



An Open Letter to Our Friends on the Question of Language

“When there is emotional pain, psychiatrists like me believe that we can help. But before we act we need to find some handle for the problem, some name to guide action. Once in awhile, we realize that these names are inadequate for the problems we are seeing. Then we search for new names, or new ways to group old names.”

-- Mindy Thompson Fullilove, M.D., “Root Shock,” 2005

Dear Friends:

The Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions is a human justice policy, advocacy and training center founded, directed and staffed by academics and advocates who were formerly incarcerated. It is the first and only one of its kind in the United States.

One of our first initiatives is to respond to the negative public perception about our population as expressed in the language and concepts used to describe us. When we are not called mad dogs, animals, predators, offenders and other derogatory terms, we are referred to as inmates, convicts, prisoners and felons—all terms devoid of humanness which identify us as “things” rather than as people. These terms are accepted as the “official” language of the media, law enforcement, prison industrial complex and public policy agencies. **However, they are no longer acceptable for us and we are asking people to stop using them.**

In an effort to assist our transition from prison to our communities as responsible citizens and to create a more positive human image of ourselves, we are asking everyone to stop using these negative terms and to simply refer to us as **PEOPLE**. People currently or formerly incarcerated, **PEOPLE** on parole, **PEOPLE** recently released from prison, **PEOPLE** in prison, **PEOPLE** with criminal convictions, but **PEOPLE**.

We habitually underestimate the power of language. The bible says, **“Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”** In fact, all of the faith traditions recognize the power of words and, in particular, names that we are given or give ourselves. Ancient traditions considered the “naming ceremony” one of the most important rites of passage. Your name indicated not only who you were and where you belonged, but also who you could be. The worst part of repeatedly hearing your negative definition of me, is that I begin to believe it myself *“for as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”* It follows then, that calling me inmate, convict, prisoner, felon, or offender indicates a lack of understanding of who I am, but more importantly **what I can be.** I can be and am much more than an “ex-con,” or an “ex-offender,” or an “ex-felon.”

The Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions believes that if we can get progressive

publications, organizations and individuals like you to stop using the old offensive language and simply refer to us as “**people**,” we will have achieved a significant step forward in our life giving struggle to be recognized as the human beings we are. We have made our mistakes, yes, but we have also paid or are paying our debts to society.

We believe we have the right to be called by a name we choose, rather than one someone else decides to use. We think that by insisting on being called “**people**” we reaffirm our right to be recognized as human beings, not animals, inmates, prisoners or offenders.

We also firmly believe that if we cannot persuade you to refer to us, and think of us, as people, then all our other efforts at reform and change are seriously compromised.

Accordingly, please talk with your friends and colleagues about this initiative. If you agree with our approach encourage others to join us. Use positive language in your writing, speeches, publications, web sites and literature.

When you hear people using the negative language, gently and respectfully correct them and explain why such language is hurting us. Kindly circulate this letter on your various list serves.

If you disagree with this initiative, please write and tell us why at the above address or e-mail us at info@centerfornuleadership.org. Perhaps, we have overlooked something. ***Please join us in making this campaign successful. With your help we can change public opinion, one person at a time.***

Thank you so much.

In Solidarity and Love,

Eddie Ellis
Founder

4 Easy Steps To Follow

- 1. Be conscious of the language you use. Remember that each time you speak, you convey powerful word picture images.**
- 2. Stop using the terms offender, felon, prisoner, inmate and convict.**
- 3. Substitute the word PEOPLE for these other negative terms.**
- 4. Encourage your friends, family and colleagues to use positive language in their speech, writing, publications and electronic communications.**

White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack

Peggy McIntosh

"I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group"

Through work to bring materials from women's studies into the rest of the curriculum, I have often noticed men's unwillingness to grant that they are overprivileged, even though they may grant that women are disadvantaged. They may say they will work to women's statues, in the society, the university, or the curriculum, but they can't or won't support the idea of lessening men's. Denials that amount to taboos surround the subject of advantages that men gain from women's disadvantages. These denials protect male privilege from being fully acknowledged, lessened, or ended.

Thinking through unacknowledged male privilege as a phenomenon, I realized that, since hierarchies in our society are interlocking, there are most likely a phenomenon, I realized that, since hierarchies in our society are interlocking, there was most likely a phenomenon of while privilege that was similarly denied and protected. As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage.

I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege. So I have begun in an untutored way to ask what it is like to have white privilege. I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools , and blank checks.

Describing white privilege makes one newly accountable. As we in women's studies work to reveal male privilege and ask men to give up some of their power, so one who writes about having white privilege must ask, "having described it, what will I do to lessen or end it?"

After I realized the extent to which men work from a base of unacknowledged privilege, I understood that much of their oppressiveness was unconscious. Then I remembered the frequent charges from women of color that white women whom they encounter are oppressive. I began to understand why we are just seen as oppressive, even when we don't see ourselves that way. I began to count the ways in which I enjoy unearned skin privilege and have been conditioned into oblivion about its existence.

My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture. I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will. My schooling followed the pattern my colleague Elizabeth Minnich has pointed out: whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work that will allow "them" to be more like "us."

Peggy McIntosh is associate director of the Wellesley Collage Center for Research on Women. This essay is excerpted from Working Paper 189. "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming To See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies" (1988), by Peggy McIntosh; available for \$4.00 from the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley MA 02181 The working paper contains a longer list of privileges. This excerpted essay is reprinted from the Winter 1990 issue of Independent School

Daily effects of white privilege

I decided to try to work on myself at least by identifying some of the daily effects of white privilege in my life. I have chosen those conditions that I think in my case attach somewhat more to skin-color privilege than to class, religion, ethnic status, or geographic location, though of course all these other factors are intricately intertwined. As far as I can tell, my African American coworkers, friends, and acquaintances with whom I come into daily or frequent contact in this particular time, place and time of work cannot count on most of these conditions.

1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. I can avoid spending time with people whom I was trained to mistrust and who have learned to mistrust my kind or me.
3. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
4. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
5. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
6. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
7. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
8. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
9. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege.
10. I can be pretty sure of having my voice heard in a group in which I am the only member of my race.
11. I can be casual about whether or not to listen to another person's voice in a group in which s/he is the only member of his/her race.
12. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods which fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.
13. Whether I use checks, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.

14. I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
15. I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection.
16. I can be pretty sure that my children's teachers and employers will tolerate them if they fit school and workplace norms; my chief worries about them do not concern others' attitudes toward their race.
17. I can talk with my mouth full and not have people put this down to my color.
18. I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty or the illiteracy of my race.
19. I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
20. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
21. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
22. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
23. I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.
24. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to the "person in charge", I will be facing a person of my race.
25. If a traffic cop pulls me over or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
26. I can easily buy posters, post-cards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
27. I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance or feared.
28. I can be pretty sure that an argument with a colleague of another race is more likely to jeopardize her/his chances for advancement than to jeopardize mine.
29. I can be pretty sure that if I argue for the promotion of a person of another race, or a program centering on race, this is not likely to cost me heavily within my present setting, even if my colleagues disagree with me.
30. If I declare there is a racial issue at hand, or there isn't a racial issue at hand, my race will lend me more credibility for either position than a person of color will have.

Peggy McIntosh is associate director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. This essay is excerpted from Working Paper 189. "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming To See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies" (1988), by Peggy McIntosh; available for \$4.00 from the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley MA 02181. The working paper contains a longer list of privileges. This excerpted essay is reprinted from the Winter 1990 issue of Independent School

31. I can choose to ignore developments in minority writing and minority activist programs, or disparage them, or learn from them, but in any case, I can find ways to be more or less protected from negative consequences of any of these choices.
32. My culture gives me little fear about ignoring the perspectives and powers of people of other races.
33. I am not made acutely aware that my shape, bearing or body odor will be taken as a reflection on my race.
34. I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking.
35. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having my co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of my race.
36. If my day, week or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it had racial overtones.
37. I can be pretty sure of finding people who would be willing to talk with me and advise me about my next steps, professionally.
38. I can think over many options, social, political, imaginative or professional, without asking whether a person of my race would be accepted or allowed to do what I want to do.
39. I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race.
40. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.
41. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me.
42. I can arrange my activities so that I will never have to experience feelings of rejection owing to my race.
43. If I have low credibility as a leader I can be sure that my race is not the problem.
44. I can easily find academic courses and institutions which give attention only to people of my race.
45. I can expect figurative language and imagery in all of the arts to testify to experiences of my race.
46. I can chose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.
47. I can travel alone or with my spouse without expecting embarrassment or hostility in those who deal with us.

48. I have no difficulty finding neighborhoods where people approve of our household.

49. My children are given texts and classes which implicitly support our kind of family unit and do not turn them against my choice of domestic partnership.

50. I will feel welcomed and "normal" in the usual walks of public life, institutional and social.

Elusive and fugitive

I repeatedly forgot each of the realizations on this list until I wrote it down. For me white privilege has turned out to be an elusive and fugitive subject. The pressure to avoid it is great, for in facing it I must give up the myth of meritocracy. If these things are true, this is not such a free country; one's life is not what one makes it; many doors open for certain people through no virtues of their own.

In unpacking this invisible knapsack of white privilege, I have listed conditions of daily experience that I once took for granted. Nor did I think of any of these perquisites as bad for the holder. I now think that we need a more finely differentiated taxonomy of privilege, for some of these varieties are only what one would want for everyone in a just society, and others give license to be ignorant, oblivious, arrogant, and destructive.

I see a pattern running through the matrix of white privilege, a patter of assumptions that were passed on to me as a white person. There was one main piece of cultural turf; it was my own turn, and I was among those who could control the turf. My skin color was an asset for any move I was educated to want to make. I could think of myself as belonging in major ways and of making social systems work for me. I could freely disparage, fear, neglect, or be oblivious to anything outside of the dominant cultural forms. Being of the main culture, I could also criticize it fairly freely.

In proportion as my racial group was being made confident, comfortable, and oblivious, other groups were likely being made unconfident, uncomfortable, and alienated. Whiteness protected me from many kinds of hostility, distress, and violence, which I was being subtly trained to visit, in turn, upon people of color.

For this reason, the word "privilege" now seems to me misleading. We usually think of privilege as being a favored state, whether earned or conferred by birth or luck. Yet some of the conditions I have described here work systematically to over empower certain groups. Such privilege simply confers dominance because of one's race or sex.

Earned strength, unearned power

I want, then, to distinguish between earned strength and unearned power conferred privilege can look like strength when it is in fact permission to escape or to dominate. But not all of the privileges on my list are inevitably damaging. Some, like the expectation that neighbors will be decent to you, or that your race will not count against you in court, should be the norm in a just society. Others, like the privilege to ignore less powerful people, distort the humanity of the holders as well as the ignored groups.

We might at least start by distinguishing between positive advantages, which we can work to spread, and negative types of advantage, which unless rejected will always reinforce our present hierarchies. For example, the feeling that one belongs within the human circle, as Native Americans say, should not be seen as privilege for a few. Ideally it is an unearned entitlement. At present, since only a few have it, it is an unearned advantage for them. This paper results from a process of coming to see that some of the power that I originally say as attendant on being a human being in the United States consisted in unearned advantage and conferred dominance.

I have met very few men who truly distressed about systemic, unearned male advantage and conferred dominance. And so one question for me and others like me is whether we will be like them, or whether we will get truly distressed, even outraged, about unearned race advantage and conferred dominance, and, if so, what we will do to lessen them. In any case, we need to do more work in identifying how they actually affect our daily lives. Many, perhaps most, of our white students in the United States think that racism doesn't affect them because they are not people of color; they do not see "whiteness" as a racial identity. In addition, since race and sex are not the only advantaging systems at work, we need similarly to examine the daily experience of having age advantage, or ethnic advantage, or physical ability, or advantage related to nationality, religion, or sexual orientation.

Difficulties and angers surrounding the task of finding parallels are many. Since racism, sexism, and heterosexism are not the same, the advantages associated with them should not be seen as the same. In addition, it is hard to disentangle aspects of unearned advantage that rest more on social class, economic class, race, religion, sex, and ethnic identity than on other factors. Still, all of the oppressions are interlocking, as the members of the Combahee River Collective pointed out in their "Black Feminist Statement" of 1977.

One factor seems clear about all of the interlocking oppressions. They take both active forms, which we can see, and embedded forms, which as a member of the dominant groups one is taught not to see. In my class and place, I did not see myself as a racist because I was taught to recognize racism only in individual acts of meanness by members of my group, never in invisible systems conferring unsought racial dominance on my group from birth.

Disapproving of the system won't be enough to change them. I was taught to think that racism could end if white individuals changed their attitude. But a "white" skin in the United States opens many doors for whites whether or not we approve of the way dominance has been conferred on us. Individual acts can palliate but cannot end, these problems.

To redesign social systems we need first to acknowledge their colossal unseen dimensions. The silences and denials surrounding privilege are the key political surrounding privilege are the key political tool here. They keep the thinking about equality or equity incomplete, protecting unearned advantage and conferred dominance by making these subject taboo. Most talk by whites about equal opportunity seems to me now to be about equal opportunity to try to get into a position of dominance while denying that systems of dominance exist.

It seems to me that obliviousness about white advantage, like obliviousness about male advantage, is kept strongly inculturated in the United States so as to maintain the myth of meritocracy, the myth that

democratic choice is equally available to all. Keeping most people unaware that freedom of confident action is there for just a small number of people props up those in power and serves to keep power in the hands of the same groups that have most of it already.

Although systemic change takes many decades, there are pressing questions for me and, I imagine, for some others like me if we raise our daily consciousness on the perquisites of being light-skinned. What will we do with such knowledge? As we know from watching men, it is an open question whether we will choose to use unearned advantage, and whether we will use any of our arbitrarily awarded power to try to reconstruct power systems on a broader base.

Peggy McIntosh is associate director of the Wellesley Collage Center for Research on Women. This essay is excerpted from Working Paper 189. "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming To See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies" (1988), by Peggy McIntosh; available for \$4.00 from the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley MA 02181 The working paper contains a longer list of privileges. This excerpted essay is reprinted from the Winter 1990 issue of Independent School.

Peggy McIntosh is associate director of the Wellesley Collage Center for Research on Women. This essay is excerpted from Working Paper 189. "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming To See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies" (1988), by Peggy McIntosh; available for \$4.00 from the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley MA 02181 The working paper contains a longer list of privileges. This excerpted essay is reprinted from the Winter 1990 issue of Independent School

for the black male lot. The Sapphire identity has been projected onto any black woman who overtly expresses bitterness, anger, and rage about her lot. Consequently, many black women repress these feelings for fear of being regarded as shrewish Sapphires. Or they embrace the Sapphire identity as a reaction to the harsh treatment of black women in society. The "evilness" of a given black woman may merely be the facade she presents to a sexist-racist world that she realizes would only exploit her if she were to appear vulnerable.

All the myths and stereotypes used to characterize black womanhood have their roots in negative anti-woman mythology. Yet they form the basis of most critical inquiry into the nature of black female experience. Many people have difficulty appreciating black women as we are because of eagerness to impose an identity upon us based on any number of negative stereotypes. Widespread efforts to continue devaluation of black womanhood make it extremely difficult and oftentimes impossible for the black female to develop a positive self-concept. For we are daily bombarded by negative images. Indeed, one strong oppressive force has been this negative stereotype and our acceptance of it as a viable role model upon which we can pattern our lives.

The Imperialism of Patriarchy

When the contemporary movement toward feminism began, there was little discussion of the impact of sexism on the social status of black women. The upper and middle class white women who were at the forefront of the movement made no effort to emphasize that patriarchal power, the power men use to dominate women, is not just the privilege of upper and middle class white men, but the privilege of all men in our society regardless of their class or race. White feminists so focused on the disparity between white male/white female economic status as an indication of the negative impact of sexism that they drew no attention to the fact that poor and lower-class men are as able to oppress and brutalize women as any other group of men in American society. The feminist tendency to make synonymous male possession of economic power with being an oppressor caused white men to be labeled "the" enemy. The labeling of the white male patriarch as "chauvinist pig" provided a convenient scapegoat for black male sexists. They could join with white and black women to protest against white male oppression and divert attention away from their sexism, their support of patriarchy, and their

sexist exploitation of women. Black leaders, male and female, have been unwilling to acknowledge black male sexist oppression of black women because they do not want to acknowledge that racism is not the only oppressive force in our lives. Nor do they wish to complicate efforts to resist racism by acknowledging that black men can be victimized by racism but at the same time act as sexist oppressors of black women. Consequently there is little acknowledgement of sexist oppression in black male/female relationships as a serious problem. Exaggerated emphasis on the impact of racism on black men has evoked an image of the black male as effete, emasculated, crippled. And so intensely does this image dominate American thinking that people are absolutely unwilling to admit that the damaging effects of racism on black men neither prevents them from being sexist oppressors nor excuses or justifies their sexist oppression of black women.

Black male sexism existed long before American slavery. The sexist politics of white-ruled and colonized America merely reinforced in the minds of enslaved black people existing beliefs that men were the superiors of women. In an earlier discussion of the slave sub-culture I noted that the patriarchal social structure gave the enslaved male higher status than the enslaved female. Historiographers have not been willing to acknowledge either the higher status of the enslaved male in the black sub-culture or the fact that sex-based differentiation of work roles as assigned by white masters reflected a bias towards the male (i.e., black women required to perform "male" tasks but black men not required to perform "female" tasks—women labor in fields but men do no childcare). In modern times, the emphasis on the sexist definition of the male role as that of protector and provider has caused scholars to argue that the most damaging impact of slavery on black people was that it did not allow black men to assume the traditional male role. But the inability of black men to assume the role of protector and provider did not change the reality that men in patriarchal society automatically have higher status than women—they are not obliged to earn that status. Consequently, the enslaved black male, though obviously deprived of the

social status that would enable him to protect and provide for himself and others, had a higher status than the black female slave based solely on his being male. This higher status did not always lead to preferential treatment but it was overtly acknowledged by sex-role differentiation.

Sexist discrimination against all women in the labor force and in higher educational spheres throughout 19th century America meant that of those black people who aspired to leadership roles, either during slavery, or at manumission, black men were the more likely candidates. As black men dominated leadership roles, they shaped the early black liberation movement so that it reflected a patriarchal bias. Courageous black women leaders like Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman did not represent the norm; they were exceptional individuals who dared to challenge the male vanguard to struggle for freedom. At public appearances, rallies, luncheons, and dinners black male leaders spoke in support of patriarchal rule. They did not talk directly about discriminating against women. Their sexism was shrouded in romantic visions of black men lifting black women to pedestals. Outspoken black nationalist leader Martin Delaney in his political treatise, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*, which was first published in 1852, advocated distinct sex-role patterns for black women and men:

Let our young men and women prepare themselves for usefulness and business; that the men may enter into merchandise, trading, and other things of importance; the young women may become teachers of various kinds, and otherwise fill places of usefulness....

Our females must be qualified, because they are to be the mothers of our children. As mothers are the first nurse and instructors of children; from them children consequently, get their first impression, which being always the most lasting, should be the more correct. Raise the mothers above the level of degradation, and the offspring is elevated with them. In a word, instead of our young men, transcribing in their blank books recipes for Cooking, we desire to see them making the transfer of Invoices and Merchandise.

Frederick Douglass saw the entire racial dilemma in America as

a struggle between white men and black men. In 1865 he published an essay titled "What the Black Man Wants" which argued in favor of black men gaining the vote while women remained disenfranchised:

Shall we at this moment justify the deprivation of the Negro of the right to vote, because some one else is deprived of that privilege? I hold that women, as well as men, have the right to vote, and my heart and my voice go with the movement to extend suffrage to women; but the question rests on another basis than that on which our rights rest. We may be asked, I say, why we want it. I will tell you why we want it. We want it because it is our right, first of all. No class of men can, without insulting their own nature, be content with any deprivation of their rights.

It is evident in this statement that to Douglass the negro was synonymous with the black male. And though he claims in his essay to support woman suffrage, he clearly believed it was more appropriate and fitting that men be given the right to vote. By emphasizing that the right to vote was more important to men than women, Douglass and other black male activists allied themselves with white male patriarchs on the basis of shared sexism.

In their private lives, black male activists and political leaders demanded that their wives assume subordinate roles. Black woman feminist Mary Church Terrell recorded in her diary that her activist lawyer husband desired her to play no role in political affairs. She complained that he treated her as if she were a fragile glass object in need of constant protection. Terrell's husband used his patriarchal status to sabotage her political work. His fear was that her femininity would be tarnished by too many encounters with the world outside the home. The marriage of Booker T. Washington and his third wife, Margaret Murray, was fraught with similar conflict. Margaret wanted to assume a more active role in the black political movement but was encouraged to confine herself to the domestic sphere. While Ida B. Wells' husband supported her political work, she did not abdicate responsibility for child care and on various occasions appeared at speaking engagements with her small children. In 1894 Calvin Chase wrote an editorial in the

Bee entitled "Our Women" in which he urged black men to assume the role of protector of black womanhood. Chase admonished, "Let us do our duty in defending our women; let us set up a system of reformation not only of our women but everything that pertains to the race's advancement." Nineteenth century black male leaders like James Forten, Charles Remond, Martin Delaney, and Frederick Douglass supported the efforts of women to gain political rights but they did not support social equality between the sexes. They were in fact adamant in their support of patriarchal rule. Like white male liberals in the 19th century, black male leaders were not against granting women access to political rights as long as men remained the acknowledged superior authorities. In a discussion of southern etiquette as regards attitudes toward women, one white writer noted, "Southern racists and black activists looked at women in similar terms. Both viewed the female as a second sex with distinctly limited privileges."

Among the 19th century black masses, folks were wholeheartedly committed to establishing and maintaining a patriarchal social order in their segregated culture. Black women wanted to assume the "feminine" role of homemaker supported, protected, and honored by a loving husband. There was one problem—few jobs available to black men. Racist whites refused black men employment, while black women were able to find domestic service jobs. White and black people have interpreted white employment of black women in domestic service jobs while refusing to provide jobs for black men as an indication that they favored black women over black men. Such thinking ignores the obvious fact that domestic service jobs (maids, housekeepers, washerwomen) were not regarded as either "real" work or meaningful labor. White people did not perceive black women engaged in service jobs as performing significant work that deserved adequate economic reward. They saw domestic service jobs performed by black women as being merely an extension of the "natural" female role and considered such jobs valueless. While white men could feel threatened by competition from black males for sound wage-earning jobs and use racism to exclude black men, white women were eager to surrender household chores to black female servants. Since

household chores were seen as degrading work, it is unlikely that white people were showing favoritism to black women by allowing them these jobs. It is more likely that they thought black women, whom they believed were without dignity and self-respect, would feel no shame in doing menial labor.

Although many black women worked outside the home, they remained staunch supporters of patriarchy. They regarded the black male who could not free them from the labor force with hostility, anger, and contempt. Even in some homes where black men worked but did not earn enough money to be the sole provider, black wives were bitter about having to enter the work force. Much of the tension in black marriages and other male-female relationships was caused by black females' pressuring men to assume the breadwinner, head-of-the-household role. Often black men were not as upwardly mobile as black women wanted them to be. As women in capitalist America are the major consumers, much of the pressure on all men to earn more money is imposed upon them by women. And black women have been no exception. Unlike many white men who responded to the materialistic demands of wives by becoming devoted disciples of the cult of work, many black men reacted with hostility to such demands. Other black men worked two or three jobs to provide for the materialistic demands of wife and children.

In 1970, L.J. Axelson published an essay, "The Working Wife: Difference in Perception Among Negro and White Males," which introduced data that showed black men were much more supportive and accepting of their wives being in the work force than white men. Often it has been black women who have been the most angered and enraged about black men not assuming the provider role. The 1968 issue of the *Liberator* published an essay by black woman writer Gail Stokes titled "Black Woman to Black Man." In the essay she expressed hostility and contempt for those black men who were reluctant to assume the provider role:

Of course you will say, "How can I love you and want to be with you when I come home and you're looking like a slob? Why, white women never open the door for their husbands the way you black bitches do."

I should guess not, you ignorant man. Why should they be in such a state when they've got maids like me to do everything for them? There is no screaming at the kids for her, no standing over the hot stove; everything is done for her, and whether her man loves her or not, he provides... provides... do you hear that, nigger? PROVIDES!

The rage of working black women, who have equated manhood with the ability of men to be sole economic providers in the family, and who consequently feel cheated and betrayed by black men who refuse to assume these roles, is but another indication of the extent of their acceptance and support of patriarchy. They saw the black male who did not eagerly assume the breadwinner role as selfish, lazy, and irresponsible, or in white male sociological terms, "emasculated." Their perception of the black male as weak or effeminate is not an indication that they have repudiated male dominance; it is an acknowledgment on their part that they wholeheartedly embrace patriarchy and feel contemptuous toward black men who have no desire to assume the breadwinner role.

The idea that black men felt emasculated because black women worked outside the home is based on the assumption that men find their identity through work and are personally fulfilled by acting as breadwinners. Such an assumption does not reveal any consideration of the fact that the vast majority of jobs men perform are time-consuming, uninteresting, and energy-draining—and are not the least bit personally fulfilling. Myron Brenton, author of *The American Male—A Penetrating Look at the Masculinity Crisis*, argues that men do not feel that work allows them to assert "masculine power." While he admits that most American men are socialized by sexism to regard work as their role, he argues that the men who accept the idea that work is an expression of their masculine power and should be the most important aspect of their life experience are usually disappointed. He comments, "The American male looks to his breadwinner role to confirm his manliness, but work itself is fraught with de-humanizing—i.e., unmanning—influence." Black men in America have rarely romanticized labor, largely because they have for the most part performed less desirable tasks. They knew that performing jobs society

deemed menial with bosses and supervisors harassing and persecuting them was not fulfilling. They also knew that the monetary rewards for their labor rarely compensated for the indignities they were forced to endure. Ambitious black men who absorbed the values of middle class white patriarchy have been most eager to accept the emasculation theory, as they are the men who feel most crippled by the racial hierarchy in American society that has traditionally denied black men unlimited access to power. It is common to hear famous black male celebrities or other financially successful black men lament the "powerlessness of the black male" or stress that he is unable to be a "real" man in American society. They choose to ignore the reality that their own successes are an indication that black men are not totally trapped, crippled, or emasculated. In actuality, what they are really saying is that they have embraced patriarchy and with it male competitiveness, and that as long as white men dominate capitalist power structures in American society, black men will feel emasculated.

Many black men who express the greatest hostility toward the white male power structure are often eager to gain access to that power. Their expressions of rage and anger are less a critique of the white male patriarchal social order and more a reaction against the fact that they have not been allowed full participation in the power game. In the past, these black men have been most supportive of male subjugation of women. They hoped to gain public recognition of their "manhood" by demonstrating that they were the dominant figure in the black family.

Just as 19th century black male leaders felt that it was important that all black men show themselves willing to be protectors and providers of their women as a sign to the white race that they would tolerate no more denial of their masculine privilege, 20th century black male leaders used this same tactic. Marcus Garvey, Elijah Muhammed, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Stokely Carmichael, Amiri Baraka and other black male leaders have righteously supported patriarchy. They have all argued that it is absolutely necessary for black men to relegate black women to a subordinate position both in the political

sphere and in home life. Amiri Baraka published an essay in the July 1970 issue of *Black World* that publicly announced his commitment to establishing a black patriarchy. Yet he did not use terms like patriarchy or male rule; instead he discussed the formation of a black male-dominated household with its inherent anti-woman stance as if it were a positive reaction against white racist values. His romantic rhetoric was typical of the language black male leaders used to mask the negative implication of their sexist message. Addressing himself to all black people, Baraka asserts:

We talk about the black woman and the black man like we were separate because we have been separated, our hands reach out for each other, for the closeness, the completeness we are for each other, the expansion of consciousness that we provide for each other. We were separated by the deed and process of slavery. We internalized the process, permitting it to create an alien geography in our skulls, a wandering spirit that had us missing each other, and never never understanding just what it was. After we were gone from each other. My hand might rest on yours, and still you would be gone. And I, of course, not there, out wandering, among the rogues and whores of the universe.

And so this separation is the cause of our need for self consciousness, and eventual healing. But we must erase the separateness by providing ourselves with healthy African identities. By embracing a value system that knows of no separation but only of the divine complement the black woman is for her man. For instance we do not believe in the "equality" of men and women. We cannot understand what the devils and the devilishly influenced mean when they say equality for women. We could never be equals... nature has not provided thus. The brother says, "Let a woman be a wo-man... and let a man be a ma-an..."

Although Baraka presents this "new" black nation he envisions as a world that will have distinctly different values from those of the white world he is rejecting, the social structure he conceived was based on the same patriarchal foundation as that of white American society. His statements about woman's role were not unlike those white men were expressing at this same period in American history. White males interviewed for the book *The American Male* expressed

concern that the growing presence of white women in the work force was threatening their masculine status, and expressed sentimental feelings of longing for the old days when sex-role patterns were more sharply delineated. Like Baraka, they comment:

Those were the days, all right. A man was a man, and a woman was a woman, and each of them knew what that meant. Father was the head of the family in the real sense of the term. Mother respected him for it and received all the gratifications she needed or wanted at home, doing her well-defined jobs.... Man was strong, woman was feminine—and there was little loose talk about phony equality. D.W.

It is no mere coincidence that at the same time white men were expressing doubts and anxieties about their masculine role, black men chose to publicly proclaim that they had subjugated black women. Finally, the black man who had seen himself as the loser in the all male competitive struggle with white men for status and power could show a trump card—he was the “real” man because he could control “his” woman. Baraka and other black men could label white men effeminate and non-masculine. In *Home*, Baraka includes an essay called “american sexual reference: black man” which begins with the homophobic statement:

Most American white men are trained to be fags. For this reason it is no wonder their faces are weak and blank, left without the hurt that really makes—anytime. That red flush, those silk blue faggot eyes.... Can you, for a second, imagine the average middle-class white man able to do somebody harm? Without the technology that at this moment still has him rule the world? Do you understand the softness of the white man, the weakness, and again the estrangement from reality.

Ironically, the “power” of black men that Baraka and others celebrated was the stereotypical, racist image of the black man as primitive, strong, and virile. Although these same images of black men had been evoked by racist whites to support the argument that all black men were rapists, they were now romanticized as positive characteristics. The American public was impressed by Baraka and others like him who heralded the

emergence of black manhood. They reacted to groups like the Black Muslims with their emphasis on strong black manhood with fear, but also with awe and respect.

From their writings and speeches, it is clear that most black political activists of the 60s saw the black liberation movement as a move to gain recognition and support for an emerging black patriarchy. When critics of the black power movement argued that a contradiction of values emerged from black men who espoused black power while at the same time choosing white female companions, they were informed that “real” men demonstrated their power by dating whomever they pleased. When Baraka was asked if a militant black man could have a white female companion he responded:

Jim Brown put it pretty straight and this is really quite true. He says that there are black men and white men, then there are women. So you can indeed be going through a black militant thing and have yourself a woman. The fact that she happens to be black or white is no longer impressive to anybody, but a man who gets himself a woman is what's impressive. The battle is really between white men and black men whether we like to admit it that is the battlefield at this time.

Black men were announcing via the Black Power movement that they were determined to gain access to power even if it entailed breaking from mainstream American society and setting up a new black sub-culture. White male patriarchs were alarmed by the assertions of militant black men whom they knew had every justifiable reason to be angry, hostile, revengeful, and they reacted with violent resistance. Despite the fact that they were able to resist and defeat black militants, white men were impressed by the sight of black men wearing the badge of their newly affirmed manhood. The Black Power movement had a great impact on the psyches of white Americans. Joel Kovel argues in *White Racism: A Psychohistory* that the black power movement completely changed white perceptions of black people. He contends:

Through open defiance, encouraged by leaders such as Malcolm X and his radical successors, blacks have cleansed the symbol of blackness, stripped it of its accumulated false

humility, and have in effect proceeded toward the regeneration of their own symbolic matrix based upon a positive concept of blackness. That this return to dignity has been possible at all, is a testimonial to the strength of humanity to resist oppression, and a great sign of hope for black and white alike. That it should have to become real through anger and destruction may seem deplorable, but it is unhappily necessary under the crushing terms of the Western symbolic matrix that would not, could not, itself grant humanity to those who had once been property. Here, in this heroic act, is a real break in the endlessly destructive dialectic of our matrix.

Many white men responded favorably to the demands of black power advocates with their emphasis on restoring black men their lost masculinity precisely because their sexism enabled them to identify sympathetically with this cause. The patriarchal privileges black men demanded in the name of black power were precisely the longings sexist patriarchal white men could empathize with. While white men and women could not identify and sympathize with the black race that they had exploited for economic gain demanding reparations, they could easily relate to the desire of black men to assert their "manhood." As Americans, they had not been taught to really believe that social equality was an inherent right all people possess, but they had been socialized to believe that it is the nature of males to desire and have access to power and privilege. In Michele Wallace's controversial book, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Super Woman*, she dismisses the black power movement as ineffectual and suggests that black men were primarily interested in gaining access to the bodies of white women. She fails to understand that the 60s black movement did not merely eradicate many of the barriers that prevented inter-racial dating; it led to numerous social and economic gains for black people. However, the meaningful gains of the black power movement do not either justify or lessen the negative impact of anti-woman attitudes that emerged in much black power rhetoric.

While the 60s black power movement was a reaction against racism, it was also a movement that allowed black men to overtly announce their support of patriarchy. Militant black

men were publicly attacking the white male patriarchs for their racism but they were also establishing a bond of solidarity with them based on their shared acceptance of and commitment to patriarchy. The strongest bonding element between militant black men and white men was their shared sexism—they both believed in the inherent inferiority of woman and supported male dominance. Another bonding element was the black male's acknowledgement that he, like the white male, accepted violence as the primary way to assert power. White men reacted to black male violence with the excitement and glee men have traditionally expressed when going to war. Although they attacked black militants, they respected them for their show of force. Since the 60s black power movement, white men have more readily accepted black men on police forces and in more leadership positions in the armed forces. It has been traditionally acceptable for men to put aside their racist feelings in those spheres where men bond on the basis of their sexuality. Despite overt racism in the sports arena, it is there that black men were first able to gain a degree of positive recognition of their masculine prowess. Racism has always been a divisive force separating black men and white men, and sexism has been a force that unites the two groups.

Men of all races in America bond on the basis of their common belief that a patriarchal social order is the only viable foundation for society. Their patriarchal stance is not simply an acceptance of a social etiquette based on discrimination against women; it is a serious political commitment to maintaining political regimes throughout the United States and the world that are male-dominated. John Stoltenberg discusses the political structure of patriarchy in his essay "Toward Gender Justice" published in a book of readings, *For Men Against Sexism*. In his essay he describes characteristic features of patriarchy:

Under patriarchy, men are the arbiters of identity for both males and females, because the cultural norm of human identity is, by definition, male identity—masculinity. And, under patriarchy, the cultural norm of male identity consists in power, prestige, privilege, and prerogative as over and against the gender class women. That's what masculinity is. It isn't something else.

Attempts have been made to defend this norm of masculinity as having a natural basis in male sexual biology. It has been said for example, that male power in the culture is a natural expression of a biological tendency in human males toward sexual aggression. But I believe that what is true is the reverse. I believe that masculinist genital functioning is an expression of male power in the culture. I believe that male sexual aggression is entirely learned behavior, taught by a culture which men entirely control. I believe, as I will explain, that there is a social process by which patriarchy confers power, prestige, privilege, and prerogative on people who are born with cocks, and that there is a sexual program promoted by the patriarchy (not Mother Nature) for how those cocks are supposed to function.

Stoltenberg also emphasizes that patriarchy is maintained by male bonding on the basis of shared sexism:

The social process whereby people born with cocks attain and maintain masculinity takes place in male bonding. Male bonding is institutionalized learned behavior whereby men recognize and reinforce one another's bona fide membership in the male gender class and whereby men remind one another that they were not born women. Male bonding is political and pervasive. It occurs whenever two males meet. It is not restricted to all-male-groupings. It is the form and content of each and every encounter between two males. Boys learn very early that they had better be able to bond. What they learn in order to bond is an elaborate behavioral code of gestures, speech, habits and attitudes, which effectively exclude women from the society of men. Male bonding is how men learn from each other that they are entitled under patriarchy to power in the culture. Male bonding is how men get that power, and male bonding is how it is kept. Therefore, men enforce a taboo against unbonding—a taboo which is fundamental to patriarchal society.

Racism has not allowed total bonding between white and black men on the basis of shared sexism, but such bonding does occur.

The black male quest for recognition of his "manhood" in American society is rooted in his internalization of the myth that simply by having been born male, he has an inherent right to power and privilege. When racism prevented black people from attaining social equality with whites, black men re-

sponded as if they were the sole representatives of the black race and therefore the sole victims of racist oppression. They saw themselves as the people who were being denied their freedom, and not black women. In all his protest fiction, black novelist Richard Wright emphasized the de-humanizing effects of racism on black men as if black women were in no way affected. In his short story "Long Black Song" the hero Silas who has just killed a white man cries out in his rage:

The white folks ain never gimme a chance! They ain never give no black man a chance! There ain nothing in yo whole life yuh kin keep from em! They take yo lan! They take yo freedom! They take yo women! N then they take yo life!

Wright relegates women to the position of property—they become for him merely an extension of the male ego. His attitude is typical of patriarchal male thinking about women.

Black men are able to dismiss the sufferings of black women as unimportant because sexist socialization teaches them to see women as objects with no human value or worth. This anti-woman attitude is endemic to patriarchy. In Leonard Schein's essay "All Men Are Misogynists," he argues that patriarchy encourages men to hate women:

Patriarchy's foundation is the oppression of women. The cement of this foundation is the socialization of men to hate women.

Looking at our development as males, it is easy to see how misogyny originates. As young children, our first attraction is to our mother, a woman. As we grow older, we learn to transfer our love for our mother to an identification with our father.

The patriarchal nuclear family makes all its members dependent upon the male (father-husband). It is in this oppressive atmosphere that we grow up, and are extremely sensitive to this hierarchy of power even as children. We realize, more than adults know, that our father (and society in his image, from policeman to doctor to president) is powerful, and that our mother is powerless. She has to scheme and manipulate through sympathy to get what she wants.

Racism does not prevent black men from absorbing the same

sexist socialization white men are inundated with. At very young ages, black male children learn that they have a privileged status in the world based on their having been born male; they learn that this status is superior to that of women. As a consequence of their early sexist socialization, they mature accepting the same sexist sentiments their white counterparts accept. When women do not affirm their masculine status by assuming a subordinate role, they express the contempt and hostility they have been taught to feel toward non-submissive women.

Black men have been sexist throughout their history in America, but in contemporary times that sexism has taken the form of outright misogyny—undisguised woman-hating. Cultural changes in attitudes toward female sexuality have affected male attitudes toward women. As long as women were divided into two groups, virgin women who were the "good" girls and sexually permissive women who were the "bad" girls, men were able to maintain some semblance of caring for women. Now that the pill and other contraceptive devices give men unlimited access to the bodies of women, they have ceased to feel that it is at all necessary to show women any consideration or respect. They can now see all women as "bad," as "whores," and openly reveal their contempt and hatred. As a group, white men expose their hatred by increased exploitation of women as sex objects to sell products and by their wholehearted support of pornography and rape. Black men expose their hatred by increased domestic brutality (white men also) and their vehement verbal denouncement of black women as matriarchs, castraters, bitches, etc. That black men should begin to see the black woman as their enemy was perfectly logical given the structure of patriarchy. Schien writes of male hatred of women:

... Psychologically, we objectify the people we hate and consider them our inferiors...

A second situation which feeds on, deepens, and solidifies our hatred of women develops a little later in time. We begin to realize our privileged position in society as males. The Orthodox Jew prays to God every morning thanking

"Him" that he was not born a woman. Subconsciously we intuit that our privilege can only be maintained if women are kept "in their place." So we live in constant fear, as the threat to our power is everywhere (even, and especially, in our bedroom). This fear of the challenge to our power explains our paranoid hatred toward the "Uppity Woman."

help
xw
straight
cont.

Black women have always been regarded as "too uppity." White men decided this during slavery. When Moynihan first published his report on the black family in 1965 perpetuating the emasculation theory, black men responded initially by exposing the weaknesses and flaws in his argument. They first argued that his assertion that they were emasculated was ridiculous and untrue but it was not long before they began to make the same complaint. Their endorsement of the idea that black women were castraters of men allowed them to bring out of the closet misogynist attitudes. While they embraced on one hand the matriarchy myth and used it to urge black women to be more submissive, on the other hand they communicated the message that their manhood was not threatened by black women because they could always use brute force and physical prowess to subjugate them.

It has always been acknowledged in lower class black communities that the ability to act as breadwinners was not the standard black men used to measure their masculine status. As one black man stated:

In white society, respect is to a large degree institutionalized. You must respect a man because he is a judge or a professor or a corporate executive. In the ghetto without the institutionalization of respect, a man must earn respect by his own personal qualities, including the ability to defend himself physically.

It is true that white men have institutionalized respect, but their success as men in power is measured by their ability to use technological force to do violence to others, or their ability to exploit others for capitalist ends. So in that sense, their way of acquiring respect for their masculine status is not that different from that of black men. While white men demonstrate their "masculine power" by organizing and implementing the slaughter of Japanese people or Vietnamese people, black men kill

one another, or black women. One of the leading causes of death among young black men is black-on-black homicide. Black psychiatrist Alvin Pouissant argues that these black men are "victims of their own self-hatred." While insecure feelings about their selfhood may motivate black men to commit violent acts, in a culture that condones violence in men as a positive expression of masculinity, the ability to use force against another person—i.e., oppress them—may be less an expression of self-hatred than a rewarding, fulfilling act.

In many black communities, young men coming of age feel that they must show their male peers that they are fearless—that they are not afraid of violent acts. Carrying a gun and being prepared to use it are the ways they publicly assert their "masculine" strength. In an imperialist racist patriarchal society that supports and condones oppression, it is not surprising that men and women judge their worth, their personal power, by their ability to oppress others. Recently, a white male journalist for a leading California newspaper reported with shock and outrage that black youths in Cleveland cheered when the slain body of an FBI agent who was murdered by a young black male was brought from a tenement building. Yet in a culture where the cult of violence dominates media (television, films, comic books), it is perfectly understandable that young men and women glorify violence. And in the case of young black males who learn from this same media that they are the automatic targets for white male aggression, it is not surprising that they should feel satisfaction when they see a symbol of white law enforcement murdered by a peer. After all, sexist socialization has been encouraging them all their lives to feel they are "unmanned" if they cannot commit violent acts.

It is often forgotten that the very same Moynihan report that promoted the idea that black men had been "unmanned" by black women urged black men to enter military service. Moynihan called war an "utterly masculine world," and it was in this world of killing that he imagined black men would develop personal confidence and pride. Like other white male patriarchs he endorsed violence as a positive expression of male strength. He argued:

Given the strains of the disorganized and matrifocal family life in which so many Negro youths come of age, the armed forces are a dramatic and desperately needed change: a world away from woman, a world run by strong men of unquestioned authority.

WP
steve
CS-11

Sexism fosters, condones, and supports male violence against women, as well as encouraging violence between males. In patriarchal society, men are encouraged to channel frustrated aggression in the direction of those without power—women and children. And white men and black men alike abuse women. While the interests of this book motivate me to be more concerned with black male misogyny, I do not intend to imply that black males epitomize sexist oppression in our society. There has always been greater emphasis on the violent acts of black men in American society, as it diverts attention away from white male violence. Male violence against women has increased in America in the last twenty years. Anti-feminists argue that changing sex role patterns have threatened males so that they are demonstrating their anger by domestic brutality. As supporters of male dominance they assert that violent acts against women will continue until society returns to the good old-fashioned days of sharply delineated sex roles.

While feminist supporters like to think that feminism has been the motivating force behind changes in woman's role, in actuality changes in the American capitalist economy have had the greatest impact on the status of women. More women than ever before are in America's work force not because of feminism but because families can no longer rely on the income of the father. Feminism has been used as a psychological tool to make women think that work they might otherwise see as boring, tedious, and time consuming is liberating. For whether feminism exists or not, women must work. Overt misogynist attacks on women occurred long before the feminist movement, and most women who bear the brunt of male aggression and brutality today are not feminists. Much of the violence against women in this culture is promoted by the capitalist patriarchy that encourages men to see themselves as privileged while daily stripping them of their humanity in de-humanizing work, and as a consequence men use violence against women to restore

their lost sense of power and masculinity. Media brainwashing encourages men to use violence as a way to subjugate women. In effect, modern patriarchy restructured to meet the needs of advanced capitalism eradicated earlier romanticized versions of the male hero role as a strong knight, protecting and providing for the damsel in distress, and replaced it by worship of the rapist, the macho man, the brute who uses force to get his demands met.

In the 60s, black men disassociated themselves from chivalrous codes of manhood that at one time taught males to deplore the use of violence against women, and idolized those men who exploited and brutalized women. Amiri Baraka dramatized his acceptance of violence as a way to subjugate women in his play *Madheart*. In a scene where a black woman is urging the black man to leave white women alone and come to her, the black male "hero" of the play demonstrates his power to use force to subdue her:

BLACK MAN: I'll get you back. If I need to.

WOMAN (laughs): You need to, baby... just look around you. You better get me back, if you know what's good for you... you better.

BLACK MAN (looking around at her squarely, he advances): I better?... (a soft laugh) Yes. Now is where we always are... that now... (he wheels and suddenly slaps her crosswise, back and forth across the face.)

WOMAN: Wha??? What... oh love... please... don't hit me. (he hits her, slaps her again.)

BLACK MAN: I want you woman, as a woman. Go down. (He slaps her again) Go down, submit, submit... to love... and to man, now forever.

WOMAN (weeping, turning her head from side to side): Please don't hit me... please... (She bends.) The years are so long, without you, man, I've waited... waited for you...

BLACK MAN: And I've waited.

WOMAN: I've seen you humbled, black man, seen you crawl for dogs and devils.

BLACK MAN: And I've seen you raped by savages and beasts, and bear bleach-shit children of apes.

WOMAN: You permitted it... you could... do nothing.

BLACK MAN: But now I can (he slaps her... drags her to him, kissing her deeply on the lips.) That shit is ended, woman, you with me, and the world is mine.

Baraka did not celebrate this male violence against women in isolation. His plays were performed before audiences of women and men who were not shocked, disgusted, and outraged by what they saw. While Baraka in the 60s used drama to act out scenes of male oppression of women, in the 70s a black woman was actually murdered on stage by a black male playwright. Black woman poet Audre Lorde refers to this murder in a short essay, "The Great American Disease" in which she comments on black male woman-hating. She recalls the case of Pat Cowan:

She was a young black actress in Detroit, 22 years old and a mother. She answered an ad last spring for a black actress to audition in a play called "Hammer." As she acted out an argument scene, watched by the playwright's brother and her son, the black male playwright picked up a sledgehammer and bludgeoned her to death from behind.

Most men in patriarchal society, though fanatically committed to male dominance, like to think that they will not use brutality to oppress women. Yet at very young ages male children are socialized to regard females as their enemy and as a threat to their masculine status and power—a threat, however, they can conquer through violence. As they grow older they learn that aggression toward women lessens their anxiety and fear that their masculine power will be usurped. In his essay on misogyny, Schien concludes:

We must understand that our anger (and hatred) is something that comes from within us. It is not woman's fault. It is the attitude that patriarchal society has encouraged us to feel toward all women. When finally confronted with the reality of feminism, which threatens our power and privileges, our defenses cannot hide our true anger and we turn to incredible violence.

We have to accept that this anger belongs to us and stems from our hatred of women. I know men say that they really do not hate women, they have just treated them unfairly because of socialization ("Those other men are rapists, not me."). This can be a cop-out and untruth. All men do hate women, and until we take responsibility for our personal hatred, we will not be able to seriously explore our emotionality nor treat women as equal human beings.

Black women are one of the most devalued female groups in American society, and thus they have been the recipients of a male abuse and cruelty that has known no bounds or limits. Since the black woman has been stereotyped by both white and black men as the "bad" woman, she has not been able to ally herself with men from either group to get protection from the other. Neither group feels that she deserves protection. A sociological study of low income black male-female relationships showed that most young black men see their female companions solely as objects to be exploited. Most boys in the study referred to black women as "that bitch" or "that whore." Their perception of the black female as a degraded sexual object is similar to white male perceptions of the black female. Often in black communities the male who overtly reveals his hatred and contempt of women is admired. The contemporary glorification of male violence against women has caused the pimp, once a despised figure in communities, to be elevated to the status of hero. The pimp's misogynist treatment of women was romanticized in movies like *Sweet Sweetback* or *Cool World*, and in books like *Iceberg Slim* that glorified his exploits. Much of Malcolm X's very fine autobiography is devoted to a re-telling of his days as a pimp. He tells readers that he felt comfortable in the role of pimp because he saw women as the enemies of masculinity who must be triumphed over through exploitation. While he repudiated the role of pimp after he became a Muslim, it is presented simply as a distorted expression of his quest for "manhood."

In 1972 Christina and Richard Milner published a book entitled *Black Players* in which they romanticize and glorify the lives of pimps. One section of the book is called "Male Dominance—Men Have to Control" which emphasizes to the reader that the pimp impresses others by his subjugation of the female. The Milners contend:

First and foremost, the ^{prostitute} pimp must be in complete control of his women; this control is made conspicuous to others by a series of little rituals which express symbolically his woman's attitude. When in the company of others she must take special pains to treat him with absolute deference and respect. She must light his cigarettes, respond to

his every whim immediately and never, never, contradict him. In fact, a ho's strictly not supposed to speak in the company of pimps unless spoken to.

vol ^{overo parabolis -> moshito / down (made)}
The role pimps expected women to play is merely an imitation of the role patriarchy expect their wives and daughters to play. The passive subordinate demeanor expected of the prostitute is not unlike that demanded of all women in patriarchal society.

Black men who joined the Black Muslim groups in the sixties and seventies were committed to sexist role patterns. In his first-hand report of the Black Muslim movement *Black Nationalism*, published in 1962, E.U. Essien-Udom noted that the black men who joined the Muslims were those who accepted the "feminine ideal" as woman's natural role. Essien-Udom observed:

Muslim women appear to accept their men as 'first among equals,' and in theory, at least, regard the man as the breadwinner and the head of the family. The Muslim women address the men as 'sir.' Wives address husbands similarly.

It was understood in the Muslim love relationship that the woman would defer to the man on all occasions. Many black women were eager to join the Muslims because they wanted black men to act in a dominant role. Like other black liberation groups, the Black Muslims glorified manhood and at the same time relegated women to the status of a subordinate.

Malcolm X was the Black Muslim leader that many people saw as an exemplary figure of black manhood, but it is impossible to read his autobiography without becoming aware of the hatred and contempt he felt toward women for much of his life. Toward the middle of the book Malcolm writes of the black woman he has married:

I guess by now I will say I love Betty. She's the only woman I ever even thought about loving. And she's one of the very few—four women—whom I have ever trusted. The thing is, Betty's a good Muslim woman and wife...

Betty... understands me. I would even say I don't imagine many other women might put up with the way I am. Awakening this brainwashed black man and telling this

arrogant, devilish white man the truth about himself, Betty understands, is a full-time job. If I have work to do when I am home, the little time I am at home, she lets me have the quiet I need to work in. I'm rarely at home more than half of any week; I have been away as much as five months. I never get much chance to take her anywhere and I know she likes being with her husband. She is used to my calling her from airports anywhere from Boston to San Francisco, or Miami to Seattle, or, here lately, cabling her from Cairo, Accra, or the Holy City of Mecca.

While Malcolm extolled the virtues of his wife, his general attitude toward women was extremely negative.

An important aspect of the Black Muslim movement for many of its members was its puritanical emphasis on purifying and cleansing black people, in particular black women, of their unclean sexuality. In American patriarchy, all women are believed to embody sexual evil. Sexual racism has caused black women to bear the brunt of society's need to degrade and devalue women. While white women have been placed on a symbolic pedestal, black women are seen as fallen women. In the black community the fair-skinned black woman who most nearly resembled white women was seen as the "lady" and placed on a pedestal while darker-skinned black women were seen as bitches and whores. Black men have shown the same obsessive lust and contempt for female sexuality that is encouraged throughout our society. Because they, like white men, see black women as inherently more sexual and morally depraved than other groups of women, they have felt the greatest contempt toward her. Within the Muslim movement, the black man who had once looked upon black women as devalued property could suddenly see her as elevated to the status of respected wife and mother, that is, after she wrapped her head in cloth and covered her body in long skirts and dresses.

Essein-Udom reported that most black women were motivated to join the Muslim movement by the promise that they would be respected by black men. He calls this section "The Negro Women: Journey from Shame" and comments:

One of the principal motives which lead Negro women to join the Nation is their desire to escape from their position

as women in Negro subculture... Womanly virtues are respected in the Nation. The Muslim male's attitude toward, and treatment of, Negro women contrasts sharply with the disrespect and indifference with which lower-class Negroes treat them. Muhammad's semireligious demand that his followers must respect the black woman has an appeal for black women seeking to escape from their lowly and humiliating position in Negro society and from the predatory sex ethos of the lower-class. A refuge from these abuses is found in the Nation of Islam, and freedom from sex exploitation. It is a journey from shame to dignity.

Black women entering the Nation of Islam were treated with greater respect than they were accustomed to prior to their conversion, but this better treatment did not happen because Muslim black men had changed their basic negative attitudes toward women. It happened because their male leader Elijah Muhammad decided that it would be in the movement's interest to develop a strong patriarchal base in which women were given protection and consideration in exchange for submission. In many cases, Black Muslim men, who treated black women within the movement with respect, continued to abuse and exploit non-Muslim women. Like white men, their labeling of one group of women as "good" necessitated the labeling of another group as "bad." The black male's move to idealize black womanhood was not unlike white male idealization of white women during the 19th century. Whereas white men elevated white female status by labeling black women sluts and whores, 20th century black Muslim men elevated black females by labeling white women she-devils and whores. In both cases neither group of men could surrender their belief that women are inherently evil. They maintained their contemptuous attitudes toward women but simply channeled them in a specific direction.

A number of non-Muslim black men who regarded black women as devalued property sought white female companions. Black men's idealization of white womanhood is as rooted in sexist woman-hating as is their devaluation of black womanhood. In both cases, women are still being reduced to the level of objects. The idealized woman becomes property, symbol, and ornament; she is stripped of her essential human qualities. The

devalued woman becomes a different kind of object; she is the spittoon in which men release their negative anti-woman feelings. Those black men who believe deeply in the American dream, which is in essence a masculine dream of dominance and success at the expense of others, are most likely to express negative feelings about black women and positive feelings about white women. It is not surprising that the black male who finds self-affirmation on the terms set forth by white men would desire a white woman. Because he is living every moment of his life in competition with white men, he must also compete for the woman the white male has decided best represents "Miss America."

The popular notion that black men desire white women because they are so much more "feminine" than black women has been used to place responsibility for black male desire for white female companions onto black women. In sexist terms, if black men are rejecting black women and seeking other companions, then surely black women must be doing something wrong since men are always right. The truth is—in sexist America, where women are objectified extensions of male ego, black women have been labeled hamburger and white women prime rib. And it is white men who have created this race-sex hierarchy, not black men. Black men merely accept and support it. In fact, if white men decided at any given moment that owning a purple female was the symbol of masculine status and success, black men in competition with white men would have to try and possess a purple female. While I believe it is perfectly normal for people of different races to be sexually attracted to one another, I do not think that black men who confess to loving white women and hating black women or vice versa are simply expressing personal preferences free of culturally socialized biases.

Black men have been eager to present their desire to "possess" white women as an attempt to overcome racial dehumanization. In *Sex and Racism in America*, Calvin Hernton contends:

In America, however, where the Negro is the underdog and the white woman is the great symbol of sexual purity and

pride, the black man is often driven to pursue her in lieu of aggrandizing his lack of self-esteem. Having the white woman, who is the prize of our culture, is a way of triumphing over a society that denies the Negro his basic humanity.

Note that Hernton continually uses the word "Negro" when he is in fact referring solely to black men. All too often black men have tried to argue (and in many cases have successfully convinced their audience) that their objectification of white females has some direct correlation to the degree to which they are oppressed in American society. This logic enables them to mask the basic anti-woman feeling that stimulates their lust to possess white women. Many black men who date and marry white women have positive self-concepts and have achieved a certain measure of capitalist status and success. Their desire for white companions is less an indication of how brutalized they are by white racism and more an expression of the fact that their successes mean little if they cannot also possess that human object white patriarchal culture offers to men as the supreme reward for masculine achievement.

Few black men who discuss black male/white female relationships question why it is black men do not seek to challenge the values of that white patriarchy that encourages them to objectify and if possible exploit white women. Instead they present the black male as a "victim," one who is unable to resist the societal seduction that teaches him to de-humanize black women through devaluation and de-humanize white women through idealization. In actuality, black men do not resist the efforts of white male advertisers and public relations people who encourage them to objectify all women, and in particular white women, because to do so would be to challenge patriarchy and its oppression of women. The black male's assertion that "possessing" a white woman is a triumph over racism is a false truth that masks the reality that his acceptance of her as "the" symbol of status and success is primarily an indication of the extent to which he supports and accepts patriarchy. In their eagerness to gain access to the bodies of white women, many black men have shown that they were far more concerned with exerting masculine privilege than challenging racism. Their behavior is not unlike that of white male patriarchs who, on

one hand, claimed to be white supremacists, but who could not forego sexual contact with the women of the very race they claimed to hate. What this indicates is that as men, they place the exertion of masculine privilege above all else in life. And if it is necessary for them to abuse and exploit women in order to maintain that privilege, they will do so without hesitation.

Often in feminist writing, women express bitterness, rage, and anger about male oppressors because it is one step that helps them to cease believing in romanticized versions of sex-role patterns that deny woman's humanity. Unfortunately, our over-emphasis on the male as oppressor often obscures the fact that men too are victimized. To be an oppressor is de-humanizing and anti-human in nature, as it is to be a victim. ~~Patriarchy forces fathers to act as monsters, encourages husbands and lovers to be rapists in disguise; it teaches our blood brothers to feel ashamed that they care for us, and denies all men the emotional life that would act as a humanizing, self-affirming force in their lives.~~ The old notion of the patriarch who is worthy of respect and honor has long had no place in an advanced capitalist world. Since patriarchy has become merely a sub-heading under the dominant system of imperialist capitalism, as patriarchs men do not serve their families and communities but serve the interests of the State. Consequently they are not affirmed in their domestic lives. As one psycho-therapist emphasizes in *The American Male*:

He may have been a big hero in high school—president of the student body or a star athlete, that sort of thing. But then he gets out into the world, and he becomes a cog in the organization, and he comes home feeling defeated.

Men are encouraged to phobically focus on women as their ENEMY so that they will blindly allow other forces—the truly powerful de-humanizing elements in American life—to strip them daily of their humanity. The select group of patriarchal women (who support and uphold patriarchal ideology) and patriarchal men who shape American capitalism have in fact made sexism into a commodity that they can sell while at the same time brainwashing men to feel that personal identity, worth and value, can be obtained through the oppression of

women, and that is the ultimate weapon by which patriarchs keep men in states of submission.

Commenting on black female/male relationships, one writer asserts:

Self-hatred and violence seethe in black sexual relationships. Because of this, black men and women rarely experience natural love in their relating—they get sex and no love or they get love and no sex. The love quality, plus the quality of respect for females is impoverished by the pimp/whore syndrome imposed for so long upon black people by American racism and oppression. Violence masquerades as affection. The deeper, more binding emotions of male and female are mutilated via mutual exploitation, distrust, disrespect and strivings for selfish aggrandizement. In fact, there are thousands and thousands of young and old blacks who know of no other mode, who have no other conception of what a man/woman relationship is except that of sex, money, automobiles, and male/female politics ("war of the sexes") vehicled by violence, physical or verbal, or both.

This writer sees the negative tensions that exist between black women and men as being solely motivated by "American racism and oppression." This over-emphasis on racism as the explanation for black female/male problems in relationships blinds us to the reality that sexism has as grave an impact on our modes of relating. The unwillingness of many black people to acknowledge that sexism fosters and perpetuates violence and hatred between men and women is due to their unwillingness to challenge patriarchal social order. Black men and women who support patriarchy and consequently support sexist oppression of women have a tremendous investment in presenting the social situation of black people in such a way that it seems we are only oppressed and victimized by racism.

But let's face it—despite the reality of racist oppression there are other ways that we as black people are victimized in American society. And it is just as important that we be aware of other oppressive forces like sexism, capitalism, narcissism, etc., that threaten our human liberation. It in no way diminishes our concern about racist oppression for us to acknowledge that our human experience is so complex that we cannot understand

it if we only understand racism. Fighting against sexist oppression is important for black liberation, for as long as sexism divides black women and men we cannot concentrate our energies on resisting racism. Many of the tensions and problems in black male/female relationships are caused by sexism and sexist oppression. And the black writer who commented on these relationships would have been closer to the mark if he had stated:

Self-hatred and violence seethe in sexual relationships. Because of this, men and women rarely experience natural love in their relating—they get sex and no love or they get love and no sex. The love quality, plus the quality of respect for females is impoverished by the pimp/whore syndrome imposed for so long upon people by American *patriarchy and sexist oppression*. Violence masquerades as affection. The deeper, more binding emotions of male and female are mutilated via mutual exploitation, distrust, disrespect and strivings for selfish aggrandizement. In fact, there are thousands and thousands of young and old people who know of no other mode, who have no other conception of what a man/woman relationship is except that of sex, money, automobiles, and male/female politics ("war of the sexes") vehicled by violence, physical, or verbal, or both.

Those women and men who feel concerned about the mounting hatred and violence in black female/male relationships come no closer to understanding the actual dynamics of that aggression when they refuse to acknowledge sexism as an oppressive force. Black nationalism, with its emphasis on separatism and forming new cultures, has allowed many black people to think that we have somehow lived in American society for hundreds of years and yet have remained untouched, uninfluenced by the world around us. It is this romanticized notion of our blackness (the myth of the noble savage) that allows many people to refuse to see that the social orders black nationalists have proposed with their foundation of patriarchy would not have changed in any way negative feelings between black women and men. In the name of liberating black folks from white oppressors, black men could present oppression of black women as a strength—a sign of newfound glory. Consequently, black liberation movements have had many positive

implications as regards eliminating racist oppression but in no way present programs that are aimed at eliminating sexist oppression. Black female/male relationships (like all male/female relationships in American society) are tyrannized by the imperialism of patriarchy which makes oppression of women a cultural necessity.

As people of color, our struggle against racial imperialism should have taught us that wherever there exists a master/slave relationship, an oppressed/oppressor relationship, violence, mutiny, and hatred will permeate all elements of life. There can be no freedom for black men as long as they advocate subjugation of black women. There can be no freedom for patriarchal men of all races as long as they advocate subjugation of women. Absolute power for patriarchs is not freeing. The nature of fascism is such that it controls, limits, and restricts leaders as well as the people fascists oppress. Freedom (and by that term I do not mean to evoke some wishy-washy hang-loose do-as-you-like world) as positive social equality that grants all humans the opportunity to shape their destinies in the most healthy and communally productive way can only be a complete reality when our world is no longer racist or sexist.

The Black Power Mixtape excerpt featuring A. Davis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=26CVcA2678k>