon" (137). Gender as weapon speaks to the subjugation of the Black woman through a construction of revolution as performance. In this space of revolution, the Black woman is given a binary role as both a revolutionary and, as an object of revolution; whereby, her body becomes a vessel of sanctioned revolutionary violence from both within and outside of the movement. The men and women of the movement saw themselves as soldiers fighting for equality for the African American on North American soil. The men expected the woman to be their foot soldiers, metaphorically carrying the pain, anger, and subjugation of the black race.

Much has been written about the Black women and her anger. Perhaps that is a part of our survival. In *Sister Outsider*, Audre Lorde devotes an entire chapter to the Black woman's anger. As African American female writers and scholars, we are working towards the same goal, healing the Black woman's pain through addressing the issues faced by the Black woman on a daily basis. Lorde asserts that "Every Black woman in America lives her life somewhere along a wide curve of ancient and unexpressed angers." (145). I would argue that her statement is simplistic in that as African American women, we are finding and have found ways to heal that anger. It is still there, but as Black women, we are learning to express that anger, whether with a community of women, through art, or music and dance, the anger is being addressed and reshaped. My research focuses on the ways that Baraka and Derby are addressing that

anger. Baraka writes hundreds of poems documenting her life while Derby paints, writes, and photographs Black life, using her art to illustrate Black life, from sharecropping, protest marches to ordinary people of color living life. In my early conversations with Amina, she spoke of the need to not just read her poetry, but to sing and perform. There was true happiness in her voice while discussing her art. Derby's art is on buildings throughout the south reminding the public of the contributions of female artists to the BAM. This is the Wahenga, the nurturing of spirit through our ancestors, through our art. Each of these women could lay in weeds of anger caused by lives steeped in hardship from the murder of Baraka's daughter to Derby visiting Freedom Riders in jail for nothing more than demanding equality for all. I write about these women because their voices are raw and contain a history begging to be told.

Black women have been fighting for equality since the Middle Passage, fighting for the right to own their bodies and to exist in a world that views them as inferior. It is in the formation of community that Black women have given themselves voice and agency. Black Feminism seeks to create systems of empowerment for the Black woman where she doesn't ask for the right to a seat at the table but merely sits down with the knowledge of her worth. In my interview with Amina Baraka, she speaks about her own developing feminism. Similar to many women of her time-period, the realization of society's unequal treatment of women has led her to gracefully stand for justice and equality.

African American men and women are in the process of discovering new identities of blackness and gender. My research methodology embraces a humanistic approach that involves an open dialogue on what it means to be a Black woman in America, and how the Black women of the BAM have enriched that dialogue through an internal code that speaks to the ancestors, Wahenga, and moving past western paradigms on race and gender in seeking an authentic inner voice of blackness.

Figure 10: Former Black Panthers Mama C and Tarika Lewis perform at UC Merced's *"We Wear Our Crowns: An Evening of Female Empowerment"* on March 2, 2017. Flyer designed by Shellee Randol.

A central tenet of modern feminist thought has been the assertion that "all women are oppressed." This assertion implies that women share a common lot, that factors like class, race, religion, sexual preference, etc., do not create a diversity of experience that determines the extent to which sexism will be an oppressive force in the lives of individual women. Sexism as a system of domination is institutionalized, but it has never determined in an absolute way the fate of all women in this society. Being oppressed means the absence of choices. It is the primary point of contact between the oppressed and the oppressor. --*Bell hooks, Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory*

Chapter 2: Dr. Doris Derby – Activism Rooted in Community

I laid my backpack and carry-on on the bed of the Dylan Hotel; it was near the San Francisco Airport. I was exhausted from lugging more than thirty pounds of luggage from Merced, CA to San Francisco. Tomorrow morning, this extra thirty pounds would be accompanying me to Atlanta, Georgia, the first stop on my Women of the Black Arts Movement Tour (BAM). Doris Derby, one of the leading voices of the Black Arts and Civil Rights Movements, or as she reminded me, one of the many women's voices that are sometimes shut-out when the men enter the room, is my first interview. As a public figure, Derby's life has been examined through oral histories, books, dissertations, videos, and articles, many of which are acknowledged in my dissertation. My research seeks to add to the conversation through the lens of the Civil Rights Movement, Black feminism and Derby's connection to the Harlem Renaissance, historical figures, and ancestralness, that connection to the ancestors that has shaped Derby's fight for equality for the Black man and woman.

Like many women authorities in their fields, Derby has had to contend with male patriarchy and the silencing or muting of the female voice. Derby, however, says she ignored that negativity and let her actions speak loud and clear. As discussed in the introduction, this chapter will examine the Black women's self-empowerment by exploring how Derby created art and culture that moved beyond the boundaries placed on Black women seeking to empower themselves and others. Civil rights activist Frances Beale's essay, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," speaks to the issue of the marginalization of Black women. Beale asserts, "Unfortunately, there seems to be some confusion in the movement today as to who has been oppressing whom. Since the advent of black power, the black male has exerted a more prominent leadership role in our struggle for justice in this country" (147-148). Beale is correct that the African American male has played a pronounced role since the beginning of the Black Power Movement. However, my research seeks to offer a counter-narrative that illuminates the role of the Black female in the struggle for freedom. The notion of the Black female as oppressive and holding the Black male down, will be explored for what it is, a specious argument with little substance. My research seeks to situate the Black woman in her power and to offer analysis that strengthens and supports her contributions to the Black Arts Movement. Ajuan Maria Mance discusses a fascinating theory in her 2008 book,

Inventing Black Women: African American Women Poets and Self-Representation, 18772000, as to why the Black female's role in the BAM is seen as secondary by the men. It is her belief that:

> The Black Arts Movement inherited its infamous male-centeredness from the poets and theorists of the Harlem Renaissance who, in turn, inherited their masculinist bias from some of the more prominent male artists and intellectuals of the post-Reconstruction era…The revolutionary nationalism of the 1960s added to this established predisposition against the representation of Black women's lives an emphasis on Black power and self-defense. This emphasis evolved out of a need and even a hunger on the part of young urban Blacks in the northern and West Coast states for African American images that would counteract the fear and vulnerability that was introduced into and maintained at the center of Black life through the gruesome spectacle of lynching. (Mance 96)

Fear can strip a man or woman of their essence. For the African American community with its history of state-sponsored violence and an awareness that slavery is less than two-hundred years in the past, and a constant shadow in their present, creating a need to feel safe in a country that has terrorized Black bodies for centuries is a must. Mance's theory of male dominance as it relates to the men of the Black Arts Movement represents a binary coding of Black masculinity; whereby, the Black male is both the protector of Black womanhood and the suppressor of the Black woman's creative aspirations relating to the Black Arts Movement. Mance equates the need of the Black male for a broader vision of the Black Arts Movement rather than what would be considered women centered as the reason for the movement's male supremacy (96). I would argue that the vision of the Black Arts Movement held by women like Nikki Giovanni, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Sonia Sanchez is expansive and was honed by their experiences and is just as valid, and as powerful, and speaks to Black Power, but from a feminine communal basis rather than one linked to Black manhood. What the Black Woman brings to the conversation is the intersectionality that opens the door to race, gender, class, economics, and community. And yes, she brings *Ancestralness*, as the Black woman realizes that she stands on the shoulders of her ancestors in the creation of the dynamic female voice. The Black Arts Movement represented a crossroads for Black women moving beyond gendered roles towards self-determination. The African American female is rooted in her views of Black womanhood and the Black Aesthetic and has created her own power dynamics. She is constructing and examining her placement in the world through her art and culture. Derby traveled across historical sites of violence determined to change how history perceived African Americans. Freedom fighters like Derby placed a spotlight on the inhumanity of the United States' treatment of African Americans fighting for racial equality. While she was not outwardly raising her fist shouting "Black Power," Derby's hand was extended as she documented, photographed, and highlighted the inequality Blacks suffered. Her work was just as powerful as Stokely Carmichael's in fighting for racial equality. Her political options as an innovator in the arts, education, and economic

development were substantive steps in developing the reality of Black Power. The words "Black Power" mean nothing without action.

Derby, an artist, anthropologist, elementary school teacher, and graduate student in higher education left a very active and productive life in New York to go south. Derby said it was her God-directed mission to leave New York for Albany, Georgia in the summer of 1962. She later left New York in 1963 to work in Jackson and other parts of Mississippi. Derby left to work in Mississippi for one year and ended up staying for nine years. She felt it was the right thing to do when you have Martin Luther King, Jr., Andrew Young, Septima Clark of Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and SNCC leaders Jim Forman, Charles Sherrod, and Bob Moses saying that they need you to join with them in the struggle. I was asked why I decided to research Doris Derby's life. Derby used her creativity in the arts, in painting, theatre, poetry, photography, and film as tools of the Black struggle. It is who she was then and still is today. Although we know the stories of Black Arts Movement luminaries such as Sonia Sanchez, Audre Lorde, Nikki Giovanni, Angela Davis, Abbey Lincoln, and countless other brilliant and beautiful African American women, Derby represents African Americans that selflessly placed their lives in danger because of the importance of protecting the civil rights of Black men and women. That is an important point. While we had many voices of protests, and countless writers speaking of the inequity of living in Jim Crow America, Derby faced life and death situations that will be discussed in this chapter.

I sat on the bed writing questions to ask Derby and wondered if, like Alice in Wonderland, I would slip down a hole of a complicated history too vast to catalogue, or, similar to Alice Walker's journey in search of Zora Neale Hurston, I would discover history long buried that speaks to the importance of the female voice. My research asks the question, "Why was there an absence of the Black female voice?" Why were Black women that fought hard for civil rights and social justice often treated like bit players left on the cutting room floor? So much of the scholarship written is either a complaint about the lack of female voice and agency or dialogues in which both men and women justify their positions as Black feminists or male authorities. I have reviewed this scholarship and made the choice to write about the hidden voices of Black female freedom fighters. Hidden not by choice, but rather society's limited view of the importance of Black voices, particularly those of Black women. Derby represents the first of my interviews of Black women intimately tied to mid-twentieth century themes of Blackness.

The next morning, I headed to the San Francisco Airport and was in Atlanta by late afternoon and found myself at the Atlanta Airport Marriott. I had bought a camcorder that I fiddled with as I was not a filmmaker but was prepared to become one rather quickly. Out of fear, that night I called one of my oldest buddies, Dr. Marilyn Johnson, an entrepreneur, who always had about five to ten projects going on at once. She had been living in Atlanta for the past twenty years and was my go-to person whenever I fell on hard times in the south, which seemed to be a growing trend. When I lost my driver, Necola Adams, due to her breaking her ankle a few hours before our trip to the New Orleans Black Arts Movement Conference, I called Marilyn. She took a plane to the conference and acted as our official driver. Now, in my hotel room, I listened with relief as she agreed to pick me up for my interview with Derby. Marilyn had experience as a

filmmaking, so we agreed that she would videotape the segment. Marilyn's hair is a lustrous silvery white. When I met her thirty-five years ago, it was a lovely rich brown, and her speech and presence reminded me of magnolias and mint-julips. Marilyn is now a vegetarian with the heart of an activist born of living as an artist and an educator along the margins.

We drove through beautiful green neighborhoods on our way to Derby's house. I had left Merced County where much of the land was ravaged by the 2016 drought; to see such greenery and buildings that must have been over two hundred years old was a beautiful experience. There was redbrick everywhere, and so much living history in Atlanta, and an awareness of America's dark past and the rich culture that is the south. We drove up just as her husband, the well-respected actor, Bob Banks, was leaving. We were ushered into a room that spoke of history and extended family. Photos of everyone from Amiri Baraka, civil rights leaders, Andrew Young, and righteous black icons gazed back at me, daring me to question their importance. We were taken to a large room with sacred paintings that Derby had done in New York and Mississippi with settings that spoke of the culture of the African Diaspora, the civil rights struggle, nature, Black pride and power. There was a creative uniqueness that could not be contained.

Each room in this winding home carried the history and culture of Black America, either through art, literature, family heirlooms, or a determination that Doris Derby's family would succeed. Most of her relatives on display were light to almost white and had a history of activism and education that stretched back generations. Her grandmother and uncle were charter members of the NAACP in Bangor, Maine in the 1920s. Family photos of Black people that went to college at the turn of the century and were expected to make a difference lined the walls. Derby revealed binders that housed photos she had taken of major African American icons from Mohammed Ali to Julian Bond, to Dorothy Heights, and Myrlie Evers. She had photographed them all. Her photography showed a rhythm for the feel of life, the juju of life, and then of course, she is a dancer, bringing joy to herself and others through salsa. One of her photographic exhibits is titled the "Early Days of Salsa Dance in Atlanta."

I looked up and saw the painting "The Banjo Lesson" by Henry Ossawa Tanner, who Derby was distantly related to by marriage. Her brother had married one of Tanner's descendants. I love the humanity of this painting and the artwork that speaks of generations of Blacks, family, and how we mentor each other. This is Black Art rising to the forefront in the lives of artists that use art as a means of breathing, of holding the space for future generations. Derby was educating me by retelling the rich history of America's Civil Rights Movement from a female and an artist's perspective.

The Interview

I sat across from Derby in a rectangular living room crowded with books, photos, paintings and humanity. Derby thoughtfully started speaking about what was most important to her, Black history. There is a brilliance to her mind and a boundless energy that belied her seventy-seven years. We both had a clear idea of the type of interview we wanted; however, this was not my story to tell, so I listened. Names like Andrew Young

and Bob Moses came alive in her narrative. My ears perked up. Derby was not just telling her story; she was telling the history of the United States' Civil Rights Movement. I asked why she chose this path. When did she know she wanted to make a difference? In 2011, Derby was interviewed by Joseph Mosnier for the Library of Congress Civil Rights History Project. Derby spoke of the impact of her family, community, and the Schomburg Library's collection of African, African American heritage, and Caribbean heritage books on the development of her passion for African culture, art, and history (4). This love of African culture would inform her research, art, and development of programming in support of the cultural framing of Africa to her students and community.

I consider Derby's work a calling to walk that extra step, no matter the danger, and wondered if she was conscious of the role she would play in history. Derby said she realized in the fourth grade that she wanted to make a difference in the lives of Black Americans. Her words spoke of Black churches, Black women sitting in prayer, walking for justice with few choices but to fight for freedom. Derby attended a predominately white elementary school, a couple of blocks from her home in a multiethnic but primarily white ethnic environment. She described attending a school with only one Black teacher. At Flag Day, where different countries represented ethnic groups, Derby noticed there was nothing representing Black people. It was in that moment that she had an epiphany and understood that there was something missing in her textbooks and at the movies that she attended every Saturday. Black people were missing from the public sphere as if they did not exist. She and her girlfriends were always looking to see if there was a Black person in any of the visuals in 1950s America. Derby knew there was a contradiction between what she didn't see in school, textbooks, and movies and what was well documented in her family's rich oral history, family photographs, and letters. While visiting her aunt on her mother's side in Harlem, she listened to family members and neighbors discuss the powerful history of Blacks in America. So, she knew that there was a history, but there was little physical account of that history. Derby was determined to find out who was writing, and who was producing works on Black history, and learn from them how to participate in Black arts and culture.

What is striking about Derby's testimony and life is this searching for groups and people on the forefront of change with regards to Black culture. Derby represents an age and time when African Americans gathered in churches and organizations with the sole goal of the liberation of the Black race. Images of African Americans were few. Mainstream media did not see a need to promote African American culture and life. Although Blacks were a significant part of American history, their existence was in the margins. It is hard to imagine the absence of images of Black people in books, magazines, newspapers, movies and television, and yet knowing that you exist, waking up every morning to stare at the Black faces of your family, friends, and your community, and wondering why your existence is relegated to a marginalized space. Even in my own life, I remember as a child shouting, "Mommy, there is a Negro on television." It was either in programs like *The Ed Sullivan Show* or movies with Pearl Bailey, Lena Horne, Eartha Kitt, Harry Belafonte, and Sidney Poitier that we viewed ourselves. As Derby spoke, I asked myself the question, what has changed? Yes, we are no longer, as a people, absent from American culture and the media, but at what price? How is the African American

viewed in today's society? How do we perceive ourselves, and where is our cohesiveness as a community, a race? 50 years ago, when Blacks saw each other on the streets, there was a hello, a nod of the head, because of the understanding that we were in this race thing together. Having Black skin in America meant you were oppressed and that recognition from other Blacks said quite simply, "Brother, sister, I see you." We had solidarity. What changed? Many said integration offered a false narrative similar to the term "post-racial America," coined during the Obama administration. We thought this race thing was over. America was cured, no more lynchings, electronic or otherwise. However, that proved to be false. We see this in twenty-first century America, with its gerrymandering, the incarceration of Black men and women, and voter suppression, a form of electronic lynching, where your existence is nullified. We hear the political speeches of outrage over racism but have a president that says of the August 2017 White supremacists rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, "I think there's blame on both sides."[10] Where is the outrage over the weakening of the Voting Rights Act of 1965? When African American NFL players take a knee in protest of police violence towards Blacks, we see the indignation of our President, but where is the concern over racial violence towards Black men? The carnage of Charlottesville has taught us that America is in need of a healing. We have become so racially fractured that citizens have taken to calling the police on innocent Black men and women for existing while Black. This racialized environment has seen a renewed interest in the work of civil rights leaders and cultural workers like, Doris Derby.

Derby didn't just "research Black history." She embodied the historical significance of Black history. Her first steps into the broader narrative began as one of the founding members of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). In his essay, "The Black Arts Movement and Historically Black Colleges and Universities," historian James Smethurst makes the point that, "the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), played a central role in the development of the notion of Black Power and the Black Power Movement in the mid-1960s" (76). SNCC was involved with activist organizations with a wide influence as well as with leaders throughout the African American community. Derby's role in the movement was one of engaging southern Blacks in programming aimed at providing the tools for racial justice. My research opens the door on the life of a committed activist, not in the conventional sense, but rather a woman that systematically worked toward racial equality through initiating and partnering with organizations and the community in programming that often took years to see real results.

Derby came by her history of activism naturally. Her father received a degree in engineering from the University of Pennsylvania. Mr. Derby was athletic and studied archery and fencing. He was designated to receive an award; however, he had to take the service elevator to receive the award. Rather than doing that, Derby's father left without being recognized for his athletic achievements. He went on to take a civil service job as a New York State employment interviewer. In the late 1950s, he and a handful of other employees started the New York State Careerist Society, an organization to fight discrimination in the civil service. Derby spoke of her father's talents. Mr. Derby was a cabinet-maker and had a woodworking workshop in the basement. That is where Derby got the wood to create her oil paintings. She used the pieces of Masonite that he had left

over to paint on. Throughout her career, Derby never painted on canvasses, but on pebbly and smooth Masonite surfaces. She still has some of her early oil paintings. Her father was a photographer and purchased brownie cameras for Derby and her sister while they were in elementary school. It's clear that he influenced her interest in art at an early age. Art and activism became Derby's North Star, guiding every aspect of her life, including who she would meet and interact with along the road.

Because of segregation and discrimination, much of African American activism took place in public spaces provided by churches. Derby's family belonged to the Episcopal Church at a time when Black churches were seen as places to organize and fight racism. It was in the church and at Hunter College in the Bronx that Derby's spirit of activism was born in the late fifties and early sixties. With the Campus Student Government Association, the NAACP, the Student Christian Association, and the student Anthropology Club, Derby was able to discuss and confront issues of segregation and discrimination. In the spring of 1961, it was decided that members of the Student Christian Association, the Student Government Association, and the student chapter of the NAACP at Hunter College in the Bronx, (later named Lehman College) would undertake a freedom ride to the Greensboro, Raleigh, and Durham, North Carolina area to talk with students, faculty, community members, and association leaders about the demonstrations and other actions taking place around integration. They wanted to support the southern students as many were being arrested and in need of funds. These arrests represented the enforcement of Jim Crow Laws and an oppressive regime that jailed Blacks on a whim. While there, she met with Robert Williams, the North Carolina civil rights leader and author of *Negroes with Guns* and Floyd Bixler McKissick, the leader of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE).

Derby sat in fixed concentration taking us on a twisting path telling the story of a young girl that became a member of her church's NAACP Chapter at sixteen. This was a time in African American history when the church housed our dreams, our history, our family and our very souls. Derby spoke of the Black Church being the hub of the Black community; music, NAACP meetings, clubs, and worship. The young adults had social activities and fundraisers bringing more people into the church. It was through her activism at Hunter College, where Malcolm X and Ethel Kennedy came to speak, that her activist spirit soared. In the summer of 1962, Derby decided to take a bus trip across country to visit friends and explore education opportunities. Additionally, she wanted to stop for a week in Atlanta and Albany, Georgia because she learned that her friend, Peggy Dammond, who had left New York to work for SNCC in Albany, Georgia, was now in jail and sick.

Ms. Dammond was interviewed by Darick J. Simpson on Long Beach Lens TV in December 2015. In the interview, Ms. Dammond speaks of the courage it took to register voters and make a difference. White and Black freedom fighters were working together to see the dream of voting become a reality for southern Blacks. Dammond tells a fascinating story of activism in her family that went as far back as her relatives William and Ellen escaping on the underground railroad to Nova Scotia and then to England to become abolitionists. In Georgia, Dammond taught sharecroppers at night and did voter registration. She speaks of unrecognized heroes and people opening their homes to

SNCC workers. Dammond learned how to chop cotton. In order for the sharecroppers to attend the night classes, the SNCC members had to help them with their work. Ms. Dammond was jailed three times while in Georgia.

Jim Forman and Bob Zellner of SNCC drove Derby to Albany, Georgia from Atlanta. She stayed with the family of then President of the Delta Sorority, a public service organization of college-educated African American women. The next morning SNCC members arrived on the doorstep stating, "We need you to go. We need to do some voter registration. We have to go knocking on doors. We are trying to get people registered to vote, and we will go by the office first, the Albany Movement office, and introduce you to some people there" (Derby). Much to Derby's surprise, when they got to the office, some of the people there included: Martin Luther King, Jr., Charles Sherrod, Andrew Young, Lonnie King, Septima Clark, and Dorothy Cotton. They asked Derby could she type and said they would do voter registration later on. Derby wanted to see Peggy Dammond who was in jail, but was told, "Oh, she's in Americus, Georgia. That's over an hour away, and there are some very dangerous things happening to Black people in the movement" (Derby).

Derby never did get to Americus. Instead, every day there was something else needing to be done. One of her duties was to go down to the jailhouse to ask the jailed SNCC members for a report on what was happening. Each day, she went by the prison window to talk to them. Derby had to be careful when going downtown. A minor infraction such as jaywalking could get you arrested. Every time she tried to leave Albany, Georgia, she was given more duties. A few days before she was to return to New York to teach, SNCC Field Secretary Charles Sherrod said she was needed to help raise money for the people who were in jail. Food, clothing, and books were also needed because a lot of the people were sharecroppers thrown off their land. Some were bombed, and supplies were needed. Derby went back to New York with the goal of raising funds to help the cause.

There is a surreal quality to this interview. I wonder, "What makes a person risk their life in this manner? Is it youth and the feeling of being invincible?" Blacks had been suffering for years under Jim Crow Laws and state-sponsored violence. Many left the south in what was perceived as a genocidal war against southern Blacks. However, there were Blacks, and men and women of every race arriving by bus, plane, and train determined to make a difference in how Blacks were treated in the American south. What is in the DNA of those that used education and non-violence to change not just a community but the world? Septima Clark, who is referred to as the grandmother of the Civil Rights Movement, similar to Derby, was one of those people with this special DNA.[11] Derby speaks about a particular incident involving the Albany Movement's attempt to integrate an Episcopalian Church in the book *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* edited by Faith Holsaert. Derby, the only Black Episcopalian in town, volunteered to appear at the 11:00 am service. Derby explains:

> The media had been alerted...I alone went up the steps to the church doors, and the white men outside those doors let me walk past them. I sat in the

> middle section and participated in the service without incident. At its conclusion, I left nervously, not knowing what I would face outside--policemen, angry, jeering faces, or what; however, except for the blank stares of the churchgoers, nothing negative happened. The *New York Times* carried the story the next day. That Episcopal church, as far as I know, was the only one to be successfully integrated without incident that year. (441)

Derby went the next Sunday; however; and was turned away without incident. To walk up those stairs alone, not knowing what might greet you, took enormous courage. The work that was done by SNCC volunteers was historic. They laid the foundation for integration. These accounts by the men and women of SNCC help us understand not only why their work was important, but the history of racial intolerance that we as a nation are still healing. Derby had worked with Andy Young, Septima Clark, and Dorothy Cotton through the Citizenship schools, first created by Septima Clark.[12] These schools helped African Americans pass the literacy tests required to vote in the south, if you were Black. Derby had no idea what was in store for her as she dove further into supporting SNCC and southern civil rights leaders. She had come to Albany, Georgia to see her jailed friend, but was commandeered along the way.

Derby returned to New York at the end of the summer to resume teaching and to raise money to help sharecropper families who were thrown off the land because of their civil rights activities. She raised funds to send can goods, clothing and books back to Albany, Georgia. In the process, she organized an event in Harlem. In late winter of 1962, Derby and the Friends of SNCC helped establish the SNCC office in Manhattan. Julie Prettyman became the director of the NY SNCC office.[13] That spring Bob Moses asked Derby to come to Mississippi to work on an adult literacy project. She did not want to go, but he kept calling. At the time, she was one of the SNCC volunteers helping with the organizing of the March on Washington. In May, Derby was watching the news and saw all the atrocities happening in Alabama. She saw the police with their billy clubs, dogs, fire hoses, and guns. In light of this state-sanctioned violence, Derby decided to go to Mississippi and make use of her teaching skills to help advance the Civil Rights Movement. When the March on Washington ended, a few days later, she headed to Mississippi.

I have read about the March on Washington, watched in fascination from my television set, but had never met anyone, until now that was there or helped organize. Derby was one of seventeen people interviewed for a special 2013 edition of *Time Magazine* commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington. Derby said of her experience:

> Some people pooh-poohed the idea. They didn't think it was going to work. They thought there was going to be a lot of violence, and so our committee met every week and we said, O.K., what do we need to move this really large group of people from all over, to bring them in? We needed public relations. We needed to have a medical corps of nurses and

> doctors on hand. We needed to have Porta-Pottys, arrange transportation. Once we had charter buses, regular buses coming in—what's going to happen to those? Where are people going to park? (Derby)

Derby's behind the scenes work on perhaps the most important march in United States history illustrates her commitment to the struggle. The images of Martin and Mahalia Jackson calling out to him, "Tell them about the dream, Martin," are etched on my soul. Those powerful words were felt by African Americans in search of a dream deferred. Those people that believed the March would not work did not have the vision or understand that Blacks were in a life and death battle for freedom. When Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke, African Americans saw equality as a real possibility. King left a legacy of social activism that will be discussed for the next hundred years and beyond. The power in the speech is that it resonates with every marginalized group that seeks freedom from oppression. Dr. Derby's front row seat to history is a reminder of the importance of every day citizens and their ability to make a difference. African Americans understood how much we depended on each other. Similar to the times of slavery, during the Civil Rights Movement, Blacks had their own underground railroad that took in strangers on the strength of someone else's recommendation. Volunteers were coming to the south in the form of freedom riders, teachers, and activists of all races. Derby was taken in by families and other SNCC members as she worked for the civil rights of African Americans. Bob Moses, a leader of SNCC on voter registration in Mississippi, recruited Derby for a new Adult Literacy Project in order to give African Americans the literacy skills needed to register to vote in the south.[7] Derby worked with SNCC on voter registration at the Council of Federated organizations (COFO) based on Lynch Street in Jackson, Mississippi. It consisted of representatives of SNCC, CORE, the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) working together in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement. Derby worked in the "…southern Freedom Movement from 1962 to 1972…"(Derby 444). She emphasized that, "[Bob Moses] asked me to come for a year for this Adult Literacy Project, and I said I would. I went there for one year and ended up staying. I facilitated work that they needed to be done. My main thing was education. I had skills that other people didn't have" (Derby).

Figure 11: "Springtime in Atlanta". 2019. A Photo taken (by Daniel Fitch) for inclusion in her forthcoming book-- PATCHWORK: PAINTINGS, POETRY AND PROSE*; Art and Activism in the Civil Rights Movement. Photo Courtesy of Daniel Fitch*

Figure 12: Dr. Doris A. Derby – BAM Panelist, Guest Documentary Photo Exhibitor on "Black Arts Movement and the Struggle for Civil Rights. Photographer: Eric Waters. Courtesy of Kim McMillon

Derby does indeed have skills that the majority of us do not possess in terms of her ability to create opportunities that enrich lives through her determination to exhibit and tell the history of Blacks in America. I am the beneficiary of Derby's largesse as she felt it was important for me to attend the Atlanta Black Theatre Festival and paid my expenses as I was unemployed. She thought that my coming to the Theatre Festival was another way of expanding our interview. Derby wanted me to attend this magnificent Festival where at the Blue & Bling Gala Awards ceremony, she received an award for her vast body of work and contributions to the community.

What was important about the Awards Ceremony was the number of young people that spoke of Derby mentoring them in the fields of African and African American theatre, history, art, and literature. The Festival was held at the Porter Sanford III Performing Arts Center in Decatur, Georgia on October 7, 2017. The Atlanta Black Theatre Festival, co-founded by Toni Simmons Henson, offers playwrights across the country the opportunity to showcase their work. As one of the co-founders of the Free Southern Theatre, Derby was uniquely positioned to be honored for her civil rights and community service contributions as well as her art that is showcased throughout the City of Atlanta.

Figure 13: Guest speaker Doris Derby at the Symposium, “What the Hell are we Fightin for?” The Atlanta Black Theatre Festival. October 5, 2017. Decatur, GA
Photographer: Kim McMillon

What struck me is the love of the community for Derby. As she entered the gala with her husband, people rushed to greet her. The crowd was huge with many dressed in African garb. The mood was celebratory as Derby and the winners of the playwriting series took to the stage. Derby spoke of her work at Georgia State University and her commitment to students and the arts. The large audience included people of all ages that were there to honor Derby.

This is why I am researching Derby’s contributions to African America history. There are many brilliant African American women that paved the way for writers like me. Their words and message are in countless books, and they are admired nationally

Figure 14: Doris Derby recognized for her contributions to African American culture at the Atlanta Black Theatre Festival's Blue & Bling Gala Awards Ceremony, October 7, 2018. Derby is surrounded by the winners of the Festival's playwriting series. Photographer: Kim McMillon

and internationally. Gwendolyn Brooks, Alice Childress, and Margaret Walker and so many other African American female writers have enriched my life, but Derby has mentored me in a manner that is humbling. As a member of the Harlem Writers Guild, Derby represents a link between the Harlem Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement.

However, it is her work as a civil rights icon that led to her iconic status. As a Freedom Rider, Derby lived in constant danger but was determined to change how African Americans were perceived through her photography and activism that detailed a level of selfless service to others. Her work as an educator led to her recruitment by the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM), a war on poverty Head Start program established in the summer of 1965. Doris Derby was recruited to be the head resource teacher/ trainer in North Mississippi at Newell Chapter, outside of Holly Springs. In the middle of the summer, she was asked to take another position at the Pilgrim's Rest Head Start Center in Durant, Mississippi in order to train local Head Start teachers and to become the model teacher for the documentary film, *A Chance for Change* directed by Adam Giffard in 1965 for the Child Development Group of Mississippi. The film was about the newly formed Mississippi Head Start program.

Figure 15: Mural in downtown Atlanta created by Doris Derby and Charmaine Minniefield Sponsored by the Bahai Association. (photographer Kim McMillon) Derby's photographs are included in two other public art works in Atlanta sponsored by the City of Atlanta.

Any initiatives by Black people in Mississippi to further their education, economic development, social and political status was considered enemy tactics by the white population and was dangerous. Derby explained, "There were shotguns in each of the corners of the Head Start Centers because it could be life-threatening." It was very dangerous work, and so the husband and son of the woman she was staying with guarded the Head Start program with guns. This is the reason that I am writing about Derby. She represents history that has not been told on the level that it deserves. By documenting, researching and disseminating this history, it is my hope that we as scholars can shine a light on the dangers of racism. By doing so, there is the possibility that freedom fighters like Doris Derby will be included in middle and high school curriculum on the Civil Rights Movement.

Guns and teaching, particularly teaching children, are not a match, but these were perilous times. Derby asserted that "Having a Head Start Program was not normal. There were no prior government funded Head Start Programs: local or national. This was a new thing." Head Start began in 1965 as part of President Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty. The goal of Head Start was to prepare disadvantaged children for elementary school. In John Hale's article "The Struggle Begins Early: Head Start and the Mississippi Freedom Movement," he explains that Head Start was connected to the "…Freedom Movement

education through the Citizenship Schools, which developed in 1955, and the Freedom Schools, which developed immediately prior to Head Start during the Freedom Summer campaign of 1964" (511). Head Start represented a means by which educational opportunities could reach underserved communities in the struggle for equality. Through Head Start communities, education was used "…as the primary means to achieve political, social, and economic equality" (Hale 511). Johnson's war on poverty was now in communities where helping those disadvantaged due to race and economics changed the trajectory of life in Mississippi for the poor. Head Start represented hope.

As someone who grew up in California where Head Start is immensely popular, it is difficult to comprehend the racialized beginnings of this program. Head Start Centers were throughout the state of Mississippi with over 80 locations. However, Derby said many were in rural areas, but the guns used for protection were not in every center. Derby explained:

> In Northern Mississippi, we didn't have that scenario. In the Delta, we had that. The Head Start director, her husband, and son had to stay up at night to watch that nobody drove by and shot into the building. I saw a fuse on the ground that was leading up to the church that housed the Head Start while a new Head Start was being built. We got out and stamped the fuse and pulled it out of the church. Head Start was revolutionary in Mississippi. It was to educate children. It brought blacks and whites together. It brought jobs. Black people started it with White help. It was for Black children. The only white children that went to Head Start Centers were the children of white people working in the movement or administrators. An average white kid did not go to these centers. The children that went to Head Start had advantages, but the disadvantage was that some of those children left the area because they couldn't find jobs, and their information left. (Derby)

Derby highlights the difficulties of teaching in an area where the lack of civil rights for Blacks led to a mass exodus of African Americans throughout the south. What is awe-inspiring is the freedom fighters of all colors pouring into the south with a hope of remedying that situation. When we view the Civil Rights Movement, images of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer, and others come to mind. What is often not mentioned are the faces of the women and men that sacrificed their lives, time, money, and energy for the children, the next generation of voices to rise. Those children, peeking around their mother's dress, walking through a crowd of white supremacists, who did not wear hoods, but rather the faces of anger and hate, will remember those looks of loathing for the rest of their lives. Derby stood between these children and hate as a freedom fighter moved to enact real social change. Derby worked with four to six-year olds in the Head Start program. In Derby's oral interview with the Library of Congress, she spoke of the difficulty in recruiting teachers "because you had conditions where you had the whites that didn't want us to have it, you had … the black

POOR PEOPLE'S CORPORATION IS BEING TALKED ABOUT IN . .

Peace News

The New York Times.

NATIONAL GUARDIAN the progressive newsweekly

THE UNITED Teacher

ethical culture today

craft

Long Island Press

PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PRESS

Herald Tribune

THE NEW YORK TIMES

Cooperatives Run by Negroes
A Growing Trend in the South

COOPERATIVES

The Poo
A ventu

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360 Nelson Street, S. W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30313

Vo. 6, No. 5 — The Student Voice, Inc. — August 30, 1965

COOP FORMED IN MADISON COUNTY, MISS.

children's smocks. That's what we're working on right now. We got more people interested after that. Lots of people who didn't think we were going to do anything at first. We got a long waiting list of people who want to work in here now. But the girls we got in first are those from out of the kitchens: maids and such. Then there are those who lost their jobs because they were active in the Madison county movement. Some were fired for trying to vote. Some for attending meetings. Next are those who really needed the job, who didn't have any money. Those who have children and were making a dollar and a half a day, on the days when they get work. Lots of people with lots of kids get only that. And that's not enough to live on.

When we started the coop we went and saw the mayor

Figure 16: Poor People's Corporation-News Clippings (*Poor People's Corporation Records, 19601967; Archives Main Stacks, MSS 172 Box 1, Folder 6;): Freedom Summer Digital Collection*, Wisconsin Historical Society, Freedom Summer Digital Collection.

teachers who had regular teaching jobs did not - they were afraid to be associated with the Head Start program. So, teachers had to be recruited" (Derby 23). This time in American history was so volatile that there was real fear of losing your life or the lives of those around you with a misstep as so simple as what happened to Emmett Till, a mere boy accused of flirting with a white woman that ended with his being lynched.[14] I spoke to Derby about the areas of the Civil Rights Movement in which she played an important role. She was involved in SNCC, the Literacy Project, Head Start, as well as Free Southern Theatre (FST). SNCC started the Literacy Project. From 1965 to 1972, she worked with the Poor People's Corporation.

This was an initiative to support the economic development of handcraft cooperatives predominately run by women. She also became a member of the Southern Media, Inc., a documentary, photography, and filmmaking group based in Jackson, Mississippi in 1966/1967. This is where Derby honed her photography and filmmaking skills and amassed thousands of photographs depicting Black life during the Civil Rights Movement. This aspect of her work is not delved into in this dissertation. How did all of these programs exist in her life? I began to believe that I was interviewing superwoman. Derby explained that SNCC was an umbrella. SNCC did not administer all of its entities. It did so by association, delegation, and community involvement. Depending on what was being done, she might work with an organization for a period of time, but still consider herself a member of SNCC. Derby lived with the belief that her life was the movement. An example of the interconnectedness of the different organizations is that when FST organized locations for their performances they conferred with SNCC, other organizations, and individuals with facilities. While her Free Southern Theatre cofounders, John O'Neal, and Gilbert Moses were interested in theatre as a career, Derby wanted to stay in Mississippi while they relocated the theatre to New Orleans for help and support.

Figure 17: Free Southern Theatre co-Founder Doris Derby with her husband actor Bob Banks at the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum to view the artifacts she donated to the "War on Poverty" exhibit. Photo by Imani Khayyam. Jackson Free Press. http://www.jacksonfreepress.com/news/2017/sep/28/civil-rightsphotographer-doris-derby-unveils-work

The history and the importance of Free Southern Theatre (FST) should not be underestimated. Just as Amiri Baraka created the Black Arts Repertory/Theatre School (BARTS) in Harlem, and Marvin X, Eldridge Cleaver, and Ed Bullins founded the Black House cultural center in San Francisco, Free Southern Theatre represents the beginnings of the Black Arts Movement in the south. In Chicago, Haki Madhubuti (Don Lee) founded Third World Press, the nation's first African American Press. This explosion of creativity took place because African Americans were looking for images of themselves, not the images on the 6 o'clock news, but images of the beauty and power in Blackness. If you think of the Black American experience as one of oppression, then perhaps, similar to a pot boiling over, the art and culture of Blackness exploded due to being stuffed in a confined and marginalized corner with slavery, Jim Crow laws, voter disenfranchisement, redlining, lynchings, and a host of other indignities that could no longer be tolerated.

The arts became a means of expressing the frustration, pain, fear, and yes, pride in being Black in America. Cultural centers arose throughout the United States. Similar to the Free Southern Theatre originally based at Tougaloo College, these centers became historical sites of Black empowerment. What is compelling is the realization that African Americans en masse were creating art that looked like them and spoke to their experiences as Black Americans. Derby addressed the beginnings of the Free Southern Theatre and her discussions with John O'Neal about the fact that the contributions of Black artists were missing in Mississippi and other parts of the south.

James Smethurst in *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s* describes Free Southern Theatre as a "combination of agitation, community cultural access, and avant-garde aesthetics-a sort of mix of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, Karamu House, the Living Theatre and the FTP" (345).

Smethurst's assessment is a brilliant description of one of the most important theatre groups created in the United States. What makes this theatre company notable is the willingness of the participants both on stage and in the audience to lay down their lives in the fight for equal rights and justice for all. An example of this is actor Denise Nicholas known for her roles on the shows *Room 222*, and *In the Heat of the Night*. In *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, Nicholas recounts an experience she had with the New Orleans's police as a member of FST:

> Watching from one of the apartment balconies overlooking the street, I saw the two photographers go over to the corner store and come back out, but they never came up the stairs to the apartment. I thought, "Oh, my God, something has happened!" so I walked downstairs. As I walked out the door, a cop pulled his gun out and put it to my head, saying, "If you take one more step, I will blow your effing brains out. (262)

Figure 18: The FST performing Purlie Victorious outdoors in a small Mississippi town, 1965. Photographer: Matt Herron. Photo from the essay Motion in the Ocean: Some Political Dimensions of the Free Southern Theatre by John O'Neal, The Drama Review: TDR, Vol. 12, No. 4, Black Theatre (Summer, 1968)

Figure 19: Photograph by Tom Wakayama of John O'Neal and Denise Nicholas as Purlie Victorious and Missy in Ossie Davis' play *Purlie Victorious*, 1965. Image from the Amistad Research Center located at Tulane University in New Orleans.

Denise explains that the cops were watching their apartment and arrested the photographers in order to destroy their cameras and film (262). From reading the stories of the women of SNCC, they experienced everything from physical violence to rape, and yet continued to fight for the rights of Black men and women. What is most disheartening is the rich history of Blacks in America is generally not taught. We as a people must start to demand that United States history represent our diverse populations.

Free Southern Theatre exemplified theatre without the boundaries of place, the limits and constructs of mainstream theatre, and the excitement of new audiences who might be viewing theatre for the first time. Free Southern Theatre brought the dramatic arts to sharecroppers, to children, and Black families. In John O'Neal's essay "Motion in the Ocean: Some Political Dimensions of the Free Southern Theatre," O'Neal says of FST:

> The lack of money should not keep people away from the theatre. Most of the people we were most concerned about have very little if any money. We therefore concluded that the Theatre was to be free. The plays, to be relevant, had to connect with the life. In a real sense, those plays have not been written yet. Those who live the life must write the particular truth of that experience. (O'Neal 73)

Figure 20: Gilbert Moses and John O'Neal in performance; August 3, 1964, Herbert Randall Freedom Summer Photographs, USM. Photo taken from SNCC Digital Gateway

It is my belief, that our playwrights, poets, and novelists are our historians. O'Neal is correct in that we as African Americans need to write our stories and create art that speaks to our experiences as African Americans. For too long, African Americans have been judged by what the dominant society sees as "Blackness." Our Blackness comes in many different shades and belief systems. It is through the arts that we teach the diversity of the Black experience.

I spoke to John O'Neal for the first time in December 2014 to ask him to speak at the 2016 Dillard University-Harvard Hutchins Center BAM Conference. He told me he was a talker and laughed and expressed so much joy. John had a stroke a few months before the conference. Although he was able to walk and speak, the exuberance that appeared to be a part of his nature was no longer as strong. However, the work that he accomplished along with Doris Derby and Gilbert Moses elevated African American Theatre and the lives of Blacks. John passed on February 14, 2019.[15] How appropriate that someone with so much heart died on Valentine's Day.

FST opened a world of possibilities through art for the disenfranchised. There

was the realization that so much needed to be done to bring about social change. Free Southern Theatre is an example of the theatre of social change where art, dance, and music are part of an umbrella housing Black creativity. Derby started to organize a dance workshop with Tougaloo students that could intersect with any performances that incorporate dancers. Dr. Ronald Schnell, the head of the arts department at Tougaloo, let art students and those interested in art into the studio to draw, paint, and associate with other artists. During that time, Dr. Schnell's generosity in allowing non-students to use the art studio at any time facilitated Derby's ability to prolifically produce paintings dealing with her thoughts about the Black freedom struggle in Mississippi and in Africa.

In the Adult Literacy office, O'Neal and Derby would dialogue about the need for a theatre in Mississippi. In addition, Gilbert Moses, who worked with the Mississippi Free Press, discussed having a theatre and a repertory company. With a repertory theatre company, they could circulate positive messages and plays written by and about Black people. Derby relays John's story of the creation of the Free Southern Theatre. The conversation took place at his and Gilbert's apartment. John says Gilbert was tapping his foot and his knee. There was an air of excitement in the room. The two of them were smoking cigarettes and said, "We need a theatre," and then John says I said, "Well if a Theatre is going to happen anywhere, we need to make it happen right here in Mississippi" (Derby). That was the start of Free Southern Theatre in the Fall of 1963. The drama teacher at Tougaloo College was willing to provide the resources with the students and the stage.

Director and Producer Woodie King, Jr. has an interesting view on why programs like Free Southern Theatre received funding and widespread support. In his groundbreaking book, *The Impact of Race, Theatre and Culture*, King asserts that the sixties and seventies saw a wave of support for programs like Free Southern Theatre and The Negro Ensemble because it suited the hegemony of the dominant society to fund these types of programs as "…the country was in turmoil and we blacks didn't believe in the American Dream anymore…To stop the destruction of the cities, we were given token handouts…" King makes the case that African Americans are in search of white approval and accept the handouts and create art in the hope that it will be acknowledged (27-28). I would argue that there is joy in the creation of art in all forms, and organizations like the Free Southern Theatre, while helped by government funding, displayed originality and love for the communities they served. FST enlightened African Americans about art, culture, and theatre. John tells a wonderful story of Fannie Lou Hamer's response to an FST production of *Waiting for Godot*:

> Every day we see men dressed just like these, sitting around the bars, pool halls and on the street corners waiting for something! They must be waiting for Godot. But you can't sit around waiting. Ain't nobody going to bring you nothing. You got to get up and fight for what you want. Some people are sitting around waiting for somebody to bring in Freedom just like these men are sitting here. Waiting for Godot....(Hamer 76)

Fannie Lou Hamer is correct, the time for waiting was long gone. The need for action was powerful and permeated the air. As a colonized people in 1960s America, many Blacks found their voices by creating art as living examples of their demand for equality. It is easy to say: Blacks were searching for white approval. However, plays like Douglas Turner Ward's *Day of Absence* or Ben Caldwell's *Prayer Meeting or, The First Militant Minister* used comedy and satire to promote theatre representative of the Black Aesthetic, theatre written by African Americans detailing the plight of Blacks in 1960s America where injustice was normalized. What the plays of the Black Arts Movement emphatically assert is "this is not normal." Themes of Black Power, and Black Pride became omnipresent and the writings of the Black Arts Movement addressing the fact that Blacks were no longer willing to live as a colonized people became a staple of Black theatre. We may never move past the racism that is at the core of American society, but it must be addressed. One of the most important tenants of the Black Arts Movement was the Black Aesthetics, creating art for and by Black people. The hope of being acknowledged by Whites is anathema to everything that the Black Arts Movement stood for.

The Free Southern Theatre was about communicating with African Americans about the Civil Rights Movement. It presented visual representations of the importance of freedom, equality, and social justice. This was more than White-Black racism, FST was about freedom from oppression. I asked Derby about the founding of Free Southern Theatre. She stated that, "The Free Southern Theatre was founded in 1963 when I was stationed at Tougaloo College for the Adult Literacy Project. When I went to Mississippi in August 1963, Bob Moses had asked me to recruit some other SNCC folks to work in the Literacy Project that was based at Tougaloo College" (Derby). Once the Literacy project was underway, Derby joined with SNCC workers Gilbert Moses and John O'Neal to create Free Southern Theatre.

In Geneviève Fabre's 1983 essay "The Free Southern Theatre, 1963-1979," Fabre outlines its significance, explaining:

> Its aim was to help blacks in their struggle for freedom by theatrical productions that would deal with both art and politics…Conceived of as a legitimate political and cultural tool, the FST set out to dramatize the message of black liberation at protest demonstrations in backward areas of the South. As a regional black arts institution, it hoped to encourage members of the community to engage in writing, reading, acting, and even directing and producing. Finally, it urged blacks to re-interpret their history, experience, and culture in order to counter white stereotypes and to devise new ways of fighting white oppression. (55)

Fabre points out that through the work of the Free Southern Theatre rural communities took part in a cultural experience that used theatre as a form of protest. Imagine what it must have been like for sharecroppers and farmers who likely never attended the theatre to see African Americans in plays that spoke to issues of racial

injustice and Black pride. Free Southern Theatre was offering a voice to those without agency. In Kalamu Ya Salaam's discussion of the roots of Free Southern Theatre, he makes the point that it began as an "integrated organization" and produced plays like *Waiting for Godot*. "By 1969 FST was all Black and…Mississippi Delta viewers were literally and profoundly 'moved' by a pre-New York performance of LeRoi Jones' *Slave Ship*. The audience was aroused to militant action…. Moving its audience to action was an intended goal of this play and of BAM" (2-3). *Slave Ship* advanced the objectives of the Black Arts Movement in its overt theatrics to bring about social change by creating theatre that demanded audiences give voice to concerns of inequality and social justice. FST's use of theatre to demand social change cannot be underestimated. In Harry J. Elam, Jr.'s article "Ritual Theory and Political Theatre: "Quinta Temporada" and "Slave Ship, "" Elam's analysis of *Slave Ship's* historical importance to the Black Arts Movement is vital to understanding Amiri Baraka's work and vision. Elam's asserts:

> *Slave Ship* represented the history of black people in America and incited its black audience to fight for social change. Jones did not present an accurate historical picture in *Slave Ship* but an interpretation and a modeling of history to meet his own ends…. The play intended to sensitize the audience to the historical realities that shaped their lives. While chronicling the passage of blacks from slavery to contemporary times, *Slave Ship* omitted any reference to the Civil War or emancipation. Thus, by maintaining that the experience of black oppression was continuous and without relief, Jones expected his audiences' outrage at their own present social conditions to be all the more urgent and intense. (465)

Elam's explanation of Amiri Baraka's play *Slave Ship* speaks to the urgency of Amiri's work. In the poetry and writings of Amiri Baraka, he was putting out a clarion call to African Americans to fight for their freedom with the belief that this was a fight for African Americans only. There is an inherent conviction in Amiri's work that selfdetermination is the guiding force within the African American community. Freedom is gained through working as a community, a race, and a people that cannot depend on anyone, but themselves.

This dependence on self was apparent in my conversations with Amina Baraka regarding the play *Slave Ship* that Amiri produced at Spirit House in Newark. There was a white reporter sitting in the front row when the head of the "Uncle Tom Preacher" was thrown onto the stage. Elam says of this scene, "Politics and aesthetics were again united not only in the message of this black revolutionary drama but in the final reference to the act of murder and the call to eradicate other "Uncle Toms" from black society. Thus, this action was to serve as a reminder of the urgency for violent action and collective responsibility of both actors and audience" (Elam 470). For southern Blacks seeing this play for the first time, the call to revolution was theatre that provoked. *Slave Ship* addressed patterns of generational abuse experienced by African Americans living within a society that placed them in the bonds of servitude, not as tightly coiled as slavery, but there, nonetheless. With regards to *Slave Ship*, Amina believes Amiri was

working out his own demons and that he thought that in order to be accepted by the Black community he had to do these outrageous things. She says of Amiri, "The man was in torture. He was in pain until the day he died" (Amina Baraka).

Amiri was writing about Black anguish. If he was tortured, then it is the pain experienced by Black people realizing that they do not live in a society where there is equality. Whatever the reason, whether you agree with his art or not, Amiri's work stands out in its ability to translate into theatre "Black pain." Revolutionary theatre requires a certain dimensionality of the artist where they are between worlds, living in the past, present, and future, and able to translate generational pain into art that demands retribution for past trauma. The tortured artist is a trope that is often seen as a part of the creative process. Amiri brought art to the stage that was dangerous. Art that transformed lives. Art that was uncomfortable. Whether the audience agreed with the methods or the art, it was life changing. For Black audiences throughout the south to view Amiri's work was liberating. The racism, the inequality, and the injustice that Blacks were experiencing was outlined in Amiri's *Slave Ship*. Through theatre, FST was offering hope to those with little. The theatre company traveled through southern communities engaging men and women in a call for Black empowerment. The theatre was free and involved the public in dialogues on the needs of African Americans.

Theatre was seen as a stimulus, not only for action but also critical analysis and a cultural base for the movement. The FST claimed that protest and politics were insufficient if they were not accompanied by efforts to fill a cultural vacuum as well as to combat the effects of poor education and inadequate information. The audience did not have to travel to view theatre. The Free Southern Theatre came to their audience. Similarly, Luis Valdez's El Teatro Campesino (Farmer Workers Theatre) used Theatre to advocate for the farmworkers and often performed in the fields. Free Southern Theatre was a means of bringing literature to African Americans who might never enter a theatre but would take a moment while working or sitting in church to listen to theatre that advocated for the rights of the oppressed. Derby explained Free Southern Theatre had a completely different audience in the segregated and racist south. The performances were set up to connect with the Civil Rights Movement, and so plays were performed in places not like New York or other urban areas. Although at some point, the Free Southern Theatre did perform in New York, that wasn't the main thing. It was a developmental process of cultivating places to perform and people to perform in front of. Derby further states that "The Free Southern Theatre utilized the Civil Rights Movement because the Free Southern Theatre was started by SNCC workers. John, Gil, and I were all working with SNCC. So SNCC was our partner and COFO, which was SNCC, CORE, and the NAACP was able to set up places for us to perform, and as more activities or agencies were initiated, we had more places, and contacts" (Derby).

In the summer of 1964, Freedom Schools were created by SNCC, CORE, and other groups. Free Southern Theatre held performances at some of the Freedom Schools. In the Summer of 1965, shows took place at Head Start centers. Performances were also held on campuses and surrounding schools. There were also plays performed on the front porches and the farmland of independent black landowners, black farmers, and churches. Derby explained that "You had some people who had never seen a play before, didn't know

anything about that, and they would just want to see what you're saying and doing, and then depending on the kind of play you had, you had different reactions" (Derby).

Derby stated that *Purlie Victorious* by Ossie Davis and quite a few other plays, including *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett were performed, and that the Free Southern Theatre was evolving the way it was presented, where it was presented, and what kinds of plays were staged. There was also storytelling, and feedback after the play, which was John O'Neal's idea. Story circles were created to allow the public and the actors to talk about ideas, the plays, and what they might mean.

When asked about the history of Free Southern Theatre in Mississippi and Louisiana, Derby had this to say:

> The Free Southern Theatre moved from Tougaloo to New Orleans in 1965 or 1966, and I decided I was not going to leave with the theatre. I was going to stay in Mississippi working with what I had come there for. Richard Schechner, the head of the Tulane University's Drama Department –said that if the theatre came there, if it was based there, that there would be more resources, and so the Theatre still put on plays in Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and other states. It took on some additional different directions. So, it evolved. Gilbert left at a certain point – I don't remember what year. You can read the history. John O'Neal remained with Free Southern Theatre. During this time, he also created Junebug Jabo Jones, a Black character that he used as a vehicle for talking about life that people could easily understand. He started traveling and performing these monologues, and he became known for that. When I was in grad school in the late seventies, he visited my university and performed. Eventually, the Free Southern Theatre developed into other performance entities in New Orleans. In 1985, we had the official burial of the Free Southern Theatre. It was then picked up and continued as Junebug Productions with John O'Neal's participation. Junebug Productions is a development from the Free Southern Theatre, and both names are now associated with the beginnings of Black Theatre in the south. (Derby)

Derby's creation of Free Southern Theatre with Gilbert Moses and John O'Neal is a history lesson on how African Americans sought ways to educate and empower their communities. Often, people have brilliant ideas, but don't act on them because of money, circumstances, or a lack of time and resources. The difference is Free Southern Theatre was created by three people with the mission of elevating the circumstances of southern Blacks. This was more than just theatre. FST was about healing communities and people whose ancestors, and families had experienced and lived under inhumane conditions. They needed a vehicle to teach Black and White communities about Black life and culture beyond a segregated existence. Bringing men and women together for the purpose of giving a voice to the Black experience in America led many African Americans to view Free Southern Theatre as political and cultural aimed at shining a light on injustice.

I want to emphasize the role played by Derby in establishing the Free Southern Theatre, which grew out of her past theatre involvement and love of the Black Arts, and her civil rights and adult literacy activism. As I sat with this brilliant woman, my mind fixated on the idea of the women of the Black Arts Movement in conversation with Black Arts Movement theorists such as Margo Crawford, Lisa Gail Collins, Patricia Collins, and Cherise Pollard. Would today's Black feminists understand the power of women like Derby who changed the course of history, Black history? It is a different type of power than a Stokely Carmichael or an H. Rap Brown. This is a power that grows out of never giving up, never surrendering. It is not a loud or boisterous or belligerent power. It is a power that comes out of raising funds to bail out freedom riders, working hand-in-hand with the sharecroppers because you know that is the only way they would be able to watch your performance. This is power through community. It is a power that is as deep and rich as the Mississippi river, always moving forward, never surrendering. There is often a tendency for Black feminists to view the women of the movement from a marginalized space due to the patriarchal stance of many of the men involved with the BAM. However, from listening to the women of the Black Arts Movement, it is clear that their power was in their ability to endure, to continue to build and to understand that they were greater than any movement as their voices combined with those of the ancestors to create a new wave of Black feminism. One that perhaps was more inner directed. A feminism that relies on an inner knowing, a connection to women determined not just to elevate themselves but all women existing in the margins. It is the feminism of community. In Cherise A. Pollard's essay, "Sexual Subversions, Political Inversions Women's Poetry and the Politics of the Black Arts Movement," Pollard points out the patriarchal nature of the movement when critiquing the anthology, *Black Fire*. Pollard asserts, "Poems by black women in *Black Fire* can be read as critiques of revolutionary black manhood. The poetry section includes work by fifty-six men and five women." Just think of those numbers. Only five women poets are in an anthology that represents the voices of the Black Arts Movement. Pollard argues that while the Black female poets may appear submerged in an effort to support the Black male, "In black women's poetry of the period, there is a sense of doubleness…The duality that emerges is not between race and nation, but between race and gender" (179). The Black Arts Movement was male driven, and the female voice was not seen as important because of a lack of understanding and valuing of the Black woman. Her voice became important to the men of the BAM when validating their achievements, their Blackness. The marginalization of Black women is a part of the history of the Black female in America as well as the history of women in general. What is important about Black feminist theorists is they are planting the seeds for a new generation to understand the power of the Black female voice. Writers like Nikki Giovanni, Ntozake Shange, and Audre Lorde address issues of gender and sexism. But, we as a society must take responsibility for the teaching of the literature and art of Black Americans, and particularly Black women. Black feminist theorists examine the past and present treatment of the Black female in an effort to bring awareness. Derby's main goal was the liberation of the Black race, but within that goal existed equality for the Black female. Through SNCC, Head Start, and the Literacy Project, Derby was actively working towards the liberation of Black southerners.

Derby once mentioned that as a civil rights worker and an artist, she did not have the luxury to write about injustice, but rather attacked the system from all sides. I asked

Derby about the notion that Black feminists had to create their own brand of "feminism" and how did that apply to her as an African American female artist? Did she think the word feminism applied to Black Women during the sixties? Derby thoughtfully responded:

> Back then, I don't think I did. There was a black womanist philosophy which...I was more seeing myself in that…Alice Walker mentions that. I saw myself more as a womanist as opposed to a feminist, and so my thought was - as I recall, the black womanist was –for the family, your community, if you are married, your husband, your family, and so on. I was not with my family when I was in Mississippi, but my family was always my frame of reference. (Derby)

Womanist, coined by Alice Walker, offers the Black female the opportunity to love the Black male without having to deny her power. It is a holistic remedy with words to the Black male-female condition. The term "womanist" contextually informs in a similar manner to "ancestralness." Both words rely on a deeper understanding of Blackness and extend towards African roots and family with ancestralness seeking family members long gone in its creating of familial support. "Womanist" offers the Black female the haven of family but acknowledges her feminist leanings. Because the human experience is personal, the women involved in the Black Arts Movement all have different opinions as to the male and female power dynamics. My research has found west coast and east coast BAM women had different interactions with the personalities involved in the movement. Marvin X, one of the founders of the West Coast Black Art Movement states of the men, "We were male chauvinistic pigs," while Askia Toure, one of the founders of the Black Arts Movement with east coast and southern roots, emphasizes that women were a powerful part of the Movement. The Movement's importance is beyond personality politics or the need to justify behavior on the part of its leaders. BAM, similar to Black Lives Matter (BLM), was felt in the souls of Black Americans determined to pave the way for social justice initiatives and to strengthen the voices of Black Americans calling for equal rights. What is different is that those refusing to acknowledge the racism that exists in the United States continue to speak of Black Lives Matter in terms of terrorism and coded language. We see groups with signs saying, "Blue Lives Matter," and "White Lives Matter," without an understanding that BLM was started because of racism that has led to the murder of African Americans by the police and White supremacists. In Derrick Clifton's article "7 Racially Coded Phrases That Everyone Needs to Stop Saying about Black People," published on the website *Mic*, he states that code words like "Thug," "Inner City," "Ghetto," "Oreo," "Uppity," "You People," and "Sketchy" are a substitute for using the "N" word. Clifton speaks of "racially coded language" that serves "… to reinforce stereotypes that stem from a sordid history of slavery, segregation and unequal treatment under the law." In 2017, due to the charged political climate where civil rights laws were ignored or reversed, there was a resurgence in not only racially charged words, but also behaviors that make organizations like Black Lives Matter so vital. Words like "thug" and "you

people" are used to describe Blacks, but there is also a word in the lexicon that is often overlooked, "terrorist." The word "terrorists" is used to describe the organization Black Lives Matter similar to its use by conservatives to marginalize the Black Panther Party. Perhaps the difference between the lives of mid-twentieth century African Americans and African Americans today is the ways in which they are being marginalized. Today, hoses and dogs are not being turned on Blacks, and the police are not perpetrating mass state-sponsored violence, like what happened on the Edmund Pettus Bridge on March 7, 1965 known as Bloody Sunday.[16] The state sponsored violence is now perpetrated by a prison system that houses Black bodies, eliminating their civil rights and the ability to actively take part in society. In a system steeped in racism and inequality, the BAM offered a means of celebrating Blackness in a world that saw Black men and women as "other." Black Lives Matter represents the continuing legacy of fighting for social justice in the African American community by supporting everyday Black men and women abused by a justice system without justice.

When Derby speaks of her work in support of social justice and freedom during the turbulent sixties, she is speaking of a time in which it was understood that Black lives did not matter to many White people. The United States has now placed a glossy coating over its history of racism to show the world that we are a post-racial America. However, events in Charlottesville illustrate that racism is alive and well in America, and voices like Derby's are needed more than ever. It has often been said that if we do not study and learn from our history, then we are doomed to repeat it. The difference now is we are not just repeating history, we are branding history with the alt-right movement, white supremacists, and Breitbart. White supremacy is white-washed to appeal to whites not wanting to see themselves as racist. Instead they are "nationalists" wanting to "Make America Great Again." The type of greatness that President Trump is espousing has no room for the poor and people of color, the very people that Derby has made it her life's work to protect.

The word "protection" is very important in Derby's work. There are different ways that Black culture protected its own. Black Panther founder, Huey P. Newton, did it by confronting the police harassing African Americans on the streets of Oakland. In other words, they were policing the police. In the South, Blacks used guns to protect themselves from the Ku Klux Klan. Derby's work with SNCC and other connected agencies safeguarded many. She worked with authors Margaret Walker, Nikki Giovanni and others coming through the Margaret Walker Center, an institute on the study of the life, history, and culture of Black people at Jackson State University in Mississippi. Often, it is the writings of African Americans that offered the means by which Blacks sought help and support. Authors like W.E.B. Dubois, Malcolm X, Maya Angelou, Richard Wright, Audre Lorde, and James Baldwin paved the way for the world to understand the horrors of racism and gender bias. Without their writings and the world's condemnation of the United States' racism, American citizens might not have had the courage to protests injustice. However, it was not just Black authors, books like *Black Like Me* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* brought racism front and center. The difference was African Americans wrote from their experiences of racism on a very personal level and represent the voice of color in its authenticity. They were living out

the nightmare of institutionalized racism. I asked Derby, as someone in the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement, why there isn't more written by many of the freedom fighters and revolutionaries involved in the movement. Derby explains:

> Many of the people I was associating with did not have time just to devote to writing because you're in the movement, and you're working in the movement to facilitate things. So, you might write when you can. You might paint when you can. Some people up north were writing maybe all the time or most of the time because they didn't have the same urgencies, and danger that we had. (Derby)

Derby like many of her southern contemporaries was working towards the reform of laws, and the treatment of southern Blacks. Derby is correct, much of the major writings on the Civil Rights Movement, and Black consciousness were from areas outside of the south. Female writers and activists Mari Evans, Rosa Guy, Carolyn Rodgers, Lorraine Hansberry, and others were writing from their worldview, which did not necessarily come from the south, but was influenced by what was happening to African Americans living there.

When I asked Derby who were her mentors, and who supported her work, names like Sonia Sanchez, Nikki Giovanni, Audre Lorde did not come up. She considered them her peers. She explained:

> I would say Lawrence Jones and Margaret Walker…they were older than me and college faculty. However, what I was doing complemented what they were doing. I was employed by Margaret Walker in her center parttime to exhibit my collection of African sculpture (in 1970 through 1972). She also hired me to coordinate a visual artists presence in her summer teacher's institute. By then, I had traveled to West Africa three times due to my interest in African art, culture and history. I was employed part-time for one year by Lawrence Jones, the Art Department Chair. When he went away to do graduate studies, I filled in to teach courses on African, African American and Caribbean art. They were role models in what they were doing. I didn't have a lot of time to do a lot of reading of other people's work because I can tell you the movement was the main thing, and then my specialization, I'm focusing on that. The writings of Alice Walker, and different ones like Nikki or Sonia Sanchez, they were…over here, and the information was going in, but I wasn't studying them to see how my work fit in with theirs and all that. No. I was doing my own thing, and part of it was education. I was always doing something in teaching and education, whether it was on a pre-school, a community development or college level. In the late 1960s or early 1970s, Nikki Giovanni did include one of my poems in a book of her poetry. (Derby)

Figure 21: In 1969, SNCC activist and photographer Doris Derby was part of the staff of Margaret Walker's Institute for the Study of the History, Life, and Culture of Black People at Jackson State. Derby is wearing a bun and is in the back row. Photograph courtesy of Dr. Robert Luckett, Director of the Margaret Walker Center, Jackson State University Institute for the Study of the History, Life, and Culture of Black People— Administrative Records.

So much of who we are stems from how we view ourselves in society. The African American's view of being Black in the 1960s was fraught with tension because of what being Black in America meant. When Derby says she wasn't studying the work of her contemporaries in terms of how she fit in, there is truth to that statement. Derby did not fit in because she is a trailblazer. Her place in history represents connecting doors to the world of theatre, the visual arts and activism through education. Derby documented the lives of every day Black people, Civil Rights icons, and African Americans in the field of entertainment. Stacks of albums in Derby's studio represented over fifty years of photographs of every aspect of African American life. Photographs of Mohammad Ali, Andrew Young, Martin Luther King, Margaret Walker, and major figures in African American history and culture from the 1960s on were in neatly stacked folders. Each was a historical delicacy giving me glimpses of major moments in African American history with Derby as my guide.

Figure 22: Seated: Julian Bond (SNCC Chairman) Richard G. Hatcher, (Mayor, Gary, Indiana), Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka (writer, cultural activist, poet) at press conference of the 1st Congress of African Peoples, Atlanta, Georgia, 1970 (photo by Doris Derby).

Figure 23: The Collective of African-American Women Photographers Exhibit, Atlanta Central Library, GA The Art of Persistence-Opening Reception and Artists Talk, October 7, 2017. Doris Derby showcasing photos of sharecroppers and farmworkers from 1960s. Photographer: Kim McMillon

Derby was creating a means by which the voiceless were given agency through programs and photography aimed at making a difference for Blacks in America. Without *Head Start*, which has expanded from its early inception, poor children throughout the United States would not have had the opportunities for educational empowerment. However, for Derby

educating young minds did not stop at the materials in books, rather, she used her interest in African art to make a difference. Derby collected art from the time she was in high school through early college. Her first exposure to African sculpture was through the church when a Jamaican couple in the import business brought an African sculpture exhibit to her church. Then as a member of the African Scholarship Committee at Hunter College where they were raising funds for African students. She says of that time period:

> I decided to have a sale of African sculptures in order to raise money for our committee. After 1960, President Kennedy brought African students to schools in the US, and we had a couple of them at Hunter College. But they got over here and didn't have very much money. So, Ray Giles and I, he started this group, raised money to get scholarships. I got African sculptures on consignment and had sales in the Student Union. I sold African sculptures and other things from Jamaica, different artifacts. That's how I raised money for the African scholarship committee. That was in the 1950s, late 1950s. So, when I went to Nigeria, I brought back some African sculptures. Consequently, Lawrence Jones asked me to teach a class on African art, African American art, and Caribbean. And Margaret, she had a summer Black Studies Institute for teachers, and she asked me to teach African art, and to arrange for an exhibit of Black artists. So, I worked for her, and I worked for Lawrence Jones but that was part time. I was still working with Southern Media, and with Liberty House and the Poor People's Corporation. (Derby)

African art and culture has been a major influence in Derby's life from the clothing she wears to the art that informs her creative output. The Black Arts Movement thrived on the art and culture of Africa. From the knowledge of Yoruba customs and traditions, to the study of African languages, particularly Swahili, the African continent has played a major role in the Black Arts Movement. Black Americans were reimagining their Blackness from a perspective that celebrated the African Diaspora. Visualize a people that have been told that you are less than human for hundreds of years, and then an awakening takes place. That awakening is represented by the Black Liberation Movement. Kieran Allen, the author of *Marx: The Alternative to Capitalism* explores the link between capitalism and creating the environment in which racism is justified in his chapter "Gender and Race." Twelve million Africans were stolen from Africa to lay the groundwork for capitalism. Many United States Corporations created their wealth through slavery, including Lloyds Bank, Lehman Brothers, Barclays Bank and others. The irony is US Presidents George Washington and Thomas Jefferson who stated, "All men are created equal" in the U.S. Declaration of Independence clearly meant those word for white men. Allen further states:

> These intense contradictions could only be resolved by excluding black people from the category of full human beings. They had to be denied equal status because, it was asserted, they possessed some extraordinary deficiency

> that made them less than human. They were supposed to have descended from the children of Ham rather than Adam and so destined to be 'hewers of wood and carriers of water'. Later pseudo-scientific racists dropped the Biblical justifications and claimed that Black people were further down the evolutionary chain than White people. (Allen 89-90)

The reason this quote is important and relates to Derby's work is the myths around Blackness to elevate Whiteness and a capitalist agenda led to the dehumanization of Black people. Derby has spent a lifetime fighting this injustice which has seeped into the very fabric of life in the United States. So, when Blacks are told to forget about the past and to move on with their lives, over 300 years of oppression is being erased. The dominant culture's refusal to acknowledge the pain and suffering that slavery has caused to the Black race has twenty-first century repercussions. The work that Derby and others have done created real social change, but this is a wound that is bone deep and needs to be continually addressed as generational healing is needed. The method in which Black people were disenfranchised with the myth of the children of Ham is soul crushing. In order for it to be removed, we as a nation would have to educate our young in a different manner. This new form of education would use empathy and a history of the United States that perhaps is still being written. The myths capitalized on by our founders and those seeking to justify racism must be removed at the roots.

The representations of Africa and Africans from Tarzan to the racist and stereotypical depictions of Africans by the entertainment industry are representative of just how powerful the myth factory is in creating a counter narrative of Blackness rooted in a dark past meant only to debase Black bodies. What changed during the Black Arts Movement is African Americans started creating their own images and beliefs on what is Blackness. In Stokely Carmichael's (Kwame Ture) 1966 address at UC Berkeley, he spoke about the power of Blackness, asserting:

> This country knows what power is. It knows it very well. And it knows what Black Power is 'cause it deprived black people of it for 400 years. So, it knows what Black Power is. That the question of, Why do black people -- Why do white people in this country associate Black Power with violence? And the question is because of their own inability to deal with "blackness." If we had said "Negro power" nobody would get scared. Everybody would support it. Or if we said power for colored people, everybody'd be for that, but it is the word "black" -- it is the word "black" that bothers people in this country, and that's their problem, not mine -- they're problem, they're problem. (Carmichael)

Stokely's words are important because they speak to the heart of Derby's life work. She was educating African Americans about their beauty, their art, and their ability to move pass society's version of what it means to be "Black in America." Our Declaration of Independence is a reminder that "…all men are created equal…endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."[17] As Americans, we are equal in the eyes of God and the law. The Declaration

of Independence needs to be one of the first things that students are taught, not just the words, but what they mean in the context of twenty-first century America. Derby was liberating Blacks from preconceived notions of who we were as a people based on the laws of the land, our treatment in America, and our history as African Americans. I asked Derby when she was aware that she was a part of a movement. Her answer surprised me because it showed the important link between the Black Power/Black Arts Movements and the Harlem Renaissance. Derby further explains:

> It's also the Civil Rights Movement, and prior to the civil rights it is the fight for African liberation. Remember, I was in Nigeria in the summer of 1960 before Nigeria got independence in October 1960. I was very aware of all of that. So, for me it was like continuing from the Harlem Renaissance. I was a part of that. I was very young, but I was involved in it. I was in high school when I was in the Harlem Writers' Guild. I was going to the Palladium and dancing salsa when I was sixteen. And, that was the meeting place of different Black people from the United States, Caribbean, South America, Cuba, Africa as well as White people. The big bands, the political leaders, that was what was going on. So, for me, I don't like to say that it just started at a certain time. (Derby)

I questioned Harlem Renaissance writers use of white patrons and how Nikki Giovanni, Addison Gayle, Jr., Amiri Baraka and others took us out of white approval with the development of the Black Aesthetic and the Black Power Movement. I pointed out that Amiri Baraka left Greenwich Village for Harlem and created a Black Arts Repertory/Theatre School that Abbey Lincoln, Larry Neal, Askia Toure, and East Coast Black activists took part in. They were creating art that spoke to the Black soul and the Black Aesthetic.

I write about the hidden voices of the Women of the Black Arts Movement but am aware of just how much women and men contributed to the overall movement. I asked activist and author Sonia Sanchez to speak on how the men might have marginalized the women writers in the creation of the Black Arts Movement literary bible, *Black Fire*, an anthology of African American writings edited by Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal. Sanchez was adamant that, although the anthology had very few women authors, the men and women worked together in the creation of the anthology – sending out letters to African American artists, both men and women asking for contributions. Sanchez's belief is that the men and women worked equally to create art representative of the Black Arts Movement. As I was not there, I can only comment on the finished product, which does indeed lack female representation.

Derby spoke further on the contributions of the artists that she had worked with during the Black Arts Movement and the Harlem Renaissance explaining that the version of the Harlem Renaissance that is often told, one where we are the recipients of white largesse is not a full and complete picture. Derby associated with Black artists that were younger, but still involved with the Harlem Renaissance, and they did not have patrons. They were visual artists. The well-known artists may have had patrons, but there were

plenty of people who were working as artist but had a job. They lived frugally so they could do their art without having to rely on patronage. Derby emphasizes that:

> …those people to me were already independent thinking and doing as opposed to some who made an actual break and said, *"We're not going to associate with the whites. We're going to have our own thing*. Now I was one who was doing my own thing anyway. I worked to take care of my own thing, but I was an educator, so I wasn't just doing art for art's sake or just for expression, I saw it as a part of fulfilling my mission to make sure that there were black images, and we had our rightful place in history, our culture was diasporic, and we needed to know that. We needed to know what our history was. We needed to connect the dots: North America, Central America, Africa, Caribbean, South America, India, Mexico. I wasn't just going to Mexico to just study, I was going to Mexico because I wanted to learn about the black people in Mexico, and I liked it, to be able to paint it. There was a place where you could study, and you could also paint in a kind of colony that would give you the right setting. (Derby)

As can be seen by Derby's words, African American history is not only American history, but is connected to the African Diaspora. Throughout my dissertation, the word *Ancestralness* is used to denote the ancestors working with African American women as a means of creating art that is alive with the traditions and voices of our ancestors. *Ancestralness* connects the world of spirit to the lives of those of African descent displaced, but still connected. The voices of those of African ancestry is a collective that has waited upon justice and equality for far too long. The men and women of the Black Arts Movement are part of an international communal voice. Derby was making and continues to make those connections that allow Black Voices to be heard on a worldwide level. I questioned Derby on how her travels influenced her perceptions of African and African American communities working towards the healing of the Black race. We started a conversation on the many African and African American artists that were a part of her community. I was particularly interested in Elizabeth Catlett, the American sculptor that moved to Mexico, became a Mexican citizen and created art that spoke to the African American experience and social justice issues. Derby met Elizabeth Catlett while in Mexico with a group of educators at an international conference that included visual artist and educator Margaret Burroughs, social realist artist Ernest Crichlow, and Elizabeth Catlett. All of the artists knew each other with Derby being the youngest of the group. I asked Derby what artists influenced her work. She stated the creations of certain artists inspired her to want to continue with her paintings and photography representing Black people in all aspects of their lives. She went to outdoor exhibits in Harlem and was influenced by many of the writers of the Harlem Renaissance, such as Langston Hughes, and John O. Killens. The writers and artists in Black magazines also influenced her creative growth. Derby collected these magazines and gave a portion of her collection to the University of Wisconsin. Because African Americans whether well-known or just average citizens were marginalized, Black magazines like *Jet*, *Ebony*, *Sepia*, and *Hep* offered Black America a window into the lives of Black entertainers, civil rights leaders,

and sport figures. The magazines allowed Black people to dream and to believe that they mattered, that Black Lives Matter. While Derby knew a great many artists and educators of the day, she made it clear that her family was where much of her work and activism grew from. Her maternal grandmother had eleven children, all of them educated. Derby spoke of her great aunt as one of her influencers. She has a letter from 1932 by her paternal great aunt, Jessica Maxell, who lived in Liberia. She also has a letter from President William Tubman of Liberia responding to her aunt, who was a principal of a mission school. Her aunt wrote to President Tubman regarding the land for their mission school, complaining that a Chief was bothering them and interfering with what they were trying to do, and she wanted him to do something about it. President Tubman wrote back straightening out the situation. Her aunt said the Chief later joined her church. She sent these letters back to Derby's grandparents, and they would read them to her as a young woman in elementary and high school. She met her great aunt Jessica when she visited the United States in the early 50s. From listening to Derby, it seems that her missionary spirit was instilled by her family. She said of her desire to visit Africa:

> So, it was in my head that I'm going to go to Africa. I had a kind of a missionary spirit early on. I was very close to the church. In 1959, I spent the summer at an Episcopal Mission on a Navajo Indian reservation. There were about fifteen students from all over the country, but I was the only African American. We provided services and bible school for the Navajo Indian children and families and migrant African American families from Texas. The African Diaspora has always been a frame of reference of mine. My paternal grandparents and my father, they always talked about traveling. My grandparents used to travel with the church. They went on bus trips, and they took me on a couple of them to Canada. But I always knew that travelling was important, and even though my parents didn't get a chance to - my father didn't get a chance to go to Africa because he died unexpectedly in 1960. – but, they always emphasized travel, and they told me, my grandparents told me about my great aunt; they read letters. So, see, there was that contradiction of what I'm getting from oral history, and from letters, and pictures, and things that I see because my grandparents kept scrapbooks. I got all their stuff when my grandfather died. So, I got all his letters, and things. I've got letters from my grandparents - to them, and from them - from the 1920s, 1930s and the 1940s. My father didn't get a chance to go to Africa, but he did go to Cuba. My grandparents also inherited money from an unknown ancestor on the white side of the family and used it in the 1960s to take a cruise to Haiti. I was in Mississippi when they did that. (Derby)

Derby's affinity for Africa and love of African art stems from a family where a member repatriated to the homeland and offered Derby a more cohesive African identity than

postulated by the media. She speaks of the contradictions in the family's oral history and from letters and pictures compared to the public sphere's pronouncements of Black identity. We speak of our history as Black people in America with the understanding of the difference between our public and private spheres. In the home, there was the safety of family and the feeling that everything would be fine, whether that was true or not. We understood that it was not always the case. An example of this is the September 10, 2018 *New York Times* article titled, "Claims by Dallas Officer Who Killed Man in His Own Home Raises New Questions." In what could be taken for absurdist theatre, an officer shoots a man in his own home and then claims she thought it was her apartment. So, although we like to pretend that our private sphere is safe, it isn't. Black life in America has ceased to be safe. However, the power of family to create circles of safety is a gift. Our oral history during the time period of the Harlem Renaissance, Jim Crow America, and the Civil Rights Movement, speaks to the understanding that sometimes the gift of safety is taken away. We can examine our leaders, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X and recognize that the journey to physical, and spiritual freedom as a Black person in America is long and twisted. Many of our leaders have been assassinated or stripped of power through the hegemony of the dominant race. We were, and perhaps still are, a nation within a nation and understand that whether famous or unknown, the laws and treatment of Black Americans applies to all of us. This is our history as Black Americans. A history that is often not taught in schools, and when it is, sometimes it is inaccurate.

The October 5, 2015 article in *The New York Times* titled "Texas Mother Teaches Textbook Company a Lesson on Accuracy" describes a section of a Mc-Graw Hill high school history book, which states, "The Atlantic Slave Trade between the 1500s and 1800s brought millions of workers from Africa to the southern United States to work on agricultural plantations." This is the way our history is whitewashed. Not only is there erasure, but perhaps one day, people might challenge whether slavery existed in the United States. Already, we see pundits saying, "Black people need to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. They have the same rights as White people! They are just lazy!" These words are already being said by people without a full understanding of the history of Blacks in America. Young minds are not being challenged with an honest examination of American history. I asked Derby why that is. As an educator she states very clearly, **"**That's because a lot of our Black history isn't taught in the schools or by family members who think it is unimportant. It's just not taught." Derby then proceeds to detail how she is working to change that through speaking engagements that allow her to tell the history of Black Americans particularly as it pertains to the arts. Through her photographic exhibits, African sculptures, paintings, and speaking engagements, Derby brings Black history to life. When she was in Mississippi in the early 1960s, she took African art to the community. Derby did this as a consultant for the Head Start Program. In the fall of 2017, Derby was asked to do a presentation in Jackson, Mississippi to teachers at the Museum Department of Archives and History. Derby received a grant to teach teachers from Title VIII schools. The theme of the talk was "Where History Meets the Future," which is the Tougaloo College Motto. She examines what happened at Tougaloo during the 1950s and 1960s. As an educator,

Derby sees students as our future and strives to make the connections between what they are experiencing and her past involvement with movements for social change. She sees students scrutinizing what happened in the past with the understanding that these students have the wisdom to carry forth the best that we have to offer. Derby connects her vision to the Black Arts Movement with the awareness that it never ended. The seeds were planted. They grew with the Harlem Renaissance. Scholars like Derby are the distributors of those seeds to help us grow and recognize that the past must never be forgotten.

Derby went into further detail about how young people that she has worked with are addressing the same issues faced by past leaders in the Civil Rights Movement. Professor Kimberley Morgan-Myles in the Humanities Department at Tougaloo College asked her to be the guest of honor for their theatre production, *Hashtag Wakeup*. The play incorporates dance, music, poetry, and the spoken word. It begins with the Civil Rights Movement and history through present time America encompassing Black Lives Matter and important milestones in race relations through the lens of art. The program ended with a talkback where Derby had the opportunity to speak to the audience about the Civil Rights Movement. These types of programs give hope to the belief that we as a nation are waking up and examining our history through a different lens, one that speaks to the issues faced and experienced by people of color. While the Mc-Graw Hill history book states that African Americans were "hard workers" brought from Africa, we cannot complain if we are not demanding and asserting our rights to "occupy" that history through our words, our writings and our belief in the importance of telling our own stories. What is important is that Derby is not a remote figure from the past but is actively engaged in creating new history that speaks to the present-time challenges of Blacks in America, while still educating the public about the United States' horrific past. Derby says that her life is activism. She wants me to understand that she is indeed standing on the shoulders of her ancestors and discusses the roots of her activism:

> It's all from my family, and the environment, and the people, places, events, and politics in the environment. So, my family, my ancestry, and I think the spirit, divine intervention, God – has molded my mission in life. This is my journey which I think is really what I'm supposed to be doing. It takes people a lot of time to figure out what they are supposed to be doing. God has ordained me to do what I'm doing. That's why I can keep going, and it's all around me. Wherever it is, I can embrace it and do it, and take it to the next level, and that's what I do again as a part of education. (Derby)

Derby's philosophy on art is similar to her beliefs on education. She views social change through the arts through a lens that stresses the importance of self-expression, family, and the divine. In our conversations, she speaks of the roots of her creativity. At a young age, she puttered around in the family's basement, creating projects by her father's side, using ordinary left-over items. The sacred moments that she had with her father are

re-created with her grandchildren. She would have them to visit her "store," which includes her plants and what could be likened to a small shop. Her grandchildren would enter, and she'd give them flowers from her plants. When they needed something, she would say, "Let's go into the store" because she had items that she didn't mind giving away. Derby describes it as going into her "creative energies and making things out of whatever is there." In the introduction, I speak of ancestralness, the quality of using the energy of the ancestors to conjure, to create, to bring forth our creative gifts. Derby conjures the energy that brings forth the gifts of ancestors through her mentoring.

From 1990 until 2012 when she retired, Derby provided programs and services, and the practice of mentoring young minds as the Founding Director of the Office of African American Student Services and Programs (OASS&P), in the division of Student Affairs at Georgia State University. African American students were largely responsible for the creation of a position in Student Affairs. They wanted to have an office that represented the Black students in the Student Affairs area. There was another office in the academic side that minimally serviced minority (Black) students. After interviewing Derby, the University President decided to combine two minority services with Derby as the founding director of this new department. The new program was housed in an office that had two and a half rooms, some used furniture, and no staff, but there was a budget to hire staff. She arrived in November 1990 and spent her Christmas vacation writing a proposal to the Student Affairs Department to acquire additional money for her program., and she was successful. Her office promoted services to students of the African Diaspora, and any other students interested in the programs and services. She knew she needed more office furniture but rather than spend her limited budget, she waited for people to change offices, and then accessed the furniture they left behind. Derby was constantly looking for more money for her office as well as more space.

In order to know the extent of services related to African American students, she researched campus faculty and departments. In the first few years, Derby's office initially reported to the provost. Eventually, an African American administrator filled the position of Vice President of Student Affairs and her department then reported to him. Because of her interest in Africa, Derby wanted to provide exchange opportunities for African American students with African institutions. Derby understood the academic side as she was an adjunct associate professor in the Anthropology Department. She researched what was being offered on the academic side that related to Africa and found out nothing officially existed. Asa Hilliard III also known as Nana Baffour Amankwatia II, was the Fuller E. Callaway Professor of Urban Education at Georgia State University. He was in the Department of Education, but his affiliations with Africa were outside of the University. He did it on his own through his outside organizations. Derby worked with African, Caribbean, and African American students to develop the foundation for an exchange partnership between Georgia State University and the Ministry of Higher Education of Cote de Ivoire. The partnership agreement encompassed the exchange of faculty, students, research, and technology. Derby also worked to expand the facilities for the students. She acquired new space that would accommodate cubicles for students so that they could have a place, a hub, and an African Diaspora library. Her program continued to have an annual African-American Heritage Awards Celebration, which had been established by students the previous year. Outstanding people from the African Diaspora were honored from

administrators to students, faculty, staff, and community. Derby was indeed before her time, enacting programs that benefitted the students, such as tutoring, free printing for their papers, and eventually a computer lab as she worked on getting more space. Their program's motto was "Our FACE is for you" – Friendship, Academics, Culture, Excellence, and Success. Their goal was recruitment, retention, and graduation.

These are the goals of all colleges, but they do not have a Doris Derby whose ancestry is composed of educators determined to make a difference. Her entire life has been spent as an educator. I researched the work of Derby because she has made a difference through advocacy for the rights of children, students, and adults seeking something as simple as the right to vote. Derby did not marry until her fifties and did not have children but has children through marriage. She spent her youth in Mississippi and Georgia fighting for the rights of young people and families through the Civil Rights Movement. Derby's work at its core represents the methods used to educate vast communities, particularly communities of color, that may not have had the advantages that we take for granted. My research is dedicated to capturing the hidden voices of the women of the Black Arts Movement, and yet this is much deeper than voices that have not been heard. Derby was building a new generation of scholars that I witnessed speaking about Derby, their source of inspiration at the Gala Presentation in Atlanta, Georgia. What my research shows is the work that AfricanAmerican women have done to transform the lives of everyday Americans. It speaks to the words of Anna Julia Cooper, "Only the BLACK WOMAN can say 'when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole Negro race enters with me"(31). This quote has been my guide throughout my research as it is representative of the Black woman in America. We see it in the Alabama election of Doug Jones for senator against Roy Moore, where 98% of African American women voted for Doug Jones as compared to 63% of White women (Styler). Roy Moore with his predilection for young girls, controversial opinions on homosexuality and Islam was still preferable to the dominant race. That is what Anna Julia Cooper is saying, "It is the Black woman that enters allowing everyone to enter with her because she understands issues of injustice because of generational abuse from slavery to Jim Crow Laws as part of her DNA. Educators like Derby are working to keep that door open so that all people regardless of race or sexual orientation may enter.

Derby has spent a lifetime in service to others. She has opened the door wide so that others can enter. I asked her how she viewed her legacy and how she wanted to be remembered. She spoke of being very adamant that her program should be named AfricanAmerican Student Services and Programs. Administration wanted to change the name to Multicultural, but she disagreed. Derby explained:

> I always said my office is open for everybody. This is our house and we welcome anyone to come because we want you to know about us, and we will participate in activities outside of the office. I laid the foundation for the partnership between Georgia State University and the Ministry of Higher Education of Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), for the entire university to participate in. Before I started this program, Georgia State University had nothing official with any African country. As this program

> expanded, another office was established to oversee its platform, and my role and the role of my office was diminished and eventually phased out. But that was o.k., because the important thing was the program was there and it was successful. The initial people involved knew how it got started. I continued to have African, Caribbean and American students participate in all phases of my office. Many African graduate students were hired as tutors in my office, and they were able to receive a tuition-free education. As part of their interaction with our students, they exchanged information about each other's countries, and everyone's horizon was expanded. I had a very broad perspective of what I needed to do for my students. So, it's hard to say what was my legacy. I wanted to tie in the African Diaspora community on campus. (Derby)

Derby continued speaking of her legacy, of rooms filled with photos from the days of African dance classes, which her office sponsored; and she participated in with the students. She hired African dancers and drummers from Gambia and the Ivory Coast and offered free dance classes to the students. In fact, her office co-sponsored the first African dance and drum celebration on campus with the City of Atlanta in the Sports Arena at Georgia State University. It was a free community event.

I remembered watching Derby dance at the 2016 Black Arts Movement Conference at Dillard University in New Orleans. I listened as members of the audience smiled stating Derby loves to dance and watched her face light up with excitement and anticipation of dancing in a crowd of friends, mostly dressed in African clothing.

Figure 24: Spontaneous Dance by Derby and the Gathering at the Opening Night Ceremony (September 9, 2018) for the 2016 Dillard University Black Arts Movement Conference. Photographer: L. Kasimu Harris

It was a spontaneous moment that captured the purity of expression and the communal nature of dance. The thrill that Derby experienced on the dance floor was the same joy that lit up her face when she spoke of the programs that she created at Georgia

State University. She talked about what it was like working in Atlanta with its HBCUs, and its population that celebrated Black culture. Derby did not advertise her programs. There was no need to. At that time, Georgia State had about 10,000 Blacks. Derby said people used to say Georgia State was an HBCU in a predominantly white institution. Derby brought in the first GSU Black Student Film Festival in 2011, which lasted for two days. She initiated the film festival as she remembered her own experiences of not seeing Black faces in film and the media. She wanted to change that, and students enthusiastically welcomed that change. Derby formed a team of black filmmakers who taped events on and off campus. As if that wasn't tiring enough, she started a group called the Performance and Visual Arts Council (PVAC), with a handful of Black Student Organizations co-sponsoring. PVAC featured a Reader's Theatre which incorporated many aspects of Black Arts & entertainment. It was as if, this was a reinterpretation of the Free Southern Theatre on a campus.

Derby represents more than a link between the Harlem Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement. Her work and commitment to education are reminiscent of a code of ethics that helped launch Historically Black Colleges, the NAACP, SNCC, the Civil Rights Movement and organizations determined to uplift and challenge African Americans to create their own legacies, their own dreams and beliefs of what it means to be African American. Working with Derby afforded me the opportunity to view her art and writing and to clearly see how she was making a difference, not just in her community, but on a worldwide level. What has happened within academic circles is the voices of men and women that have empowered movements are often usurped by academia. Their stories told through the lens of academic voices. My dissertation seeks to provide the authentic voice of the women that were a part of the movement and dealt with the marginalization of their voices as the words and experiences of the men of the Black Liberation Movement were often deemed as having the validity so often seen as lacking in the Black women's experience. What sets my research apart is that I am going directly to the sources of the African American woman's experience in the Black Liberation Movement.

It must also be pointed out at this time that black women are not resentful for the rise to power of black men. We welcome it. We see in it the eventual liberation of all black people from this corrupt system of capitalism. Nevertheless, this does not mean that 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. --*Frances Beale, Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female*

Chapter 3: Amina Baraka – The Woman That Guided the Ship

I arrived on Amina Baraka's doorstep in Newark, New Jersey on June 6, 2017. I had never been to Newark and was strongly aware that I was in an African American city with lovely old homes and streets filled with Black people, signs of neglect, urban renewal, and community. A police car sat in front of Amina's two-story home, and an African American female cop got out of the car and walked up the steps announcing my arrival. Amina greeted me like a long-lost family member. This neighborhood became my home for the next two days. I opened the door to African and African American history sitting together as sisters, not quite in harmony, but understanding their roots and allowing each other their space. African artifacts were everywhere, along with books, art, and history. I was reminded of the words of Franz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*. "When the colonized intellectual writing for his people uses the past, he must do so with the intention of opening up the future, of spurring them into action and fostering hope" (167). Amina and Amiri Baraka were doing more than "fostering hope." Through their work in the community, they cultivated an ideological vision of a better world for the Black race, opening the minds of many to the real possibility of Black self-determination.

Throughout the Baraka home, the past and the future sit in compelling silence through art that speaks of revolution, of honoring the ancestors, and using history to move a people towards freedom. The Barakas' African American art collection recalls the past but demands that we reclaim our present through Black pride and an acknowledging of our ancestral home, Africa**.** That is what Amina and Amiri did through the Black Arts Movement. They offered hope by providing words and art as ammunition for social change. As I walked through the rooms, there was a feeling of being in a homey museum, airy, with large windows, wooden floors, and walls filled with art, and memories. At its center is a living goddess. Not like Goddesses that require worship, but rather a historical figure to be acknowledged for still standing amid the struggle. Amina will tell you that she does not believe in Black people viewing themselves as kings or queens and so would not appreciate the goddess remark. Her roots are connected to the fight for equal rights for all and the acknowledgement of the importance of the worker.

We sat down as sisters who had been away for too long or perhaps had never met but knew we were connected. She, with her cigarettes, and I, with my camera, ready to document her story, her struggle for identity living with a man worshipped by so many. During the 1960s, Amiri Baraka, Amina's late husband, had become a symbol of Black pride, Black anger, and Black revolution. Amina described this worshipping as the "cult of personality**.**" It is her belief that the deifying of Amiri Baraka was cultlike.

In *Fighting for Us* by Scot Brown, Brown cites Clyde Halisi as saying, "Sometime around 1968, Karenga gave Baraka the name/title "Imamu," for high priest" (qtd in Brown 139).[18] Even without the title Amiri Baraka was destined for acclaim. His art was mesmerizing. Amiri encapsulated the Black experience with words and held our attention as we, the public, gazed in fascination.

Later in this chapter, Maulana Karenga, the founder of the Cultural Nationalist Organization US, will be discussed with regards to his influence in the lives and work of Amiri and Amina Baraka and the deifying of Amiri, and its effect on their marriage.[19]

Amiri's art, marriages, and politics were often played out as living theatre, performed by those closest to him. Amina has been profoundly affected by his art to the point that she refuses to allow his most famous play, *Dutchman*, to be performed in her lifetime. Amina hated the play and saw it as disrespectful to Amiri's first wife, Hettie Jones. Her view is that he used the character of Lula to humiliate Hettie. In Charlie Reilly's "An Interview with Amiri Baraka," Amiri speaks of how the character of Lula was developed:

> Well, my model for Lula was an utterly whacked-out white woman whom I met during my early Village days. I called her Dolly in the *Autobiography*, and she was a deeply disturbed human being….Personally, I can say Lula was modeled on a number of people. My ex-wife, who is white and who did marry me, would be a good bet to be one aspect of the character. (254, 257)

I don't know if Amiri consciously used the character of Lula to hurt his ex-wife. Art much like life is complicated. In *Dutchman*, Amiri opens a painful door on racism. When the character Clay moves beyond the role of the "safe" Black male, he is murdered by Lula. Amiri was speaking on the very real issue of Black men being metaphorically, physically, and spiritually assassinated by a society unwilling to deal with its embedded racism. From reading Cohen's biography, *How I Became Hettie Jones*, I would argue that the emotions of Hettie, and Amiri with regards to *Dutchman* are complex and based on issues of race that sadly still apply. She speaks of "glances of strangers" and feeling the question silently asked, "Who was that at the playwright's side-Lula the murderer, his white wife, or the former Hettie Cohen?" She says, "And then, as I'd dreaded, one day they all become one" (Jones 218). As a white woman, it could not have been easy living with a Black man that racialized Black–White, male–female relationships in his plays, *Slave* and *Dutchman*. In *The Autobiography of Leroi Jones*, Amiri remarks that Hettie disliked the play, *Slave* (279) with its revolutionary Black male arriving at his ex-wife's home to take their children. In *Slave* and *Dutchman,* death and racial inequality are open wounds explored through the medium of theatre with violence as an endnote.

In *The Autobiography of Leroi Jones*, Amiri remarks that Hettie disliked the play *Slave* with its revolutionary Black male arriving at his ex-wife's home to take their children (280). Hettie says of the play *Slave*, "This is the play I called Roi's nightmare…"(219). In *Slave* and *Dutchman,* death and racial inequality are open wounds explored through the medium of theatre with violence as an endnote.

In Hettie's and Amiri's autobiographies, his confusion about marriage to a White woman is acknowledged. He says of their relationship after two children and several years of marriage, "I think now I resented her. It was the black-white thing, the agitation, the frenzy, always so deeply felt and outer directed. It had settled in me directed at my wife. I had begun to see her as white!" (288). What is fascinating about Amiri's statement is the idea that "seeing someone as white" somehow lessens their value; just as for some, Blackness is identified with being less than, less intelligent, less beautiful, and less human. Both systems of identifying individuals diminish their humanity. The question must be asked, "Does love remove color and race?' Had Amiri begun to view himself as Black, and Black identified and thus saw Hettie as White based on his new characterization of himself as a Black man? This was the 1960s, with its Jim Crow Laws, race riots, and emergence of Black identity. With Amiri viewed as an important voice of racial discontent, it would have been hard for the marriage to survive.

What is fascinating is the triangulation of relationships throughout Amiri's life with art as the common thread. Poet Diane DiPrima's autobiography *Recollections of my Life as a Woman: The New York Years: a Memoir* is a beautifully organic remembrance of her life and affair with Amiri Baraka. What separates DiPrima's work from other memoirs is her willingness to explore life, sexuality, and art in all of its gritty noncomformity. She says of her relationships, "Peter returned sure that he was in love with me, and when he asked me to marry him I said yes. There was, to both our minds, nothing odd about my being in love with LeRoi-and continuing to sleep with him-while becoming engaged to Peter. As there was nothing odd about Peter's being in love with both Freddie and me at the same time" (245). DiPrima is a great poet with an open heart that is displayed throughout her memoir where sexuality becomes a way to heal, to speak, to touch without regards to binary forms of expression. It is not male or female, it is the exploration of love, lust, and everything in-between.

In 2010, I organized an earthquake relief benefit with PEN Oakland for Haiti and Chile, Diane attended with beat poet Michael McClure and handed me several of her books of great value to help the relief effort. She is foremost an artist and worked with Hettie and Amiri in the creation of art. However, their relationship dynamics did not always favor women. Diane speaks of how Hettie had asked her to tell Amiri that Hettie had a lover:

> It was barely three months, the spring had not yet turned to summer, when I was caught up in high drama between Roi and Hettie. At her request, and in an effort to make room in their marriage, I talked one night to Roi about a love affair she found herself in, but I only succeeded in making him angry….Hours later, to my chagrin, Roi dressed in the dark still angry, and set out to berate his wife, break dishes. Make the kind of scene I had thought was beneath us. Destroy the dream of openness and freedom. Grace to be loved and graciousness in loving. All gone awry. (Jones 228)

This information is included in my dissertation as it is part of a pattern of male chauvinism that Amiri displays in his autobiography and that is evident in his treatment of the women closest to him. In DiPrima's memoir, she speaks of Amiri's affairs and flirtations in a matter–of–fact manner. It did not preclude her love or appreciation of his artistry. It is clear that his wife and romantic partners were important to his artistic growth and production.

Amina explained that after Malcolm's death, Amiri felt guilty for living downtown with the Beat society. Amina saw his time with the beats as an opportunity for them to become knowledgeable about what it means to be a Black man in America. Amina felt that they learned about Black culture from people like Leroi Jones and Bob Kaufman and made the analogy that as African Americans white culture was forced upon us.[20] Amina believes the dominant culture has the luxury to discover and choose how much Blackness they can accept. When Amiri left Greenwich Village, he had an awakening. A great many of his friends felt hurt because of his rejection of that life. Amina asserts:

> I did not know him when he wrote *Dutchman*. I did not have the same view. He thought the worst thing he could have done was marry a White woman, which I did not agree with. I did not know him. I had never heard of Leroi Jones. You can only know what you know at the time you know it. When he moved to Harlem, he thought he had done something wrong. He was embarrassed. I don't agree with that and I told him. I can understand how it would hurt her. The class element in this and the racial element. When he got to Newark, he was saying we were not Black enough. He was out of touch until he went to Harlem. He was trying. They were criticizing wrongfully. He had to come back home. He wasn't welcomed in Harlem. (Amina Baraka)

In literature, the word *Bildungsroman* represents a young man's search for identity, his coming of age story. Amiri's autobiography can be seen as his *Bildungsroman* in which he finds his way back home to Newark, New Jersey. His journey is one of pain, growth, and adulation. Amina's view of Amiri is unlike that which is described in the memoirs of Hettie Jones and Diane DiPrima. As an African American, Amina observed Amiri from the point of Blackness. Perhaps this was not an area that he was able to share with Diane or Hettie through no fault of their own. Time, place and conditions play a large role in relationships, particularly in 1960s America with its racialized and patriarchal culture. Amina is right. There was no reason for Amiri to be embarrassed. Love is love and has no race. However, Amiri was creating a new identity, one based on living and breathing in Blackness. To him that identity did not entail a mixed-race marriage.

As a scholar, this has been a learning experience in how the creation of art affects the creator, those closest to him, and his audience. Amina's feelings of distaste for *Dutchman* are rooted in her views of what it means to be a wife and how words can damage a relationship. However, as an academic, my view is *Dutchman* represents one of the most powerful and transformative plays in this country's history. The symbolism

and allegory in *Dutchman* capture twentieth century America's poisonous relationship to race. That relationship has led to despicable acts of violence and the oppression of entire cultures. In Hilton Als' February 7, 2007 *New Yorker* review of Cherry Lane Theatre's revival of Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman*, Als suggests, "By bringing so much of America—its myths, its lore, its hatreds—onstage in "Dutchman," Baraka changed the theatre forever." *Dutchman* received an Off-Broadway Theatre Award (Obie) in 1964, and it is still relevant.[21] However, Amina was sensitive to the fact that Amiri was married to Hettie while writing *Dutchman*. Amiri and Hettie Jones divorced in 1965.[22]

Amina's Roots and Newark

When you are married to a symbol, your voice can become lost, no matter how powerful, and Amina's voice is powerful. Amina was a part of Newark, New Jersey's Loft Culture. This was a movement of older working-class musicians who did what was called moonlighting. At the time, they were looking for a place to perform and Amina happened across an available loft at 22 Shipment Street near Springfield Avenue. Before this, the musicians had been meeting in each other's homes. The loft was on the fourth floor. They paid $50 a month and had a café. People started coming from all across the country to listen to the artists. There was a split in the politics of the artists, and so Art Williams created the cellar culture downstairs. The loft stopped existing and everything became the cellar." What is essential about the culture that saw the emergence of spaces for Black artists is that it represents the need and development of spaces for art and community that the Barakas eventually played a major role in developing throughout Newark.

Amina's love of community and Newark are on display as she describes her early life and joy in exploring the arts. Amina had dropped out of high school pregnant at sixteen and married Walter Wilson at seventeen and divorced him five years later. She left with two daughters. Her family did not believe in abortion. Her mother had Amina at sixteen. Amina's mother and grandfather were both involved in union organizing in Newark. Amina reminds me that she came from a working-class background and that support of unions was an important part of her early development. Just as Amina's grandmother mothered the neighborhood, the men Amina hung out with at the loft, who were twenty-five and thirty years older, nurtured Amina. One of the men, Franklin Bowens, was her mentor and was in and out of jail as he was selling and taking drugs. Franklin was a stylish Black man that wore Italian knits and gave her books like the *Invisible Man* and the works of Richard Wright. Franklin never offered Amina drugs, and people knew better than to come near her with narcotics. Franklin died in New York City of an OD. They called Amina, Sylvia. The older men in the Loft and Cellar Culture watched over Amina making sure she stayed out of trouble.

Amina is a storyteller, and I listened enthralled by her descriptions of her early life. Her grandfather always knew when her grandmother had done something wrong because she would start playing the piano and singing gospel. Her grandmother had shot a woman named Hattie. Hattie did not press charges though. In fact, her grandmother and the woman became friends. Her grandmother had asked Hattie not to let her grandfather visit her gambling house, and when Hattie refused, her grandmother shot her.

Hattie lived, and her granddaddy did not go back. This story is important because it is an open book to Amina's life. She was mostly raised by her grandparents who instilled an understanding within her that all people have something to give and empathy for man's foibles is a must.

To understand Amina requires the knowledge of her roots, her connection to family that often includes her entire neighborhood. In her book, *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance*, Zenzele Isoke says of Amina, "…Amina considered herself a self-educated and a self-acclaimed "cultural worker" (88). In my hours of conversation with Amina, she speaks about being self-educated and reading everything she was able to on Black America. I would identify Newark as a point of recognition; heart centeredness developed over a lifetime of working within her community for the betterment of African Americans, particularly African American women and children. Isoke identifies the root of Amina's activism as centered in family observing that "As a child, Amina's threebedroom flat became a homeplace for the neighborhood because of her grandmother's willingness to mother other people's children. She wanted to make certain that her grandmother's legacy of community mothering was channeled into her own political work" (87). However, Amina's life work goes beyond community activism. Amina is a brilliant writer and major voice that was often silenced. This was the 1960s, and men did not marry women with the idea of promoting their art. In one of our conversations about Amiri, she shares:

> I had a collection of Billie's [Holiday] stuff before my first marriage. He was surprised I knew so much about music. I explained to him that I came out of a musical family. When my mother sang, you couldn't tell whether it was Billie or my mother. I sacrificed my life, and I did it willingly. Every time I had a child I wanted them to have. I schemed. I asked him to get me a publisher. (Amina Baraka)

Those are the words of an artist longing to be heard. Amina grew up in a household of musicians and vocalists. Every fiber of her being represents art in creation mode. She says she sacrificed her life willingly. When will women of all races no longer have to sacrifice for love and family? Throughout this dissertation, the theme of the Black woman as artist creating regardless of life's circumstances is explored. As an artist, Amina's contributions to the Black Liberation Movement and her community are immense. In his book, *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, cultural worker Michael Simanga says of Amina, "To date no comprehensive study of her significant contribution to the Black Liberation Movement, especially as a leader in CAP, has been written.[23] This lack of scholarship on her work and contribution and that of other women in CAP deprives us of a complete view of the important role they had in CAP and the movement" (79). Simanga makes an excellent point that my dissertation seeks to change. I am well aware that my research is at the beginning stages of highlighting Amin's life and importance to the Black Arts Movement. However, what is important is that new scholarship on Amina Baraka is vital to understanding the importance of women to the Black Arts Movement and her role in Amiri Baraka's formidable rise in the Newark

community. The need for a definitive book on Amina Baraka's life and contributions to the Black Arts Movement cannot be understated. From spending only a few days in Newark and seeing the love Amina receives from her community, particularly the young people, there is the realization that her life and work has made a difference to the Black Liberation Movement.

In an excerpt from Jaribu Hill's *A Life Standing at the Well*, we are given an important glimpse into Amina Baraka's commitment to the struggle while working with the Committee for a Unified Newark (CFUN).[24] Hill says of her experience:

> I became a leader in the women's division of the Committee for a Unified Newark, which later became the Congress of African People (CAP). Under the leadership and guidance of Amina Baraka, I wrote about the plight of black women in the movement and taught and trained other young sisters like myself. They were coming to get the same thing I had already found - a true purpose. I spent more than five years working in Newark, honing my skills as an activist and returning to my roots as a cultural artist. (32)

Jaribu Hill is currently a judge and the founder of and the Executive Director of the Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights.[25] She is just one of the women mentored by Amina Baraka through CAP. Amiri speaks of Amina's importance to the Congress of African People in his autobiography. In this chapter, I detail some of the issues that eventually caused Amina to break free from this organization, most specifically, its overt male chauvinism. As with many organizations that are male driven, it is often the women's voices that are marginalized. Through my research, I am restoring the name of Amina Baraka to her rightful place in the Black Arts Movement. While many poets have been included as contributors, her name is curiously absent. In fact, she is equally as important as male writers such as Amira Baraka and Askia Toure and female poets such as Sonia Sanchez and Nikki Giovanni. Amina's voice is significant beyond her literary output. She is a catalyst and architect for social change. Although Amina at times feels that she sacrificed her talent to work as Amiri's assistant, and to be a mother, one of her most important contributions is as a cultural gatherer.

Amina, The Poet and Cultural Gatherer

Amina uses the arts as a means of addressing Black culture. In the 1981 July/ August *Black Scholar*, Amina contextualizes Black historicism in her poem HIP SONGS (for Larry Neal) to remind us that the ancestors are always present, a part of our writing, our art and our survival (Amina Baraka 55). To listen to the poem is to hear Black Art:

did you ask me who was
the hippest singer in the
world well, i'd go so far as
to say it was the first slave

that gave a field holler
& a shout in the field i
mean thats what i would
say i'd say the hippist
singer must have been
the local gospel group over yonder there down
the country road while pickin cotton & they tell
me little willie james father was the hippist
blues singer in town & they say his mama got
her freedom once the master heard her
screaming and crying song
but you know the hippist
singer i heard wassa dude
in new Orleans
playing a piano & singing a kinda different tune
although....
in Chicago there was this fast singing woman
w/a blues bottom & a lotta rhythms behind her
she was hip
now I've heard some hip singers
i know a hip song when i hear
one you know w/hip lyrics & all
but, let me say this one of the
hippist singers i ever heard was
a poet singing
"Don't Say Goodby to the PorkPie Hat"
-Amina Baraka (Sylvia Jones)

As a cultural gatherer, Amina has linked African American history, slavery, the ancestors, and art. HIP SONGS speak of Blackness, and the ancestors. When Amina asks the question, "Who was the hippest singer," she answers, "it was the first slave that gave a field holler," reminding her audience that today's hip hop artists come from a tradition rooted in Africa. Amina is carrying the cultural water. In HIP SONGS, the irony is that in order to survive enslavement, Africans and African Americans were creating art from their existence. Art became a means of survival. Amina's words are musical riffs that tell a story of Black life and tell us that the hippest singer "was a poet singing "Don't Say Goodby to the Pork Pie Hat"" by Larry Neal. His poem, a soulful journey spiced with music and Black history, sways with that Pork Pie hat until its dazzling finish. Neal reminds us that:

…the Blues God lives
we live
live

spirit lives and sound lives
bluebird lives lives and leaps
dig the mellow voices dig the
Porkpie Hat dig the spirit in
Sun Ra's sound dig the cosmic
Trane
dig be dig be dig
be spirit lives in
sound
dig be sound lives
in spirit
dig be
yeah!!!
spirit lives
spirit lives
spirit lives
SPIRIT!!!
SWHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEETT!!!
take it again this time from the top
(Neal 181-182)

Amina says of Larry's poem, "When I heard Larry read that poem, I said 'Oh honey!' Larry Neal never got his due." Just as scholars are in conversation with each other, Amina and Larry Neal are carrying on a poetic dialogue initiated by Amina that speaks to the heart of Black literature, "spirit." Spirit literature celebrating the past, present and the future of Blackness with a nod to the ancestors with its appreciation of those that have gone before us. When Amina writes, she is not only speaking to us, but to the ancestors and to communities seeking to heal not just from the ravages of slavery but from a world limited in its depiction and understanding of Blackness. Her collection of women's voices, of spirits, and art, is the eternal heartbeat of the Black woman determined even in slavery to make a way where there was none. It is through the embracing of our history that we as a people bring a new clarity to our world. Amina and Amiri were working towards that aim. I would suggest that it is an ongoing battle based upon a marginalized historicism of what it truly means to be Black in America. The poets are our historians, because they come closest to understanding that through art, the heartbeat of a people is unleashed. Just as the poets are the historians, in *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*, Amiri makes the point that Black music:

> …was the history of the Afro-American people as text, as tale, as story, as exposition, narrative, or what have you, that the music was the score, the actually expressed creative orchestration, reflection, of Afro-American life our words, the libretto, to those actual, lived, lives. That the music was an orchestrated, vocalized, hummed, changed, blown, beaten, catted, corollary confirmation of the history" (ix-x).

A syncretic examination of Amiri's view of Black music as Black history, and Amina naming the anthology *Confirmation* because African American women were telling their history through art challenges our perceptions of Black history and opens the door on the myriad of ways in which Blackness is historicized. Just as Charlie Parker was able to extend the riffs in "Confirmation," the women are having a protracted conversation on Black womanhood through the anthology *Confirmation*. Amina is affirming Black womanism by using text to tell the history of the Black woman and threading the writings together similar to the musicality of Parker's "Confirmation." The women are articulating Black history through the written word. It is a history of Black womanhood that affirms their worth and speaks to what it means to be a Black woman in America.

Just as Isoke uses the life of Amina Baraka to assert the Black women's ability to create and establish community, the literature in *Confirmation* upholds the Black woman's determination to tell her stories, from this perspective, Isoke says of Amina:

> Over her lifetime Amina's political work included cofounding the African Free School, the Black Women's United Front, Community For a United Newark and other progressive community coalitions. Today, the most important component of all of her political work was "telling the story" of black cultural and political resistance …She helps young people imagine and reclaim Newark as a sacred space that gave birth to musical legends like Sarah Vaughn and Gloria Gaynor. (89)

Through *Confirmation*, Amina helped women, and not just Black, reclaim a space where their voices are heard, their stories are told validating the Black female body and the ancestral spirits that took part in the creation of that body. Throughout this dissertation Amina's deep roots within the Newark community are discussed. This idea of reclaiming sacred spaces is not new but is important when examining how African American women are reclaiming community and telling their stories. Amina has spent a lifetime nurturing young minds and providing needed avenues of self-care for the Black community. Like the storyteller, a living component of African tradition, Amina represents the voices of Black women longing to recount their stories and seeking empowerment through a gathering of voices. Amina is the way shower for Black women and children obtaining their voices through art, and community organizing. Confirmation was not an isolated case of Amina empowering women. "Amina Baraka/Sylvia Jones) led more than 800 women and men in CAP, ALSC, and the NBA, representing twenty-eight states, in founding the Black Women's United Front (BWUF), with the aim of developing an autonomous political and ideological agenda for African American women" (Woodard 3).[26, 27]

Amina meet Amiri in 1966. When she describes her early relationship with Amiri, she sings the song, "My Foolish Heart,' by songwriters Victor Young and Ned Washington.

> There's a line between love and fascination
> That's hard to see, how many names such as this

For they both have the very same sensation
When you're locked in the magic of a kiss (l. 5-8)

This song was a popular standard in the mid-twentieth century. Amina says of Amiri, "He was fascinated by me. I don't think he loved me." From reading Amiri Baraka's autobiography, not only do I believe he loved her but also valued her opinions and thoughts. He loved her, but they did not share the same love language.

Amiri represents the revolutionary lover that he so eloquently describes in his poem "Revolutionary Love:"

Black Revolutionary Woman
In love w/ Revolution Your
man better be a revolution for
you to love him
Black Revolutionary woman the
care of the world is yours, in your
hands is entrusted all the new
beauty created here on earth Black
revolutionary woman were you my
companion I'd call you Amina,
Afrikan faith and inspiration, were
you my comrade in struggle, I'd still
call you lady, great lady
Bibi, Black Revolutionary Woman were you
my woman, and even in the pit of raging
struggle, we need what we love, we need
what we desire to create, were you my
woman, I'd call you companion, comrade,
sister, black lady, Afrikan faith, I'd call
you house, Black Revolutionary woman
I'd call you wife. (Amiri Baraka 325)

Amina was Amiri's Black Revolutionary Woman. They may not have spoken the same love language, but they were revolutionaries committed to the struggle. "Revolutionary Love" is a love letter that aspires to a transcendent love, the soul language of the heart, the alchemy of revolutionary love conjuring the Black Revolutionary Woman. Amina said that during Karenga's time, the women were called "house," and being Amiri's wife, Amina was called Bibi, which in Swahili means lady. It is in the house that we can close the door and to be ourselves. The house is a place of warmth and nurturing. Amiri was nurtured consciously and unconsciously by Amina.

He was an admitted chauvinist, but even chauvinist can understand a women's value, and Amina is valuable. She had the ability to speak truth to a man that was worshipped by so many. Amina explained that after his experience in Harlem, Amiri arrived in Newark as a refugee.

Her words are in response to the chaos surrounding Amiri's creation of the Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School (BARTS) in Harlem in March 1965. In Harlem, Amiri was surrounded by eccentrics, artists, druggies, and creative madness. Amiri said of the organization, "We needed to be directed, we needed guidance. We needed simple education. There were next to no black institutions where we could learn, that's why we had tried to put one together" (326-327). Amiri's words ring true today. Guidance and support are needed in marginalized communities seeking to understand the process by which institutions are built. What Amiri did by creating BARTS was offer a beginning blueprint. Amiri's ideas and creative endeavors in Harlem were brilliant, but then as well as now, the African American community is in need of infrastructure and training to enable communities to sustain arts and community organizations.

Once in Newark, Amiri began rehearsing his first play at the Loft. Playwright Ben Caldwell introduced Amina to Amiri, who hired her to perform in his play *A Black Mass*. *A Black Mass* is the story of Yacub as told by the Nation of Islam. Amiri was directing the play, and Ben warned her that he was going to start screaming and hollering. Amina said he never hollered at her, but once. In his interview with Sandra Shannon, Amiri says of that time period:

> We had met not long before the time of *Black Mass*, and I think that it was subsequent to *Black Mass* that we began to see each other. But she has been a very strong influence upon me in terms of…In a lot of my earlier plays, the black woman is not dealt with well at all. And I think that she has been very, very forceful in terms of trying to make me understand that, which I hope I have understood, and just generally in terms of helping me to give some weighty attention to black people's real problems….(237)

In his interview with Shannon, Amiri stresses the importance of Amina to his work. Amiri has shown a pattern of involvement with his partners in the creation of art. The difference being with an African American women, they were committed to art that spoke of the Black experience and articulating that experience to the masses.

Living in Newark with three blocks dedicated to the Nation of Islam, Amina had a front seat to Black nationalism. Amina had just left the Nation of Islam. A friend had taken her to hear Malcolm X. It was so crowded that they had loudspeakers, so you could hear outside. Amina began to follow and listen to Malcolm. She joined the nation but stayed only two weeks because you were not allowed to dance, and a woman could not go out at Sundown by herself. Amina says that she was working in a hair salon on the day Malcolm was murdered. They sent her home. For many, it might be difficult to understand just how important Malcolm X was to the African American community. Even now, listening to his speech, "The Ballot or the Bullet" is a reminder of his power and commitment to social change, and to freedom for the Black man and woman. His historical and emotional significance to African Americans is well documented. Malcolm X's death was a night of darkness where you awake and are never the same because of a loss so great.

For an artist, loss can also be represented in never finding your voice, or the longing for others to hear your words, yet living in fear of those words being heard. In hiding, poetry has the invisible power of "what might be." Poems become magic amulets imbued with power that never dies because they are never read. Therefore, there is always the possibility of greatness. However, once the words are spoken, they are judged, and the magic becomes greater or is lost. Amina has boxes of her unpublished poetry and Amiri's murdered sister Kimako's poems. Amina's career had taken a backseat to Amiri's. Her magic is held in boxes full of words. Perhaps it was growing up as a Black woman in the forties and fifties, when women were often told to be quiet, do not draw too much attention to yourselves, your husband knows what is best, that did not allow her genius to flourish. As a dancer, poet, and vocalist, Amina's creativity is unlimited. Even in her seventies, Amina is tall and winsome with strong features and stone-colored hair and a clear awareness of her and Amiri's place in history. I want to tell Amina's story in an honest manner, and Amina wants to be heard. We sat at a wooden table where Amiri often worked. I turned on my camcorder and started asking questions. I know that polite conversation was warranted but sought to get to the heart of her story. I had waited over a year for this conversation and could barely contain my excitement. I wanted Amina's voice – her truth – as only she could tell it. She explained that police were stationed at her home seven days a week due to her son Ras Baraka, the Mayor of Newark, receiving death threats. She said he wanted to change so much, to make the city better. Sometimes change is not welcomed.

Amina spoke about the early days of Newark. If you were African American, you could not work in the stores. You could work in factories or clean homes. Amina worked in a factory. You could enter the store and buy items, but if a White person was there, you had to wait until they were served. Blacks lived in an apartheid system that changed after the Newark Rebellion. Amina talks about the Newark Riots, stating that when the rebellion happened in July 1967, she and Amiri were not married when he was beaten and arrested. Her son, Obalaji was 15 days old. Amina had to fight to visit Amiri in prison. She called Allen Ginsberg, who then call John Paul Sartre. Komozi Woodard in his essay "Amiri Baraka and the Music of Life" says "The renowned philosopher called the governor of New Jersey demanding an accounting, and that international scrutiny probably saved the poet's life from a violent end" (8). Amina describes Amiri and Allen as very close.

During the period of Amiri's incarceration, Sammy Davis, Jr. got in touch with her. Amiri's father and Amina went to the hotel where Davis was staying. They sat down and told him the story. Davis asked Amina if she wanted Amiri out of jail. Davis said, "We can have him out before you get out of Newark." He pushed a button, and someone entered the room, and Davis asked what she wanted him to do. Amina told Davis nothing and went back to the jail house. Amiri thanked Amina. He did not want to be owned. John Paul Sartre called some people he knew, and Amiri was out of jail.

Pure Jazz and Arts

Amina opened the door to life in Harlem and Newark in the late 1950s and early 60s. I asked the question that I had posed to both male and female artists of the BAM,

"When do you believe the Black Arts Movement started?" Amina left the room for a minute and brought back the *Pure Jazz African American Classical Music Magazine* that stated that the beginning of the Black Arts Movement was in the late 1950s. This magazine was not the literature of my African American history classes, which state that the movement started after the assassination of Malcolm X and Amiri Baraka moving from Greenwich Village to Harlem. Amina believes it started around 1958, not when history books align the movement with the assassination of Malcolm X and Amiri Baraka's move to Harlem. I asked Amina with history validating Amiri as the father and the founder of the Black Arts Movement in 1965, why was she insistent that it started earlier? With a voice filled with conviction, Amina spoke about her first contact with the African Jazz-Arts Society & Studio (AJASS), and meeting Abbey Lincoln, Max Roach, Elombe, his wife Nomsa, and what she saw as the beginnings of the explosion of the BAM.

Figure 25: Untitled (Original AJASS Members l to r: Robert Gumbs, Frank Adu, Elombe Brath (seated), Kwame Brathwaite, Ernest Baxter & Chris Hall) 1965, Archival pigment print, framed, AJASS_27_008, 15 x 15 inches, 38.1 x 38.1 centimeters, shown with the permission of the Philip Martin Gallery, photograph by Kwame Brathwaite

Figure 26: Untitled (Abbey Lincoln and Max Roach at AJASS Studios), 1962, printed 2018, AJASS_19_009, Archival pigment print, framed. 15 x 15 inches, 38.1 x 38.1 centimeters, shown with the permission of Philip Martin Gallery, photography by Kwame Brathwaite

Amina had heard of Elombe and Nomsa when the Granddassa Models had picketed *Ebony Magazine* because all of Ebony's models were light skinned. She was told that Grandassa stands for *Big Ass Models*. The origins of the Granddassa name are further explained by Tanisha Ford, author of *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Soul*:

> They named the group Grandassa, drawing from the name "Grandassaland" that Carlos Cooks used to describe the lush beauty of the African landscape. In the early years, the Grandassa models represented Cooks's imagined Africa and the specific type of Black Nationalism in which he was invested. (52-53)

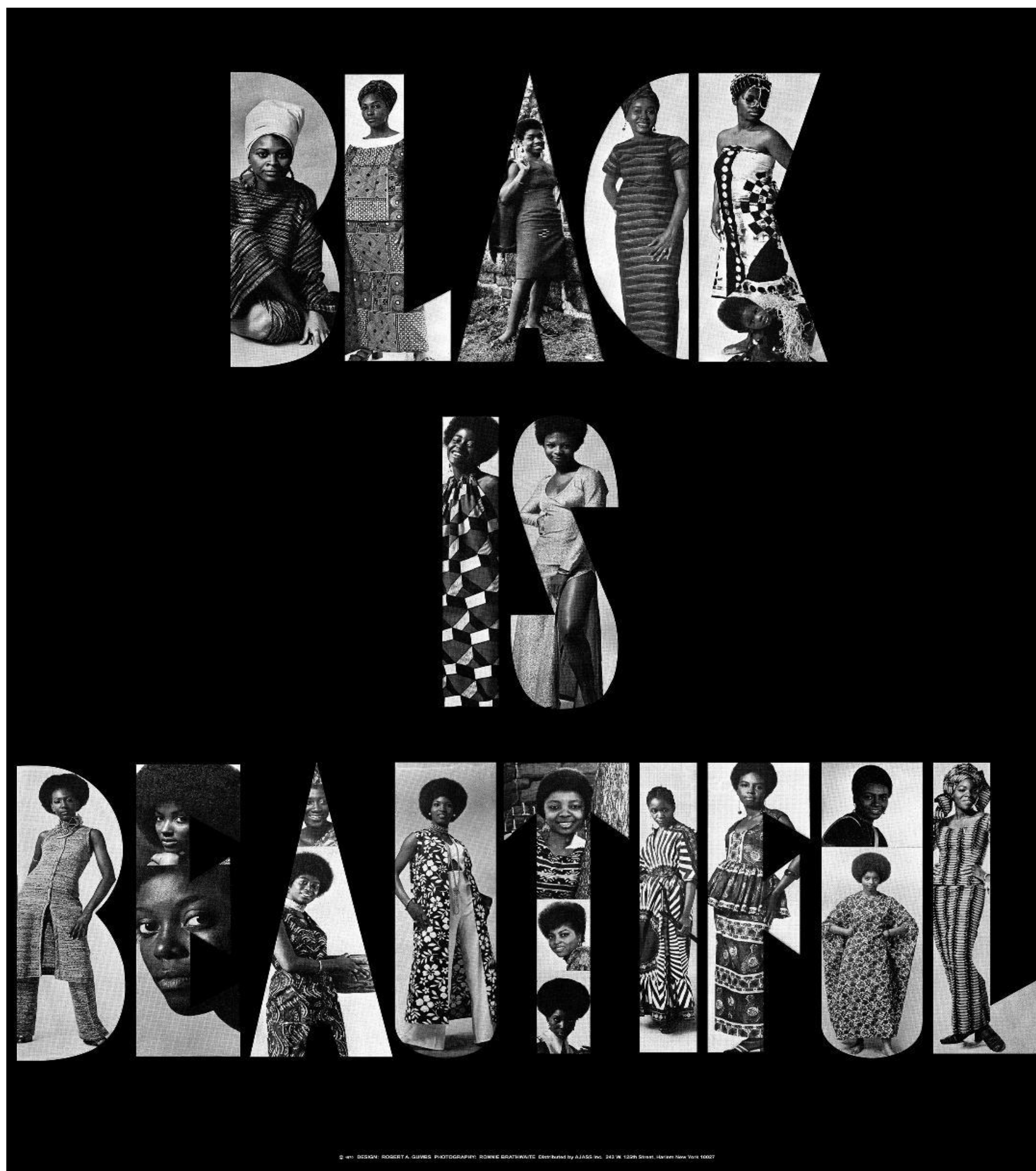

Figure 27: Untitled (Black is Beautiful Poster from 1971*)*, 1971, printed 2018, Archival pigment print, mounted and framed, 60 x 40 inches, 152.4 x 101.6 centimeters, Photographer: Kwame Brathwaite, permission given to include in dissertation by the Philip Martin Gallery, Los Angeles

The Grandassa Models represented Black Nationalism epitomized by Black women strutting their beauty clothed in African images offering African Americans the opportunity to celebrate their own Blackness. When Amina saw these depictions of Blackness and beauty there is no wonder that she thought of Harlem as the beginnings of Black Arts Movement.

Michaux's Bookstore, the Brath Brothers, Nomsa, the Granddassa Models, these people and places were a subset of the developing "Black is Beautiful" mind-set that was at the beginning of the Black Arts Movement.[28]

Figure 28: Untitled (Grandassa Models at Rockland Palace, Zeta, Sikolo, Pat and Eleanor*)*, 1967, printed 2018, Archival pigment print, framed. AJASS_48_001, 15 x 15 inches, 38.1 x 38.1 centimeters, shown with the permission of Philip Martin Gallery, photograph by Kwame Brathwaite

In the anthology *Conversations with Sonia Sanchez* edited by Dr. Joyce A. Joyce, India Denis Mahmood asks Sonia to speak on the Black Aesthetic. Sonia succinctly expresses the concept of "Black is Beautiful," explaining:

> We subverted the whole idea that black was terrible. We turned it around and said no, black is beautiful. We weren't saying that because we thought everybody was beautiful…But what we were saying with the concept of black is "beautiful" is that we all have some beauty about us, you see, and no longer can we be looked down upon-when people would call you black, you thought, "Oh, my God. We're going to fight." Because it was a dirty name. No longer will we allow the idea that the only thing that is beautiful in this world is white. By the very fact that we said that black is beautiful, it was a given that that meant Asian, Puerto Rican, Native

> American. All of that became beautiful for the very fact that we said it. (Sanchez 100-101)

Sanchez is speaking of the power of the spoken word to create social change. Imagine what it must have been like for a race that had been told for centuries that your features, your lips, your nose, and your skin were not beautiful. Suddenly, the word beautiful is used to describe your blackness, and the sun is brighter, and it feels good to be alive. During the Black Power and Black Arts Movements, African Americans realized the power of words and our ability to empower ourselves with new images and beliefs on what it meant to be Black in America. Sonia Sanchez's remarks represent a mass healing for Black and Brown people that somehow thought that the color of their skin lessened who they were. That was the gift of the Black Arts Movement. It changed on a worldwide level how those of African ancestry perceived themselves. Whether they lived in Cuba, Algeria, France, or the United States, the words "Black is Beautiful" became a mantra that uplifted Black bodies and souls.

Amina had a different take on issue of colorism, stating, " I think this was a class thing. They didn't want you to be darker than a paper bag. That's a class more than a racial thing. Where I come from that wasn't it. That was a minority view. Daddy was Black as a frying pan, and he thought he was beautiful." Amina and Sonia's points are valid. As African Americans, we represent diverse viewpoints of what it means to be Black. Our beliefs are colored by age, environment, social status, and circumstances that are often beyond our control. As a Black woman with brothers, I have seen the state-sponsored policing of Black men and the effects of systemic racism that can color how the Black man and woman view their own bodies and lead to internalized oppression. That is why the words "Black is Beautiful" are so important. From birth to the grave, African Americans have little choice but to carry their own words and mantras of beauty in Blackness to survive and thrive in this world.

Amina's love of the art and beauty of the Black race is clear in her poetry and perspective on life. Her understanding of this period in American history is from the standpoint of one that has been a major voice in the battle for Black liberation. We see educators speaking in an erudite manner on this period. However, the power of the Black Liberation Movement was felt on a gut level. It was not cerebral. These men and women were committed to the Black Aesthetic. This commitment permeated their beings and essence as Black Americans. They did not necessarily come from academia but understood the power of their message. They wore Afros and ethnic clothing and saw their dark skin and features as magnificent.

In the December 7, 2011 cultural BlogSpot, *Pancocojams* edited by Azizi Powell, a threepart series on the Grandassa Models was created. In part one, titled "Grandassa Models & The Birth of The Black Is Beautiful Movement" Powell states, "The Grandassa Models were a group of African American female models whose afro-centric fashion shows were the first to promote the slogan "Black is Beautiful. Based in New York City, the Grandassa models' fashion shows were held in various cities in the United States from 1962 to 1979." The models celebrated Black skin, Black features, and Black culture.

There has been a resurgence in the appreciation of "The Black is Beautiful Movement." The historicism of this period relates to how Kwame Brathwaite used photography as a means of validating and lifting the Black race beyond space and time. As academics, we are still mining the art and culture of the Black Liberation Movements highlighted in Brathwaite's work.

The photographs of Kwame Brathwaite showcased in this dissertation are on display at the Philip Martin Gallery in Los Angeles and represent post-structuralist art. Philip Martin graciously provided the photos in support of my research. The importance of Kwame Brathwaite's photography has expanded as our understanding of race and its impact on society has changed. Systems of apartheid that were a part of America throughout most of the 20th century did not allow for the universal acknowledgement and celebration of Black beauty. In the article, "The Photographer behind the Black is Beautiful Movement" by Miss Rosen published January 22, 2018, she writes of the beginning of this Movement, stating, "On the evening of January 28, 1962, a massive crowd gathered outside Harlem's Purple Manor, eager to gain entrance to *Naturally 62* – the landmark event that introduced the 'Black is Beautiful' movement to the world." There was a huge audience that hungered for these images. Historical figures like the Brath Brothers, Abbey Lincoln and Max Roach expand the lines of what we have termed "The Black Arts Movement." Their work along with others provides a deeper understanding of the importance and role of the visual arts, music, literature, and community organizing in shaping a new perspective of Blackness that sought to rebirth Black identity. My research further explores and provides new scholarship on the Hidden Voices of the women of the BAM.

A case in point, while Amina acknowledges the significant role her husband played, her experiences in 1950s New York strengthened her conviction that the history of the Black Arts Movement is much more nuanced than what has been written. Since Amiri Baraka was considered the father of the Black Arts Movement, his voice was powerful in designating who was a part of the movement. In my conversation with Amina, she says that, "Amiri didn't recognize Sonia [Sanchez] as the mother of the Black Arts Movement. I went to speak at a big poetry reading with Amiri and announced that Sonia was the mother of the Black Arts Movement. He was annoyed." Amina was adamant that she viewed Sonia Sanchez as the mother of the movement and felt that if Amiri was the father, then Sonia needed to be acknowledged as the feminine counterpart. Amiri's annoyance might have to do with sharing the stage with a voice that is powerful and female. By creating a non-binary view of the Black Arts Movement, the narrative of the powerful Black male becomes the controlling vision. Acknowledging the feminine energy as an important creative force for Black identity might be considered a negation of the powerful Black male. Sonia Sanchez is an icon. Her leadership, writings, and powerful voice illuminating Black arts and culture transcend any discussion that would seek to limit her role. Sonia's writings are as relevant today as they were in the 1960s. Her poetry and plays open doors for young minds seeking to put into words issues of police violence, segregation, interracial racism, gender inequality, and living in a Black body, particularly as a female. What is disheartening is my students reading Sanchez's play *The Bronx is Next* and believing the racism faced by African Americans in the 1960s is just as prevalent and is being experienced by Black

and Brown people now. There is the hope that we have progressed beyond the racism and oppression of the Civil Rights Era. However, with the emergence of White Nationalists, racism appears to have taken on a more palatable tone, allowing the mainstreaming of fascism and hate to propagate on a national stage due to extremism espoused by our President. What is hopeful is that colleges and universities understand the importance of creating spaces for research that speak to issues of gender as well as racial inequality.

During an interview with Ishmael Reed at the 2014 UC Merced BAM Conference, Reed makes a point of discussing just how varied opinions are as to who represents the Black Arts Movement:

> You know I wrote a piece for the *Wall Street Journal* about the passing of Amiri Baraka. I was in correspondence with him until November 16. We had our last correspondence then. We had our ups and downs. It was a very on again, off again relationship because we had disagreements on certain things. It is probably not correct to say that Henry Louis Gate's definition of Black Arts that he included in his *Norton Anthology of African American Literature* was arbitrarily done. For example, the anthology (the third edition), places James Alan McPherson and Adrienne Kennedy in the Black Arts Movement. Now, Amiri Baraka did not accept James Alan McPherson as being part of the Black Arts Movement. There are so many others that are arbitrarily placed under the umbrella of "the Black Arts Movement," and Gates omits other people. (Reed)

Reed highlights an important argument that even Black Arts Movement scholars are not in agreement. Prior research lends credence to Reed's belief that there is little accord as to who was a part of the movement. At issue is that the BAM has been treated as an exclusive club that opened its doors to a select group of men and women with the right credentials and who wrote in a manner deemed authentic. Voices, like Amina Baraka exemplify inclusivity, and celebrating Black art in all its representations. The decision on who was a part of the Movement is similar to asking a mother, "Which of your children do you prefer?" The Black Arts Movement celebrates the art and culture of African-Americans, whether rich, poor, dark or light. I would argue that if you were African American and created art during this period, you were a part of the Black Arts Movement. To what level you and your art are recognized is a separate issue. Art is personal. Art is political. Art represents who we are in our developmental evolution.

With the BAM's official beginnings in the mid 1960s and extending into the '70s and beyond, many of the Movement's iconic figures believe the BAM never ended. It is alive and being nurtured by literary icons Sonia Sanchez, Askia Touré, Avotcja, Eugene Redmond, Mona Lisa Saloy, Doris Derby, Haki Madhubuti, Aneb Kgosistile (Gloria House), Amina Baraka, Judy Juanita, Ishmael Reed, Kalamu ya Salaam, Jerry Ward, and more. This notion of discounting voices, of choosing who was a part of the movement, explains much of the marginalization of the women of the BAM.

I asked Amina, "Who decides who was a part of the Black Arts Movement? If you were describing powerful women of the BAM, whom would you discuss? Who would you say, "Yes, they were doing amazing work, whether or not it was garnering attention?" Amina spoke again of the Grandassa Models, disclosing that there was a sister named Black Rose and that was the first time she saw an afro. Black Rose had a shop in 1958 or 1959 and would cut everyone's hair. She is still around. The people Amina spoke on wore African clothes, jewelry and realized their deep connection to the African continent. Tanisha Ford makes the point that "By wearing Africaninspired garments, they were communicating their support of a liberated Africa and symbolically expressing their hope for black freedom and social, political, and cultural independence in the Americas" (56). I would argue that we carry our culture inside and our outside presence reflects that culture and our connection to the Black Diaspora.. The BAM opened the door to a Black cosmology that celebrated the universalness of Blackness. This coincided with African nations seeking independence. Throughout the globe, Blackness was rising and became something greater and connected on a worldwide level. We were having our own "Back to Africa" on American soil. It was then that Amina began to understand the relationship of African-American women and the continent of Africa.

Amina's commentary on Africa and African American women supports my research and the establishment of the term ***ancestralness***. My theory explores the connectivity of ancestralness to the gifts of the ancestors, and cultures long gone, but still a part of our being, our essence. My research at times skirts the edge of magical realism in its vision of the ancestors as between two worlds, reaching out, and exclaiming, "I've got you. Our wombs are your sanctuary, your place of wholeness and survival. We as spirits are here. Use our art, our music, and our voices as tools to persist." This Wahenga is the ancestralness that has nurtured the bodies of Black women since the beginning of existence. Therefore, for the Black female to adorn her body with Afrocentric clothing and to wear her hair in its natural style is honoring the ancestors. The Black Arts Movement is more than books, plays, and art. It is the heart of a people seeking to affirm their existence when so much has been done to obliterate their very beings. Since first setting foot on American soil, African Americans have been in a battle for their lives.

It is that reason that the ancestors are so important to African American culture. There is a need to believe that through the Middle Passage, Slavery, Reconstruction, the Civil Rights Movement, and mass incarnation that the ancestors have been watching over us so that we as a race can survive these atrocities. Amina points out that the BAM was about experiencing our culture on a very personal level, from the taste of grits and cornbread to the nationalism of the movement. In our discussions, Amina takes on one of the most controversial aspects of the movement, Black Nationalism. She asserts:

> Malcolm was becoming a well-known figure in the Black Awakening. Newark was almost the Mecca of The Nation of Islam--and so we had the connection to the Nation of Islam, and they were dealing with Arabic culture so to speak, Islamic culture and so they had the garb going, but

> they had the suits and the bow ties, and so on. But my first attraction-- let me say this -- knowledge did start up there in Harlem with the Brath people. (Amina Baraka)

Amina speaks of the Brath brothers because of their work in support of Black Liberation. The attraction to the Nation of Islam stems from its celebration of Blackness. Imagine living in a world where your Blackness is seen as undesirable, and the Nation of Islam celebrates who you are as part of the collective. For many, this was a cultural aphrodisiac. Elombe Brath represented the rise of Black pride in a community in need of self-love. Jay Ransom's May 21, 2014, *New York Daily News* article, "Harlem mourns death of Elombe Brath, lifelong warrior in battle for Pan-African Empowerment" highlights Elombe Brath's legacy of Black liberation with the founding of the Patrice Lumumba Coalition and co-founding the African Jazz & Arts Society and Studio with his brother Kwame. Elombe produced the Naturally Shows that showcased the Grandassa Models and his commitment to Black self-determination.

Similar to the Brath Brothers, Amina chose a path that was influenced by her association with the Jazz Art Society in Newark. The Society worked with Sun Ra and other artists, some prominent, and others among the working class, like bass player, Art Williams. Amina met many great musicians because the seeds were planted for what would ultimately be an arts and jazz community.

Music permeates every fiber of Amina's being. When I arrived, she handed me her latest CD, "Amina Baraka & the Red Microphone" recorded in 2017. The cover displays jazz performers that appear to eat, sleep, dress and breathe jazz, morning, noon and night. The first selection I played was titled "For Margaret Walker Alexander." Amina's rich vocals captured the warmth and fire of one of America's greatest poets. Lines like, "Children Dream and grow to be," and childhood rhymes that ignite Black Fire and remembrances uplifted this CD to the realms of opulent jazz. Ras Moshe Burnet on tenor Sax and Rocco John Iacovoe on alto saxophone, with Laurie Towers on bass guitar and John Pietaro on drums, conjure images of smoky nightclubs. Close your eyes, and the music speaks on a soul level of Black life, the rhythm of life, and Black history. Amina has earned the right to speak and write on jazz legends Coltrane, and Charlie Parker. She is revered throughout her Newark community for her commitment to supporting artists, her own creative struggle, and as the foundational support for Amiri Baraka's inspired output. With a mix of Billie Holiday and Abbey Lincoln, Amina becomes the music, the instrument, as she references Zora Neal Hurston, Jayne Cortez and the voices in between. This is blues. This is art.

Amina sings the blues, her poetic voice igniting Black history, and giving us music, and vocals that scorch with their heat. In the July/August 1981 *Black Scholar* Amina Baraka's Poem, "For the Lady in Color" explores the life of Billie Holiday:

it is the blue part of billies flame
that enchants me
something in common w/the Lady

the man i love you've changed on me
was a high Lady the needle brought
down did they bury the flower in her
hair too is that where flowers have
gone naked courage strolled the streets
searching for love looking for dignity
in a song music was the vehicle
the carpet that
carried her
the story was important to the Lady she staged it in
High Drama on the road in a one woman show the
woman sang and even when
her lyrics smiled water laid in
her eyes waiting to overflow
in phrase and a crying note it
was not magic that we heard
it is the oppression this country can lay on you black &
oppressed (Amina Baraka)

Amina like all of us is mesmerized by the talent and earthy, yet ethereal quality of Billie Holiday that wraps us in song, moving through darkness, at time touching the light, reflecting our own inner journeys. Yes, Amina is enchanted by " the blue part of billies flame." We repeat Billie's lyrics again and again with the hope that their meaning is somehow less painful in the singing. Amina's poem opens the door to the heartache of living in a world where talent and beauty take a backseat to Blackness so that the "water laid in her eyes/waiting to overflow/in phrase and a crying note" and becomes a metaphor for the oppression of African Americans living in Jim Crow America, breathing air separated by closed doors marked "Whites Only," where love like freedom is hard to find. Amina is a poet that uses her life and the history of Blacks in America in the creation of art.

Confirmation

Amina's use of her life to tell our stories is evident in the anthology *Confirmation* and illustrates her deep connection to jazz. Amina discusses the creation of *Confirmation*:

> …it was named after Charlie "Bird" Parker's tune, "Confirmation," and what was interesting about "Confirmation" – there are several different takes on the same tune. I saw in different people's writings; there were different takes on Black culture and Black life, and so on, and so I said, Well Bird could do it, he did a whole lot of different takes on "Confirmation." So, we named it *Confirmation*. (Amina Baraka)

Similar to the intricacy of Parker's "Confirmation," Amina weaves together a gathering of women speaking on Blackness, gender, and inequality through poetry, plays, and prose. "Franz Fanon uses the term "Combat Literature," describing it as literature that calls upon the oppressed to "join in the struggle for the existence of the nation" (173). *Confirmation* is combat literature. There is no waving of the white flag. This is literature that enlightens and seeks cultural justice for every Black woman "in the margins." It is not "black-female writer preoccupations." *Confirmation* is representative of African American woman stating their truths. The African American has been engaged in the struggle for self-determination since landing in the Americas. Anthologies like *Confirmation* speak to that struggle. It is up to those of African descent to create literature without fear that it will be judged based on the viewpoints of the dominant society. *Confirmation* is a major undertaking with some of the most accomplished African American female writers.

However, what is problematic is the introduction by Amiri Baraka. In Evelynn Hammonds's essay "Old Friends, New Faces, and an Intruder" Hammond makes the point that "The introduction, by Amiri Baraka, is disturbingly at odds with the rest of the book. As feminists, we cannot ignore the presence of the introduction–especially if *Confirmation* becomes widely used as a text in Women's Studies programs (as well it should)" (6). Amina said that she did not have the opportunity to read the introduction before the publication of *Confirmation*. Hammond's essay and *Confirmation* were published in 1983. Amina's entire goal was to birth her baby, *Confirmation*. While I understand Hammond's concerns, *Confirmation* was Amina's dream, and in 1983 America, Amina did not feel that this dream could take place without Amiri. Even with its introduction, *Confirmation* stands alone as a significant contribution to American letters, and yet, you will not find *Confirmation* on bookshelves. Excerpts from *Confirmation* are a regular part of college literature courses, most notably Toni Morrison's "Recitatif," Morrison's only short story. In "Recitatif," issues of race are unclear and the touchstone of this narrative. I asked Amina how the authors were chosen:

> You know what happened. … I was traveling around… and I met various women; poets, and writers, and dancers, and singers, and every time I would go somewhere, I would find somebody who just struck me, and this went on for years before I said, "Amiri, maybe we should do a book, and collect all these black women," and so I went through the gamut of the women that I had met, heard, and read. Some of them I had not met, but I heard them read, and then I had by that time, understood that Abbey Lincoln was a writer as well, and she is in there, and Maya is in there, and Toni is in there, and Sonia is in there, and Jayne Cortez, I mean everybody - every time we went to a reading or something, I would find somebody else that I would like to collect, and put it in a book, so other women could have my experience. (Amina Baraka)

Amina's description of gathering the writers for *Confirmation* is reminiscent of the African priestess, assembling the women for a healing ritual. Because, Black women reading the works of other Black women is healing. It is an affirmation that the Black women's voice matters.

As she travelled, Amina collected the words of African American women, words that speak to the traditions, culture, and voices of Black America. This is a form of ancestralness as each of the women represents her ancestors on a space time continuum that allows for the interconnectedness, a refashioning of the Black experience that at its core is non-linear and infinite in its expressions.

When Amina took up the mantle of *Confirmation*, she became a voice for the living and the dead, the dreams of the ancestors, and Black women who in their lifetimes were denied the right to speak their truth. In *Confirmation*, Jayne Cortez acknowledges ancestors Fannie Lou Hamer, Big Mama Thornton, and Aretha Franklin while Rosemari Mealy's poem "New Chapters for Our History" reaches into our past and reclaims Black lives:

To America
Built not in honesty
Destroying the dignity of women—
Black sisters breast fed the mouths
Of those when grown
Would bid upon her at the auction block
As they did the planters' corn…(224)

Mealy's poem speaks to the history of the African American woman and her ability to tell her stories. The last lines of the poem are a reminder that "freedom is a constant struggle," but ultimately that struggle will be won:

We have sailed together upon an imaginary voyage—it has
taken you
through many epochs in our history…it has presented the
international cause-legitimizing the international links of
why we echo loudly the
necessity of solidarity…
It has stated in simple tones/the Afro American's
status throughout the reign of the wrong
privileged class and why as Black women on this
day---we must state emphatically a very natural
message of solidarity.
We want to reflect hope on this voyage
Our children symbolize that intent like
The strength of the roses stem.
From Africa, to Latin America, to Asia, to Europe, that Afro
America's

message is that we can struggle to win, despite the stakes
that we are
up against, that we can struggle to win as implicit from
Angola, to
Cuba, to Mozambique, to Guinea-
Bissau, and most
importantly
Our children will fulfill this task in future history. (229)

Mealy's poem is a powerful message on the history of the Black woman and the intersectionality of their experiences throughout the diaspora in the reclaiming of identity and the bodies, minds, and dreams of our ancestors. Just like the fisherman, we throw out the net in the waters of humanity, both past and present, in our efforts to reclaim and understand our history.

Although the anthology was Amina's baby, she explained that she knew it would not have been published without Amiri's name attached. I am not as sure. *Confirmation* is a work that stands on its own. It is ironic that Amiri Baraka wrote the introduction. It is obvious that *Confirmation* was important to Amiri. It acknowledges African American women and their enormous contributions to American literature in a manner that *Black Fire*, the anthology seen as the bible of the Black Arts Movement, did not. In his introduction, Amiri asserts that *Black Fire* is a showcase for the new Black writer, while *Confirmation* affirms the Black female writer who many saw as non-existent (15). *Confirmation* more than affirms the Black woman. It is a testament to the resilience of the Black female creating art, literature, poems, and plays that reach into the heart and acknowledge the Black woman's worth. Comments from Amina Baraka about the genesis of *Confirmation* would have been an important contribution. However, the absence of Amina's voice is a reminder of the silencing of Black women, intentionally or not. Amina's poetry is brilliant and an important addition to *Confirmation*. Amina's voice is unique in its ability to speak truth to power. The voices of African American women, in general are marginalized due to racism and gender inequality. Amiri points this out in his introduction by stating that the "The Black woman is usually and notoriously absent" from American literature. The publication of *Confirmation* illustrates that "a whole body of American Literature has been consistently ignored or hidden." Amiri makes the case that the Black woman has been and continues to be ignored as one on the "bottom of the American social ladder…the slaves of slaves"" (Amiri Baraka 16).

Amiri's words "the slaves of slaves" points to what writers from Anna Julia Cooper to Angela Davis have described as the debasement of the African American female. Being a slave is horrendous but being so low on the scale of importance that you do not even rise to the position of a slave is incomprehensible. *Confirmation* was published in 1983, and yet equality, sexism, and the marginalization of the Black female are still topics that we as a nation are grappling with today. Amina is a brilliant author who was married to one of the most exciting voices in American literature, and yet her voice and talent took a backseat to his work. Amiri's flaws and brilliance permeate his work. In his introduction, Amiri mentions that they decided against including Nikki

Giovanni's work because of her trip to South Africa during the travel boycott due to apartheid (25). Yet, Amina says that she was not happy that Giovanni was left out of the anthology. It is ironic that a book that celebrates African American women includes censorship. This further validates Hammond's discussion as to the inappropriateness of Amiri Baraka writing the introduction.

Hammond elaborates on what she deems as problematic with regards to Amiri's introduction:

> My concerns about Baraka's introduction are serious. He is perpetuating misconceptions that Black feminists have spent hours debunking. Although none of the writers in *Confirmation* identify themselves as feminist in the autobiographical notes, several of them have worked in the women's movement for many years. Which raises an even more disturbing question-how did this book come about? How many of the writers read the introduction before publication? I don't know the answers to those questions, but they must be raised by anyone attempting to use this book in the classroom. Baraka's discussion of the women's movement must be juxtaposed with other material, in particular material in which Black women articulate their own concerns. This anthology does not need the introduction Baraka provides. But once we get past the introduction, *Confirmation* is an excellent book…. 6

Hammond's points are valid. However, real life is not that simple. Amina did not feel that she could publish *Confirmation* without Amiri. Her decisions were made based upon the very real need to see *Confirmation* in print. When I spoke to Amina about the lack of representation from the LGBTQ community, Amina said, "I understand what she is saying. That was part of the problem of excluding Nikki."

Amina tells a story about meeting Nikki Giovanni at an arts function and asking if she went to Sun City, South Africa. Nikki said she went to South Africa but did not go to Sun City. Amina called Nikki to the stage and repeated Nikki's statement to the audience. Both then raised their fist in the Black Power Salute. Amina made it clear to the audience that she had no problems with Nikki. This represents the open heart that Amina displays throughout a life dedicated to social justice and human rights. It is obvious that *Confirmation* was a labor of love for Amina and should be taught on college campuses. *Confirmation*, sadly, is out of print. I voiced my surprise, and Amina explained:

> Well, you know what happens to black literature, period! Whether it is male or female …we asked Elizabeth Catlett to do the cover, the painter, and God![8] When she said yes, Oh Lord, the sun started to shine, I felt very good about it, and I thought, sure, that was going to be a great thing, and it was for a little while; even actors got involved in it, and so forth. But, *Confirmation* is not the only one. That is what they do to Black literature.

> It is not even Black literature; literature from people to the left or people who are trying to discover, the people that they work with, and live with every day that are great at their work, and the book comes out, it's a big hit and one day, two days later, we can't find it. (Baraka)

Marginalized art and literature disappear when deemed no longer viable to mainstream audiences who are unconscious to the importance of honoring America's diverse literary legacy. Great writers, not taught, similar to old letters, fade until much of their brilliance is a memory. I have asked students "Who are Georgia Douglas Johnson, Angelina Grimké, and Alice Dunbar Nelson," all major contributors to the Harlem Renaissance. How many literature majors know the work of Zora Neale Hurston, and Nella Larsen? They are key voices from the Harlem Renaissance, and yet their light is dimmed similar to a mantra not being repeated, left forgotten, unless more readers discover their writings. Yet, our students know Shakespeare, Hemingway, and Edgar Allen Poe. Why? These authors are valued men, writers whose names are repeated until they become a part of the American Literary Lexicon of great work. The irony is that many times, the names that are remembered and taught in our literature classes, Milton, Chaucer, and Dickens, are not American authors, but rather foreign male voices that are worshipped and reprinted. Yes, female authors like Virginia Woolf, Emily Dickinson, and Sylvia Plath are taught, but it is still the men of all races that are more easily remembered. The reading public is a bit more acquainted with major names in African American fiction like Toni Morrison and Maya Angelou, but there is still a lack of knowledge, and a need for more inclusivity when dealing with African American authors. It is only when we as a nation practice the appreciation of authors of color, particularly women, that we will see minds and hearts open. I learned about *Confirmation* because of xeroxed copies of works from the anthology passed out in my college literature classes. But how do others discover these authors? At one time, the anthology *Black Fire*, published in 1968, was out of print. However, a strong interest in the writings of the Black Arts Movement has seen books that were once thought to be of little interest, reprinted. It takes the concerted efforts of schools and the general public speaking to publishers about the value of books tossed to the wayside due to the mistaken belief that these books are no longer viable. This same sustainability is an issue with Black Bookstores. Amina put it more succinctly, "They're struggling, and then they are gone." Marcus Bookstore, one of the oldest African American bookstores in the nation, was evicted from its San Francisco home in 2014 and reopened in a different location in 2016.[29] The Oakland-based Marcus Books is still in existence and is a haven for people seeking African American arts and culture. However, the reality is that African American bookstores are struggling. Amina spoke of the battle but also discussed our system as being the culprit:

> …different people who wanted to write began to get a place to write and get published. Then the mainstream society, they take it up, and they can offer you more money. They can make you pay more rent, use your space, then they don't like the things that you're writing about, they don't like the

> people that you're telling the stories of, and they find a way like they do everything else…(Baraka)

I finished Amina's sentence with the words "to exploit and then they run you out." Do we say this is capitalism or the greed that is a natural part of our society? The hegemony involved in publishing assures that the few will make the money, while the rest will hope that one day their work is noticed. It is similar to a Ponzi scheme, except the bottom is composed of the rich works of writers that deserve more. Once those on the bottom are awakened, the ones in charge find a way to barter, antagonize, and inflict harm, until everyone goes back to sleep. Only many are refusing to sleep. The game of divide and conquer has been played so long that many are unwilling to take part, no matter the false gains that are presented. The questions that artists, particularly female artists, have been asking since the beginning of the battle of the sexes are "How do we win? How can our voices be heard?" My research examines the Elaine Browns and Kathleen Cleavers of the world, women that worked towards the goal of the liberation of the Black race. Is that how we win by working as allies to overthrow an unjust system? Amina discusses Black Panther icons Elaine Brown and Kathleen Cleaver, asserting:

> It is an old saying but divide and conquer is the main way of destroying because they even will turn women against women. Toni Cade Bambara is a great writer. I can just go on and on; I better quit naming names, have to leave some out, but the truth is that they will use what they always use to conquer. They look at, and they make use of those contradictions, and they knock us off one by one, and this is not only with women, but they also do it with the men as well. They do it with any people that they want to oppress. This is how capitalism works. (Baraka)

Amina uses the word "they" as a way of "naming" the forces that limit the poor, women, the disabled, people of color and marginalized groups from succeeding in a world where the one percent have already established the parameters whereby 99% of the population is ruled. Amina's view of the United States and its power structure is dark, but this is a woman that has battled for the rights of women, men, and social justice from an early age. Her daughter, Shani Baraka, was murdered in August 2003. Her husband Amiri Baraka was beaten and arrested during the Newark Rebellion of 1967, and her son, Ahi, was shot in the head and lived. These are not the experiences of everyday Americans. The life experiences of Amina speak to the power of standing up no matter what, of walking forward when all you want to do is crawl. Amina is a survivor. Her viewpoint from a global perspective is about the limitations placed on women, particularly those fighting to be heard. Amina notes our country's history of suppression of the vote, particularly for women. She spoke of the fact that only white men with property were allowed to vote in the beginning of our country's quest for democracy. White men without property could not vote. She reminded me that at one time women could not own property. They could not vote, and they could not own land even if their

husband had died. Amina spoke further about the history of women's suffrage in the United States clarifying:

> It could not be your property, and would have to be in their name, and so the woman question, along with the question of slavery has been a problem in this country…Okay, let us take it here - Hillary won the popular vote. I was not a great fan of hers, but I really thought that they were blaming her for things that her husband had done, or other men did that did not matter to me. But Trump, the fascist, wins the Electoral College, and if you know the history of the Electoral College that goes back to the Civil War…But the woman question… We have always likened slavery to that matter because that is what we were used as; as property, and just as they did with the mistress on the plantation and a slave woman on the plantation, they divide and conquer; like they have done all of their reigns of terror. It's very important to me that people begin to understand the contradictions and begin not to feed into it.…we're going up against a system that means no person, no human being, any good - like we finally got the right to vote, now they are trying to take it back. Every time we make one step forward, they take us two steps backward, but like my son quoting Kwame Nkrumah said, "backward never, forward forever."[30] (Baraka)

Black Liberation

Amina wears the mantle of history as a woman that has seen into the future and is reminded of the sins of our past. The need to fight those that would oppress is at the heart of Amina's art and music. While lesser souls might give up and remove themselves from the fight for social justice, Amina fights, and writes and speaks her truth on the marginalization of people, due to nothing more than skin color and features born of African ancestry. The women of the BAM worked alongside the men and saw themselves as comrades even though many believed the men were misogynistic. Amina has never been one to shy away from her truth and said, " You have to know enough about history and the politics of humans, and particularly the sexual politics of females and males. It is not difficult to understand that this is not only with the Black Liberation Movement, this is with all movements" (Amina Baraka). I cannot begin to understand the dynamics of male and female relationships in the 1950s and 1960s. However, just by reading the magazines or watching television from that time, it is easy to see that men and women were not considered equals. Why is there a need for dominance? Is this in the DNA of the male? Does the male believe it is his right to dominate the female due to spoken and unspoken belief systems of what it means to be a man? Amina clarifies her thinking concerning the men of the Black Arts Movement by saying she did not think they were conscious enough to know or understand what they were doing.

While I would agree that many of the men of the Black Arts Movement were not consciously working to marginalize African American women, the need to be seen, to stand out in a world where your very existence is questioned is reminiscent of Amiri

Baraka's quote, "the slaves of the slaves." If the Black man was powerless, then the Black woman was invisible, attached to the Black male fighting for his right to exist and seeing the Black female as an appendage there to support him. In my interview with Asian activist and poet Genny Lim, she discusses the Black woman and women of color involved in the liberation movements as viewed from a marginalized space in service to their men. Lim advances the reason for this was the fact that the men had been so oppressed; they justified their behavior with the thought "when I get to the top of the mountain then I will bring you up; just be by my side and work with me, and once I get there, it will be different. But I need, as a male, to get there first" (Lim). While Amina made clear that she understood, Lim's analysis, she exclaims, "They are wrong! It is not about individuals, male or a female, It is about a collective work, and a collective kind of unity too because you are not going to get anything without a struggle" (Baraka).

I questioned whether Amina's idealist belief of men and women fighting hand and hand in the struggle was possible. Amina assured me that it was and that there was evidence. I asked Amina if she saw herself as Amiri's muse, and if so, was her voice heard. It is her belief that it was not until she started fighting back that she gained voice and agency. As long as she stood in the background, on the side, and did not say anything or publicly speak out, and gather other people to defend her views, it was fine. Amina could say something to him, but not reject his viewpoint in public. Her next words surprised me:

> There were many times I thought that the marriage was done. As I got older, and I learned more because it didn't have to do with my age, it had to do with the company that I was keeping meaning the more I moved to the left. The people I was beginning to get in contact with were in the Liberation Movement, and Marixst-Lenism, and also lots of women on the left. I began little by little to say, 'I think they're correct,' and I started on my own development, reading their works, and reading history, and so forth. So when I found myself in a place that was very uncomfortable because I found myself disagreeing strongly with some of the things that we were doing, he and I, and some of the things I had to watch other women bear that they shouldn't have had to bear, and in their inability to understand that this ain't the way it's supposed to be. (Baraka)

As I listened, I thought of Amiri Baraka's autobiography published in 1984. The reprint includes an introduction dated 1996 that can be likened to an internal battle between Amiri's perceptions and beliefs about Amina as they pertained to their relationship. There is the question of ideological differences as well as grievances brought about by his actions that he acknowledges as chauvinistic heightened by his involvement with the Congress of African People (CAP). He speaks of following the doctrine of Maulana Karenga which perceives women as "not equal, but complimentary to men." Amina resigned from CAP, which Amiri saw as a betrayal (Amiri Baraka 149). This is one of the most personal introductions that I have read. Amiri views Amina as an extension of himself, and therefore has difficulty with her veering from his belief systems. Throughout

the autobiography, he constantly acknowledges his "chauvinistic" behavior. Although, it does not change. Much like an observer to his own life, Amiri comments and moves on. For many mid-twentieth century women their husbands were the rulers of the household. The woman was seen as there to serve. The dynamics between men and women have changed and yet remain the same. Amina speaks of Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Ida B. Wells in our dialogue on powerful Black women. Harriet, Sojourner, and Ida stood their ground in ways that most men and women could not even imagine. Yet, all three were born slaves. The Black woman at one time in United States history was not thought of as a woman, or even a person, but rather as an animal, marginalized in an effort to justify inhumane treatment. In *Women, Race & Class,* author Angela Davis deftly defines the parameters of the Black woman's existence, asserting, "The slave system defined Black people as chattel. Since women, no less than men, were viewed as profitable laborunits, they might as well have been genderless as far as the slaveholders were concerned" (5). With the rape and abuse of the black woman's body, it might be asked how the female slave could be seen as genderless. As rape is not sex, but rather domination, the black body has become a site of torture and subjugation. So, when Sojourner Truth asks the question "ar'n't I a woman," she is stating that the black female body, a site of torture, resists any acts of violence in her determination to self-define black female identity.

Is the need to overcome extreme adversity in the DNA of Black women, or do we rise to the occasion? I asked Amina when she consciously realized that perhaps her purpose went beyond helpmate. Was there a moment when she said, "Oh, I get it! Everything is lining up. This is my purpose. This is what I am supposed to do. I have a mission." Amina asserted that it took her a while, and that she resented women referring to her as the homesteader or wife, wondering if they thought that because she was trying to make peace where she felt there was none.

Amina has said that her poems are autobiographical. She started to read from her poem "Soweto Song" perhaps with the thought that the words represented the plight of the Black woman:

Soweto song –
I come from the womb of Africa,
To praise my black diamond,
To shine my black gold,
To fight my peoples enemies,
To stand on my ancestors shoulders,
To dance in the hurricane of revolution,
Soweto,
Soweto,
Soweto,

I come with my hammer and sickle,
I come with bullets for my gun,
To fire all my enemies,

To stab the savages that suck my breast,
To kill the beast that raped my belly,
I come painted red in my people's blood,
To dance on the wind of the storm,
To help sing freedom songs,
Soweto,
Soweto,
Soweto,

I come to carve monuments in the image of my people,
I come to help hold the flag of freedom,
I come to bring my tears to wash your wound,
I come to avenge slavery,
I come to claim my blood ties,
I've come to help my people,
Soweto,
Soweto,
Soweto,

I come to hide in your clouds so I can be in the thunder,
I come to work black magic,
I come to burn out the eyes of imperialism,
I come to chop off his head,
I come to carry out my duty,
I come to stand with my people,
Soweto,
Soweto,

To hear Amina read "Soweto Song" is to understand her ability to use words to create images and reminders of what those of African descent are fighting for, full equality in a system that has yet to offer equal protection under the law for African Americans. There is real anger in this poem:

I come with bullets for my gun,
To fire all my enemies,
To stab the savages that suck my breast,
To kill the beast that raped my belly
"I come to avenge slavery…I come to carry out my duty/I come to stand with my people."

Amina's voice is added to the dialogue on racism and its devastating effect on Soweto, South Africa. The pain and horror of her poem speaks of centuries of violence and enslavement of Black people and is situated in a timeless space of atrocity. In the essay "A Literary Geography of Soweto," Deborah Hart uses literature specifically created to

speak to the "… dehumanisation, oppression and institutionalised violence" of Soweto. (191). Her words and those of South Africans poets illustrate the inhumane conditions Blacks lived under in Soweto. The poetry becomes a genre of racialized violence towards a people whose crime is being born into Apartheid. Similar to Amina's prose, the poetry in Hart's article is displaced, ravaged by cruelty, racism, generational neglect, and poverty. "Soweto Song" represents a continuum of time and space stretching from slavery and uniting with systems of Apartheid, illustrating the inhumanity and racism of man that continues unabated.

Soweto Song also speaks of revolution and the end of imperialism and illustrates and frames the issue of racialized structural inequality. We have only to observe how the debate on Colin Kaepernick kneeling during the national anthem has become a referendum on who is patriotic in America rather than to acknowledge Black men and women being shot by police with impunity. Amina wrote "Soweto Song" during South Africa's Apartheid system of racial segregation and the attack on the children in Soweto.[31] Amina is using her voice and agency to speak out against racism and the issues faced by those of African descent on a daily basis. This is not an American problem. Racism is a worldwide epidemic. This same epidemic of racism and sexism almost led to *Confirmation* not being published. I had to sit and examine that fact. It is foreign to my universe that an anthology with the voices of Sonia Sanchez, Mari Evans, Maya Angelou, and Toni Morrison struggled to be published. I wonder if I am in an alternative cosmos without justice. *Confirmation* reaches it audience on a soul level clearly stating, "Yes, as a Black woman on this planet, I exist in a righteous space." Amina explains the issues with publishing *Confirmation*:

> If I had not been married to Amiri, it would not have been published, and that is because we have to remember, in that period there were many Liberation struggles going on all over the continent of Africa and Latin America, and so on, not to mention the United States. For Afro-Americans, that was the inspiration, to collect the poetry of AfricanAmerican women because some of the best poetry I had heard had come from listening to, and reading poets, and I said, *'oh, I want to collect them.'* I presented the idea to Amiri and he said he would help me, and he got the publisher, and he wrote the introduction to it, and that is how it came into being. For all I know, that's how it went out of being because of the content, and the attention to the liberation movements, to the hearts and minds of black women, and the struggles that we've had to endure as well as the struggles that we had not exactly written about but we were on our way to telling it, our story, and it's always been a hidden story. (Amina Baraka)

I would argue that *Confirmation* would have been published, but yes, the stories of Black women are hidden but in plain sight. Amina similar to *Confirmation* is a gift hidden in plain view. Her visionary approach to creating *Confirmation* is what enabled it to be published. Amina understands the value of the Black woman's voice and experiences. My research speaks to the power of creation myths, and the concept of writing the Black

woman into a history of her own making. Our stories are written by playwrights Sonia Sanchez and Alice Childress, poets Maya Angelou and Mari Evans, and novelists Toni Morrison and Alice Walker and other African American female authors. Our writers are our historians, communicating our history not found in books, but rather in the minds and on the backs of a people long betrayed by society's inability to value Black bodies. Amina views the anthology within the confines of her world and the structural limitations placed upon women, particularly Black women. *Confirmation's* Afro-Centric voice speaks of the pain and joy of being born into a Black body in a world where European dominance has created a racialized universe in which skin color has created a class of "others."

There is a need to sit and allow ourselves to experience the past as told by our elders as a means of healing. I asked Amina what she wanted people to understand about the Black Arts Movement. Her words moved me to a place of appreciation for the art of a people wrapped in cultural wounds. Our past is tangible as if written in the air so that we might grab parts of ourselves laid out by the ancestors as remembrances of whom we are. When your voice, body, and spirit are bound by slavery, the soul holds remembrances of the ancestors and the past so while culture and names are forgotten, the soul knows and carries that past for those weighted down by injustice. When Amina says that she wants our voices to be heard, it comes from a deep place, a place of racial memories that demand justice. Therefore, the souls of Black people create music, poetry and art to tell their stories to liberate themselves and their ancestors. Amina is given the title cultural worker because similar to the African priestess, she gathers our culture and creates. The book *Confirmation* was a gathering of culture by Amina Baraka. She says of that assembly:

> …it's not surprising to me that this book never got any attention because of the women that are in it, and most of all, because of the things that these women are saying in this book, which was also my inspiration for trying to put it together. (Amina Baraka)

These women are speaking to the truth of having a Black body. Through art, they are rejoicing in their Blackness, no matter the pain. When I say pain, I am speaking of a psychic pain and the realization that you are judged before entering a room. Our skin color creates an awareness that we must be vigilant with the full knowledge that the beauty of our Blackness is not always seen or appreciated. Amina speaks of wanting the voices of Black women to be heard, no matter the cost:

> I wanted them to hear the voices of the most oppressed. I wanted them to hear the voices of freedom writers, freedom fighters. I wanted them to hear our voices as women who bear children, who raise children, who marry, who don't marry; women who are struggling every day of their lives to become looked at, and appreciated as human beings which many times does not happen, particularly in the climate of the United States of America… (Amina Baraka)

Amina's desire to hear the voices of Black women comes from a place of deep love and pain. On August 12, 2003, her daughter Shani Baraka was murdered with her friend

Rayshon Holmes by her brother-in-law, who had a history of domestic violence and was looking for Baraka's sister, but found Shani and her friend instead.[32] Shani was a leader in the LGBTQ Community. Amina said that her son, Ras, the Mayor of Newark created the Shani Baraka Women's Resource Center in order to create a space for women dealing with domestic violence, a safe haven for women and children. Amina drove us to the Center, which had only been open for a short time. Everything about the building was beautiful, from the police station manned by African American women, to the counsellors, job placement program, HIV/Aids Testing, support groups, food, and shelter and clothing services. The Shani Baraka Women's building represents a brother's love that led him to create a center, a safe space that his sister did not have. Walking into the building and hearing the pride and hope in the voices of the females reminded me of *Confirmation*, but instead of an anthology, Amina and Ras were gathering female bodies to offer hope and to give voice to the voiceless.

Amina contends that the struggles of Black women are hidden stories, and there is truth to her words. We see this in explanations of the origins of the Black Arts Movement. The question that needs to be asked is why the mythic tale of Amiri Baraka has leaving Greenwich Village, the popularized version of the official beginnings of the Black Arts Movement, been accepted as fact. This version is wrapped in the *Black Patriarchy* of our beautiful Black Orpheus going down into the depths of Harlem to give righteous voice to Black culture. "Say it Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud." Yet, we have the Granddassa Models, the Afro-Centric culture of Harlem, and the opening of *A Raisin in the Sun* on Broadway in 1959, all speaking to the theme of "Black is Beautiful." However, it is when a Black male makes his epic journey to Harlem to promote Blackness that the Black Arts Movement becomes bona fide.

Amiri Baraka's leaving Greenwich Village and his wife Hettie to establish the Black Arts Movement in Harlem is the stuff of legends and myths. Amiri lived a life as an artist without the strictures that many place on their lives in order to feel safe. Amiri was not interested in safety. Years ago, I wrote a poem titled "I am an Excitement Junkie." A few of the lines aptly apply to Amiri.

> I am an excitement junkie
> I need to feel like
> I'm taking a risk
> I'm a stimulus
> addict I need to feed
> on be on…
> (McMillon, *Voyages*, 1986, l. 1-6)

From reviewing Amiri's writings, stimulation in all forms was mandatory. Whether it was drugs, marijuana, women, writing, words, music, or art, Amiri was an excitement junkie. His involvement in the Black Liberation Movement gave Amiri the challenges needed to support his brilliance. America was changing. We as a nation were in need of liberation from old concepts of race, gender, and sexuality. Amiri was one of our liberators.

Both Amina and Amiri shaped the Black Arts Movement with the power of their presence and commitment to African American culture. I asked Amina to describe the movement. There is a great difference in the views of men and women looking back at what the movement was and what it accomplished. Once again, Amina brought up the theme of hidden voices. Amina argues that "The black Arts Movement grows out of the fact that we were a hidden people, and a people full of life and emotion, and the will to live and the will to fight back, and sometimes that pencil or that pin or that typewriter or today, that computer, is the only gun we've got." The computer as gun is a concept that I had not considered. However, I was in the presence of a woman that had faced enormous tragedy. Amina's daughter was murdered, her son, Ahi, was shot in the head and survived, and her sister-in-law, Kimako Baraka, was stabbed to death in 1984. Perhaps writing was the only means by which Amina could heal. Art was her means of survival and in that survival; art had become a weapon for Amina and Amiri.

Amiri's poem "Black Art" is powerful in that it encompasses his worldview as well as controversial language wrapped in words that speak of self-determination as well as themes of violence and revolution. He writes:

> …We want "poems that kill."
> Assassin poems, Poems that shoot
> Guns. Poems that wrestle cops into alleys
> And take their weapons leaving them dead
> With tongues pulled out and sent to Ireland. (Amiri Baraka)

In-between language that transcends, homophobia, racism, and anger are expressed. "Black Art" was published in *The Liberator* in 1966.[33] Amiri's words were anti-Semitic, but later in life he renounced views that no longer reflected his growth as an artist and a human being. With all of its anger and pain, "Black Art" has some of the most beautiful language ever written. In *Performing Blackness*, Kimberly Benston says of "Black Art," "…the poem subtly declares its belief in a form of art that can attain full consciousness without succumbing to the intentional negativity of discourse. In progressing from corrosive theory to authorizing invocation, "Black Art" performs the meaning it seemly prevents…" (195). It is all about love. Even with its anger and hate, "Black Art" is a love poem that transcends its anger. Amiri uses words to heal the Black soul. His lines, "Black People understand/That they are the lovers and the sons/of lovers and warriors and sons/of warriors Are poems & Poets &/All the loveliness here in the world," speak to the power in Blackness that is often misunderstood. "Black Arts" speaks of external and internal love that permeates the cells of every human-being, but this love poem is directed at the hearts of Black people so that they understand that they are "All the loveliness here in the world."

When creating the poster for the 2014 UC Merced Black Arts Movement Conference, I emailed Amiri, "Would like to use your poetry to create an email postcard." He wrote back, "Ok for image, etc, AB." The message was from his Blackberry. I experienced the same joy that Amina felt when Elizabeth Catlett agreed to allow her artwork to grace the cover of *Confirmation*. I knew I wanted his poem "Black

Art" on our posters. The lines, "Black People understand/That they are the lovers and the sons/of lovers and warriors and sons/ of warriors" are embedded in the fliers.

"Black Art" uses language to express the beauty in Blackness by a consummate wordsmith. The beginning and middle of the poem with its dialectic violence is problematic. However, the poem's last thirteen lines are a prayer to the Black race. The last threads of poetry, "We want a black poem. And a Black World," may appear nationalistic; however, they are a greeting to the disenfranchised seeking a world where their voices are not shuttered, where their beauty is as common and as accepted as the air we breathe. It is a statement of yearning for a world where Blackness is accepted in all of its totality. Black men and women are breathing in Blackness and knowing they are wanted in "this world."

Figure 29: Shani Baraka Center in Newark. Amina Baraka and Kim McMillon in Boardroom in front of a painting of Shani, her friend and backdrop painting of Maya Angelou.

Figure 30: Poster for the 2014 UC Merced Black Arts Movement Conference (50 Years On). Amiri Baraka allowed us to use his poem and photo in the poster.

So much of Black history is being dismissed for a more sanitized version. Amiri is speaking of the history of Black people who came from a warrior past and a world where art and man are never separate. The one constant is Amiri's belief in self-determination. Earlier in his career when Civil Rights legislation had not yet passed and Jim Crow Laws were still enforced, Malcolm's X's words "by any means necessary" were Amiri's calling

card. The assassination of Patrice Lumumba and the Newark Rebellion framed Amiri's conviction that the United States was not free and equal for those with Black skin. Amiri was protesting through art. Amina says of this:

> I think we raised the consciousness on how to use Art as a weapon. Art is a weapon, and it is self-defense. The only way we could defend ourselves in terms of nonviolence was to write or to paint or to dance or to sing. Many of us who were involved in the Black Arts Movement were also activists. The activism is probably, I know that for me, it was the inspiration for my work because I didn't want to end up in jail like many of my comrades did and have to do as I am trying to do now, free all political prisoners, because they were political prisoners. It was a war, and people in war get hurt. Sometimes they die, and most times they are jailed. We were correct to fight back, and I will resist until the day I die. (Amina Baraka)

There are people born to the revolution. Perhaps the tragedies that she has faced have led Amina to fight for freedom for all. This need to overcome obstacles is in her writing and her approach to life. Amina's poetry is fierce in its determination to stare down adversity. Art is used as a weapon against the pain of living. Amina offers a means to heal through art and to show those that are healing that it is possible and probable that they will make it through the fire. In an excerpt from her poem, "Sortin-Out," Amina glides and stomps through pain:

> & people kept asking her "why don't you write a novel,/since you have had such an interesting & colourful childhood,"/not to mention how a girl pregnant at sixteen married at seven-/teen/working in factories wanting to be a movie-star/or at least the mate to the Thin Man/how did she come to his big house, this famous man/& seven children/why wasn't she somewhere working or in school/why did she lose her sense of direction/ was it love that led her into this long adventure/that not even she could understand. Was this the end/since she never made it to her dreams/was it being born to a fifteen-year old child/or was it being raised on Howard Street/or was it being raped at fourteen/or having to drop out of high school pregnant. (Amina Baraka 74)

Amina has written an autobiographical poem that speaks to her dreams as well as her dreams deferred. In this age of the MeToo Movement, Amina had the courage to write about rape long before women en masse began demanding justice for the sexual abuse by men in power and men in general. Joellen ElBashir, the curator of the Moorland-Spingam Research Center at Howard University's Founder Library has been invaluable to my research on Amina. A 1968 letter from Amina Baraka to Amiri was found in the library's collection.

Nov 19, 1968

LeRoi,

I've been trying to get myself to tell you what I wanted to say all week, but I never can quite choose the right time.

You sort of know and understand what kind of childhood I had, although I dont think you knew right off. I think I did a pretty good job of hiding that. I didnt or couldnt see the beauty of it until I meet you. Thats what I want to say and thank you for. You have given me all the things and taken me to all the places I dreamed of sometimes I just cant believe I have you for real. maybe thats why I'm always talking about losing you. It just doesnt seem real. I know I dont always react the way I should but its really hard being married to the greatest man in the world. especially for a woman like me. When I only thought it was a dream. Most Black women never meet their heroes let alone marry them. I dont think you understand what that means for me. I love you even when we fight although I might say I dont. Love turned out to be Black for me.

Ameena.

Figure 31: Amina Baraka's letter to Amiri Baraka dated, November 19, 1968. Courtesy of the Moorland-Spingam Research Center at Howard University Founder's Library

I spoke to Amina about the letter, which she says has a connection to the poem "Sortin-Out" in that she had not told Amiri about the rape before their marriage. The letter speaks about her early life and her profound love for Amiri Baraka.

In a fascinating side note, both Amiri and Amina reference the romantic sleuths, Nick and Nora Charles from the Thin Man series in their writings about each other. Amina's wishful line, "working in factories wanting to be a movie-star/or at least the mate to the Thin Man" corresponds nicely to the ending of Amiri Baraka's autobiography in which he says:

> So, if you see us anytime, Amina and me, somewhere, myself like I look and this tall beautiful woman, maybe we are in the lobby of a theater looking at each other and laughing about something….we might look like Nick and Nora Charles in brown to some or Zora Neale and Langston to others or like a brown boy and brown girl, well dressed and sophisticated,

> given to irony and sudden passion, lovers of poetry and music. (Amiri Baraka 465)

Having watched the Thin Man series, Nick and Nora Charles represented, wit, charm, and above all love mixed with a bit of panache. Nick was a retired detective and Nora an heiress. Their clever repartee and crime solving endured them to lovers of mystery with a comedic touch. They were partners and equals, who could solve any crime together. Amina and Amiri were partners, equals, fighters of inequality and "lovers of poetry and music." Just as Nick and Nora loved a good mystery, Amina and Amiri loved a good poem, a righteous cause, and each other... Amina loved to dream. However, the line in Sortin-Out, "…she never made it to her dreams" is relative. What Amina has accomplished in response to the Black Arts Movement is historical. Though, I am not sure of Amina's dreams. In "Sortin-Out," Amina addresses being married to "…the Poet, the Monkish One/the -- famous one…" (75) Which of course, is Amiri Baraka. She speaks of their "complicated sojourn." Yes, it was complicated by people, music, children, art, lovers and life, but Amina was living her life, the one with Amiri that she says of in her 1968 letter, "You have given me all the things and taken me to all of the places I dreamed of sometimes I just can't believe I have you for real…" Amiri and Amina were artists painting the same landscape with different strokes and beliefs of what is important. She uses her poetry to speak of the past, her life, and Black artists that have enthralled the public. While Amiri's poetry is like white lightning, the backyard brew. It has a kick with that first taste that leaves the reader spinning with words that conjure and wonder, "should I take another sip? Will I become delirious and mystified with these words, this opaque liquor of language?" There is darkness and light in his work. Amina too, is not afraid to dwell in the darkness and the light. She uses words to deconstruct pain. Amina has boxes of poems that have never been seen, never been published. While her voice was not silenced, it was muted. I asked why the majority of her work is not published. She expresses that Amiri wanted to control her literary output and so she stored her writings in boxes and became one of the hidden voices. In his autobiography, Amiri acknowledges her pain stating, "Amina feels that her own background as dancer, painter and sculptor…are hidden not only by the hostile system, but with even greater injury, by me as well" (328). Amina stated that things had been difficult near the end of Amiri's life. So much so, that she questioned staying in the marriage. There was a pause. We can never really understand another's relationship. It was clear that as a seventy-five-year-old woman, Amina was finding her voice. This was not just any voice. Amina is a Marxist-Leninist that feels strongly about the rights of the worker, the everyday person. I could see her commitment to community as I met young people of all ages who called her "Mom" with a sense of pride and family. Amina had grown up in Newark, and it showed in the love the people had for this woman. We went to a premiere of the film *Down on My Luck*, a movie on drugs in the community created by Crystal Diniro, a talented African American filmmaker that grew up in the neighbourhood. At the screening, Crystal spoke of the death of her girlfriend before the finishing of the movie, greeted Amina, and her son Ras with love and a thankfulness for the stabilizing force that they represented. I was introduced to people that had led lives of drug abuse and violence

but were now giving back to the community through their art with many citing Amina Baraka as an inspirational force.

Amina spoke of how Amiri encouraged writers and artists to use their art to fight back. Amiri provided Amina with the encouragement to write. He taught her to "lay on the metaphors" as well as the importance of close reading. For many, Amiri was a catalyst for change. Even in the short period where we exchanged emails on his support for the UC Merced Black Arts Movement Conference, I appreciated Amiri's commitment to mentoring. Amina clarified his involvement in the movement emphasizing:

> He was also part of a movement that existed long before he was even born. We have always used song, and dance, and artifacts to express ourselves. I am fond of saying that as slaves, we had chariots in our songs; why don't you swing down Sweet Chariot, stop and let us ride. We'll see you on the other side, and we weren't just singing to God - the other side, it was home, Africa. We used our art; we moaned, we groaned because Africa, it was many, many languages, and we somehow learned English enough, and we began to use those words and those feelings, and we put it in print. (Baraka)

Amina's line, "We put it in print" speaks volumes on the history of those of African descent. Africans in captivity understood that the written word was connected to freedom. In Henry Louis Gates's essay, "The Trope of the Talking Book," he discusses the importance of writing to the nineteenth century African American as a means of fashioning identity. Gates asserts, "Black people, the evidence suggests, had to represent themselves as "speaking subjects" before they could even begin to replace their status as objects, as commodities, within Western culture. In addition to all of the myriad reasons for which human beings write books, this particular reason seems to have been paramount for the black slave" (129). African Americans have used the written word to move beyond limited stereotypes of what it means to be Black in America. The "talking books" enabled us to write down for the world our oppression. Yes, Amiri was a part of a movement that existed long before he was born. Yes, we used song, dance and art to express ourselves. And in that expression, Africa was at its center. African slaves had in common a longing for Mother Africa, whether conscious or unconscious, they longed for home, until that home was something unknown, but always yearned for with the hope of a better life, a better world. When the need to express that craving became too great, they learned how to read and write. Slave narratives enabled us to tell our stories of inhumane treatment by those that would seek to own Black bodies. Amiri and Amina were a part of a movement that cried "freedom," sang sorrow songs, and understood the importance of Africa, the great mother to those of African blood and traditions, traditions they may not have known, but still flowed through their blood as powerfully as the Niger travels through West Africa giving life through its waters. There is often shame in our past and the knowledge that we were a people kept in bondage. However, August Wilson makes an important point about slavery in the anthology, *Conversations with August Wilson.* He asserts that African Americans do not tell their children "that at one time we were slaves. That is the most

crucial and central thing to our presence here in America. It's nothing to be ashamed of" (Wilson 27). I would argue that while a conversation on the history of Blacks in the Americas is important for Black children to hear, the re-remembrance of that history is everyday life for Black people. Their memories are of a past that is told to them by their families and society. It is these pictures and remembrances that develop into Black identity. In the United States, an African American is reminded of their Blackness the minute they open the door or are stopped by the police or purchase a home in a neighborhood outside of the Black community. Yes, there is never a reason to be ashamed of our past or our ancestors, but slavery has left many African Americans without ancestral identity; thereby Africa and African heritage become a bond that like the womb absorbs and nurtures.

The issue of the past occupies an important role in my research on Amina. Her life is interwoven with historical figures that are a normal part of her conversation. Throughout our time together, the name Abbey Lincoln was spoken repeatedly. Abbey appeared to be a sister to Amina, someone that she could confide in and that had her back as well as understood who she was on the deepest level. Because Amina played a background role, many may underestimate the influence of this woman. I asked Amina, who were her greatest female inspirations with the knowledge that Abbey would be at the top. Amina liked the sound of Abbey's voice and recognized her as a great poet with stunning lyrics. She loved Abbey's song, "I've Got Some People in Me," as its worldview of oneness was what Amina sang about throughout our interview.

She met Abbey in early 1958. It was not a person-to-person meeting, but rather she became familiar with her work. The African Jazz Art Society in New York presented yearly programs where she came to know of Maxwell Roach and Abbey Lincoln. Amina had heard them on recordings but had never seen them in person. Amina's remembrance of Abbey was palpable for its joy. She said of Abbey, "Not only did she sing her song, she looked like her song."

It was the 1950s and much like Doris Derby, Amina was aware of the remnants of the Harlem Renaissance and the Harlem Writer's Guild. She was greatly influenced by the African American artists from this period, particularly Billie Holiday, who died in 1959. Her mother was a fan of Billie Holiday. Her grandmother was a fan of Ella Fitzgerald. Amina went to Newark Arts High School, a magnet public high school that Sarah Vaughan also attended. Amina stated that Sarah was there earlier and had the ability to use her voice in an almost operatic style. Amina described the way that Sarah could take a line, and tell the story with one line, the ups and downs and arounds. When Amina spoke of Sarah and Billie, she acknowledged these great vocalists in a manner that paid homage to their lives. Without historians in the schools chronicling African American music and arts, the knowledge of African American cultural icons will disappear. Amina identified with Billie Holiday's life, the pain in her voice, with the misunderstanding of who she was and what she did, and her contributions to music. As a society, we cannot afford to lose the history of important African American cultural figures like Fitzgerald, Vaughan, Holiday, and so many others.

In my research of Amina Baraka and Doris Derby, I encountered similar themes and truths, which stressed the importance of teaching Black history in a more inclusive manner so that women's voices are a viable part of that history. Both women speak of the Movement as connected to a long line of African American artists that never ended. Amina harkens back to the contributions of slaves with regards to Negro spirituals, the blues, and folklore. In the pioneering *Souls of Black Folks* by W.E.B. DuBois, he says of the African Americans' contributions to American music:

> Little of beauty has America given the world save the rude grandeur God himself stamped on her bosom; the human spirit in this new world has expressed itself in vigor and ingenuity rather than in beauty. And so, by fateful chance the Negro folk-song--the rhythmic cry of the slave--stands to-day not simply as the sole American music, but as the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side the seas. (DuBois XIV)

Amina similar to DuBois understands that as Black people we are on a continuum that stretches back to Africa. We brought our gifts from Africa, our voices, our music that comes from our bodies, our knowledge that although we would never see kin again, we could hold them in our hearts by the sheer artistry of our voices raised in honor of a heritage that stretches back to Mother Africa.

Amina speaks of how we have used our voices as tools of resistance. She speaks of how we sent messages with the drum and how even tap dancing was like a drum. Slaves could tell stories with just the motion of their bodies and the stories that our parents would tell about the south, and memories their family had of ancestors working in the fields. They did not romanticize the struggle. As writers we paint pictures with words. We place the reader in the fields, in the slave quarters, and in lives long forgotten. Through art, we are telling our stories, our history. Amina suggest that our culture is in our speech, how we talk to each other. How in the past and still in the present so much is coded language. The 1950s and 1960s were awash in coded language in order to save Black lives from the horrors of lynchings, cross burnings, and the loss of property and family.

Many African American authors wrote in a coded language, particularly African American women who used codes to find ways to celebrate their Blackness and to unleash the bonds of invisibility. I asked Amina if she had felt invisible due to the role of women in this time period.

Amina explained life in terms of roles, how women are seen as somebody's wife, somebody's sister, or somebody's daughter. I noticed Amina used the term, somebody when describing how the Black woman is seen by others in terms of connecting her to "somebody," a term that can denote the loss of self and signify a form of marginalization. The Black female belonging to somebody, whether good or bad. Amina believes that Black women who excel in the arts are often misunderstood, that they had no right to fight; that they only had the right to serve, and thus, we were celebrated for our service. Amina makes the point that Viola Davis received an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for *Fences.* Amina finds it telling that Davis received an award for the character of Rose

Maxson, a woman that is in many ways subservient to her husband throughout most of the play. Amina shares:

> The fact that she would end up raising a child that was not born to her as her own, the fact that she had to stand between her husband and his son – now, that's not uncommon with black women, and it's like the one line that she said, *'I had dreams too'.* It's like our dreams as Langston would say were deferred, and it didn't seem to bother anybody. They would talk about what a great actress she was, and she is that. But I'll tell you I liked her much better in *The Help*."

I was surprised by her statement and wanted to know why she preferred Davis' performance in *The Help*. Amina explained that Davis' character told a story. She had wanted to be a writer. She was telling the story, and then she had to force herself to openly tell the story. For that, she was Amina's hero. What is fascinating is that Amina approaches the film from the viewpoint of a writer. Whereas, Mekado Murphy's, September 17, 2018 *New York Times* article states that Viola Davis viewed the film with regret as she felt that the African American voices were shuttered, and that the focus of the film should have been the lives of the Black maids as their voices were not being heard.

Amina saw Viola's character in *Fences* as an example of the Black woman who always picks up the pieces and questions why we should have to. I asked if she felt like Black women picked up the pieces during the Black Arts Movement. She explained that some did, and some did not. At issue was that the women had to struggle to be included in the readings, in the panels, and then once included, the men would pick out two or three that they allowed at the table. The rest of the women had to wait until there was space.

What she found to be dismaying is that these men wrote in a profound manner about Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, but if their present-day female comrades followed the mindset and work of a Harriet Tubman or a Sojourner Truth, they would be ostracized. I mentioned that Ntozake Shange as well as Alice Walker were openly criticized for their portrayal of Black men. There were complaints from Black men that Shange's "*for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf,* was a limited and painful view of the Black man. Amina spoke of Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster's Place* as being a more diverse picture of Black women in the United States. She spoke of the importance at the end of the story of the women tearing down that wall, tearing down barriers to their lives as Black women. Amina saw this as a form of breaking out of jail. They refused to have a wall separating them from the rest of the world and its many contradictions. It is Amina's belief that nobody frees a slave but the slave. She asserts:

> You do not get freedom by standing on the sidelines. You have to get into battle, and you have to take the whip. You got to snatch the whip out of their hands too, and at the end of the day, we're going to have to do that, and we're doing it. Many women are now in places that we fought for, and nobody gave it to us nor did they give it to the men but when people don't

> understand or don't seem to understand - because I can't say they don't understand it - what they don't seem to care about is the role of life. Women give life. Of course, the seed has to be planted, but also the subject comes up as to whether you have a right to your own body… (Amina Baraka)

Amina makes the point that no male or other female can make the decision of what choices you make with your body. She also makes the case that for many it is a question of genocide, a question she views as always on the slave's mind, the mind of Native Americans or any other group that has been systematically disenfranchised.

Amina bore seven children, and has been asked the question, "Why did you have so many?" She is not ashamed to say she had seven children and views those births as beyond sex, and more from a consciousness that gives life, rather than destroys. Yet, she sees that those same lives, Black lives have had to fight for their existence. Amina stands with women saying, "It is my choice." A similar theme with regards to how the Black woman chooses to use her body is explored throughout Elaine Brown's autobiography, *A Taste of Power*. Women are shown as revolutionaries prepared to die for what they saw as freedom "by any means necessary." Women were being told that their bodies were to be used as a vessel for future revolutionaries, and that "Our gender was but another weapon" (Brown 137). Gender as weapon speaks to the subjugation of the Black woman through a construction of revolution as performance. In this space of revolution, the Black woman is given a binary role as both a revolutionary, and, as an object of revolution; whereby, her body becomes a vessel of sanctioned revolutionary violence both within and outside of the movement. The men and women of the movement saw themselves as soldiers fighting for equality for the African American on United States soil. The men expected the woman to be their foot soldiers, metaphorically carrying the pain, anger, and subjugation of the black race. Amina believes the Black woman taking ownership of her body is an issue confronting, not just Black women, but all women. The difference is that owning the Black body by women before and after emancipation could still lead to death or loss.

I asked Amina to describe her interactions with Black Panther women. Amina saw her role as a series of contradictions with the cultural nationalists, of which she was a part, and the Panther Party. They supported and aided the Black Panthers in their fight for freedom but were aware that the Black Panther women were a lot freer to do as they wanted than the cultural nationalist women. They seemed to understand that they had a role that was important. Not that the cultural nationalist women were not important, but Amina explained that they thought if people ate the right food, wore the right clothes, respect people who didn't respect them that would calm things down, that the men would come to understand that they were human beings like them.

Amina saw Black Panther Party women as bolder and freer. They understood that they had to be equal, and the cultural nationalists were satisfied to some degree, until they became consciously awake. They were satisfied to braid their hair, wear naturals, sew African clothes, and speak Swahili. Amina does not see her words as a put-down, but rather an awareness of where she and other cultural nationalist women were at the

time. She felt there was a need for them to historically understand their roles as freedom fighters, and there lay the contradiction. How do you become a freedom fighter when you are in sync with your oppressor? Amina is aware that the Panther women did not lead glorious lives. They were just not stunted in the same manner as the cultural nationalist women. Amina believes, "They had a lot of pain. I wasn't there, but I can assume, being a woman and all there was a lot of pain."

The Anchor

In my introduction, I write about Amina as being Amiri Baraka's anchor. An anchor sinks to the bottom of the sea, holding the history and treasures of the ship. An anchor is what allows the ship to not float away, insubstantial and unable to handle life's currents. I saw Amina as often steering the ship when Amiri might go off in a different direction, or insult a major literary figure, such as Nikki Giovanni.

I wanted to know how Amina viewed Amiri's legacy, and did she see herself as his anchor. Amina starts with the position that they were male and female. That in itself will often cause a difference in viewpoints. Amina worked alongside of Amiri, and yet felt that she was not allowed the freedom that he had. Amina could make an analysis of what was going on, watching from the outside and participating all at the same time. She came to different conclusions about the movement, started to fight back, and encouraged other women to do so. Michael Simanga, in *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People*, says of Amina:

> Amina Baraka was a serious and influential leader in CAP who contributed to its ideological organization, and programmatic development. As the only woman on CAP's Executive Council for several years, she was also the only voice on that body advocating for significant change in women's roles in the organization including diversifying the leadership to involve more women on all levels. (80)

Amina was determined that the women of CAP would have a voice in the leadership of an organization with a mission of addressing the needs of African Americans on a national basis. With regards to CAP, Amiri and Amina fought in terms of ideological stances. Amiri speaks at great length on this in his autobiography which was republished in 1997 with a new introduction specifically addressing issues that Amiri had with regards to Amina supporting his work. I felt there to be a great deal of sadness, and yet love for Amina in his introduction. He said of their relationship, "Didn't she know that however incorrect I was in whatever juncture of this travail that ultimately I would find the clarity and correct political direction? How could our relationship be dismantled by some political disagreement? No matter how much we might differ, I thought that if we worked together, as husband and wife and as committed revolutionaries, we would come up with the correct political focus, together" (3). The introduction resembles a love letter from a disgruntled suitor. Amiri professed his love while venting his frustration over why Amina was not listening to him. I sometimes cringed at Amiri's earnestness and street fighter

instincts. They were involved in the Congress of African People (CAP) of which Amiri was their leader. CAP was built on the doctrine of Ron Karenga, which saw women as not equal, but complimentary to men (Amiri Baraka 2).

Amiri's introduction is a fight between himself, his political stances, and his desire for Amina to be a loving mate that allows him to work through his chauvinism. Both Amiri and Amina had enormous creativity infused with the revolutionary desire for social change. At this point in Amina's life, she was examining the role of women and questioning the male patriarchy. In James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement*, he makes the point that Amina, a feminist at heart, spoke the words of Karenga in her statement at the 'Social Organization workshop." She said, "What makes a woman appealing is femininity and she can't be feminine without being submissive" (88). Smethurst points out that, "…in this unreconstructed Kwaidaist view" it was the duty of the Black woman to act as both revolutionary and submissive partner. Due to the power of the Black female and her male allies this gender oppression "…the Kawaidaists, including Karenga himself, did not simply revise their ideological stances but often offered formal apologies (88-89). Amina says she does remember saying this, but makes clear that she opposed this ideology, asserting that she came to her feelings of dislike for Karenga because of his doctrine, which she felt was akin to a cult. It is her belief that she cannot be loyal to any doctrine that oppresses another human being. Amina's voices what she saw as problematic with Karenga's doctrine as she discusses having to say this statement on a daily basis. "If I have said or done anything of value or beauty all mistakes are mine and all praises due to Imamu Baraka." She said this every day for ten years. Amina further states that, "Any member that was a member of African people in our group, anybody in the cadre, had to say that every day when you had to speak to him." In Komozi Woodard's *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka and Black Power Politics*, Woodard states of Amiri's relationship to Maulanga Karenga and Kwaidaism, "Baraka had become fanatical, almost religious, in his faith in Karenga's leadership and doctrine. Baraka would not allow anyone around him in Newark to question Karenga's authority on any subject" (120). From reading accounts of this period, Karenga gave Amiri the tools by which he was able to create an organization that eventually amassed great political power in Newark through a cultural nationalism that united those of African descent. Woodward points out that "In the June 16, 1970, election, Kenneth Gibson, the Community Choice candidate for mayor, received some 95 percent of the black vote… At the time, the victory was understood as a powerful endorsement of Imamu Baraka's innovative politics of cultural nationalism" (115). However, I would argue that Amina Baraka was just as much of a political force for change in Newark as Amiri:

> In CFUN, CAP Newark, and CAP nationally, Amina Baraka focused her efforts on not only expressing the need to address the issue of equality for women in the organization and movement, but she also focused on organizing the women into a formidable force for change in the organization, community, and movement….Despite their lack of

> official leadership status within the Kawaida community, because of Amina's advocacy and organizing of the women, she effectively moved women into leadership within the organization. (Simanga 80-81)

Amina's advocacy is reflective of her commitment to inspiring and healing women, particularly Black women of institutional oppression. Further, it is quite evident that Amina was dealing with cultural and gender oppression and used her talents as a vocalist, writer, and community organizer to combat marginalization. Amina is a warrior that has picked up her tools, her weapons of choice, the written word and music to stand in her power.

I spoke of Amina as Amiri's anchor, and perhaps at times his conscience. She does not know if she was an anchor for Amiri but would disagree and try to persuade Amiri to understand that there had to be equality in order to have freedom. Amina was a safe harbor for women and men in CFUN and CAP that desired a means of working towards self-determination and political advocacy in their communities. In reviewing my research, I am continually reminded that this was the 1960s, and women of all races were fighting for equal rights. When assessing Black Arts Movement archival material with Alex Cherian, resident film archivist for the San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive housed at San Francisco State, I asked Cherian why there was little or no film on the women that took part in the Black Arts Movement. He explained that it was the 1960s, and men put the cameras on men. While, Sonia Sanchez, Amina Baraka, Judy Juanita and Black Panther Party women were on campus, the videotapes that I reviewed mostly showcased Amiri Baraka, Jimmy Garrett, Huey Newton, Marvin X, Dr. Nathan Hare, and other African American males involved in the movement. It was a different time where the female voice was not championed. In historian Ashley D. Farmer's book *Remaking Black Power*, she discusses Amina's complete revamping of CAP so that the voices of women were heard:

> Amina Baraka presented a version of African womanhood that reified and reconfigured CAP's political outlook and organizing structure. She located the crux of the African woman's activism in Kawaidist directives of inspiration, education, and social development…. By calling on CAP women to develop a political identity based on the "scientific politics of revolutionaries" rather than the hermetic interpretations of black men, Baraka charged black women with eradicating the remaining vestiges of Kawaidist conservatism. She also portrayed them as the progenitors of progressive forms of cultural nationalist thought and challenged the antiintellectual characterizations of female cultural nationalists. (185-186)

Amina says she knew exactly what she was doing in that she felt responsible because she was Amiri's wife and had a lot of influence over the women's lives. She wanted the women to feel empowered. By remaking Kawaidism and interpreting the doctrine in a manner that identified ways that the African American woman's voice was

strengthened through cultural and revolutionary practices geared to uplifting the Black woman, she was truly remaking the doctrine in the proud image of the Black woman. However, in discussing this time period with Amina, she speaks of enormous guilt for taking part in what she now considers a cult. I would suggest that the work that was done in the community outweighs her perceptions and misplaced guilt in being a part of an organization that she deemed as cult-like. From our conversation, it is clear to me that we cannot fix or heal our past, we can only heal ourselves. It is that healing that enables us to live with our past.

I wanted to know if the African American men in the Liberation Movement viewed the women as partners or as fulfillers of their needs. Amina saw the women as always having to fight. She was impressed with the women in the African Liberation Movement, the women in the Latin American Liberation Movement, and the women in the military, women that participated in World War II that were often unsung heroes. These were the women that influenced Amina. She was impressed with Puerto Rican nationalist Lolita Lebron, Winne Mandela, and the Suffrage Movement.[34] The woman question and those women that fought to have their voices heard is what has affected Amina. Rosa Park, Fannie Lou Hamer, and the women and men from the Civil Rights Movement have stirred her own fight for social justice. Another of Amina's loves is women blues singers. She says of the women:

> They weren't loved by a particular class. They would do things that women weren't supposed to do to defend themselves. We took the right to start to defend ourselves. The Panther Women really set the stage for that one. They really set the stage for that one, and they paid dearly for it. (Amina Baraka)

Amina explained that although they paid dearly, they did not have a choice because if you are conscious and you know how to use your weapons, and make decisions, you must be able to defend them and not be moved. She speaks of the women of the movement, working to free Angela Davis and other political prisoners.

How did women freedom fighters influence Amina's work? Or if not the women, was it the music? Amina speaks of music as her main inspiration. She says that music was always it, but it was the women writers, the women poets that gave her the freedom to create. She experienced freedom from meeting and hearing the voices of women writers. Amina realized, "I can say this. I don't have to hide this. I can actually say this. I might get accused of being this or being that but it's okay as long as I have the freedom to say it."

What was the music and art that was transformative that made her sit up and say, "Oh, my God, this is art?" Jayne Cortez's name was uttered, and Amina had this to say about Cortez:

> I read her and listened to her voice. This is what I want to write like! This is what I want to sound like! These are the things I want to pay attention to because she laid it out very clearly, and Zora Neale Hurston's stories. Honey, Zora got some wow ass people, and they seem to

> overcome. They seem to overcome, and Toni Morrison a later one. Sometimes her work is very complicated to me, but *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* are my favorite pieces, and I recommend that to anybody who is trying to understand the heart of a woman. Women have been my greatest influence not to mention my grandmother, and my mother, and the women friends that I chose. I choose my women friends very carefully because when I didn't, I always ended up on the wrong side of the road. But I like women who have courage. If you feel like making a sweet potato pie, then do it. Vertamae Grosvenor got along very fine because she was able to take food, which is part of the culture - and give it a revolutionary spin. (Baraka)

Amina's appreciation of women and their contributions to arts and letters is one of the primary reasons that she created the anthology *Confirmation*. While the writings of Toni Morrison, Ntozake Shange, and women authors in the late 1970s are viewed as postBlack Arts, their work is representative of the Black Arts Movement continuum and corresponds to the second wave of feminism acknowledging the new Black woman. With that acknowledgment comes an appreciation of new voices of Black female empowerment. Amina represents a bridge, a crossing with her anthology and willingness to speak on the past, present and future of the Black female artist as a historical figure involved in the fight for Black Liberation. In her essay, "Black Women Shaping Feminist Theory," bell hooks makes the point that "We resist hegemonic dominance of feminist thought by insisting that it is a theory in the making, that we must necessarily criticize, question, reexamine, and explore new possibilities" (277). hooks similar to Amina assesses the response by African American women to feminism as continually evaluated and reshaped based on our needs and perceptions. Amina developed an appreciation of the female artists based on her understanding of the need to celebrate art, particularly art by women of color to help ensure that their voices are acknowledged and heard. She is a fighter, not just for herself, but also for the rights of women to sit at the table and be counted. She speaks of the importance of artists conversing about their lives, their needs, and their willingness to fight back by using art as a weapon.

In the use of art as a weapon, what was expected of Black female artists during the Black Arts Movement? Were there requirements or a blueprint for being a Black woman in the Movement?

Amina discussed Toni Cade Bambara in regard to the word blueprint. Toni perceived the women of the Black Arts Movement as the "blueprint" for revolution. She represented the courage needed and the ability to hone that courage into a platform that spoke to the revolutionary aspect of Black life through art. Toni was a catalyst for revolutionizing how Black women viewed themselves. *The Black Woman: An Anthology* by Toni Cade Bambara explores revolutionary thought by African American women engaged in the struggle for identity based on a structural belief that Blackness is a powerful statement of affirmation particularly in the hands of the Black woman engaged in self-liberation. In the preface of her anthology, Bambara's first words are "We are involved in a struggle for liberation" (1). Amina Baraka as well has worked towards the emancipation

of the African American woman by acting as a catalyst for social change. Amina does not see this liberation as being just afforded to the African American woman, but rather this is an emancipation of all people. I would argue that by liberating the African American woman, all people are liberated. In my introduction, I assert that the African American woman has been perceived by many as the lowest of the low, as Amiri Baraka asserts, "The Slave of the Slaves." I have argued that the Black woman is the heart of the planet. She has dealt with slavery, violence, rape, the selling of her children, and yet she is still able to love, and to feel. Dr. Anna Julia Cooper speaks of this in her groundbreaking tome *A Voice from the South*, published in 1892. Cooper says of the Black woman:

> The colored woman of to-day occupies, one may say, a unique position in this country. In a period of itself transitional and unsettled, her status seems one of the least ascertainable and definitive of all the forces which make for our civilization. She is confronted by both a woman question and a race problem and is as yet an unknown or an unacknowledged factor in both. (134-135)

Have things changed for the Black woman? Many might say, no, or perhaps only slightly. At issue is that women of all races are still fighting for equality. Those in power are not in the habit of acknowledging the suffering of others as can be seen with President Donald Trump manufacturing a crisis at the Mexican border as a way to keep out immigrants of color. Many are still working on an old paradigm of racial superiority. How do we handle the woman question when the race question looms large in America?

The women question is problematic as it pertains to African Americans when questioning why many Black female educators fighting for social justice died early. Toni Cade Bambara, June Jordan, Barbara Christian, Lorraine Hansberry, Audre Lorde, and Sherley Anne Williams all died of cancer and lived relatively short lives. The message in their art was "We want a revolution. We want equality now!" They all taught or were educators in some manner or form. Why did they die so young? What type of stress did they experience as twentieth century African American women advocating for the rights of the Black female through art? Amina addresses these women as key figures, educating and providing women and men the spine to fight, and to choose what they will or will not do, and whom they will defend. I would suggest that as a revolutionary, Amina not only considers life vital, but the right to defend your beliefs by any means necessary as imperative. To live a revolutionary life, which Amina has done, is to die a revolutionary. The concept of revolution does not leave. It is just tucked away amid the horrors of injustice ready for that moment when complacency is not an option. The women of the Black Arts Movement were not complacent. Amina addressed the factor of stress in all of their lives, stating, "Many times you had to fight the enemy, and you had to fight your partner all at the same time whether they were male or female. War is not fun, and I hate to hear people romanticizing the 1960s or the 1950s or the 1940s - ask the people that were in those wars, it wasn't fun."

Perhaps that is why some are hesitant or refuse to see themselves as part of the Black Arts Movement. For many it was a war as the art from this period addressed issues of police brutality, incarceration, Jim Crow Laws, gender inequality, etc. Amina theorizes that some people consciously cling to the Black Arts Movement while others were in the BAM unbeknownst to themselves. They were telling their stories and their lives, which happened to coincide with those who were conscious of their role in the movement. The Black Arts Movement is seen by some as too revolutionary, not respectful, and not safe, in that it questioned the status quo of Blacks in America. Amina see this as an issue of subjectivity believing that because the Black Arts Movement was a movement, you had to consciously focus on Black Liberation. This was an intentional effort to push the subject matter, to validate Blackness. Amina further explains:

> There were some people whose stories and lifestyle if they just start talking about their lives and their feelings about where their place was in the society, and who they admired and so forth, you would say objectively they were in the Black Arts Movement. That's not what they were trying to do when they say they didn't join the organization, but they certainly provided a lot of bullets. (Amina Baraka)

Amina's assessment of the movement is valid, particularly when viewed through the prism of today's society. The Black Arts Movement has become an intellectual forum because of universities like Stanford and Harvard providing the framework for degrees related to the Black Arts Movement. What was once a group of people with revolutionary goals, espousing Black Nationalism, and experimentation in art that dealt with Black lives and Black culture has become a part of academia. There is a sense that the movement is being usurped. Not just in the fact that the icons of the movement Askia Touré, QR Hand, Marvin X, and Amina Baraka and others are not necessarily making a substantial profit off of their writings, but rather it is the academics that have now become their voices. Granted many of the voices of the Movement, Nikki Giovanni, Jerry Ward, Eugene Redmond, Mona Lisa Saloy, and Gloria House are academics, but they are retired or retiring as the way is paved for newer voices that do not necessarily carry the blueprint of the movement. The importance of the Black Arts Movement is monumental to American and world history. Similar to the Franklin D. Roosevelt's publication of the oral histories of slavery published by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), funding needs to be provided to create national oral histories of the Black Arts Movement With many of the movement stalwarts in their 70s, 80s, and 90s, there is a real chance that this crucial information could be lost within the next ten to twenty years. We have seen the passing of Amiri Baraka, Jayne Cortez, Maya Angelou, Wanda Coleman, Ntozake Shange, Abbey Lincoln, Max Roach, Mari Evans, and more. The majority have died in the last six years. The slave narratives gave the world an understanding of the lives of slaves as well as a means of comprehending the degradation experienced by African Americans and its effects on the current status of Blacks in America. Why does this matter? In early 2019, I attended a school board meeting in Merced, CA where African American youth were represented in red sections in a slide

show by instructors and administrators, not one of them Black, discussing the fact that African Americans represented the highest number of suspended students. Where were the role models for these young people? Why was there not one African American administrator or teacher speaking for these students? This is 2019, and the African American is still without voice and agency. That is what the Black Arts Movement did. It gave a voice and a face to the Black struggle for self-determination. That is why the Black Arts Movement needs to be taught in high schools across the United States to give young students of all races information that shows there is power, beauty and knowledge in Blackness. The Black Arts Movement is a part of the wider liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, from the Civil Rights, Black Power, The Revolutionary Action Movement, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, and the Black Panther Party. These Movements intertwined as African Americans throughout this great nation fought for the liberation of the Black race.

The history of Amina Baraka's involvement with Black Liberation Movements is important, not just because of her work with Amiri Baraka, CFUN, and CAP, but because she represents the voices of Black women that have not been heard. The title of this dissertation is *Hidden Voices* for a reason. African American women have been left in the shadows. The anthology *Confirmation* is representative of those elements of dark and light. *Confirmation* should be required reading in every high school English class and every college women's studies program. If those Merced administrators pointing out that African American students had the highest rate of suspension required the teaching of the history of African Americans and their fight for liberation, there would be no need for suspensions because lesson plans that support their development and socialization would be a part of the curriculum. To not teach the history, culture, and art of the enrolled students is a form of cultural genocide.

This type of cultural abuse is an issue that is continually discussed with regards to African American life. As African Americans, we have a history of state-sponsored abuse, abuse within our own community, and abuse by the dominant culture. Amina makes the case that often abuse within the African American community is ignored, particularly as it pertains to celebrated artists. She sees this as part of the woman question, stating:

> I don't care if you're Black and you're proud and all of that, but I want to know why are you beating this woman? Why are you abusing? That's what I want to know because the woman question is still in it. They somehow see women as less than anything else. I don't care about the song or the dance or the movie star. I care about that person. To me, if you can't treat women like human beings and equal, I don't care; you don't mean a darn thing to me. I'll be 75 in December. I'm done! I am not going to aid and abet my own abuse because you can't have it both ways. (Amina Baraka)

Hearing Amina words, I wondered, "How do we heal as Black men and women? Are we here to heal each other? Are we a unit?" When I said the word unit, Amina likened the term to how as members of humanity, humans have created units within our society, slave master and slave being one of the most egregious. Recalling that John Brown refused to be a master and Nat Turner refused to be a slave. "If you choose not to be the master and I choose not to be the slave, that's a good partnership" (Amina Baraka). With regards to Black men and women, Amina reasoned that she chooses not to be the master, and she definitely was not going to be the slave. Amina was beginning to see men and women acknowledge and consciously set out not to abuse each other in their fight for equality. I questioned whether in the 1960s and 1970s, there was consciousness within the Black Arts Movement for this type of equality and how do we intentionally as Black men and women work together. One of the major focuses of the movement were couples that jointly made an impact from Stokely Carmichael and Mary Ann Makeba, Eldridge and Kathleen Cleaver, Abbey Lincoln and Max Roach, and Amiri and Amina Baraka. Amina thoughtfully responded:

> Sometimes you learn as you go. But people who tend to be insensitive – my word to use – to others' feeling, and others' lives, liberty and pursuit of happiness, generally are suffering from their own enslaved mind and their own inability to understand that justice starts at home, and it starts in relationships. I love the way Malcolm X at the end of his biography comes to the conclusion that he's not going to leave his wife at home anymore. You can see that he's coming to the conclusion equality has got to be in this, and he's going to do the best he can to make up for what he wasn't even concerned about. He got concerned as he traveled the world, and that's important. (Amina Baraka)

When Amina first heard Malcolm X speak, he was talking about men not abusing women. This issue is at the forefront of Amina's thinking, having been abused herself. Amina was raped at fourteen and experienced a form of abuse with Amiri as her wanting to publish her poetry was often squelched in their joint work of promoting him. I asked Amina to speak further on women artists and the issues they faced. She replied:

> We've gone through so much and had so many blocks. Let me tell you, all the women in the Black Liberation Movement and in the Civil Rights Movement - hands up, I'm with you, hands up. All the women in the Black Lives Matter, and the Civil Rights Movement, whether they were Black, Latin, Asian or White, I think all of them, all of them, I wouldn't want to be in their place at all. (Amina Baraka)

But Amina was in their place. She understands their struggle because it was her struggle. Amina could not have published *Confirmation* if she was not a freedom fighter. She could not have stood with Amiri through his arrest and conviction during the 1967 Newark Rebellion. She could not have supported her son, Newark Mayor Ras Baraka, creating a

community center honoring her daughter Shani after her brutal murder if she was not a warrior. After visiting the community center, I wanted to know if there was a similar safe space in the 1960s and 1970s. Amina told me about her sister-in-law Kimako as an example of creating safe spaces in the community. She said of Kimako:

> She had her own place up in Harlem for many years. Her good heart and kindness, she took in this person, and he killed her. It took us a while to try to figure out what could we do – because she took on that name Kimako –we had the space here all the while. So we named it after her. It wasn't easy. She was a very good person, a great dancer, an actress and of all that. But, her kindness got her killed. We were trying to figure out a way that we could celebrate the life that she did live. (Amina Baraka)

Figure 32: Photo of Amina and Amiri Baraka with Abbey Lincoln (middle). Bryan Smith is the bassist in the background. (Courtesy of Amina Baraka). The photo was taken in 1980 at Kimako's Blues, the club the Barakas ran out of their basement on South 10th Street and appears on page 80 of *The Encyclopedia of Newark Jazz: A Century of Great Music* by Barbara J. Kukla. The book was copyrighted in 2017 by Swing City Press, Barbara J. Kukla's imprint.

Kimako's Blues People was situated in their home and offered a means of honoring Kimako as well as opening their doors to the community and to artists across the nation. I spoke to a friend of Kimako's, San Francisco Bay Area musician, Avotcja. She describes Kimako as one of the most creative, kindest, and beautiful people that she knew. Avotcja was in Harlem at that time and saw Kimako as an extraordinary talent. Both women were gay and lived in a time period with not as much acceptance, particularly during the Black Liberation Movement. Most people did not know that Kimako and Shani were gay until after their deaths.

Amina has experienced more in one lifetime than most people experience in two or three. She points out that compared to those who lived through the Jewish Holocaust or what happened to Native and Black Americans, she does not have too many troubles. I asked Amina to speak on the major contributions of the women of the Black Arts Movement. Amina described Sonia Sanchez as vital to the Movement, explaining:

> She was brave enough to say things in poetry, stuff that most women would not say, and she too has had an extraordinary life. In my personal point of view, Sonya was a mother of the Black Arts, and they said well what about so in so- so I say, *"I'm not talking about that. I'm only talking about when I came in the room."* You know how we tend to think history begins when we show up, and it was going on all along but that's when I showed up, and she was among mostly men. (Amina Baraka)

When I asked Amina what she would say about the Black Panther women. In her profound directness, she said, "I'm glad they existed. Thank goodness they were born. Thank goodness they had the courage and thank goodness they lived. These women took chances - just like asking somebody what you think of Sojourner Truth or Harriet Tubman – what do you think of them because you're glad they were born so that you could be born" (Baraka).

Questions and Answers

Amina's voice is powerful in that the need for truth and justice permeates her being. In the writing of this chapter, this last section has been created for Amina's frank comments about love, her family, her work and influences. It is my hope that readers will come away with how vital this woman is to American and African American history and art. The questions are in no particular order, but rather allow Amina to express her views without edits. The questions start with our addressing her life.

Kim You are storing so much history. You lived through a time period that changed how Black people saw themselves. I am saying this because the first time that I consciously saw someone give the Black power salute was in 1968 while watching the Olympics. I looked at the TV in absolute shock because I felt

that way. For someone to show in physical terms that we were not powerless, and we needed to protest our second-class citizenship left me in awe. As a black person, I was amazed that these athletes could articulate our plight with a raised fist, just with a fist. It is an example of telling our stories.

Amina: That's why I'm always and still impressed with Sojourner's poem "Ain't I a Woman. "I can eat as much, fight as hard"… You have to tell your own story. If you do not tell your own story, somebody is going to write it for you, and it's not that they can't write it for you; it's that they can never write it the way you would write it because they're not you, and you have to take care of yourself. You have to take a voice and stand. You have to take a stand, and that's in all cases. Unless, we fight back, we will always be at the bottom.

Kim: Do you feel at this point as black females we're rising to the top?

Amina: Oh, we're on the up. I really do believe that but at the same time for every mountain you climb, there's somebody up there waiting to push you down, but the glass ceiling is not broke yet. We're breaking it. It's got a lot of cracks in it as Hilary said, but it ain't broke yet.

Kim: Did you think that Hillary was going to be our first woman president?

Amina: I was hoping so, but she had a lot of people, a lot of baggage. But so have all of the men that have ever run, and it's all coming out now under the fascist, Trump, and there's baggage. But, if you're a female, and you have baggage, you have to carry your baggage everywhere you go. If you're a male, and you've got baggage, you can drop some of it off, sometimes at different places depending on where you're going.

Kim: I agree with that. I want to ask about your work. What is your process? Do you write at a certain time?

Amina: I wish I did. I think about stuff for a long time before I put it to press to be honest with you. When I hear other poets, I want to write something. Even with a song, I can hear songs or look at a movie, and it makes me want to write. I may not write then because I've learned that wasn't the best thing for me because I ended up having to rewrite it again, but I'm inspired by mostly women. Maybe because of my grandmother, and my mother, and the women in my life. Who is that that said, "I've known rivers," well, I've known women?

Kim: What do you believe is the biggest contribution of African-American women at this point in history?

Amina: The very fact that we are alive at this point is a contribution. Our consciousness has been raised. The very fact that we can survive our children being murdered in the streets every other day, the very fact that many of our husbands have died or been killed, and many of us are graduating from universities and becoming scholars, and so on, and we have a future, and we're beginning to claim it; the fact that we are beginning to claim our presence in the world just as black people, claiming our history. We are claiming our history, and we have to continue to do what we are doing, and the only thing I would say is that black women particularly black women, I'd say this, be a best friend. I mean in terms of quitting gossip and going into other people's lives that you don't have a clue about why they did this or did that.

Gossip is going to kill us. If you could just stop for a moment and consider that some of the black women might know what they're doing, and whatever they're doing, they've got reasons for it, and have some empathy, please; have some empathy because there is too much criticism. It's too much criticism, and too much competition. We are learning the ways of the oppressor, and sometimes the oppressor is black men. Let us not learn their ways. Let us try to understand that unity is better than disunity, and if you see somebody falling down, don't laugh, pull them up; don't laugh.

Kim: If you were to say anything to black women about what we need to do, would it be to heal?

Amina: That's a very good point there about healing. Yeah, there is a time to heal. But if you don't know - It's hard to heal something when you don't know what the illness is. If you don't know how much stress you can take or if you have a heart attack – You've got to know you have had a heart disease to begin to take heart medicine or see a doctor or something. We have to identify what is healing because we don't all have the same Illness. You have to find out what is wrong and heal it. We've got to be conscious of the fact that we're human beings, and we hurt, and we have pain like everybody else. We have ups and downs like everybody else, and men in particular need to understand that we are human beings, and we hurt, we laugh, we cry, and we fight, we do all of that. Just stop hurting us, just stop.

Kim: You were married to Amiri for quite a bit of time, and he passed January 9, 2014. If you were going to say one thing about him, about his work, and about yourself, what would you say?

Amina: We learned a lot. We learned a lot.

Kim: That is beautiful. If you were going to say something about him as a talent, what would you say?

Amina: He was good at what he did, He was good at it.

Kim: If you were going to say something about Amiri as a partner and the raising of a dynasty, what would you say?

Amina: I don't think we intended to raise a dynasty. I think we really intended to raise some human beings and raise the question of democracy and fight for it.

Kim: The reason I said raising a dynasty is because Ras Baraka is now in his second term as the Mayor of Newark. Your other son is supporting Ras. You and Amiri helped change how people saw African Americans and our place in the world in a different way than your sons seem to be doing.

Amina: Yeah, they are. They settled on changing the world, and that's a good thing - and so far they have kept their promise, they are fighting for democracy.

Kim: Yes.

Amina: Not only for black people but for humanity. They know who's got the most pain. You go to the most wounded first.

Kim: Do you think as African-Americans, we are the most wounded?

Amina: I think so, I think so. Slavery - We have not overcome the mentality. But yeah, I think what I said in the beginning. When there is a catastrophe, and you send in the doctors, they always go to the most wounded first, not that they don't care about the rest, but you go to the most critical.

Kim: What would you do, if you could do anything to change the plight of AfricanAmericans? What would you say you needed to do if money was no concern, what would you do?

Amina: That's a good question. Democracy is on my mind with a small *'d'*. I will fight against the question of the monarchy, the dynasties, the kings, the queens. We fought wars about this, and democracy is yet to be gotten. I would maintain that we keep our eye on the prize, and the prize is democracy, and justice for all. Otherwise, there will be no peace.

Kim: Yes, and for the African-American female, if you were going to tell her one thing to help heal, to help create change, social, economic whatever; what would you say to her?

Amina: That's another question – The only thing I know is to tell my sisters and

comrades is that try to - I know it sounds corny but reach out and hold another sister's hand. Make sure before you make a decision about who they are, and what they should be doing, allow them to do that, and if you have questions about who they are, best place to go to is ask them, ask them.

Kim: The reason I asked that question is we have to look at the ways that we heal that we support each other, and I think the question of healing needs to be seriously asked so that we can create that change.

Amina: That's right.

Kim: Thank you

Amina: Like Langston said, "Ask your Mama."

Men have got their rights, and women has not got their rights. That is the trouble. When woman gets her rights man will be right. How beautiful that will be. Then it will be peace on earth and good will to men.
Sojourner Truth, When Woman Gets Her Rights Man Will be Right, 1867

CONCLUSION

The Black woman holds a mirror to her image, and the ancestors stare back. She realizes that her existence is predicated on persons that lived hundreds of years ago. Her greatgreat-grandmother's mannerisms, her walk, and smile are in the Black woman's DNA. She is the embodiment of a past that she does not know, but the ancestors still exist. They have left their mark on her and her family. For some, like the African American woman, there is an awareness of that mark, "the ancestors as foundation" (Morrison 56). My research addresses a central narrative described throughout this dissertation as ancestralness, the use of the tools of the ancestors, poetry, art, music, and community. These tools have their origin in Africa and became a part of African American life when the first African slaves set foot on American soil in 1619. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines soil as "the upper layer of earth in which plants grow, a black or dark brown material typically consisting of a mixture of organic remains, clay, and rock particles." Its origins are "Late Middle English: from Anglo-Norman French, perhaps representing Latin solium 'seat,' by association with solum 'ground.'**"** It is in this definition that the ancestors are seated, to the ground, and the earth.

Moreover, it is in the soil of the human body that the ancestors arise to be planted in generations of souls. It is in that layer of soil that the ancestors allow the Black female to ground, to grow, and to take the nutrients from that earth, the ancestralness to survive. Amiri Baraka was grounded in the fertile soil created by Amina**.** The Black female is similar to the soil that no one sees, but that enriches the lives of Black men. In soil, there is so much life, it does not matter whether that soil is from the mother, or the man's partner, it is still rich in its Blackness. Amina spent most of her life in Newark, New Jersey. When Amiri left Harlem, he stepped into a world that Amina knew as an artist and a Black woman. He became rooted in her soil; her creative energy that offered Amiri a new manner of seeing and viewing his world. The roots of that soil are based in African traditions that have survived despite slavery. A case in point, Doris Derby traveled throughout Jim Crow south working to promote voting rights. In Derby's chapter, I discuss her entering an Episcopal church to integrate their Sunday morning service. Derby appeared to have walked into that church alone, but in actuality, she entered with over 300 years of her family's ancestors who fought for the civil rights of the Black man and woman. Derby's entering this church was a significant victory for African Americans in their fight for freedom and equality at a time when the United States was practicing Apartheid.

In this dissertation, I have argued that ancestralness opens the door to ancestral DNA where art and community are privileged. The chapters on Amina Baraka and Doris Derby epitomize the Black women's connection to the ancestors. The results of my research indicate that the Hidden Voices of the Black Arts Movement are women throughout the nation that created a narrative of resistance through art that informed how we view the women of the Black Arts Movement and Blackness itself. Although the movement was paternalistic, the writings of Wanda Coleman, Nikki Giovanni, Toni Cade Bambara, Gwendolyn Brooks, Jayne Cortez, and others are studied for their brilliance, female empowerment, and view of Black life. It is over 50 years since the official beginnings of the Black Arts Movement. Because of the women of the BAM, there is a more inclusive view of the movement. The Black male was perceived as the voice of the BAM, but the writings and art of Black women, those hidden resources of beautiful Black creativity are the heart of the movement. The agency of Black women was muted in favor of patriarchal masculinity. The ideology espoused by Amiri Baraka and many of the men has fallen to the wayside. In the Foreword to *Black Fire*, the bible of the Black Arts Movement, Amiri speaks of the power of the Black male without acknowledging the contributions of the Black female. In his introduction, Amiri writes:

> Tho the map be broke and thorny tho the wimmens sell they men, then cry up hell to get them back out here agin. In the middle of my life. In the middle of our dreams. The black artist. The black man. The holy black man. The man you seek. The climber the striver. The maker of peace. The lover. The warrior. We are the whom you seek**.** Look in. Find yr self. Find the being, the speaker. The voice, the back dust hover in our soft eyeclosings. Is you. Is the creator. (xvii-xviii)

The foreword is a brilliant piece of creative writing speaking to the power of the Black man and demanding that he acknowledge his greatness. Amiri writes, 'These are the wizards, the bards, the Babalawo, the shaikhs, of Weusi Mchoro. These descriptions will be carried for the next thousand years, of good, and of evil. These will be the standards black men make reference to for the next thousand years" (xvii). Throughout this insightful foreword, Amiri continues to say, "the black man." What happened to the Black woman? Did she not take part in this gathering of art, of words on Blackness? The Black man is exalted, but the Black woman is invisible. In deference to Amiri, perhaps this relates to the fact that *Black Fire* was published in the 1960s when the Black female and women, in general, were often treated as an appendage, second-class citizens without the right to purchase a credit card in their name. What is compelling about this period is the refusal of Black women to be marginalized. Amina Baraka gathered women together to create the anthology *Confirmation*. Toni Cade Bambara edited the anthology *The Black Woman*. Black women were creating their avenues of empowerment. We as Black people are creative thinkers. Surely the patriarchal flag that covered the entire planet, could for a moment be folded in favor of promoting the Black male and female voice together. That is the difference between the 1960s and now. With the Me-Too

Movement, the advocacy in the LGBTQ+ community, and the changing roles of both the male and female, there is at least the awareness of the dangers of patriarchal rule. I would advocate for a reprinting of significant works like *Black Fire*, and with it, an acknowledgment of its limitations as a means of demonstrating to future generations that we as a people are learning and understand the need for equality for all. In *The Magic of JuJu*, a dialogue between Kalamu Ya Salaam and BAM historian and theorist Margo Natalie Crawford occurs where she questions Salaam on the issue of the marginalization of the Black woman as well as why Black Power feminism was not an explicit part of the BAM. Salaam explains that Black feminism was considered the enemy (297). Salaam further elucidates:

> Implicit in the advocacy of feminism is not only open support for women's rights to self-determination but also open support for what is now called LGBT (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender) rights of selfdetermination. Patriarchy has no broad human rights position precisely because patriarchy denies agency to women to determine their lives. Any philosophy that denies the rights of the other is flat wrong. (298)

Salaam represents a major voice in the Black Arts Movement/South. His advocacy for Black feminism and repudiation of the patriarchy are not in alignment with the misogyny that was a part of the Black Arts Movement. In the broader sense, Salaam's words are representative of a neo-Black Arts Movement, one that advocates for the rights of women and men of all sexual orientations. The belief that patriarchy denies agency to women is a critical dialogue that should not be given lip service to and then dismissed. Women and men have had many academic discussions on this issue, with both sexes condemning an unjust system, and yet we continue to live in a patriarchal society. What Ya Salaam has done is to very succinctly state that patriarchy should not be a part of our world view. We as a nation need to regard patriarchy as similar to the measles, a disease that must be eradicated by any means necessary. The vaccine is education and knowledge.

Salaam's dialogue with Crawford continues with a discussion on concepts of selfdetermination as they pertain to the Black woman with Crawford asking the question why the Black man felt the need to control the Black women's struggle for liberation (300). Salaam's statement is healing in its acknowledgment of the oppression of the Black woman. He emphasizes that:

> We did not fully understand that yes, once we achieved civil rights women would also be free in the sense that black women, as well as black men, would have the right to vote, but our political freedom in that sense did not address women's need for rights as a gender, which was and is distinct from, and in many important ways larger than, women's needs for rights as part of a racial identity. (300)

While I agree with Salaam on the problematic issue of gender not being addressed in the fight for equality, I would argue that Black women were working with Black men and their allies to end segregation. Gender inequality paled in comparison to the need to survive. In Lorraine Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun*, Lena Younger, the matriarch of her family, makes the point that in her day freedom was everything to the Black family. Walter Lee Younger responds to her words with all the frustration and anger of the Black man wanting more:

> Walter: Sometimes it's like I can see the future stretched out in front of me—just plain as day. The future, Mama. Hanging over there at the edge of my days. Just waiting for me—a big, looming blank space—full of nothing. (123)

Walter Lee is crying out for a different kind of freedom than what has sufficed for his mama. He desperately desires to walk down the street as a proud Black man with money in his pocket and the power to make deals, to be a part of the male patriarchy. Lena, connected to the earth, and grounded in her history, says to her son:

> Lena: In my time we was worried about not being lynched and getting to the North if we could and how to stay alive and still have a pinch of dignity too…Now here come you and Beneatha—talking 'bout things we ain't never even thought about hardly, me and your daddy. (123-124)

This discussion between Walter Lee and his Mama represents the dialogue that Black men and women have had for generations and continue to have over what matters, the roles we play, male pride, and the need for power. Lena Younger sees her role as the helpmate, the woman that will hold her Black man and comfort him when injustice makes him feel less of a man. Lena is looking back at ancestors, barely free from slavery and is thankful to have her freedom. Walter Lee is looking forward and trying to reach out and touch the American Dream of power and privilege. As Black females in the late 50s and early 60s, gender politics were not on the table. Black people were living in the politics of survival and fear as a colonized people.

What changed for Black women because of the Black Power and Black Arts Movements? It was the realization by African American women like Doris Derby and Amina Baraka that the fight for equality was male-dominated, and there was a need to create the space for female growth and empowerment. Yes, Black Power is important, but is the Black woman expected to rejoice in Black Power as represented by the Black male? With legislation like the Civil Rights Act of 1964, freedom became a real possibility. Something Black Americans had been fighting for since first stepping foot on American soil seemed to be within reach. However, was it? Particularly for the African American female, was she free at last? Imagine fighting for fundamental freedom for hundreds of years, and then finally the door is open. However, how you enter is behind the Black male. The concept of Black feminism was not necessarily considered by Black men and many Black women. The idea of, "Baby, your Black man

is free; isn't that what we were fighting for?" was supposed to be enough. The Black man announces, "I have enough freedom for us both." To enlarge upon that point, activist Barbara Smith describes her and a friend inviting counterculture icon Mark Rudd to Mount Holyoke college to speak and him bringing a friend who communicates to Smith about women's liberation (36). Smith says of the experience:

> And I looked at this white woman and I could not even understand—what the hell is she talking about? I could not—this is '68, right? I had no idea what she was talking about, because she was white, you know? And my perspective was, like many Black women—and even now some Black women still hold this today—my perspective then was like, "what do white women have to complain about I mean, they've been terrorizing us in their homes and in their kitchens for several centuries here now. They are the excuse for a pandemic of lynchings in the United States." Their status as, you know, 'pure white women' is instrumental, and has been instrumental, in lynching and other forms of racial violence. Their status also was the absolute opposite of what our status was as Black women. So, I couldn't even wrap my mind around it. (Smith 36-37)

Smith skillfully explains a Black woman's concept of Women's Liberation in the 1960s, which when given to the Black female through the prism of white womanhood was unappealing, coupled with enormous distrust and the belief that Women's Liberation did not necessarily benefit the Black woman. Smith states that it wasn't until she applied for credit and could not get a credit card under her name because she was a female that Women's liberation became personal (37). Perhaps all necessary change must be personal. Black feminism and feminism, in general, were not necessarily viewed as something wanted or needed by many Black women. The end of Jim Crow Laws and segregation were seen by Black females as real freedom, at last. They had yet to realize that when living in a patriarchal society real democracy is an ongoing fight. However, the weapon of education is making that fight a little less hard. Women are demanding equal rights and equal pay, and in many cases, their voices are being heard.

Throughout this dissertation, the word "Hidden" has come to stand for many things. The Hidden Voices of Black Women, the Hidden or code words in Black women's poetry, the Hidden scars on Black women's bodies, the scars of the ancestors that we wear as unconscious remembrances of collective pain, these Hidden parts of ourselves are what are finally being taken out and examined as Black women work towards collective emancipation. The Hidden voices of the women I write about are empowering others through their words and art that reaches out as a collective voice to say, "The Black woman is powerful and has agency." That is what Amina Baraka, and Doris Derby's art and words are communicating, the power in Black sisterhood.

Ultimately, their goal is to communicate a new vision of Blackness through art. The Black woman is creating art in her likeness, art that affirms the creative life force that speaks to the ancestors and the continual journey of the spirit. It is in that journey

that we question, “What does it mean to be a Black woman in America, and how does the experience of Black womanhood from slavery to present time define the African American woman?” Realistically, the question of Black womanhood cannot be answered in just one paper. My dissertation is the beginnings of discourse on creating a holistic approach to analyzing the Black woman in correlation to the BAM. I want a new way, new methods of addressing Black womanhood. How do we speak on what it means to be a Black woman in America in a manner that is healing for the Black woman? A counter-narrative on Black womanhood needs to be created by Black women and taught throughout our educational system. New research on the Black woman that doesn’t become a part of the mainstream public’s understanding of what it means to be a Black female in America is wasted research. The Black female is warm and soul-identifying in her rich fluidity that belies centuries of demeaning stereotypes. Her Blackness encompasses humanity in outstretched arms, never bending to limited views of what it means to be Black. Whether or not she is aware of her beauty, like the ancestors, it is always there. My study demonstrates the humanness of the Black woman. The work and art of women like Doris Derby and Amina Baraka open a portal to understanding the depth and impact of the Black women on the Black Liberation Movement and society. In the introduction of *SOS-Calling All Black People,* the editors had this to say about the BAM and the early involvement of Black women:

> In its early days, the Black Arts Movement was relatively gender egalitarian. Given the deep sexism running through U.S. society, it was actually much more open in this regard than the vast majority of cultural and political institutions and formations….In the late 1960s, however, Maulana Karenga proposed a clear and influential cultural nationalist model based on neo-African principles that posited women as “complementary, not equal. (Bracey, Sanchez, and Smethurst 2)

Karenga’s influence was felt in the Black Arts and the Black Power Movements. Women, as well as men, spoke against this ideology. The editors point out it was Karenga’s Kwaida philosophy that ultimately led to Black Power and Black Arts feminism (23). The idea that Black women would agree to the role of second-class citizens when they were already marginalized by society is reason enough for Black Arts feminism to flourish.

In Chapter Two, Amina Baraka discusses her dislike of Karenga’s Kwaidaism and its effect on her family and the patriarchal nature of this ideology. Amina represents the women of the Black Arts Movement speaking truth to power as it concerns the ability of Black women to demand that their voices be heard. Amina says of Karenga:

> What he did, he went to Africa to cover his patriarchy. He went back to feudalism. He went back to polygamy. He went back to a period in Africa that even progressive Africans did not agree with. They wanted to go back to a society of Kings and Queens. I did not want to see my daughters or nobodies daughter thinking that the title of Queen was a title of respect.

Amina was firmly against what she felt Karenga represented, male patriarchy. She felt her rights as a female were lessened under Kwaidaism. Amina is a Marxist with a working-class background that demands that she fight for the rights of the oppressed. As I stated in an earlier chapter, Amina eventually parted ways with Karenga's organization and doctrine.

Amina has dedicated much of her life to advocating for the rights of women, and the literary arts. My analysis suggests that Black women writers like Amina are finding renewed interest in their work in academia. The writings of Sonia Sanchez, Charlotte "Mama C" O'Neal, Judy Juanita, Avotcja, Audre Lorde and others are acquiring new audiences brought about by women celebrating women. The females of the Black Arts and Black Power Movements continue to create and speak out on their legacy. In the introduction, I discuss the importance of teaching the literature of the Black Arts Movement and Kalamu Ya Salaam's belief that there is a lack of books on the movement, and that compared to the importance of the BAM there is a lack of an academic response.

Salaam also makes the claim that the lack of scholarship on the movement is "… not an accident but rather part of a systemic effort at erasing our history" (276). There is a saying that the conquerors write history. Moreover, as African Americans, in some respects, we are still colonized people. There is a real danger that our history could be erased. An example of erasure is Texas high school textbooks listing slaves as workers. Ultimately, if we wish our history to be taught, it is our responsibility as a people to demand that African American history, which is American history, be reviewed on a national level for accuracy. An analysis of how African American history is taught in academia is also a must. I would argue that as a country, we cannot afford to gloss over this issue. Blacks have been a part of American history from its beginnings. Whether it is being taught in the school system or privately, our history needs to be disseminated. What happened in Texas, cannot be dismissed as a mere textbook error.

The limitations of my research focus on my desire to interview more of the women of the Black Arts Movement as well as to include the many interviews that took place. However, in the process of organizing my work, I realized the scope and magnitude of my study might be better served in future writings. I chose to concentrate on Doris Derby and Amina Baraka as they both represent women whose roots are deeply embedded in African American history. Doris Derby's activism is rooted in the NAACP, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Civil Rights Movement, while Amina Baraka was an essential voice in Newark's Loft Movement, as a founding member of the Newark Jazz Arts Society, and ultimately in partnership with her husband, Amiri Baraka. Both women were involved with historical figures in the Black Liberation Movement from civil rights activists Andrew Young, and Septima Clark to Abbey Lincoln and Kathleen Cleaver. In my early research, I conducted video interviews of Afro-Puerto Rican jazz musician and poet Avotcja, former Black Panthers Charlotte "Mama C" O'Neal, and Judy Juanita, author and activist Ishmael Reed, former Black Panther Emory Douglas, actor Adilah Barnes, and Assistant Director at Emory College Center for Creativity & Arts Dr. R. Candy Tate. Each of these artists and activists spoke with authority on the Black Arts and Black Liberation Movements as well as the historical importance of their work and

research. They informed my work by providing a greater understanding of the movement and its intersectionality in terms of the women and men nationally and internationally working towards Black liberation. With regards to my research on Doris Derby and Amina Baraka, each offered a personal account that coincided with significant historical events like the March on Washington and the 1967 Newark Rebellion.

What can't be quantified, are the many people affected by the work of Doris Derby and Amina Baraka. Both women took on large projects from Derby's cofounding of Free Southern Theatre to Amina's editing *Confirmation* and working as Amiri's assistant. Amina traveled with Amiri and met talented Black women writers, some famous, some not. She kept thinking about these women and the need for a book like *Confirmation*. She would talk to the women in her neighborhood and be surprised at how many did not know the names of Black women writers. She mentions a gathering of educated Black women that had never heard Sojourner Truth's "'Ain't I a Woman' speech. Sojourner's speech was "delivered at the Akron, Ohio, women's rights convention in 1851" (Guy-Sheftall 5). This is considered a major statement of Black feminist thought as it examines race and gender. (Guy-Sheftall 5). While the women knew who Sojourner Truth was, the fact that they had not heard of this speech shows the problems with erasure when it comes to the powerful voices of Black women civil and gender rights advocates. Amina interviewed every writer that contributed to *Confirmation*. Maya Angelou was almost left out because she had not sent her work. Amina personally called Maya Angelou, and her submission, the short story "Reunion," was immediately sent with apologies. On the recommendation of Sonia Sanchez, Amina included the writings of several of Sanchez's students in the anthology. The reason that Amina created *Confirmation* is that she understood the power of the Black women's voice and the fact that few books celebrated Black women writers.

Derby and Amina left an indelible mark on African American and American arts and letters. Those that viewed Derby's artwork documenting the lives of sharecroppers or enjoyed a performance of Free Southern Theatre, may not have expressed how they experienced the art, but as pointed out in the chapter on Derby, she influenced generations of people through the Head Start Program, the Civil Rights Movement, and photography that documented the lives of African Americans in the deep south. With regards to the work of Amina Baraka, *Confirmation* was published in 1983 when there were not many plays by African American women being distributed. Aishah Rahman and Janus Adams both contributed plays to *Confirmation*. In 1983, I was enrolled in a master's program studying playwriting at San Francisco State University remember being frustrated searching for plays that represented African American theatre. One of the issues for many students is the lack of information and the failure by academia to hire enough instructors of color to support students seeking art and literature that represents them. Imagine if a course had been taught that included the works of African American female playwrights. Women and men of color desperately need to see their art and literary contributions in academia. While attending graduate school in the eighties, I was very aware in the make-up of my classes and the literature studied that I was a minority and as a female, in the minority. My research shines a light on the need for an educational system that encourages diversity and is representative of the students being taught.

Concerning my findings, I recommend that we continue to expand our view of the Black Arts Movement and particularly the role of women. What came out of the 1970s is literature that speaks to the issues faced by Black feminists and the marginalization of the Black female, and women in general. Themes of oppression and gender dynamics are still a significant concern. Perhaps, it was not until the writing of the Combahee River Collective Statement that Black women created a manifesto that articulated the problems they faced with regards to race, gender, and sexuality. This work put into words the mass oppression that Black women felt on an everyday basis. In *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective,* editor Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor discusses the changing Black woman of this period. Taylor asserts that:

> Black women were not radicalizing over abstract issues of doctrine; they were radicalized because of the ways that their multiple identities opened them up to overlapping oppression and exploitation. Black women's social positions made them disproportionately susceptible to the ravages of capitalism, including poverty, illness, violence, sexual assault, and inadequate healthcare and housing to name the most obvious. Black women's oppression made them more open to the possibilities of radical politics and activism. (8)

This statement was a breath of fresh air to Black women and women of color seeking to understand their feelings of alienation and their growing political consciousness. With it came an awareness of a need for more, of the need for a collective voice that did not seek to condemn Black men or White women, but rather to empower the Black woman while acknowledging her struggle with issues of race, class, and patriarchy. The common thread in my research is racial oppression, and the awareness of a system in which aspects of poverty and economic subjugation along with male dominance has led to a level of weariness for the Black female. Doris Derby and Amina Baraka have both managed to survive a system that does not value the Black female. The need to survive is what has caused the Black woman to look towards the ancestors and to seek the council of those long gone. Sometimes that is as simple and sitting quietly and just breathing. It is in the DNA of the Black woman to find solace in that which is unseen. Imagine generation after generation of Black women abused through slavery. At some point, there is a calling to that which is hidden for answers. This is the ancestralness brought from struggle, and as Toni Morrison notes the "discredited knowledge," of something unseen (61). This knowledge is the guiding force for those willing to listen. Toni Morrison makes an important point about our connection to the ancestors and the dangers of ignoring our historical presence. Morrison explains "…if we don't keep in touch with the ancestor that we are, in fact, lost…. When you kill the ancestor you kill yourself"(64). Morrison is speaking to the fact that as African Americans and human beings, we are connected. Just as we have a connection to our parents, they have a link to theirs. We are a chain that is unbroken with an infinite number of ancestors stretching back to times unknown. A point of sorrow within that chain is the enslavement of those of Black ancestry, which did not break that chain, but it did create ruptures. Connecting to the ancestors heals those ruptures so that although the ancestors may not be known, the

spirits of those ancestors are still there, guiding and nurturing the Black man and woman. Awareness of the ancestors is not mandatory. Just as breathing is not a conscious decision, it takes place with or without our deliberate effort.

In line with my research questions, what does it mean to be a Black woman in America, and how does the experience of Black womanhood from slavery to present time define the African American woman; I will discuss my critical findings as they relate to my questions and discuss the implications of my research. I have examined my research questions in the introduction but will go into further detail on their importance.

The results of my literature review emphasize books that specifically address the lives and experiences of African American women involved in movements that have historically dealt with the effects of racial and gender inequality. My research explicitly delves into the lives of Doris Derby and Amina Baraka as women intimately involved in the Black Liberation Movement. Amina Baraka co-published, a collection of poetry, *Songs for the Masses*, *The Music: Reflections on Jazz and Blues*, and the anthology *Confirmation* with Amiri Baraka. The autobiographical nature of her poems included in the anthology gives abundant examples of a full if at times problematic life. I gained a greater understanding of Amina reading Amiri's *The Autobiography of Leroi Jones*. Amiri felt very strongly about Amina as a helpmate committed to the struggle for social justice. He acknowledged his male chauvinism but also his love for Amina. What was difficult for Amina was his involvement with Karenga and what she saw as the cult of personality with regards to Amiri. Amina said to me that her poetry was her autobiography, and so her writings and our discussions were invaluable to my research. What does it mean to be a Black woman if you are Amina? It means that you are powerful and will fight for the rights of those less fortunate, until as she has said, "her last breath."

To better understand Amina Baraka and Doris Derby, I researched online interviews. Because both women experienced racial as well as gender bias, the following secondary resources played a prominent role in my research along with those online interviews. Throughout my conclusion, I also examine forms of resistance and what or who influenced Derby's and Amina Baraka's art. The secondary sources listed below represent scholarship that reviews the Black Arts Movement from the perspective of its placement in the Black Liberation Movement, the ideologies it fostered, and how Black women are situated in the movement. The books include: *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon; *Visions of a Liberated Future: Black Arts Movement Writings* by Larry Neal; *The Magic of Juju: An Appreciation of the Black Arts Movement* by Kalamu Ya Salaam; *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s* by James Edward Smethurst, and *The Black Power Movement: SOS-Calling All Black People: A Black Arts Movement Reader* edited by John H. Bracey Jr., Sonia Sanchez; and James Smethurst. Several books were particularly relevant to my research as they pertain to Black feminism: *Anthology of African American Feminist Thought* by Beverly Guy-Sheftall; *The Black Woman: An Anthology* edited by Toni Cade Bambara; *New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement* edited by Lisa Gail Collins and Margo Natalie Crawford; *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* edited by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor; *Visionary Women Writers of Chicago's Black Arts*

Movement by Carmen L. Phelps, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America* by Melissa Harris-Perry; *Conversations with Sonia Sanchez* by Sonia Sanchez; *feminist theory: from margin to center* by bell hooks; *Inventing Black Women: African American Women Poets and Self-Representation, 1877-2000* by Ajuan Maria Mance; *De Facto Feminism: Essays Straight Outta Oakland* by Judy Juanita; *When and Where I Enter: The impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* by Paula Giddings; and *In Search of Our Mothers Gardens: Womanist Prose* by Alice Walker. These books opened the door to Black feminism as well as how African American women negotiated space and agency from slavery to the present time.

In 2010, *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* edited by Faith Holsaert was published. Included in the anthology was Doris Derby's essay on her experiences as a member of SNCC. Derby speaks about leaving for Albany, Georgia because she heard that her friend Peggy Dammond was in jail in the area and ill (440). Peggy Dammond also contributed to the anthology and wrote on being jailed twice for "marching and praying on the steps of Albany City Hall." She also speaks about being jailed for protesting the beating of a six-month pregnant movement worker and being placed in a stockade for two weeks (170). While Dammond and Derby faced immense danger, it should be noted that Derby worked within the leadership structure while Dammond was a part of the student protest as a member of SNCC. Dammond's chapter is titled, "Connecting with my Ancestors." She writes of the experience of working in the cotton fields to help the sharecroppers so that they could attend "voter education classes" (163):

> This was a heavy emotional experience for me, because my ancestors had escaped from slavery in Georgia not that far from the fields where I was working. Although my great-great grandparents on my mother's side had been house slaves, not field slaves, at one point I felt I was a re-creation of my ancestors…I stood in the field and felt as if I were actually a slave and not free but burdened with all the emotions that a slave must have felt. The earth, the dirt in Georgia is very red. At that moment I knew that the color came from blood, the blood of our slave ancestors, who were often worked to death and died right there in the fields. (Dammond 164)

Dammond's writing speaks to the belief that the ancestors are always there, guiding, and opening doors. A door unlocked in those fields, and Dammond was given the gift of understanding what she was fighting for. The ancestors are our guides through those doors. Dammond's chapter is a reminder of the belief within Black communities of the power of the unknown and of the spiritual nature of existence, and that we are not alone. That point is furthered in Robert Farris Thompson's *Flash of Spirit,* which was integral to my connecting the world of spirit and the ancestors to the Black experience in America. In Thompson's writings, the world of ancestors and the world of man operate jointly. What is most important is that the connection to the ancestors is on display throughout the African Diaspora. Similar to a boiling pot of tea, which cannot exist without the water, the tea, the holy fire, and the pot, the soul, we are the souls that ground

the ancestors, that bring them here to heal us as well as themselves. The ancestors, their progeny and the soil, the land on which we walk, ground our relationship to each other and the divine.

The videotaped interviews of Doris Derby and Amina Baraka were the foundation of my research. However, Derby is continuing to promote her work and has in the last two months independently published *Poetagraphy: Artistic Reflections of a Mississippi Lifeline in Words and Images: 1963-1972*; and *Paintings Patchwork, and Poetry*. I had the honor of writing a book blurb for *Paintings Patchwork, and Poetry*, which details art that encompasses the history of the Civil Right, Black Power, and Black Arts Movements, and will be published in the next few months.

In October 2019, Derby traveled to Montpellier, France as seventeen of her photographs were on display at the Civil Rights exhibit, "I Am a Man." Derby was the only female photographer whose works were on display and the only artist traveling from America to the exhibit and a related two-day symposium. In 2019, the "I Am A Man" exhibit will be on display at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. and the Museum Africa in Johannesburg, South Africa. Why is this important? Derby's art is being viewed on a global level. As important as this is, only one female artist exhibiting speaks to the fact that women artists and women, in general, are still fighting to be recognized for their contributions to arts and culture.

What stood out in my interviews with Doris Derby and Amina Baraka is the importance both women placed on equality. Amina Baraka has been a strong voice in that area and interviewed on March 2, 2018, for the Queer Newark Oral History Project where she speaks about members of her family that did not conform to heteronormative standards. In the interview, Amina makes clear that queer-identified men and women were a part of her community. The article was essential to my research as it illustrated that Amina advocated for fairness for all regardless of race, gender or sexuality at a young age. Amina speaks of her daughter's Shani's murder and the murder of her sister-in-law Kimako. Both women were gay and are discussed in my chapter on Amina Baraka. What was significant about this interview is that it reinforces the changing patterns in our society concerning sexuality and how it relates to the Black Liberation Movement (BLM). Amina speaks about not understanding Amiri's homophobic writings when many in the Beat Generation were gay as well as Amiri's close friendship with Allen Ginsberg and the tension that developed when Amiri moved to Harlem (17). Amina had this to say about the Black Liberation Movement and Amiri's relationship with gay icons Allen Ginsberg and James Baldwin:

> The Black Liberation Movement was—you talk about homophobic and sexist, you ain't seen nothin' yet. I think he felt obligated because he and Allen stopped speaking. Allen was the one I called when he got arrested. Allen was the one who helped me find him when he was locked up…. But even through those years, he remained friends with Allen Ginsberg and James Baldwin despite a sort of tension in the air?... When you're involved in those kinds of politics and stuff like that, you're always on edge. But no. Allen would come here and so on. They got to be friends

> again. Yeah. Thank goodness he didn't go out of here without reconciling. Yeah. (17-19)

With her background, Amina did not understand Amiri's homophobic remarks. However, Amiri like all of us was growing through life experiences. I imagine that with the hypermasculinity of the BAM, it might have been difficult for many of the men to view sexuality outside of constrictive norms. When I first started my research, I did not realize how much of a role gender and sexuality played in the politics of this period. I write of the Hidden Voices of women, but the representation of queer men and women was just as silenced, even more so. Amina speaks of James Baldwin not caring what others thought and not having much to say outside of his writings about his sexuality. Amina explains, "See, he wasn't interested in trying to disguise it. He didn't see anything wrong with it, so that was your problem" (5). What my research shows is how the human condition, the fact that we live in our skins, whether comfortably, or uncomfortably, creates outlooks and opinions that separate us, that create barriers. My interviews with Amina revealed a woman that is open and accepting of all people with a philosophy of "If you don't hurt me, I won't hurt you." That might seem simple, but in a time of racial unrest and barriers to class and gender, it was not a simple rule.

My research into the lives of Black feminists like Barbara Smith confirms the patterns of interracial racism and sexism that did not always allow women to be heard. Barbara Smith explains what Black women and women of color were up against:

> We were marginalized in the Black movement, in the Black Liberation movement, indeed in the Black nationalist movement. Moreover, we were marginalized in the white feminist movement, for different reasons. One of the reasons we were marginalized in the Black movement, besides sexism and misogyny was also homophobia. (60)

Barbara dealt with the intersectionality of competing spaces of marginalization as a Black lesbian feminist. Her voice could not be muted, and like so many other Black female writers and artists of that time period, she was determined to be heard and found voice and agency through the Combahee Collective and challenging the patriarchy at every turn through published essays, anthologies, articles, and supporting the rights of women of color, particularly. Smith speaks of being marginalized because of sexism, misogyny, and homophobia. We are currently seeing a pattern that points to the unwillingness of women writers, artists, women in general, and their allies to remain silent. There is new scholarship on empowering women and reviewing past writings by women of color to understand their paths of resistance to hegemony and patriarchy. Derby and Baraka represent Black women that have overcome a past riddled with minefields created to oppress and continue the placement of the Black women as "other."

In concluding this dissertation, it must be remembered that as a country we have systematically attacked and persecuted women, people of color, the disabled, and marginalized groups because of race, religion, sexuality or fear. As a country, it is imperative that we emerge from this cocoon of racism and sexism. The African

American is often used as an example of America's shameful history of abuse and enslavement. We need to widen that net of awareness of persecution in any form so that we teach young people, just as we teach math or science, the power of empathy, of truly seeing all men and women, no matter their circumstances as equal. Many have mentioned that Africans enslaved Africans, but European slavery and American slavery are entirely different, although neither can be justified. One of the significant differences is that African slaves often became valued members of the household on par with members of the family. American slavery with its violence and inhumane conditions, and the separation of entire families is a shameful and dark period in American history. There is the illusion that the United States was a civilized country, but there is nothing enlightened or civilized about slavery. It is important to continually remind ourselves of our nation's history so as not to repeat it in the ways we most certainly have with our prison system. Just as Doris Derby and Amina Baraka fought for the rights of women, the poor, and the marginalized, our next front in the fight for injustice is another form of slavery, our justice system. We have a history as a Black race of fighting injustice. In *Sister Outsider*, Audre Lorde speaks about the need for understanding the dangers of racism, and sexism stating:

> …any attack against Blacks, any attack against women, is an attack against all of us who recognize that our interests are not being served by the systems we support. Each one of us here is a link in the connection between antipoor legislation, gay shootings, the burning of synagogues, street harassment, attacks against women, and resurgent violence against Black people. (139)

Sister Outsider was published in 1984. Lorde cites systemic racism, sexism, gender inequality, and religious intolerance and the need to understand our part. What is most important is that she acknowledges that any attack on women, Blacks, and I will say anyone, is an attack against what our nation holds most dear, freedom. Attacking another is taking their rights away and limits our ability to function as a person of integrity. Why are we as a country continuing to treat human beings in this manner? What is in the DNA of our people that we would allow this systemic oppression for generations? We as a nation have shown patterns of limiting the freedom, the opportunities, and the civil rights of groups that do not represent the dominant society. I chose to write about Doris Derby because of her courage and willingness to fight racial oppression, but that was over fifty years ago. Now, this great lady is exhibiting photographs that showcase that fight for equality. Why is this important? Because each time she speaks, it becomes a teachable moment. Derby has probably done more to fight racism than most people will ever know or understand. That is the beauty of education. We as educators can start with the very young in the hope that equality for all becomes the norm. Although Derby's fight for racial justice is different from Amina Baraka's, there is intersectionality in their work. Both women strived to address and champion the arts and service to the community.

Amina started the African Free School, a liberation school for the area children. Amiri Baraka formed the Committee for a United Newark (CFUN) after the 1967 Newark Rebellion, and Amina Baraka formed the Women's Division of the Committee for a Unified Newark.

Like Derby, Amina worked within the community to create real change for women and children. Amina also took part in programming in support of African and African American culture. My chapter on Amina Baraka speaks about her work with CAP, which eventually became the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL). These types of programs are needed to help heal the genuine oppression felt by African American women. Amina Baraka has shown in her interviews a real commitment to human rights issues. Amina says of her advocacy, "My consciousness came from pain. Like an escaped slave. I said I am done." Perhaps it will take more women saying, "I am done" before we see real social change. In summarizing, Amina Baraka and Doris Derby represent a time in the United States where even with enormous injustice, people and groups of all racial and religious backgrounds fought for a better United States and a more humane manner of viewing each other. In the present time, there is a shift in how we see each other, and the amount of empathy that is a part of our world. The presidency of Donald Trump, the distribution of wealth, and the blundering of the Earth to sustain the one percent could be viewed as representative of that change. There is a real need to educate young minds on the power of empathy and equality for all at a young age so that the Doris Derby's and Amina Baraka's of the world will continue to exist and make a difference.

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Notes

[1]Priestess Nana Sula Spirit, "The Sacred Libation Tour," *Allboutdat.com*, "Web," 25 Mar 2019.
"Priestess Nana Sula Spirit, was initiated in Ghana, West Africa in 2007 and has been immersed in Traditional African Religions and Native American Traditions for the past thirty (30) years. The Temple of Light…Ile de Coin-Coin was built in honor of her Great Great Grandmother Marie Therese Coin-Coin who was born in 1742 in Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana."

[2] "Ancestor," English Oxford Living Dictionary, *en.oxforddictionaries.com*, Web, 28 March 2019.

[3] Melissa Brown, "Black Feminism Defined," *Black Feminisms,* March 2018, Blackfeminisms.com, Web, 29 March 2019

Black feminism is defined as:

"1. Centered on Black women's experience and the way the matrix of domination shapes them

2. Rooted in Black communities

3. Theorizes agency for Black women

4. Promotes a humanistic visionary pragmatism"

[4] Aimé Césaire, Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith, eds, Notebook of a Return to the Native Land, (Middletown, CT, Wesleyan University Press, 2001.) 68.
"Aimé Césaire is perhaps best known as the co-creator (with Leopold Senghor) of the concept of negritude…his poetry describes the colonized condition of Caribbean, African and Third World peoples…"

[5] "Negritude," English Oxford Living Dictionary, *en.oxforddictionaries.com*, Web, 28 March 2019. "The affirmation or consciousness of the value of black or African culture and identity."

[6]Michigan State University Press, 2017) 2-3. Fannie Lou Hamer's televised speech before the Credentials Committee describing her arrest for her work on voter registration. "The first Negro prisoner ordered me by orders from the State Highway Patrolman, for me to lay down on a bunk bed on my face. And I laid on my face, the first Negro began to beat me."

[7]Although White Patriarchy had much to do with the marginalization of the Black female, this is a conversation between the Black male and female working to heal patterns of abuse and separation. This is an inner healing with outward consequences. White patriarchy and patriarchy in general is a dismissal of the power and grandeur of the female in her beauty and alliance with mother Earth. Both carry the wombs by which new life and concepts are born.

[8]Christine Emba, "'Reclaiming My Time' is Bigger Than Maxine Waters," 1 Aug. 2017, *Washington Post,* Web, 3 April 2019.

[9]"Niger River…enters the Federal Republic of Nigeria, where the Benue River joins to create an important confluence of the two rivers at Lokoja in Nigeria. From the confluence with the Benue, the Niger heads southward and discharges through a massive delta into the Gulf of Guinea or the Atlantic Ocean." http://geography.name/niger-river/

[10] Michael D. Shear and Maggie Haberman, "Trump Defends Initial Remarks on Charlottesville; Again Blames 'Both Sides,'" *The New York Times,* 15 Aug. 2017, Web, 8 April 2019.

[11] "Septima Clark," Digital SNCC Gateway, snccdigital.org, Web, 11, April 2019 "Septima Poinsette Clark pioneered the link between education and political organizing, especially political organizing aimed at gaining the right to vote…. Septima Clark bridged the gap between SNCC and an older generation in a way that few did, and her lifelong work in adult literacy and citizenship education helped pave the way for SNCC's organizing work, especially the Freedom Schools of Mississippi."

[12] "Julie Prettyman," *Digital SNCC Gateway*, snccdigital.org, Web, 8 April 2019 By July 1963, "I was persuaded that I really needed to work with SNCC," recalled Prettyman, who agreed to serve as SNCC's first official director of operations in New York….The following year, they brought in $350,000, giving SNCC the money it needed to function behind the cotton curtain and in the remote corners of the Deep South.

[13] Jennifer Latson. "How Emmett Till's Murder Changed the World 60 Years Ago." *Time*, Time, 28 Aug. 2015, time.com/4008545/emmett-till-history/.

"An all-white jury acquitted the defendants (the husband and brother-in-law of the woman who complained about Till), who later confessed to the killing in a raw, unremorseful interview with *Look* magazine. One said that they had intended only to beat the teen, but decided to kill him when he showed no fear — and refused to grovel."

[14] Neil Genzlinger, Neil. "John O'Neal, 78, Champion of Theater in the Deep South, Dies." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 28 Feb. 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/02/28/obituaries/john-oneal-dead.html.

[15] Maurice Hobson, "Jackson, Jesse L., Sr. (1941)," *Black Power Encyclopedia: From 'Black is Beautiful' to Urban Uprisings*, 2016: 394.

"Led by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the SCLC, activists marched out of Selma with the goal of registering voters at a Montgomery, Alabama courthouse. However, the demonstrators were met at the Edmund Pettus Bridge by officers and state troopers who demanded that they turn around, which they refused to do. As a result, multiple supporters were left injured and hospitalized."

[16] America's Founding Documents, n.d., https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript, (accessed May 6, 2019).

[17] Scot Brown, *Fighting for Us: Maulana Karenga, the US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism*, (New York University Press, New York and London:2003), 139 Clyde Halisi is the editor of *Kitabu: Beginning Concepts in Kawaida* from which the quote of Karenga giving Baraka the title of Imamu was taken from.

[18] Tiamoyo Karenga, "Karenga, Maulana (1941-)," *Black Power Encyclopedia: From "Black is Beautiful" to Urban Uprisings*, (Santa Barbara: Greenwood 2018) 411.

"…he is the executive director of the African American Cultural Center (Us)…Karenga is most known nationally and internationally as the creator of the Pan-African holiday Kwanzaa, a celebration of family, community, and culture that is observed by millions…"

[19] Al Winans, "Bob Kaufman," *The American Poetry Review*, (May/June 2000) pg.19 www.jstor.org/stable/27783404.

"Bob Kaufman, known in France as the "American Rimbaud," was one of the original Beat poets of the late fifties, who is rightfully regarded as the most influential black poet of his era. In San Francisco's North Beach, home of the West Coast Beats, he was regarded as the original bebop poet."

[20] "Amiri Baraka, a Controversial Poet and Playwright." *African American Registry*, aaregistry.org/story/amiri-baraka-a-controversial-poet-and-playwright/. "In 1958 Baraka founded *Yugen* magazine and Totem Press, important forums for new verse. He was married to his co-editor, Hettie Cohen, from 1960 to 1965. [Dutchman] established Baraka's reputation as a playwright and has been often anthologized and performed. It won the *Village Voice* Obie Award in 1964."

[21] Michael Simanga, "Introduction," *Amiri Baraka and the Congress of African People,* (New York, Palgrave MacMillan 2015), 1.

"The Congress of African People (CAP) was a critically important political formation in the Black Liberation Movement. It was founded in 1970 in Atlanta as a revolutionary Nationalist/Pan – Africanist organization and continued throughout the 1970s."

[22] Judge Jaribu Hill, *Cooperation Jackson*, 26 April 2016, Cooperationjackson.org, 10 July 2019.

[23] Komozi Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics*, (Chapel Hill and London, University of North Caroline Press, 1999), 3. "In May 1972, CAP joined with an even broader front of black nationalists and Pan-Africanists to organize the first African Liberation Day…This mass demonstration of 60,000 black people produced the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC)…"

[24] Ibid, pg. 3

[25] Sally Lodge, "No Crystal Stair' Spotlights Legendary Harlem Bookseller," *Publishers Weekly*, 12 February 2012, publishersweekly.com., 10 July 2019.

"In 1939, with only five books, a storefront, and $100—along with a great deal of passion and determination—Lewis Michaux opened a bookstore in Harlem to sell books by and about black people. The National Memorial African Bookstore became an intellectual, cultural, and social hub of the community before, during, and after the Civil Rights era, and was frequented by such luminaries as Malcolm X and Langston Hughes before its doors closed in 1975."

[26] Judith Rosen, "Marcus Books Returns to San Francisco," *Publishers Weekly*, 08 August 2016, Publishersweekly.com, Web 11 July 2019

[27] "Nkrumah Never Dies," *Ghana Star*, 20 September 2016, Ghanastar.com, Web 11 July
2019. "In the year 1951, Gold Coast went to polls to vote for self-rule, and this time, Kwame Nkrumah had split from the UGCC and formed his political party, the Conventions People's Party (CPP), with its Motto "Forward Ever Backward Never.""

[28] Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, ""I Saw a Nightmare...": Violence and the Construction of Memory (Soweto, June 16, 1976)," *History and Theory*, December 2000, jstor.org, Web, 11 July 2019

"Ninety-five black schools in Soweto, four in Alexandra, and twelve in the Cape Peninsula were destroyed or damaged during the uprising. The uprising claimed at least 176 lives in the first two weeks. Estimates of the total number of deaths varied significantly, ranging from 700 to 1,200. Only two of the victims were white. Many very young children took part in the demonstrations. The South African Institute of Race Relations reported that eighty-nine of the dead in the West Rand Area were under twenty years old, twelve below age eleven"

[29] Ronald Smothers, "Man Indicted in Two Killings, Including Poet's Daughter," 3 March 2004, *New York Times*, nytimes.com, Web, 11 July 11, 2019

[30] William J. Harris, "William J. Harris on "Black Art," *Modern American Poetry*, 05 April 2015, modernamericanpoetry.org, Web 11 July 2019

[31] Melinda C. Shepherd, "Lolita Lebrón Puerto Rican Nationalist," *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 13 October 2010, Britannica.com, Web, 11 July 2019.

"Lolita Lebrón**…** in support of the fight for Puerto Rican independence, planned and executed a violent attack in 1954 on the U.S. House of Representatives, in which five congressmen were wounded by the shooters…All of the attackers were captured, however, and sentenced to prison. By the time she was released in 1979, Lebrón was a well-known folk hero in her homeland."