

“And So Far as I Know, Revolutionaries Are Not Determined by Sex”

Radical Women of Color and the Feminist Movement

In the words of Betty Friedan, published in 1963, “The whole world lies open to American women.”¹ This quote is within the work of literature credited with sparking the second-wave feminist movement in the United States, *The Feminine Mystique*. After its publication, women from coast to coast took to the streets, forming numerous feminist organizations, and burning their bras publically in solidarity for the fight for women’s rights. The legacy of the second-wave feminist movement is often shaded with a nostalgic view of a time when women were finally able to leave their lives as homemakers and join American society on equal grounds with men; however, there were flaws in this notion from the start. However inspiring and groundbreaking Friedan hoped that *The Feminine Mystique* and the later feminist movement would be, it fell short of representing the experiences of all women. Twenty years after Friedan’s publication, these words were published by a feminist woman as well: “I cannot afford the luxury of fighting one form of oppression only ... and I cannot afford to choose between the fronts upon which I must battle these forces of discrimination, wherever they appear to destroy me.”²

This quote is pulled from a piece titled “There Is No Hierarchy of Oppressions,” written by Audre Lorde, a self-described Black, lesbian, mother, poet, and activist, states that for her and many others like her, she cannot choose to fight only for her gender, her race, or any single characteristic of her identity. This was the common experience among women of color, and especially those who participated in the second-wave movement alongside white women, who

¹Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1963), 37.

² “The Interconnectedness of Oppressions,” *Echoes and Reflections*, accessed November 17, 2021, https://echoesandreflections.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/11-03-08_StudentHandout_Interconnectedness-of-Oppression.pdf.

saw that second-wave activism was missing an essential element, the inclusion of women of color. The continuous exclusion felt by women of color from different communities led women like Lorde to write about their experiences as individuals plagued by numerous oppressive forces.

Despite the inspiration caused by *The Feminine Mystique*, too many women were not able to relate to Friedan's writing. In the preface to *The Black Woman*, Toni Cade Bambara writes that literature directly relevant to Black women would not fill a page in comparison to the entire collection of (white) feminist work available.³ This can be seen as a leading cause in the development of the literary community as a driving force in Black feminist activism. While the presence of Black feminists may be missing from the records of women's organizations and the photos of feminist rallies, their existence is seen clearly through literature, and it is an important factor in the history of second-wave feminism.

Social movements are characterized by group interactions, which especially rings true for second-wave feminist activism. Louise Michele Newman in *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* puts into context group relations between white women and women of color before 1960, which in turn affected how women of both races organized during the second wave. Newman asserts that feminist movements have always been racially divided and that the imperialist mindset prevalent among white women is a leading cause of that divide between feminist activists, which Benita Roth expands upon in *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave*. Roth coins the term feminisms to describe feminist groups that were based upon race/ethnicity and centered around activism that tackled interlocking oppressions. Roth delves into the reasoning

³ Toni Cade Bambara, *The Black Woman: An Anthology*, ed. Toni Cade Bambara (New York: Washington Square Press, 1970), 5.

behind the stark divide in feminism during a period overflowing with social movements that seemingly crossed racial barriers while disproving previous theories that women of color did not participate in feminist activism. However, what Roth and Ashley D. Farmer state in their respective research, is that women of color did organize based on feminist ideals, even with the pushback of their parent movements, while still staying connected to other movement parties.

Farmer's book *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era* covers the feminist activism of Black women from within Civil Rights and Black Power organizations. While previous histories of second-wave feminism discuss the separation of feminist women and women who stayed "loyal" to racial activism, Farmer's research proves that it was nearly impossible for Black women to separate from Civil Rights and Black Power movements completely because of their personal ties to the community, identity, and the mission. Many women did continue working with these groups on a day-to-day basis and contributed their intellectual and physical energies in an effort to push the African American community towards a more radical viewpoint that included gender. Continued writings that detailed the lives of Black women and introduced radical theory were one of the primary ways that this radicalization occurred.

The Feminist Bookstore Movement: Lesbian Antiracism and Feminist Accountability by Kristen Hogan details the creation of feminist bookstores from 1970 to 2003 and uses interviews and historical research to argue that bookwomen, the title of the bookstore workers, and the stores themselves created a specific kind of activist work not discussed in scholarship on second-wave feminism. Hogan argues that their activism combined feminist and antiracist analysis and physical application of theory within their presence in the literary community, which the bookwomen and patrons of the bookstores carried over into their lives outside of the bookstore

as well. Hogan later writes that “Literature was a staging ground for developing this vital antiracist feminist relational practice,” which adds a new path in the historiography of second-wave feminism when looking at the literary community and what they did to promote feminist and antiracist activism among its readers.⁴

Still examining the literary community, though from a different perspective, Cheryl Higashida in *Black Internationalist Feminism: Women Writers of the Black Left, 1945-1995* aims to examine a few of the many pieces of writing from female Black writers to show their impact on the Left, Civil Rights, Black Power, and second-wave feminist movements. Higashida argues that the international feminist theory presented within literature written by African American women had a large impact on radical ideology in the social movement sector. While Farmer’s work focused solely on women within the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, Higashida widens her scope to include women in the Third World Left and includes an internationalist theory in her examination of the writings from Black female writers as well. Continuing this theme, Cynthia A. Young in *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left* include examinations of film, organizations, and social justice initiatives in addition to feminist literature from the same group of people that Higashida examines, the U.S. Third World Left. One of the major conclusions that Young comes to is that the existing historiography surrounding the social movement sector too often cuts out critical history by focusing solely on the period of 1960 to 1968. *Soul Power* and *Black Internationalist Feminist* expand this timeline to include vital work and done by women of color within the U.S. Third World Left, especially whenever it comes to their creative work and publications.

⁴ Kristen Hogan, *The Feminist Bookstore Movement: Lesbian, Antiracist, and Feminist Accountability* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), XXV.

Patricia Hill Collins in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, explores Black feminism from what she argues is its beginnings, the resistance, and modes of survival enacted by Black women for years prior to the sixties. Collins's theory continues to contribute to existing historiography that argues for an expanded timeline of second-wave feminism and the social movements during this period of U.S. history, in addition to her new theory of the tradition of Black women's activism. She breaks this tradition into two functional parts, one being the struggle for group survival, and two being the struggle for institutional transformation.

Taking a slightly different approach in comparison to other historians, Jennifer C. Nash approaches the history of Black feminism from an intellectual standpoint, looking at how intersectionality as a theory and intersectional work written by Black women has impacted women's studies and the results of that impact in the academic community. *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality*, argues that while intersectionality has become a core value of many women's studies programs, one of the reasons being the numerous publications by women of color that have influenced scholarly discussion on a large scale, in many cases those programs do not enact the theories that drive intersectionality, instead they rely on Black women to perform service work in the name of diversity that is not compensated or recognized. Nash's contribution to historiography includes this examination and her characterization of Black feminism as a mode of intellectual production, which cannot be fulfilled simply by having African American women represented, writing for, or working for an institution. Anyone, Nash argues, can partake in this intellectual process by embracing and enacting intersectional theory.

Black feminist literature integrated intersectional theory within their written works, and through examination of these pieces written by African American women, it can be concluded

that there are numerous examples of Black feminist literature that were written, published, and read outside of the conventional second-wave timeline of 1960 to 1980, proving an expanded timeline of second-wave feminist thought. These works should still be considered as “second-wave” literature because they contain the same ideological foundations rooted in intersectionality that can be connected to works within the timeline, showing a continuation of Black feminist thought.

Despite not fitting into the traditional second-wave timeline, Black feminist activism beginning in the sixties did have characteristics that were distinguishably different than previous feminist activism in the African American community and therefore should be included as the beginning of a new periodization of activism. The development of immensely complex feminist theories, from this community, grew increasingly wider in scope, which included incorporating sexuality as a form of oppression and the overall growth of intersectional theory. Additionally, their increasing collaboration with different demographic groups, including other women of color and lesbians lead to an increasing acceptance of intersectional theory and added to the complexity that was Black feminist activism. These characteristics differed from previous social movements and aided in the widespread dissemination of Black feminist writings and theories.

The writings from Black feminist women influenced radical thought by pushing theories further to the left. On a large scale, this meant that publications from Black feminists advocated for an intersectional theory that included race, gender, class, and sexuality as dimensions of oppression, and most importantly as dimensions that could not be separated from one another. Within the pages of feminist literature, women of color combined academic language and sources with personal accounts of discrimination to prove the relevancy of their personal oppression, and therefore the need for Black feminist activism. This also occurred through Black

feminist writers directly calling out other activists or authors whose work undermined women of color or other minority groups to make them see their mistakes. This was used as a bridge to connect to other minority groups, to create solidarity and a larger codependent activist community.

Feminism has always been racially divided, and Black feminism, in particular, experienced multiple divides within their existence due to interlocking oppressions and the multitude of separate activist movements. In Newman's studies on the racial origins of feminism in the United States, she argues that the theory of "common oppression" was used by white female abolitionists and suffragettes to emphasize similarities in their oppression under the patriarchy as wives and daughters to the oppression that African Americans faced while they were enslaved.⁵ Common oppression continued to be supported through the second wave by many white feminists. For example, Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* creates an image of all American women being situated and oppressed in the same way, while not addressing the systemic issues that make the suburban housewife different from women of color, poor women, and homosexual women. Linda La Rue, a Black scholar, argues against this continuous idea in a publication in 1970 by making the distinction that African Americans are oppressed while white women are suppressed, to distinguish the difference in the goals of white feminism and Black feminism and the divide between the movements.⁶ The well-circulated publications from Friedan and La Rue show the continuation of common oppression in public thought, insisting that feminist movements began as racially divided and continued to grow in that way. Despite La Rue's article being published in *The Black Scholar* and not in the mainstream white press, it

⁵ Louise Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5.

⁶ Linda La Rue, "The Black Movement," *The Black Scholar* vol. 1, no. 7 (May 1970): 38.

shows Black feminist thought beginning to argue towards the public for an intersectional theory that included a race and gender analysis that could not be separated.

Not only did African American women experience alienation from their white feminist counterparts, but their thoughts on gender activism were also pushed to the side from within Civil Rights and Black Power organizations. The time that typically encompasses the feminist movement was filled with multiple social justice initiatives, including but not limited to the Civil Rights movement, the Black Power movement, the Gay Rights movement, Chicano/a Political movement, etc. Because of this, the calls for gender-related activism, especially within existing movements that were structured around another form of oppression, were often put onto the backburner, if addressed at all, in order to put racial/ethnic issues first. Many women of color felt as though they were forced to choose between their race and their gender, as Dorothy King states “I refuse to choose. And by that I mean I refuse to choose between being Black and being a woman ... I am both equally and I’m proud to be both.”⁷ This sentiment is a common theme throughout the work written by Black feminist women before the second wave and throughout it, which not so subtly underlies their calls for intersectionality within separate movements.

“The Myth of Black Macho: A Response to Angry Black Feminists” by Robert Staples, published in 1979, displays this hostility against including anti-patriarchal theory within the fight against racism. In his article, Staples writes that African American women cannot be oppressed by Black men because Black men do not have the control in institutions that oppress.⁸ Staple's argument shows his failure to embrace intersectional theory through an examination of the interlocking oppressions that characterized the lives of women of color, simply for being women

⁷ Dorothy King in Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1.

⁸ Robert Staples, “The Myth of Black Macho,” *The Black Scholar* vol. 10, no. 6/7 (March/April 1979): 27.

and for being Black. Additionally, because “The Myth of Black Macho” was published in the prominent journal *The Black Scholar*, its publication can be used as proof of the widespread pushback that Black women received because of their actions to organize around feminist activism.

It can also be stated that within some Black feminist groups there was a limitation to the extent of their activism. Many of these organizations were unintentionally characterized as either “straight” or “lesbian” feminist groups. Coalitions like the Combahee River Collective (CRC), which formed in 1974, were created as Black feminist lesbian socialist organizations to tackle interlocking oppressions that they felt were not addressed in other groups, including homophobia. Many of the most well-known Black feminist writers, including Barbara Smith and Audre Lorde, identify as lesbians, and their work is among the most prominent in the field. However, towards the end of the second-wave timeline, homophobia begins to be accepted by most, if not all, feminist organizations as a dimension of oppression that needs to be fought against. This can be seen within written works that include open discussions on homophobia, such as in the foreword to the chapter “Between the Lines: On Culture, Class, and Homophobia,” in *This Bridge Called My Back*, the editors write “One of the biggest sources of separation among women of color in terms of feminism has been homophobia. ... So often it is the fear of lesbianism which causes many of us to feel our politics and passion are being ignored or discounted by other Third World people.”⁹ *This Bridge* is a book published after the end of the second-wave timeline, and this quote and chapter title shows that open discussions on homophobia were beginning to happen within the feminist community, but there was still work

⁹ Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, “Between the Lines: On Culture, Class, and Homophobia,” in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 102.

to be done. The rise of feminist bookstores can be seen across the United States can also be traced with the growing acceptance of different sexualities and homophobia as a form of oppression, since these stores were largely run by lesbians of color and dedicated themselves to an analysis of literature that included race, gender, class, homophobia.¹⁰ Sexual orientation and the effect that it had on Black feminism is crucial to mention because many Black feminist writers identified as lesbians and included this aspect of their lives in their written works, which affected their take on intersectionality.

African American women did not have a singular response to the discrimination they experienced from white feminist groups and Black activist groups. More often than not, complete separation from other movements was not feasible or desired due to personal connections to people, resources, and the movement ideology in general. Many Black feminist organizations argued against fully isolated feminist movements and recognized that cross-racial/gender organizing should be situational and related to specific issues.¹¹ In the long run, this desire did aid in the goal of radicalizing other groups of people, since communication was cautiously open between Black feminists and other groups. By 1980, other activists began to implement intersectional theory within their activity, including doing this by reading and discussing theories written by Black women.

Reaching across this divide, however, took place across a spectrum, in many ways dependent on the time and the issue that was bringing them together. For example, the Combahee River Collective on occasion organized with another Boston-based white feminist group, Bread and Roses, to implement structures that helped local women, such as creating women's shelters for domestic violence victims; therefore addressing a gender-related issue

¹⁰ Hogan, *The Feminist Bookstore Movement*, XV.

¹¹ Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*, 221.

(although it was an underlying race-related issue as well).¹² While this interaction was a positive one, there were limits to the interactions between Black feminists and other activists, as described by Demita Frazier, a co-founder of the CRC, in an interview with Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, in which she asserts that race made white people too uncomfortable, which restricted what they were willing to do in their activist efforts.¹³ This contributed to the continuation of the Black feminist movement, especially outside of the mainly white second-wave, and is seen in the frustrations written within the work of Black feminist women by not being able to intellectually reach people in order to radicalize them.

While there was no singular response to the divides that Black feminists experienced, one of the routes that were commonly taken was to continually push for an agenda that included radical theories on gender issues.¹⁴ These actions contributed to what Patricia Collins referred to as the culture of resistance, in which Black women traditionally continually fought against systems of oppression for their survival or to create institutional change.¹⁵ These two paths can be seen taken by African American women throughout much of their activism, even outside of social movements. More often than not, the two paths are interconnected. This is because the systems of oppression that affect women of color are embedded as institutions within American society that work to limit their day-to-day survival; to fight one is to fight for the other as well.

While the two paths are intertwined, you can see both separately within the writings of women as well. Black feminist women wrote about the interlocking oppressions, race, gender, class, and sexuality, to argue that issues like sexual assault, healthcare, and welfare were issues

¹² Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*, 221.

¹³ Demita Fraizer, "Demita Frazier," in *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*, ed. Keeanga-Yamhatta Taylor (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), 125.

¹⁴ Ashley D. Farmer, *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 5.

¹⁵ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 142.

that needed to be addressed for the survival of women of color. In “A Black Feminist Statement” written by The Combahee River Collective, they state that “We find our origins in the historical reality of Afro-American women’s continuous life-and-death struggle for survival and liberation”, which shows that one of the main objectives of their organization is to fight against a multitude of oppressive forces, including the white heteropatriarchy, sexism within the Black community, racism within the white feminist community, and homophobia within the feminist community at large.¹⁶ In Frances Beal’s article originally published in 1969 “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female”, she calls out specific “maternity clinics” in the North East that forced Black women to undergo sterilization in order to continue their welfare benefits.¹⁷ This has numerous negative emotional, psychological, and physical effects on women, and the implication that Black women were continually fighting for basic human rights and respect shows that the issues mentioned above hindered the day-to-day survival of Black women, while also simultaneously creating an environment that was incompatible with working to build institutional changes from the ground up.

Even with the critical fight for survival, some Black women were able to use their writing to fight for institutional change within society and within larger movements where they were experiencing gender discrimination. Often these women had a level of privilege because of their access to higher education and/or the income to be full-time activists and writers, therefore allowing them to write about things that could be used to create institutional change. “Blowing the Whistle on Some Jive” by Sarah Webster Fabio is a great example of a written work that directly argues against gender discrimination within the African American community, as Fabio

¹⁶ The Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* vol. 42, no. ¾ (Fall/Winter 2014): 271.

¹⁷ Frances Beal, “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female,” *Meridians* (2008): 172.

is writing as a direct response to Staple's "The Myth of Black Macho: A Response to Angry Black Feminist" article cited above. In it, Fabio rebuffs the claim that Black men do not have the power to be sexist towards Black women, especially within the African American community, and concludes that the divide between men and women of color within activist communities is influenced by systemic forces such as societal racism and gender politics.¹⁸ Both of these articles were published in *The Black Scholar*, showing the difficult conversations that Black feminists had to attempt to create institutional change by calling out discriminatory practices.

One of the most significant contributions that women of color had during this period was their intellectual thoughts, which were continually written and published to influence others to believe in more radicalized leftist ideology. Whether intentional or not, a large literary community developed centered around writing, reading, and conceptualizing radical Black feminist thought, and this community has its beginnings before the traditional timeline of second-wave feminist activism, which is considered to begin in the early 1960s. Maria W. Stewart, born as a free woman in 1803, wrote and gave speeches on political issues related to gender and race. Collins is quoted saying about Stewart "This early Black woman intellectual foreshadowed a variety of themes taken up by her Black feminist successors."¹⁹ Additionally, Anna Julia Cooper's book *A Voice of the South* published in 1892 is considered to be the first example of Black feminist theory in a full-length book; in it, Cooper examines race, gender, and class in postbellum America and comes to conclusions that mirror those of intersectional writings in the 1960s.²⁰ Even though neither of these women was able to organize on a large scale during their time, the foundations that they set through their written work influenced other

¹⁸ Sarah Webster Fabio, "Blowing the Whistle," *The Black Scholar*, vol. 10, no. 8/9 (May/June 1979): 56-59.

¹⁹ Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 3.

²⁰ Jennifer C. Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 7.

Black female writers during the sixties and beyond, in addition to setting a precedent for literature being an important aspect of black feminist activism. The continuing themes of examining the lives of Black women in terms of race, gender, and class can be seen first blooming within Stewart and Cooper's work.

During what is considered the second-wave feminist movement, African American women organized among distinct racial lines to create an agenda based on the theory of interlocking oppressions, a term coined by the Combahee River Collective, meaning that oppressive forces worked together and amplified one another.²¹ Even before the CRC's Black Feminist Statement was published in April 1977, women were writing about how interlocking oppressions affected their lives. Frances Beal's "Double Jeopardy" published nine years before the CRC'S Statement discusses how race and gender affected the lives of working-class Black women living in a capitalist society. Additionally, *The Black Woman: An Anthology*, edited by Toni Cade Bambara and published in 1970 was compiled of poems, short stories, and essays that carried with them evidence of how interlocking oppressions affected their personal lives. So, while the term was not coined and published yet by the CRC, Black women experienced and wrote about how their lives were affected by oppressive forces in the early timeline, showing how Black feminist thought was present within multiple sets of writings.

The CRC's Black Feminist Statement was published during the period when the white feminist movement was beginning to slow down, which greatly contrasts with the state of Black Feminism, which was continuing to grow and become more publicized. The Statement is broken into four sections, including the origin of Black feminism, the politics that the CRC believes in,

²¹ Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, "Introduction," in *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), 4.

the issues with organizing Black feminists, and Black feminist issues and practices.²² Within the writing, the authors quote work from feminist women of color like Angela Davis and Michelle Wallace, in addition to groups like the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) for their contributions to the political environment that the CRC inhabits. From the time the statement was published it has been referenced by countless other Black feminists and activists who based their politics off the core theories the CRC organized around. The Black Feminist Statement was written to influence and establish an audience to discuss radical values with, and it continually did that throughout and after the second wave was over. The CRC Statement has been cited countless times throughout feminist literature, including within multiple books used for research here, as a foundation for intersectional theory to come.

After the end of the traditional timeline in 1980, a wide array of Black feminist literature was published that continued to influence radical feminist thought and proves a continuation of second-wave feminism after what is claimed as the end of the movement. Perhaps the most well-known of these is Angela Davis's *Women, Race, and Class* published in 1981. Davis's work contains an analysis of gender, race, and class in the United States from slavery to the second-wave feminist movement in the sixties, and begins with a critique of the current histories of the experiences of female slaves, which Davis argues affects the knowledge of current Black feminist activism, because there is not a comprehensive history of the origins of Black feminist activism.²³ In Chapter 12, "Racism, Birth Control, and Reproductive Rights" Davis ends with a call to end forced sterilization, an issue that is discussed by numerous female writers of color, like Frances Beal and Barbara Smith, throughout the second wave. The connection can be drawn between Davis's first critique of the lack of knowledge of the history of the female enslaved

²² The Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," 271.

²³ Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981), 4.

experience and the failure of white feminists during the second wave to advocate against forced sterilization, especially considering that white feminists fought for abortion rights without including the voices of women of color. Davis's work includes multiple critiques of white feminism and pushes for the consideration interlocking oppressions within Leftist activism.

While Davis was a prominent woman in the feminist movement, she was also well known within the Black Power movement and was an open member of the U.S. Communist Party, and she used her voice within these movements as well to spread Black Feminist thought and push for a radical ideology that included a gender analysis, further radicalizing other groups of people outside of the Black feminist community.

This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, published in 1981, is another anthology composed of written pieces by women of color, not just African American women, that discusses how their lives have been impacted by interlocking oppressions. The demographics of the authors themselves show the growth and acceptance of Black feminist thought and intersectional activist theory, proving the effectiveness of radicalizing efforts taken by Black women during the second wave timeline and the creation of a larger coalition of people because of Black feminist theories. In one essay from *This Bridge*, titled "An Open Letter to Mary Daly" Audre Lorde calls out fellow feminist author Mary Daly, a white woman, for quoting the works of Black feminists out of context and appropriating African culture, in what Lorde calls Daly's attempt to claim to have a diverse story.²⁴ Daly's actions reflect the unfortunate historic trend of Black bodies and culture being used for white profit, and because Daly did not reply to Lorde's letter it also reflects the trend seen in both history and the second-wave movement of white unaccountability. Lorde's decision

²⁴ Lorde, "An Open Letter to Mary Daly," in *This Bridge Called My Back*, 90-93.

to publish this letter after not receiving a reply was an attempt to radicalize other women by showing them what is wrong with a specific piece of so-called feminist literature and the actions of a well-known feminist author. Even within the community of feminist writers, Black women were continually attempting to influence the ideologies of their counterparts to steer them towards more radical feminist thought; in other words, they were attempting to create institutionalized change within the feminist community at large.

In addition to her letter to Daly, Audre Lorde also included “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” in *This Bridge*. This essay is aimed to pull its readers a step beyond simply reading feminist literature towards taking actions to implement intersectional theory in their daily lives. Lorde states that there is a difference “Between the passive ‘be’ and the active ‘being’” while arguing that feminists in academic circles will claim they are antiracist, but will not enact this by choosing not to publish Black women's work, choosing not to put Black feminist texts onto reading lists, and generally participating in performative activism.²⁵ While there were sects within the feminist movement at large who continued to ignore intersectional theory, the work done by Black feminist women in radicalizing other groups of people, who did as Lorde would write participate in an “active being”, had grown substantially towards the end of the second-wave timeline and after, as seen in the development of feminist bookstores.

Feminist bookstores, which were largely run by a combination of women of color, lesbians of color, and white lesbians, and in the late 1970s reflected the need for a home for the Black feminist writings described above.²⁶ Feminist bookstores grew rapidly because most mainstream bookstores carried very few, if any, works of literature by women of color, and the bookwomen aimed to create a comprehensive space to house radical literature that would

²⁵ Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” in *This Bridge Called My Back*, 95.

²⁶ Hogan, *The Feminist Bookstore Movement*, 4.

otherwise go unread by interested readership simply because it was unavailable to them. This in itself contradicts the memory of the second wave being a straight, white movement, and proves that feminist women who were reading works by women of color were becoming radicalized and began to enact intersectional theory within their activist practices. In their effort to obtain feminist literature, these bookstores often had to lobby publishers who were not interested in supporting radical works written by women of color.²⁷ This is seen in 1977 when Random House publishing declared that “The market for women’s books is over,” and refused to publish feminist literature; however, due to the lobbying of feminist bookstores, within a year the company began publishing feminist books again under the slogan of the third wave of feminist publishing, despite it being before the second wave is commonly thought to be over.²⁸ Bookwomen made it their duty to create an environment that supported intersectionality by making sure that Black feminist literature was available in their bookstores, which influenced women who may have not had access to these materials previously and created change within the institutions that they influenced.

Going beyond the benefits of having a supportive location for Black feminist literature to be held, the creation of feminist bookstores established a new institution in and of itself, one that worked towards aiding group survival and creating larger institutional change within the communities around them, which contributed to the culture of resistance, theorized by Collins, by combining the two paths in one mission.²⁹ Bookstores became a physical location for women to gather to read and discuss feminist work. This later expanded past brick-and-mortar locations to include the "Feminist Bookstore News," a newsletter and network written by and spread

²⁷ Hogan, *The Feminist Bookstore Movement*, 43.

²⁸ Hogan, *The Feminist Bookstore Movement*, 48.

²⁹ Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 141-142.

between bookwomen and interested radical feminists to discuss theories, events, and most importantly, book recommendations, which will be discussed later.³⁰ These developments show the impact of Black feminist literature on radicalizing leftist women and strengthening bonds between feminists since the bookstores grew out of a realization of the necessity for access to these books.

In addition to being a location to create institutional change and disseminate theory, feminist bookstores became a resource center for local communities by putting Black feminist theory into action, combining theory written in literature with tools for group survival to aid local women. First, bookstores created a job for many women, and because it was an organization with moral foundations based within intersectional activism, women felt supported and open to be who they were within their work environment, surrounded by others with similar morals. Furthermore, bookwomen became experts on creating and providing information for the community through pamphlets and informational texts on many different issues, such as coming out, divorce, abortion access, single motherhood, and even getting published.³¹ The open access that feminist bookstores provided for communities added to the culture of resistance by providing a space that survival tools were freely available. As a result, many women walked into bookstores looking to gather information they may not find elsewhere discretely and continued to come back for the welcoming environment, to read a book, or talk with the bookwomen themselves, creating a cycle of customers coming for resources and staying to read and discuss theory.

A community adjacent to feminist bookstores were newsletters and magazines that included and disseminated Black feminist writing and theory. These compiled works should be

³⁰ Hogan, *The Feminist Bookstore Movement*, XV.

³¹ Hogan, *The Feminist Bookstore Movement*, 6.

categorically separated from books and other anthologies because magazines and newsletters required continued work over extended periods, showing the strength of coalitions from the foundations built by Black feminist intersectional theory to undergo continuous intellectual work. *Conditions: a Magazine of Writing by Women with an Emphasis on Writing by Lesbians*, published from 1976 to 1990, and *Azalea: A Magazine by Third World Lesbians*, published from 1977 to 1983, are both examples of long-running periodicals that were published past the end of the second-wave timeline. While neither of these magazines was solely composed of writings by African American women, except for *Conditions: Five, The Black Women's Issue*, they were two of the few magazines at the time that published works by women of color in every edition.³² *Conditions: Five* consists of work written by only African American women, and is very similar to larger anthologies, like *The Black Woman*, in that the work is personal to the lives of Black women when examining oppression with an intersectional lens.³³ Both magazines were compiled of author-submitted works, from poems to short essays that detailed the lives of women. *Conditions* and *Azalea* contained a continuing theme of addressing a multitude of oppressive forces in the lives of women and support of intersectional theory created by Black feminists during the second wave and spread by radicalized feminist women beyond the timeline.

The Feminist Bookstore News (FBN) was another long-running periodical influenced by Black feminist thought. Distributed between feminist bookstores and other feminist activist circles between 1976 and 2000, this newsletter was similar to *Conditions* and *Azalea* in that it continually supported intersectional theory through one of its major components: book recommendations. Every newsletter contained numerous recommendations for diverse books,

³² J.R. Roberts, "Black Lesbian Literature/Black Lesbian Lives: Materials for Women's Studies," *The Radical Teacher* no. 17 (November 1980): 11.

³³ Lorraine Bethel and Barbara Smith, "Introduction," *Conditions*, September 1, 1979, 11-15, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.28035103>.

and continually recommended books by Black feminist authors³⁴. This was, as Audre Lorde argued needed to be done, applying, and participating in intersectional activism, because through book recommendations, the *FBN* was able to aid in spreading radical theories, support Black feminist writers by raising demand for their books which helped to keep them in print, and contribute to the non-erasure of Black feminist literature within the literary community. Feminist magazines and newsletters lived in a unique space within the literary community where periodically influence people's reading choices through different issues published regularly, in comparison to a book that is only released once. *Conditions*, *Azalea*, and the *FBN* continually provided written works to further radicalize women, and in the case of the three mentioned here, they did this outside of the second-wave timeline and continued to bring Black feminist theories to activist circles.

As many scholars argue, there is a definite need for the expansion of the second-wave feminist timeline. Doing this would not only include the numerous works of feminist literature written by Black women and other women of color, like the pieces referenced here, in the second wave literary canon, but it would also create a conversation centered around the importance of intersectionality within the feminist movement, and in turn within activism in general. The theories created, written, and published by Black women during the second wave have continued significance because they represent the diversity among people that has been present within the United States since its inception.

While there is agreement that the second wave should be expanded for these reasons, there is not a consensus on when the second wave ends. In part, this is because Black feminist thought has become an integral part of Leftist activism today, which is why periodization, as

³⁴ Hogan, *The Feminist Bookstore Movement*, 34.

opposed to a strict end date is so important. Activism, especially within communities of color, is continuous and not reliant upon larger (white) American society to create a massive movement dictating when it is time to create change, and so, this is the case for many African American women as well. Barbara Smith, Demita Frazier, Angela Davis, and Frances Beal are all Black feminist writers from the second wave that never paused their activism, and are still seen in the twenty-first century continuing the work they began in the sixties by being highly participatory in politics and social movements.

Today, the personal activism of these women and the people they have radicalized are so heavily based upon the theories created and published by Black feminist writers in the second wave, that in the end, deciding on a specific end date for second-wave feminism is not realistic. Rather, Black feminist thought, characterized by the creation of intersectional theory, coalition work with other groups, and a complex literary community directly created a new era of radical thought that continually influences radical thought today. Black feminist writers were and are revolutionaries in terms of their influence on social movements from the second wave on.

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