5-2022

The Bodies Politic: Sex, History, and the Promise of a Black Queer America

Jonathan Newby
William & Mary

The Bodies Politic: Sex, History, and the Promise of a Black Queer America

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in American Studies from
The College of William and Mary

by

Jonathan Alexander Newby

Accepted for Honors
(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)

Leisa D. Meyer, (AMST/HIST), Director

Jerry Watkins, III, (HIST)

Monica Gosin

Monika Gosin (SOCL)

Williamsburg, VA
May 11, 2022

The Bodies Politic

Sex, History, and the Promise of a Black Queer America

Jonathan Alexander Newby

Honors 496

May 11, 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Content Warning: Sexual assault, racism, homophobic violence

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I wish to dedicate this writing to my late father, Jonathan, as well as mother, Regina, and my younger brother, Braxton. I love you all dearly.

I also wish to acknowledge my advisors, Drs. Leisa Meyer and Elizabeth Losh, for guiding me through my academic journey at William & Mary, and for whose encouragement and patience I will be forever grateful.

Lastly, to all the Black and Queer folk reading this: thank you for holding on, even though you did not and should not have had to. Prayerfully, by the time you read this, America will be kinder to us in all the ways we deserve. Be bold, authentic, and always full of love—not only to others, but especially for yourself.

INTRODUCTION

> See, if everything is sex
> Except sex, which is power
> You know power is just sex
> You screw me and I'll screw you too
> Everything is sex
> Except sex, which is power
> You know power is just sex
> Now ask yourself who's screwing you[1]

The human body exists at the intersections of pleasure and pain, culture and law, power and liberation. Sex is a medium through which social relations are expressed and regulated; with whom people have sex and the ways that different segments of society react to such, to varying degrees, dictate which identities are privileged or disenfranchised. Not only has sex defined the bounds of intimacy, but it has been used to enforce (and break down) notions of gender, as well as complicate conceptions of race and interracial relations. In the United States, in particular, sex, and intimacy more broadly, serve as pillars of community, gatekeeping White, heteronormative American hegemony against those deemed inferior and transgressive—Queer people and people of color especially.

Black and Queer people understand these dynamics very well - at the crossroads of race and sexuality, they occupy complicated spaces in their respective communities, while still creating their own unique enclaves. The particular role that Black Queer people play in defining the boundaries of sex is twofold; Black Queer people push back against Queerphobia in Black spaces and anti-Blackness in Queer spaces, while still asserting their own personal and sexual autonomy. Critical to this is the

[1] Janelle Monáe, "Screwed," featuring Zoë Kravitz, Wondaland Arts Society, track 5 on *Dirty Computer*, 2018.

understanding that Black people have their own sexual experiences with Queerness that exist beyond the mainstream; and at the same time, Queerness is quintessential to Black identity as a whole—one cannot have Black communities without the Queer people and experiences that exist within them.

In the United States especially, Black Queer people have always been at the forefront of movements for justice and equality. The fight to cement Black Queer love and culture into the national canon is part of the broader influence that Black Queer people have had on other moments of social activism, especially the Civil Rights and Gay Liberation Movements of the 1960s onward, despite attempts at being overshadowed for the sake of integrating into hegemonic citizenship.[2] Several Black Queer leaders played pivotal roles in advancing racial justice and sexual freedom in America while critiquing the moderate positions of their White or heterosexual counterparts in favor of more radical politics and actions. Their intersectional identities positioned between and across Blackness and Queerness gave these individuals and collectives unique insights into the complex multitude of injustices plaguing both the nation and themselves specifically, as well as solutions to such that did not hinge on capitulation to normativity or respectability politics characteristic of their less-intersectional counterparts, which often required them to essentially "hide their sexuality or gender identity."[3] But both openness of one's sexuality and gender identity, as well as full-throated assertion of their race is what makes the prospect of a just future ever more possible.

---

[2] Thaddeus Russell, "The Color of Discipline: Civil Rights and Black Sexuality" (*American Quarterly* 60, no. 1, 2008), 101-128.
[3] Doug Meyer, "An Intersectional Analysis of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) People's Evaluations of Anti-Queer Violence" (*Gender & Society* 26, no. 6, 2012), 835.

This essay explores American history and the need to reorient our understandings of it; the history and effects of Black love and its Queer conceptions; and racism in supposedly progressive Queer communities in recent history and the present day. Each of these three topics together weave a story of the essentiality of Black, Queer, and Black Queer folks to the narrative of the United States; without them, the nation as its known and should be known would not exist, and countless movements would be without many of their most valuable leaders.

AN AMERICAN STORY

Genuine examinations of Black and Queer people anywhere—and especially in the United States of America—require radical acts of reorientation. Such study demands a deep reinterpretation of the histories we have long been taught and an elevation of those that have been oft-ignored or purposefully suppressed by unjust authorities. But even beyond this, Black and Queer narratives necessitate the redefinition of history itself as something not linear, definitive, and authoritative, but as open-ended, malleable, and with many an author.

Faedra Chatard Carpenter in "'Que(e)rying' History" carefully examines the play *Insurrection: Holding History* as a quintessential Queering of history and positions it as an example and extension of intellectual postmodernism, which itself encourages interrogation of supposed absolute truths.[4] *Insurrection* details the journey of a Black Gay graduate student at the predominately (and historically) White Columbia University as he does research for his thesis on American slavery. Carpenter argues that *Insurrection* does much work in complicating the authoritativeness of history that Americans have so often been conditioned to accept, that "O'Hara's play presents history—and identity—as fluid experiences that cannot be fully confined or categorized within the metaphorically 'dusty' pages of an authoritative text."[5] Further, Carpenter asserts that history is akin to performance, that by its very nature cannot be the

---

[4] Faedra Chatard Carpenter, "Robert O'Hara's *Insurrection*: 'Que(e)rying' History," in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, eds. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson (Durham: *Duke University Press*, 2005), 253.
[5] Carpenter, 253-254.

unabridged, unaltered truth, instead calling for our understanding of history to be Queered in an effort to understand and appreciate said performativity.

Normative conceptions of history often fall into the trap of linearity, of simplistic cause-and-effect narratives that rarely if ever challenge their own assumptions. As traditionally taught and shared to the public by hegemonic institutions, history is the definitive course of events as it relates to major powers—how empires rise and fall, how wars start and (sometimes never) end, and how a select few ingenious folks go on to change the world in their various fields. While not always in and of itself incorrect, this model of historical storytelling advances isolated and exclusionary understandings of how our world has progressed—and sometimes regressed. By portraying historical events in broad strokes of black-and-white morality and individualism (on both the personal and societal level), countless counter-narratives are lost or pushed aside for the sake of the so-called one true story—which by and large does not exist.

Interpretations of history are further complicated when taking into account the particular experiences of the marginalized, whose stories cast shadows on the predominant narratives told of their lives and their eras. For example, one may look at the dichotomy between Thomas Jefferson's revolutionary legacy in the American mythos and his close relationship to slavery—a phenomenom which can be complexly analyzed and critiqued within a reorientative lens, but is woefully simplified and whitewashed by patriotic scholarship and education. As the head of Monticello in Charlottesville, Virginia, Jefferson enslaved several Black families—perhaps most infamously the Hemings family; with Sally Hemings, Jefferson sired six children (four of whom survived past childhood), and later freed them from enslavement (yet did not

free their mother, Sally).[6] This comes into direct conflict with Jefferson's historical standing as a Founding Father of the American republic, whose position comes with the presumption of rational, enlightened thought and rebellious commitment to democracy and freedom; Annette Gordon-Reed aptly interrogates the myth of of Jefferson's proverbial celibacy, noting how the Jefferson family and their allies asserted "[h]e was too busy creating a nation to be bothered with creating passion and children with Sally Hemings."[7] But in light of the confirmation that Jefferson did, indeed, have children with Hemings, this nationalist myth of the upstanding Founding Father, untainted by fraternizing with enslaved Black people, is rendered just that—a myth (yet canonized by the need to keep segregated the lives of America's historical elites and their human property). How, then, does one reconcile the words of the Declaration of Independence—that declared "all men are created equal" and entitled to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"[8]—and the author behind said text, who himself owned human beings and considered them inferior to himself on the basis of race?

Furthermore, on the other side of the controversy, how does one critically examine Sally Hemings? On one hand, she was an enslaved woman owned by a President of the United States of America, and on the other, she managed to arrange freedom for her children and carve out some semblance of autonomy at Monticello, relative to the circumstances of her enslavement. It would be incorrect to claim that

---

[6] "Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: A Brief Account," Thomas Jefferson Foundation, accessed 2022, https://www.monticello.org/thomas-jefferson/jefferson-slavery/thomas-jefferson-and-sally-hemings-a-brief-account/.

[7] Annete Gordon-Reed, "Engaging Jefferson: Blacks and the Founding Father" (*The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 57, no. 1, 2000), 180.

[8] Thomas Jefferson, et al, *July 4, Copy of Declaration of Independence* (1776), https://www.loc.gov/item/mtjbib000159/.

Hemings was wholly subordinate to Thomas Jefferson, given her influence in orchestrating some reprieve for her family; that being said, it would also be wrong to argue that Hemings rose out of her enslavement to control Jefferson to a large, unprecedented extent, given that she never gained her own freedom from bondage. Further, one must ask questions of attraction and power: did Thomas Jefferson love Sally Hemings, or vice versa? Could any such relationship, if it did exist, be consensual given the drastic power imbalance that inherently exists between the slaver and the enslaved? One descendant of Hemings, according to the research of Lucia Stanton, did recall that Sally Hemings was "deeply loved" by Jefferson, and it is implied by other descendants as well as later generations of Jeffersons that their relationship was in some way "more of a romantic story."[9] Still, though, one has little reason to believe that Hemings could freely consent to having sex and children with Jefferson, but her ability to convince Jefferson, her legal owner, to lessen the burden of her family at Monticello and grant freedom for their children implies some connection between them intimate enough to, at least on a small scale, break down the racial and hierarchical barriers between them.

Perhaps, as Clarence Walker argues, the United States "should recognize Sally and Thomas as its founding parents and abandon the idea that the United States was a white nation from its inception,"[10] in the pursuit of uncovering "those smoldering

---

[9] Lucia Stanton, *"Those Who Labor for My Happiness": Slavery at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello* (Charottesville: *University of Virginia Press*, 2012), 245.
[10] Clarence Earl Walker, *Mongrel Nation: The America Begotten by Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings* (Charlotesville: *University of Virginia Press*, 2009), 29.

silences that could speak the histories of multiple origins and racial injustices."[11] Deborah Gray White also tackles the issue of American mythology, further insisting on the centrality of enslaved Black women to America's founding and development. White argues that for enslaved women, unlike their male counterparts, being marginalized by both gender and race "made it most difficult for [them] to escape the mythology," while at the same time also noting that this same inability to break free from the American myth made them essential to overturning it in the centuries during and after legal slavery was abolished, highlighting such figures as Sojourner Truth, and countless of the unnamed—without which American as it is today would not exist.[12]

Or perhaps we should argue the opposite position—that the United States should remove Jefferson from his place of reverence in American history. But either argument is a disservice to Hemings, whose story we have not fully learned of or from. Despite much recent scholarship on and recognition of her life, the extent to which we know Sally Hemings pales in comparison to the amount of knowledge we have on Jefferson's life—even if some of that knowledge is biased in his favor.

The saga of Sally Hemings is just one example of hundreds of enslaved women having intimate (and sometimes forced) relationships with their slavers, problematizing several contemporary assumptions of life at the time—miscegenation and interracial relationships, consent and empowerment in the face of slavery, and ultimately the conception of the nation and its leaders as dutifully moral and nigh-flawless. Scholars

---

[11] Fred Lee, "Reconsidering the Jefferson—Hemings Relationship: Nationalist Historiography Without Nationalist Heroes, Racial Sexuality Without Racial Significance" (*Political Research Quarterly* 66, no. 3, 2013), 512.
[12] Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: *Norton*, 1999).

and the public must wrestle with these hard questions and complicated narratives, but with the glaring caveat that such work will forever be incomplete and without definitive answers. There will always be multiple narratives in the study of history, but it is important to note that some narratives are simply inaccessible to us. In the case of the Hemings family, one of the main reasons why the relationship between Sally and Thomas became a contemporary controversy is because of oral history and rumors passed down by the Hemings and other families close to the Jeffersons, which led to Sally's descendants taking DNA tests in 1998 against that of Thomas', concluding that the two families are indeed related by blood as a result of their common ancestors[13]; without such, the story of Sally Hemings may never have been told on a large scale, and this major stain[14] on the image of Thomas Jefferson may never have come to be.

Records from enslaved people are notoriously few and far between, and the legacy of such erasure is widespread. Our archival history of the United States is woefully incomplete as a result of the lack of early knowledge produced on and by Black people; the enslaved were largely not taught to read and write (and often legally not allowed to), and various cruel tactics by White slaveowners prevented the enslaved from recording their histories and passing them down not just to their future generations but to the nation as a whole for written perpetuity—hence the importance of oral storytelling in Black American communities. What does exist in our archives are numerous accounts of horror, which have been used to gender and politicize the legacy

---

[13] Jobling E. Foster and P.M. Taylor, *et al.*, "Jefferson fathered slave's last child," (*Nature* 396, 1998), 27–28.

[14] For context, "stain" here is meant to be interpreted from a nationalist standpoint, that Thomas Jefferson's fraternization with a Black woman, consensual or not, calls into question the centering of Whiteness in the stories of America's founding and subsequent founding principles, of which separation of the races is a prominent pillar.

of slavery. In *Dispossessed Lives*, Marisa Fuentes recounts many stories of Black women in bondage undergoing such extended, inhumane punishments as over one hundred lashings in intervals of thirty-nine or being hung from a tree by the wrists and genitally mutilated by a slaver's fire.[15] These narratives, though crucial to understanding the excruciating pains of slavery, are of no solace to those affected; historians' focus on enslaved Black women's pain, Fuentes argues, led to their suffering being used as the political backdrop of abolitionism by emphasizing the womanhood of those tortured, a "silencing of enslaved women in pain even as they seem to be the focal point of the narratives." Saidiya Hartman further explores the political pawning of enslaved Black women on both sides of the issues of slavery and segregation, detailing how opponents of enslavement prolifically recorded stories of enslaved women committing suicide and being brutalized in order to shock the public (often not taking firsthand accounts from these women, neglecting them an opportunity to voice their experiences for themselves), and how various southern states passed laws to essentially ban Black people from the public and political spheres (denying them both the full rights of citizenship and the ability to be non-discriminatorily recorded as citizens), for the possession of social power was determined by one's proximity to Whiteness.[16] This process of "archival erasure" disempowers those whose voices needed to be heard, allowing for others to dispossess them of their own narratives and autonomy as human beings. Even in the present day, the Black body is often an object of death, particularly in the age of social media where it is easy to watch Black death on repeat as a form of

[15] Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: *University of Pennsylvania Press*, 2016), 124-127.
[16] Saidya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjugation: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: *Oxford University Press*, 1997), 117.

pornotrope, as understood by Yasmin Ibrahim.[17] It has not been until relatively recently that there has been an outpouring of stories of Black resistance and Black joy to both counteract and coexist with the prevailing narratives of endless pain and death. To a certain extent, to be Black in America is to suffer, but that does not mean—by any stretch of the imagination—that Blackness itself is suffering. The failure of our archival canon to dispel the notion of the latter has not only exacerbated the former but put down any opposition from those other sources that believe in what positivity does exist in and from Blackness.

A stalwart of that Black positivity can be found in Bayard Rustin; he was born in 1912 and grew up to become a steadfast activist for Black and Queer civil rights, even serving as a mentor for Martin Luther King Jr. But compared to King, or other civil rights leaders and icons such as Malcolm X or Rosa Parks, Rustin is barely acknowledged, and it is increasingly understood that it is because he lived his life as an openly Gay man—a rarity for someone as high profile as he was at a time where broad public acceptance of Queerness was not as prominent as it is today, as a result of widespread erasure of the radicalism of the Civil Rights Movement.[18] In *Lost Prophet*, John D'Emilio recounts Rustin's life in great detail, from his beginnings as a young radical at a Black, Quaker college to his pivotal role in organizing the Montgomery bus boycott with King and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and beyond.

---

[17] Yasmin Ibrahim, "The dying Black boy in repeat mode: the Black 'horrific' on a loop" (*Identities*, 2021), 4.
[18] John D'Emilio, "Remembering Bayard Rustin" (*OAH Magazine of History*, vol. 20, no. 2 2006), 12–14.

But Rustin's sexuality was always a point of contention even amongst his closest allies. This tension came to a head in 1953, when Rustin was arrested in Pasadena, California, along with two White men for "lewd vagrancy," with Rustin being accused at the time of offering and performing oral sex on the men (at the time, oral sex was criminalized as sodomy).[19] According to D'Emilio, Rustin's career never fully recovered; as a result of the Pasadena arrest, Rustin resigned or was let go from several organizations he was a part of, including the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), a coalition of religious communities for pacifism which had previously tried to make him "exercise 'rigorous discipline' if he expected to stay on staff."[20] These attempts at regulating Rustin's sexual activity to maintain a clean, moral facade for these organizations were made to cover up Rustin' perceived immoralities and to protect the movements from accusations of impropriety—necessary steps, their leaders and benefactors believed, to maintain their political respectability. Though at times these organizations took strides to defend Rustin and his importance to their work and movements, less care has been taken to protect his long lasting legacy from falling out of popular memory. And to top it all off, the Pasadena incident rocked Rustin's relationship with King, which in effect relegated him to the sidelines, even as he continued to advocate for justice on his own terms. This sidelining greatly reduced Rustin's national profile, allowing his legacy of contributions to fall to the wayside, even to the current day where he and his civil rights work are largely invisible or at least not

---

[19] George Painter, "The Sensibilities of Our Forefathers: The History of Sodomy Laws in the United States." Gay & Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest, http://www.glapn.org/sodomylaws/sensibilities/california.htm?msclkid=32100f4cbeb511ecbd53cd227728ebfd.

[20] John D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 191-195.

recognized to anywhere near the same extent as his contemporaries. Though during his life he still managed some fame and recognition, it cannot be commonly said that said recognition extends to the present day to the degree it once did; he was not resurrected from history in the same way that King and others were.

How can we do right by Bayard Rustin? What can we do to correct our understanding of history, so that the Sally Hemingses of the past and present are more fully present in the story of the United States, in that they are studied, represented, and understood to same extent (or even more extensively) than the morally-compromised Jeffersons to whom they serve as historical counters? Such work requires a series of reorientations: first, we must do away with the singular notion of history, and instead recognize its inherent multifaceted nature—history is, in reality, histories, an interwoven web of narratives that together make a fabric of nonlinear, interpretive continuity. We must also alongside this elevate those parts of the web that are too often ignored—those of marginalized identities, systematically written out of the national narrative, must not only be brought back into the fold but centered as key contributors to authentic storytelling and imperative to the mission of facilitating deeper discussions of said national narratives. And further, we must acknowledge and embrace the role of individual and collective agency on the part of the marginalized, that these people and their communities have always acted in resistance to oppression and have always been the creators of their own identities, outside of the dictates of oppressive and hegemonic cultural and political institutions. This especially holds true for Black Queer folks, who for decades have set out to change the discourses surrounding race, sexuality, and power.

LOVE, DARK AND COLORFUL

Black love is not a new concept, by any stretch of the imagination. As long as there have been Black people, there has been Black love. In the context of modern African American communities, however, Black love takes on several new meanings, particularly racialized and politicized in climates of discrimination and segregation. A key pillar of the Jim Crow era was the widespread legal ban on miscgenation—interracial marriages in particular. Though resisted by both White and Black citizens, most notably in the *Loving v. Virginia* Supreme Court case decided in 1967[21], there long remained (and still, in some respects, remains) a cultural stigma against interracial relationships, both romantic and platonic. Some of these reasons, as one might expect, are rooted in racism against people of color, with many White people perceiving them as inferior; other reasons, though, are rooted in the opposite: the protection of community.

In "Movement for Black Love," Tabitha Jaime Mary Chester details an autoethnographic account of her time in various activist spaces associated with the Movement for Black Lives and other liberationist spaces, where she observed how these communities built cultures of collective love to combat institutional forms that sought to eradicate love amongst Black people.[22] But what is Black love, as understood in the contemporary age? Chester would argue that it is a form of resistance, that Black love exists so that Black people may form radical bonds with one another and use said

[21] *Loving v. Virginia*, Legal Information Institute, https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/388/1%26amp%3Bhl%3D

[22] Tabitha Jamie Mary Chester, "Movement for Black Love: The Building of Critical Communities Through the Relational Geography of Movement Spaces" (*Biography*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2018), 741-759.

bonds to work together against anti-Blackness in the world. Similarly, Suzanne Manizza Roszak, in re-examining a number of literary sources and cultural critics on the matter, observes that "Black love [...] can be broadly humanist, but it can also be deeply romantic and solidly familial. What's more, it is often invested in undoing both racist and capitalist social structures," and also "that [Black Love] has been forged in the face of American barbarism (slavery) and American terrorism (Jim Crow, lynching)."[23] From this, we can define Black love as the lens through which Black people interact with one another, with the collective understanding of the need for solidarity in the face of a hostile racial environment, both historically and in the present. Especially in the media, this Black love manifests in depictions of Black men and Black women coming together in a romantic bond in spite of a myriad of societal challenges threatening their relationship; even while resisting sexual stereotyping in the United States, many prominent Black creative outlets conformed to a heteronormative conception of Black sexuality. "Strange Love" goes in depth to examine how Black Americans, following World War II, created Black-centric magazines and promoted scientific research that deconstructed the assumption of the "average person" being White and middle class, refuting so-called obscenity tests and breaking color barriers in visual media and literature.[24]

Black representation in media has not always been a net positive, however, and many depictions of Black sexuality advance a narrative that, while already presumed to be compulsorily heterosexual, also conceives of Black men as physically aggressive,

[23] Suzanne Manizza Roszak, "Intersectional Feminism, Black Love, and the Transnational Turn: Rereading Guillén, Hughes, and Roumain" (*Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 44, no. 4, 2021), 37-56.
[24] Leisa D. Meyer, "Strange Love" in *Connexions: Histories of Race and Sex in North America*, eds. Jennifer Brier, James Downs, Jennifer Morgan (Champaign: *University of Illinois Press*, 2016), 256-281.

sexually wanton, and rigidly masculine—to a toxic degree. In *Black Sexual Politics*, Patricia Hill Collins speaks to the transformation of Black masculinity resulting from changing media narratives:

> In this context, some representations of Blackness become commonsense 'truths.' For example, Black men in perpetual pursuit of booty calls may appear to be more authentically "Black" than Black men who study, and the experiences of poor and working-class Black men may be established as being more authentically Black than those of middle- and upper-middle class African American men.[25]

This deauthentification of Black masculinities which are not rooted in violence perpetuate ideologies which not only reify Black people as inherently poor and uneducated, but also make these deauthentificated Blacknesses, in whole or in part, un-Black. The canonization of the sexually dominant, "hood," heterosexual Black man into the American consciousness has had a direct negative impact on Black Queer people—men especially, as their Queerness equates them to a weaker manhood, essentially womanhood, which puts them opposite of "true" Black masculinity, and thus subject to verbal, physical, and sexual violence, all perpetuated principally by other Black men.[26] This threat—and sometimes promise—of violence has historically buried many expressions of Black Queer sexuality, forcing the birth of the "down low" subculture of recent decades, which requires Black Queer mens' discretion in homosexual (or even homoerotic) encounters, even while continuing to maintain heterosexual relationships in public.[27]

---

[25] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 151-152.
[26] Collins, 172-173.
[27] Collins, 173.

Not all Black men had gay sex explicitly on the "down low," though—for many, their same-sex exploits were, to an extent, common knowledge among their peers. In *Sweet Tea*, E. Patrick Johnson, through a series of oral histories of Black men in the American South, uncovered a legacy of these men, in their youth and onward, having homosexual and homoerotic experiences with one another, simultaneously enforcing and complicating notions of masculinity in these Black communities. Many of the subjects interviewed recollected instances of mutual masturbation, which were moments of bonding between these Black then-boys, and also of asserting one's social power through being sexually experienced in this way. One interviewee, Dan, went so far as to reveal that he was part of a group of boys who, around the seventh grade, engaged in anal intercourse with one another—though avoiding oral sex, as oral sex was considered "the worst thing someone could do" within the context of the Black community.[28] In this way, not all sex was equal; oral sex was often demeaned as inferior and a moral failing, those who participated (or were suspected of doing so) were branded "cocksuckers".[29] Though even with these many instances of sex, other cases of same-sex intimacy rarely went beyond kissing or mostly one-sided admiration.

Sex often began young—in one's middle school years or earlier, and sometimes as a result of molestation, that subjects in *Sweet Tea* have complicated feelings towards to this day. In these cases where consent could not be given—legally or morally, considering the vast age difference between the adult and the minor at hand—the legacies of these interactions cast a shadow on the development of one's Queerness.

---

[28] E. Patrick Johnson, *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South* (Chapel Hill: *The University of North Carolina Press*, 2008), 276-278.
[29] Johnson, 277.

The matter of consent in youth experiences with sexuality in some ways mirrors the aforementioned issues of consent surrounding Sally Hemings and Thomas Jefferson's interactions and calls into (both legitimate and illegitimate) question the Queer sexual awakening as opposed to its heterosexual counterpart—the extent to which outside forces affect one's sexuality.

Kent, from Berea, North Carolina, spoke with E. Patrick Johnson about his experience being molested when he was about seven years old by someone in their late teens ("He was probably around seventeen at the time, somewhere in that area").[30] Kent recounts how the experience "at one point felt natural and beautiful," but he blocked it out up to his twenties in order to not risk losing his parents' love, who dealt with the molestation by pretending it never happened. And this refusal to address to events confirmed to Kent's parents that that Kent was Gay because he was molested by another man—and not because of his own inner sexuality. During his interview with Johnson, Kent recalled:

> My mom mentioned it when I came out to her a little over two years ago. And she thought maybe that was the reason what I was telling her I was gay. But I told her that I remember having these feelings before that happened. So his molesting me didn't make me gay.[31]

Kent also went on to note that he eventually found out what came of his molester: that he got married and had children. And, despite wanting to confront him, "a friend of mine convinced [Kent] to just let it go," implying (alongside the mental blocking) that, despite admitting that the experience felt natural, that it was still on some level traumatizing as Kent matured. These stories have often been used as fodder for

---

[30] Johnson, 265
[31] Johnson, 265

homophobes to rail against Gay rights, arguing that Queer folks (men especially) are perverted and, like the man Kent mentioned, bound to be molesters. Such fodder, for example, can be found in the Regent University Law Review, wherein Steve Baldwin argues that homoseuality has a "destructive impact [...] upon Western Civilization" and that "the homosexual community is driving the worldwide campaign to lower the legal age of consent."[32]

Categorically, such accusations are false.

On the large scale, though, these are attacks that heterosexual Black people do not experience to anywhere near the same degree. Both culturally and academically, Black Queer folks have been separated from the wider concept of the Black American community precisely because of their Queerness. Much like how Bayard Rustin was hidden away during the Civil Rights Movement to preserve the political palatability of Martin Luther King Jr. and other movement leaders, Black Queer Americans have been cast aside and made (in the mainstream) irrelevant to advance a heterosexist Blackness that is respectable to White institutions. Dwight McBride in his book chapter "Straight Black Studies" evaluates in depth the essay "Loyalty" by Essex Hemphill, arguing that his writing "is keen to demonstrate how the very models of intervention into racial discrimination at the heart of the analysis represented by African American studies are themselves committed to the flattening out (if not the evisceration) of queers or queer sexuality and the challenges they pose to the heterosexist construct that is 'the African

---

[32] Steve Baldwin, "Child Molestation and the Homosexual Movement" (*Regent University Law Review* 14, no. 2, 2002), 267-282.

American community.'"[33] Further in his chapter, McBride discusses the relationship of James Baldwin to African American Studies, noting that while Baldwin "had a rather complicated relationship" with gay liberation movements during his time, Baldwin's public outing at the release of his book *Giovanni's Room* as a Gay man emphasized the essentiality of Baldwin's Queerness with his Blackness, cementing an intersectional approach to his identity and legacy within African American Studies.[34]

As mentioned previously, such toxicity in Black communities in the pursuit of integration with hegemonic America has had grave impacts on Black Queer Americans, who nonetheless continue to simultaneously insert themselves into American Blackness and stand outside of it as their own political and cultural force. The insistence of Black Queer folk to include themselves in conversations of race and power in America represents a longstanding demand for Black communities as a whole to better embrace intersectionality and the necessity of liberation for people of all identities, not just those who are heteronormative. At the same time, the physical and social infrastructures that Black Queer Americans have built both embedded into the fabric of and apart from heterosexual Black America exemplify the independence that Black Queer Americans have been both voluntarily or forced to adopt as their own.

Black Queer folks, like their heterosexual counterparts, utilize Black love to combat racism and build strong bonds with one another. But, necessarily, their form of Black love is Queer, and radical.

---

[33] Dwight A. McBride, "Straight Black Studies: On African American Studies, James Baldwin, and Black Queer Studies" in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, eds. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 63-78.
[34] McBride, 65-66.

[35]

Just as racism is not new to the United States as a whole, it also is not an unknown phenonemon in Queer communities; the comparison of myself, a Black man, to a dog by a White man is just one small example of this reality. The roots of this racism can, according to Damien Riggs, be found in the origins of modern Gay rights movements, which, being distinctively Westernized, were also largely White (at least among their prominent leadership) and associated with White cultural norms.[36] Riggs notes that, even though mainstream Gay advocacy organizations borrowed heavily from the Civil RIghts Movement, they largely did not adopt race as a key component of their activism, going so far as to accuse their more radical counterparts such as ACT UP of being too committed to fighting racism and embracing intersectionalty, falling in line with "popular" political discourse which made sexual and racial justice movements adversaries of each other (an accusation which, in part, led to ACT UP's demise).[37]

This institutionalization of racism in Queer communities has survived the twentieth century and is now embedded in a new digital landscape, where the internet

---

[35] A screenshot from the mobile app Grindr of a user sending an image reading "NO DOGS NEGROS MEXICANS," captured December 17, 2019.
[36] Damien Riggs, *The Psychic Life of Racism in Gay Men's Communities* (London: Lexington Books, 2018), 2.
[37] Riggs, 3-5

is a major facilitator of interactions between Queer individuals, for both platonic, romantic, and sexual experiences. Despite being potential avenues for the subversion of heteronormative expectation, relationship and hookup apps simultaneously serve to reinforce those same restrictive norms with particularly insidious abandon. In *Screen Love*, Tom Roach argues that digital platforms such as Grindr "can nurture a utopian desire to be free from heteronormative relational models, standards, and rituals," while in reality also being "crude, offensive, bigoted, and deplorable."[38] Other scholars argue that Grindr and related social media sites replicate Westernized ideals of what makes for a suitable mate, and the objectification (of others and the self) that accompanies the perpetuation of said hegemonic ideals.[39]

Roach's analysis of Grindr works in part because Grindr, by design, is meant to be simplistic and minimalistic in its interface and reputation. Grindr distinguished itself from other Gay dating apps by, for one, being the first to be location-oriented, and for another by billing itself as "noncomplicated," focusing on images and quick descriptors over the types of involved questioning? typical of other social media platforms oriented towards Queer men (such as Gaydar).[40] This relgation of a user's identity to just the various categories they occupy within Queer spaces (such as "bear" or "DL" ("down low") and what they want (with tags ranging from "Networking" to "Right Now" (denoting the desire for a sexual encounter) is reminiscent of other social

---

[38] Tom Roach, *Screen Love: Queer Intimacies in the Grindr Era* (Albany: *State University of New York Press*, 2021), 66.
[39] Joel Anderson, et. al., "iObjectify: Self- and other-objectification on Grindr, a geosocial networking application designed for men who have sex with men" (*European Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 48, Issue 5, 2018), 602.
[40] Elija Cassidy, *Gay Men, Identity, and Social Media: A Culture of Participatory Reluctance* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2018), 137.

media sites such as Facebook (which emphasizes a curated profile of oneself and the content they share) and has advanced prejudiced behaviors within Queer communities. Roach argues that"Racism, classism, effemephobia,[41] gender- and body-normativity are palpable in m4m media, and social identity filters help them flourish,"[42] and without more direct confrontation of such discrimination on Grindr[43] and other platforms, people of color—among many other groups—suffer in Queer digital spaces and have to fight for equity largely on their own.

Congruous with the Westernization of Queer communities is the constructed, systemic invisibility of Whiteness in many Queer spaces. Sulaimon Giwa defines the effects of this invisibility, noting that:

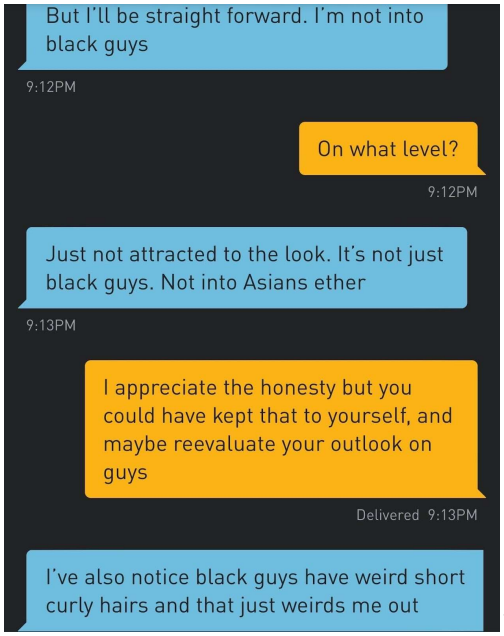
> Central to the power of invisibility, moreover, is the operation of whiteness as the standard against which racialized groups are measured (Giwa 2016)[44]. In this way, whiteness continues to evade scrutiny, while gay men from the African diaspora remain the object under surveillance.[45]

In this way, White Queer men, privileged by their race, become the epitome of Queerness both inside and outside of Gay communities, creating a social hierarchy which disadvantages people of color as inferior and unable to be full-fledged members of Queer communities. The image at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates one way in which this White Queer superiority manifests in modern digital spaces; the dismissal of myself, a Black man, from interactions with a White man from Grindr is

---

[41] "...the fear of effeminacy," and, in this context, prejudice against those Queer men who protray or claim womanhood and/or proximity to femininity broadly (Alexis Annes, et al., "The Careful Balance of Gender and Sexuality: Rural Gay Men, the Heterosexual Matrix, and 'Effeminophobia' (Journal of Homosexuality 59, 2012), 279).
[42] Roach, *Screen Love*, 56.
[43] Grindr maintains Community Guidelines (https://www.grindr.com/community-guidelines/), but prescribes few efforts to curb violations of them beyond community self-policing and reporting.
[44] Sulaimon Giwa, "Surviving Racist Culture: Strategies of Managing Racism Among Gay Men of Colour—An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis" (York University, 2016), PhD diss.
[45] Riggs, *The Psychic Life of Racism in Gay Men's Communities*, 82.

representative of several other similar interactions I have had on the platform, where my Blackness was treated as a flaw, a poison that made me not just undesirable but untouchable.



[46]

Racism is rampant and has divisive effects on communities long portrayed as progressive and united by common struggles, and that facade has, in many ways, emboldened the perpetrators of said racism to be more open and less discreet about their prejudices; there is something to be said about the ways in which discrimination against Black hair and hairstyles has trickled down from workplace America[47] to online Queerdom. Maura Kelly and other researchers, in interviews with Queer Americans, noted how many interviewees felt connected to their LGBTQ communities through shared experiences of trauma and discrimination against Queer individuals, while at the same time also experiencing racism within Queer communities, significantly affecting

[46] A screenshot from the mobile app Grindr of an interaction between a user and the author of this paper, captured June 4, 2019.
[47] Margaret Goodman, "Wearing My Crown to Work: The Crown Act asa Solution to Shortcomings of Title VII for Hair Discrimination in the Workplace" (*Touro Law Review* 37, no. 2, 2021).

their conceptions of belonging in Queer spaces, and to an extent their own sexual identities.[48]

And this is of little surprise when the historical movements and media developments upon which modern Queer communities have been influenced by and even founded on center Whiteness. Kai Linke, in *Good White Queers?*, frames the debate regarding racism in LGBTQ spaces within theoretical understandings of Gay and Lesbian activism in America and media that has propelled or been inspired by such. From a historical standpoint, Linke argues that, during the Civil Rights Movement, even though Black nationalism had generally been the majority opinion regarding liberation by and for African Americans, their liberal, White counterparts instead pushed surface-level integration as a solution to racial justice, and used their existing political power within inequitable institutions to rob the movement of its radicality, representing for some the lost opportunities to reshape the nation in ways more fully beneficial for Black people.[49] As a result of these shallow attempts of integrating Black folks into White power structures, African American communities continued to experience rampant racism, from employment and bank discrimination to school and neighborhood segregation—much of it informal, in part due to the weakness of White liberal integrationist reforms, often underwritten by the same White supremacists the integrationists claimed to oppose.[50]

---

[48] Maura Kelly, et al., "Collective Trauma in Queer Communities" (*Sexuality and Culture* 24, 2020), 1522-1543.
[49] To be sure, there were a number of Black integrationists, such as Martin Luther King Jr.; however, this passage focuses specifically on the influence of White integrationists, herein acknowledging that they had some backing by various Black leaders.
[50] Kai Linke, *Good White Queers? Racism and Whiteness in U.S. Comics* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2021), 47-49.

Further, Linke profiles C. Riley Snorton's research on the "ungendering of blackness" and how, in the wake of the Transatlantic slave trade, enslaved Black people were stripped of their authority to assert their identities or basic humanity in the rising heterosexual matrix of the New World, casting them, their descendents, and other people of color out of the American gender and sexual hegemony and made, in the eyes of White Americans, inherently deviant.[51] In turn, this affected how people of color socialize and identify with Queerdom. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, mainstream Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual advocacy organizations began positioning themselves as the inheriters of the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement, the so-called next oppressed group to fight for their rights—in other words, "Gay is the New Black," in the eyes and statements of these groups, most notable among them the Human Rights Campaign. Reactions to this "new" tactic for securing rights could, for example, be seen in the court system, where Gay and Lesbian legal organizations (like Lambda Legal, among others) argued that the cause for same-sex marriage was similar to or the same as *Loving v. Virginia*, and the struggle to decriminalize sodomy was "our *Brown v Board of Education*."[52] This manufactured linearity and queuing of the history and present of marginalized justice asserts two main falsehoods: one, that the oppression of Black people and Queer people are the same; and two, that the time of large-scale racial justice initiatives has passed and must be replaced by mobilization for Gay rights (this mobilization being led especially by White people)—essentially, asserting a post-racialism in America that, to put it plainly, does not exist.[53] Such

[51] Linke, 61.
[52] Linke, 189-190.
[53] Linke, 191.

notions that the United States is by-and-large (or entirely) beyond racism are fantasies of White populations in America, whose members do not or cannot fully grasp intersectionality or understand the deep systemic racism that pervades American laws, cultures, and institutions. These falsehoods further obfuscate the demands of more radical activists, who adopted "Queer" as a marker for confrontational, oppositional politics—which were openly opposed by those nonprofits which sought to assimilate into the normative American hierarchy without foundational critique.

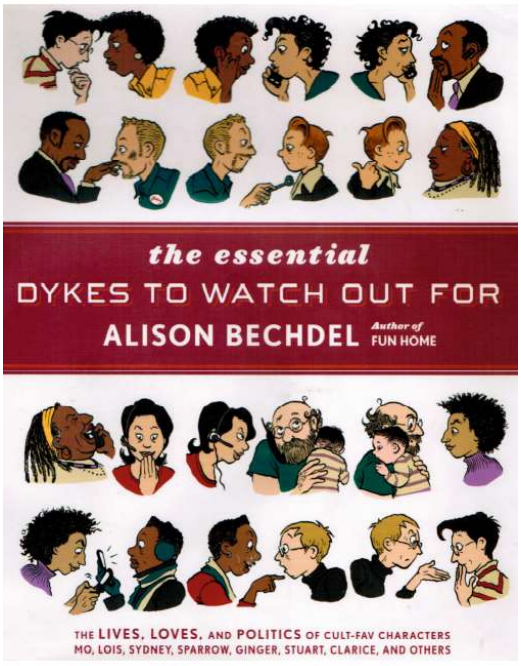
These colorblind politcs in action in LGBT spaces can be examined in one of lesbian cartoonist and graphic novelist Alison Bechdel's major works, *Dykes To Watch Out For*, and its derivatives. In the comics, Bechdel imagines a Lesbian community that is indeed (nominally) racially diverse and politically active, but falls short of making substantial critiques of or interventions into intracommunity racism. Linke notes that the cover of *The Essential Dykes To Watch Out For* greatly exaggerates the number of characters of color in the compilation, mimicking tactics "reminiscent of the common practice in advertising brochures to feature the same few token People of Color over and over again in order to create the visual illusion of a diversity that does not really exist."[54] Linke additionally calls attention to a particular main character, Mo (who is heavily based on Bechdel herself), noting:

> It also bears noting that the very egalitarian chain of gossip depicted on the cover both starts and ends with Mo. Having the chain of gossip bookended by Mo once again underscores her central role in the comic and thus serves to center whiteness, even on a cover where white people are actually in the minority.[55]

---

[54] Linke, 115-116.
[55] Linke, 116.

Figure 2



Bechdel, *The Essential Dykes To Watch Out For*, cover [56]

This simultaneous portrayal of both an idealized diversity and the centering of White Lesbianism betrays the supposed progressivism of LGBTQ communities (particuarly those within activist circles), and instead highlights the shortcomings of a Queer culture that does not adequately address race and its intersections with gender and sexuality through complex lenses. The latent racism of such White progressives has been a roadblock to transformational, intersectional justice, and because of this, different paths of understanding Queer rights and liberation must be followed—some new, others long in the making in the background.

The failures of mainstream LGBT organizations to more strongly critique the mechanisms of power which inherently work against them can be corrected by moving from a normative to non-normative interpretation of struggle—or, as Ghassan

[56] Linke, 115.

Moussawi and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz argue, from Queer reductionism to "Queer sociology."[57] Vidal-Ortiz and Moussawi, in advancing Queer sociology, advocate for situating people of color in the center of LGBTQ issues and other fights for liberation and justice, while at the same time decentering Whiteness, arguing that the feminist, postcolonial ideologies of people of color come with the necessary intersectional critiques of heterosexism and settler colonialism needed to challenge hegemonic power structures which are a constraint on not only sexuality, but gender and race, among other positionalities.[58] Queer sociology acknowledges identity while also moving beyond it to self-critique and complicate our understandings of identity-based movements. The two authors specifically note:

> ...'[A] queer sociology' centers power relations beyond sexuality; this results in locating race, class, nation, gender, along with sexuality (beyond identity) at the heart of discussions of national and subcultural formations. For example, a queer sociology critiques (white) LGBT identity politics and movements, and considers the complicities and the hierarchies within racialized LGBT categories as opposed to reproducing them. When we pay attention to the privileges within marginalized groups and move beyond single issues (such as sexuality), we complicate understandings of gay communities, neighborhoods, and LGBT organizing.[59]

Thus, to advance justice from and within Queer communities, we must firmly interrogate the ways in which hierarchies and inequalities are replicated in LGBTQ spaces, and a focus on race is critical to such interrogation. From that, in order to decenter Whiteness, we must call out its invisibility and challenge its status as the unspoken default of Queerness. Until we do, people of color will always be alien in Queer spaces, accepted only on the condition of conformity or silence.

---

[57] Ghassan Moussawi and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz, "A Queer Sociology: On Power, Race, and Decentering Whiteness" (*Sociological Forum*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2020), 1273.
[58] Moussawi, 1273-1274.
[59] Moussawi, 1281.

CONCLUSION

Black Queer people represent the essential nature of intersectionality to the history of the United States. Occupying multiple positional identities, which both diverge and intersect in a variety of ways, Black Queer people, by virtue of their existence and their resistance, represent a core caucus of the *body politic* of America. Consciously and unconsciously, they have had distinct impacts on every generation, challenging not only America's legacy with race, but also its constructions of gender, sexuality, and power (both cultural and political). Without Black Queer people in this nation, we would lose a vital demographic necessary to critique the inaccuracies of patriotic American history, and we would be without the thinkers and doers necessary to reorient the very idea of American identity. If we are to accept that there are many sides to every story, that movements for justice must center the marginalized, and that sex and love are not solely defined by privileged, we must then acknowledge the mutifacetedness of our past and embrace a more liberated future—the promise of a Black Queer America, which has existed for centuries and at the same time is still yet to come.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Joel, et. al. "iObjectify: Self- and other-objectification on Grindr, a geosocial networking application designed for men who have sex with men." *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2350.

Annes, Alexis, *et al.*, "The Careful Balance of Gender and Sexuality: Rural Gay Men, the Heterosexual Matrix, and 'Effeminophobia.'" *Journal of Homosexuality* 59, 2012.

Carpenter, Faedra Chatard. "Robert O'Hara's *Insurrection*: 'Que(e)rying' History," in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*. eds. Johnson, E., Patrick, Henderson, G., Mae Durham: *Duke University Press*, 2005.

Cassidy, Elijah. *Gay Men, Identity, and Social Media: A Culture of Participatory Reluctance*. London: *Taylor and Francis*, 2018.

Chester, Tabitha Jamie Mary. "Movement for Black Love: The Building of Critical Communities Through the Relational Geography of Movement Spaces." *Biography*, Volume 41, Number 4, Fall 2018, pp. 741-759, *University of Hawai'i Press*, 2018. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/719275/pdf.

Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*. New York: *Routledge*, 2004.

D'Emilio, John. "Remembering Bayard Rustin." *OAH Magazine of History*, Volume 20, no. 2, (2006): 12–14.

D'Emilio John. *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin*. New York: *Free Press*, 2003.

Foster, E., Jobling, Taylor, M., P., *et al.* "Jefferson fathered slave's last child." *Nature* 396, 1998. https://www.nature.com/articles/23835.

Fuentes, Marisa J. *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archives*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

Giwa, Sulaimon. "Surviving Racist Culture: Strategies of Managing Racism Among Gay Men of Colour—An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis." York University, 2016. PhD dissertation.

Goodman, Margaret. "Wearing My Crown to Work: The Crown Act asa Solution to Shortcomings of Title VII for Hair Discrimination in the Workplace." *Touro Law Review* 37, no. 2, 2021.

Gordon-Reed, Annette. "Engaging Jefferson: Blacks and the Founding Father." *William and Mary Quarterly* 57.1 (2000): 171-82.

Hartman, Saidya. *Scenes of Subjugation: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1997.

Ibrahim, Yasmin. "The Dying Black Body in Repeat Mode: The Black 'horrific' on a Loop." *Identities (Yverdon, Switzerland)*, 2021.

Jefferson, Thomas, et al. *July 4, Copy of Declaration of Independence*. -07-04, 1776. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mtjbib000159/.

Johnson, Patrick E. *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South*. Chapel Hill: *The University of North Carolina Press*, 2008.

Kelly Maura, *et al.* "Collective Trauma in Queer Communities. *Sexuality and Culture* 24, 2020.

Lee, Fred. "Reconsidering the Jefferson–Hemings Relationship: Nationalist Historiography without Nationalist Heroes, Racial Sexuality without Racial Significance." 2012. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1065912912453519.

Linke, Kai. *Good White Queers? Racism and Whiteness in U.S. Comics*. Bielefeld: *transcript Verlag*, 2021.

Loving v. Virginia, 388 U.S. 1 (1967). Legal Information Institute. Accessed 2022. https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/388/1%26amp%3Bhl%3D.

McBride, Dwight A. "Straight Black Studies: On African American Studies, James Baldwin, and Black Queer Studies" in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, eds. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson. Durham: *Duke University Press*, 2005.

Meyer, Doug. "An Intersectional Analysis of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) People's Evaluations of Anti-Queer Violence." Gender & Society, vol. 26 no. 6, December 2012 849-873. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0891243212461299.

Meyer, Leisa. "Strange Love: Searching for Sexual Subjectivities in 1950s Black Print Popular Culture," in *Connexions: Histories of Race and Sex in North America*. Champaign: *University of Illinois Press*, 2016.

Monaé, Janelle. "Screwed." Featuring Zoe Kravitz. 2018. Track 5 on *Dirty Computer*. Woodland Arts Society.

Moussawi, Hassan, Vidal-Ortiz, Salvador. "A Queer Sociology: On Power, Race, and Decentering Whiteness." *Sociological Forum*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2020.

Painter, George. "The Sensibilities of Our Forefathers: The History of Sodomy Laws in the United States." *Gay & Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest*. http://www.glapn.org/sodomylaws/sensibilities/california.htm?msclkid=32100f4beb511ecbd53cd227728ebfd.

Riggs, Damien W., ed. *The Psychic Life of Racism in Gay Men's Communities*. London: Lexington Books, 2017.

Roach, Tom. *Screen Love: Queer Intimacies in the Grindr Era*. Albany: *State University of New York Press*, 2021. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cwm/detail.action?docID=6481399.

Roszak, Suzanne Manizza. "Intersectional Feminism, Black Love, and the Transnational Turn: Rereading Guillén, Hughes, and Roumain." *Journal of Modern Literature* 44, no. 4, 2021. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/811486.

Russell, Thaddeus. "The Color of Discipline: Civil Rights and Black Sexuality." *American Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2008): 101-128. doi: 10.1353/aq.2008.0000.

Stanton, Lucia. *"Those Who Labor for My Happiness": Slavery at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello*. Charlottesville: *University of Virginia Press*, 2012.

Thomas Jefferson Foundation. "Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: A Brief Account." Accessed 2022. https://www.monticello.org/thomas-jefferson/jefferson-slavery/thomas-jefferson-and-sally-hemings-a-brief-account/.

Walker, Clarence Earl. *Mongrel Nation: The America Begotten by Thomas Jefferson*