The Future is Feminist:
An Analysis of Black Women's Rage in American Society Through Beyoncé's *Lemonade*

by

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Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the accompanying thesis by Cherokee Cierra Washington has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Honors in Rhetoric Studies.

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Abstract

This thesis explores Beyoncé Knowles' 2016 alternative R&B album Lemonade and its relationship to Black rage. Black rage, a concept discussed by rhetorical scholar Bryan McCann, often revolves around the association between Black men and the agency of rage. For McCann, Black men and the right to expressions of Black rage are inextricably linked through slavery and other oppressive traumas that have affected the Black community. Although Black rage is useful in understanding discourses of Blackness and masculinity, there is an unintentional absence of a focus on the ways that Black rage can be performed by Black women. Through Lemonade, I argue that Beyoncé extends the concept of Black rage beyond the notion that Black men are the primary vessels of rage. To do so, Lemonade articulates women's expressions of Black rage through its visual and lyrical content, ultimately opening an avenue for the experiences of Black women to be valued and acknowledged by the public.

Key Words: Black Women, Black Feminism, Pop Music, R&B Music, Beyoncé Knowles, Protest Rhetoric, Black Rage, Anti-Black Discourses

Lemonade: Acknowledging Black Women's Rage

In 2016, singer Beyoncé Knowles released her sixth album *Lemonade*. *Lemonade,* an hour long visual album, is an ode to the many experiences of Black women[1] in America, as it possesses a message of self-love and unapologetic celebration of the intersection of Blackness and womanhood. Since its debut, *Lemonade* has gone viral, gaining over 182 million views for its individually released videos on YouTube. Winning several awards such as best music video and Urban Contemporary song at the 59th Grammy Awards, *Lemonade* has helped Beyoncé honor Black women's experiences while simultaneously challenging spaces of whiteness and maleness through the inclusion of several characteristics of Black feminist thought, Black rage, affect, and identification. In the public sphere, *Lemonade* has been debated, celebrated, and boycotted, as different audiences have interpreted Beyoncé's intentions in a plethora of manners. Told through a narrative of adultery and redemption, the album is one of Beyoncé's most controversial to date.

By centering Black women, *Lemonade* offers its audiences an emancipatory potential[2] that allows Black women to challenge the "lemons" that obstruct them from

[1] While I primarily discuss expressions of Black women's rage exhibited in *Lemonade* throughout this thesis, I will turn to the possibilities for such identification within other marginalized communities in my conclusion. Whether it be biologically or otherwise, the coding of Black women is not limited to physical markers of Blackness and womanhood, thus the possibility of identification with the term allows for other groups who express womanhood in different ways to partake in rage as Knowles does in the album.

[2] Mccann, Bryan J. "Affect, Black Rage, and False Alternatives in the Hip-Hop Nation."

making their own “lemonade” in society. Including topics such as Black love and intergenerationality, the album functions as a platform for affirming Black women’s rage[3] through artistic and political engagement with topics of race and gender. Many Black feminist writers such as Alondra Nelson have applauded Beyoncé stating, “there is...a righteous certainty about [Beyoncé’s] value and, by extension, the intrinsic value of Black women and all of our myriad experiences, from apathy to freedom.”[4] Joy Williams, the president of the Brooklyn’s National Association for the Advancement of Colored People branch further states, “the album and the visual art alongside it became a representation of the betrayal, anger, and despair that Black women (at least me personally) feel from the world and feel from Black men collectively and individually.”[5] *Lemonade* has also been negatively critiqued in addition to its celebration. In her essay, *Moving Beyond Pain*, Black feminist bell hooks discusses her criticism of *Lemonade*, suggesting the album hides messages of capitalism behind a critique of the white and male gaze (or the “constant and negative pleasure taken from patriarchal habits of viewing that entrench masculinity and devalue femininity”[6]). Despite her issues with the album, hooks shares her support early in the essay stating:

> Obviously *Lemonade* positively exploits images of black female bodies—placing them at the center, making them the norm. In this visual narrative, there are diverse representations (black female bodies come in all sizes, shapes, and textures with all manner of big hair)...It is the broad scope of *Lemonade*’s visual landscape that makes it so distinctive—the construction of a powerfully symbolic

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Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies 13.5 (2013): 408-18. Web.

[3] Ibid., 408.

[4] Harris-Perry, Melissa. “A Call and Response With Melissa Harris-Perry: The Pain and Power of
‘Lemonade.’” *Elle Magazine.* (2016).

[5] Ibid.

[6] Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 1989, 14-26.

> black female sisterhood that resists invisibility, that refuses to be silent. This in and of itself is no small feat—it shifts the gaze of white mainstream culture. It challenges us all to look anew, to radically revision how we see the black female body. However, this radical repositioning of black female images does not truly overshadow or change conventional sexist constructions of black female identity.[7]

It is this capitalistic commodification of Black bodies that makes *Lemonade* harmful for hooks, as the album positively portrays Black women's bodies, but does so in a highly sexualized manner that adheres to the male gaze. hooks also believes that Beyoncé's message of empowerment is not a new one, as *Lemonade* portrays Black women as victims of the male patriarchy, a narrative that must be altered in order for progress to occur. hooks states that:

> [Beyoncé's] construction of feminism cannot be trusted. It's all about insisting on equal rights for men and women…[there is] no call to challenge and change systems of domination, no emphasis on intersectionality. In such a simplified worldview, women gaining the freedom to be like men can be seen as powerful. But it is a false construction of power as so many men, especially black men, do not possess actual power. And indeed, it is clear that black male cruelty and violence towards black women is a direct outcome of patriarchal exploitation and oppression.[8]

In other words, the version of feminism that Beyoncé relies on throughout *Lemonade* is one that does not aim to demolish societal patriarchy. Rather, it acts as a means for establishing equality amongst men and women through alterations of freedoms. For hooks, this is problematic, as an important goal of feminism is to *end* male dominance, which then ideally leads all individuals to have equal statuses. As a remedy to this issue, hooks suggests that women must avoid their own victimization, as she writes:

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[7] Hooks, bell. "Moving Beyond Pain." *bell hooks Institute Berea College.* (2016). Web.
[8] Ibid.

> To truly be free, we must choose beyond simply surviving adversity, we must dare to create lives of sustained optimal well-being and joy. In that world, the making and drinking of lemonade will be a fresh and zestful delight, a real life mixture of the bitter and the sweet, and not a measure of our capacity to endure pain, but rather a celebration of our moving beyond pain.[9]

Additionally, hooks agrees that *Lemonade* creates space for the expression of women's rage but sees this as counterproductive, as violence does not emancipate women from positions of subordination. Instead, feminized violence is often sexualized and reinforces narratives of domination that can become complex and misinterpreted.

Members of the queer community have also criticized *Lemonade*, deeming it as exclusive. Blogger Radical Faggot (better known as Rad Fag) states their concerns with the album in an article titled *My (Apparently) Obligatory Response to 'Formation': in List Form.* Here, Rad discusses the ways in which Beyoncé excludes visual proof of rapper Big Freedia, utilizes references to Hurricane Katrina for assumed aesthetic purposes, attempts to pass as white, and appropriates queer culture. Rad states, "Beyoncé is a logo. Beyoncé is a commodity. Beyoncé is a production. Beyoncé is a distraction. Beyoncé is a ruse. Beyoncé does not actually exist...You–not her–are the Black visionary, the budding potential for revolution."[10] Echoing hooks, Rad codes Beyoncé as an artist who is a puppet of commodification and who does more harm than good to the audiences she tries to memorialize and the audiences she inadvertently

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Fag, Rad. "My (Apparently) Obligatory Response to 'Formation': In List Form." *Radical Faggot.* February 10, 2016. https://radfag.com/2016/02/10/my-apparently-obligatory-response-to-formation-in-list-form/

excludes (e.g. the queer and trans communities); she, in no way, shape, or form is the key to freeing anyone from systems of oppression.

Though each piece of criticism surrounding *Lemonade* is harsh, they are important to engage with when analyzing the album as a rhetorical artifact. With such a controversial role, I argue that *Lemonade* creates a space in which Black women's experiences can finally be acknowledged and affirmed, rather than ignored. Typically, when women engage in rage, they are overlooked, as male rage is always placed in the forefront as more legitimate or reasonable when performed. The feminization of rage is often coded as negative, delegitimized, or sexualized by the public, as it is not a woman's place to express any form of rage or violence in our society without being labeled as "crazy" or a "bitch." The rage that *Lemonade* explores is important in that it resists the negative connotations that accompany Black women's rage in particular, allowing Black women to freely partake in rage without resistance from maleness or whiteness. Thus, Beyoncé ultimately offers an affirmative potential through *Lemonade* that challenges issues of "misogynoir"[11] (or misogyny pointed at Black women) regardless of its adherence to unproductive narratives of capitalism. In this way, the album is revolutionary in its ability to place value on the forms of Black rage expressed through Black women's experiences, a task that few cultural texts have taken on in the past.

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[11] khan, janaya (j). "If You're Dissing the Sisters You Ain't Fighting the Power: Kendrick Hailed,
Beyoncé 'Failed.'" *janaya (j) khan*. February 17, 2016.
http://janayakhan.com/2016/02/17/if-youre-dissing-the-sisters/

Origins of Black Feminist Thought

In challenging dominant narratives, *Lemonade* relies on a crucial ingredient of resistance to help it function; Black feminism. Through collaboration with activists, cultural figures, and artists, Black feminists have created the tools and education used to amplify a plethora of voices that authentically share different versions of Black women's experiences. Historically, Black bodies have been physically, emotionally, and mentally taxed, as slavery and other systems of oppression have plagued the Black community since the 1600s. Today, Black bodies are resisted through new iterations of oppression including police brutality and mass incarceration. Though these systems have forced Black communities into positions of inferiority, Black women have been uniquely marginalized as their intersectionality of race and gender have placed them in a different category of disenfranchisement.

From the moment Black women were brought to America, they were immediately sexualized, fetishized, and tokenized, serving as nothing more than pieces of property to be bought, prostituted, and raped by the slave masters who owned our autonomy. Ibram Kendi dissects the history of slavery in the United States, uncovering the reasoning behind discourses of anti-Blackness. He discusses the positioning of Black women during slavery, arguing that white Europeans in the early 1600s believed that "Black women possessed a 'temper hot and lascivious, making no scruple to prostitute themselves to the Europeans for a very slender profit, so great is their

inclination to white men,'"[12] as African women were considered to be hypersexual[13] "beasts" who were meant to be controlled. These cruel portrayals of African women lead white men to be acquitted of their abuse of sexual power, as it was morally acceptable to rape and hide attraction to dark-skinned women. When it came to relations between Black and white women, discourses were equally unforgiving, as white women were seen as pure while Black women were coded as foul. Kendi includes references to laws that forbade Black women and white men to lay together, stating:

> The court ordered a White man...'to be soundly whipt before an assembly of negroes & others for abusing himself to the dishonor of God and the shame of Christians by defiling his body in lying with a negro.' The court contrasted the polluted Black woman and the pure White woman, with whom he could lie without defiling his body.[14]

These imposed tropes of impure hyper sexuality ultimately allowed white men to dictate the position of Black women in American society. Today, Black women still fall prey to the white male gaze, as according to statistics provided by the Connecticut Alliance to End Sexual Violence Iterations, 18.8% of reported rape incidents involve Black women. Although the discourses of Blackness that Kendi describes have been immensely altered over time, Black women are still viewed as objectifiable through harmful tropes of sexuality. Negative connotations aside, Black women are considered by some individuals as incredibly powerful humans who serve as the glue that holds the Black community together, as these women are expected to be several things:

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[12] Ibram, Kendi. *Stamped From the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America.* Nation Books: First Edition/First Printing edition. 2016. Kindle edition.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

caregivers, support systems, and lovers- all roles that can be extremely empowering. With these positive tropes, Black women have chosen to take freedom into their own hands since the days of slavery through feminist efforts, as their desire for emancipation marks the birth of the of *Black feminism*, an important and necessary component needed to challenge spaces of whiteness and maleness.

Black feminism's roots stem far back into history, as attempts to free Black women from their positions of subordination began during the era of slavery. Building on this legacy through the 1800 and 1900s, one of the most prominent organized efforts of Black feminism in the post-civil rights era emerged in 1973 with the creation of the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO).[15] The New York based organization founded by Florynce Kennedy, Michele Wallace, Faith Ringgold, Doris Wright, and Margaret Sloan-Hunter was dedicated to the continuation of social justice efforts of the 1960s, but focused specifically on bettering the lives of Black women. As the organization grew, its focus expanded to include aiding Third World communities, working people, and lesbians in their attempts to achieve freedom from oppression. Along with these initiatives, members of the NBFO created a more radical branch of the organization called the Combahee River Collective which based itself in Boston. This group deemed itself as a Black lesbian organization dedicated to challenging white feminism, capitalism, and other branches of institutional oppression affecting other marginalized groups. The Collective is perhaps most famous for creating the

[15] Fraizer, Demita, Barbara Smith, and Beverly Smith. *The Combahee River Collective statement: Black Feminist organizing in the seventies and eighties*. Albany, NY: Kitchen
Table, (1986).

Combahee River Collective Statement,[16] the quintessential manifesto of Black feminism. In the document, the authors layout the position of Black women in the United States, describing a lack of economic, sexual, and racial privileges experienced through the intersection of Blackness and womanhood. Members were highly dedicated to:

> Defining [their]…own politics, while at the same time doing political work within [their]…own groups and in coalition with other progressive organizations and movements…[as they were] actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and [saw their]... particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the major systems of oppression...[as] interlocking. [17]

Hyper vigilant in acknowledging the undeniable intersectionality of gender, race, and class, the organization was able to advocate for underprivileged groups through an avenue of Black feminism. Eventually, NBFO members became active in other Black Power groups such as the Black Panthers in the 1970s and by the end of its existence in 1980, the Collective possessed a specific agenda for social change.

Through their work, the Collective made a clear statement that the only way Black women can find emancipation is through their own agency, support, and initiatives, writing:

> As Black women, we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face… Black women have always embodied, if only in their physical manifestation, an adversary stance to white male rule and have actively resisted its inroads upon them and their communities in both dramatic and subtle ways."[18]

[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 210.
[18] Ibid., 210.

Clearly, the Collective believed that Black women are a symbol of a unique struggle that not only encompasses Black experiences, but the also the experiences of other disenfranchised individuals in need of freedom.

In tandem with the Collective and NFBO, there were independent Black feminists who were also involved in social justice efforts before, during, and after the civil rights era. These women took the existing strategies of Black Power and assembled what we know today as the academic field of Black feminist thought. Women such as Patricia Hill Collins helped found this sector of feminism and have continually demanded an acknowledgement of Black women's existence through poetry, advocacy work, teaching, and literature. Many of these voices are still active, such as Angela Davis who spoke at the 2017 Women's March. Within the speech, Davis elaborates on the plight of women's bodies and their intersectionality with other bodies in need of emancipation, stating:

> The freedom struggles of black people that have shaped the very nature of this country's history cannot be deleted with the sweep of a hand. We cannot be made to forget that black lives do matter. This is a country anchored in slavery and colonialism, which means for better or for worse the very history of the United States is a history of immigration and enslavement. Spreading xenophobia, hurling accusations of murder and rape and building walls will not erase history. No human being is illegal. This is a women's march and this women's march represents the promise of feminism as against the pernicious powers of state violence. And inclusive and intersectional feminism that calls upon all of us to join the resistance to racism, to Islamophobia, to anti-Semitism, to misogyny, to capitalist exploitation.[19]

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[19] Ibid.

Davis, a notorious member of the Black Panther party and advocate of Black Power, is currently a professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz, teaching courses in the departments of feminism and history of consciousness.

Speaking to similar issues of inequity, Audre Lorde is another Black feminist who resisted discourses of anti-Blackness. Before dying from cancer, Lorde identified as a poet and lesbian, publishing literature that mainly revolved around homophobia and parent-child relationships. Today, Lorde is still applauded for her ability to capture affect through her words, touching the hearts of audiences of all kinds. Additionally, Lorde mastered the art of expressing affect through a perspective of Blackness, as her poetry on police brutality and other issues of race are filled with deep-rooted responses to societal rejections of her identity as a Black, lesbian, woman. Lorde demonstrates this ability particularly in her poem *The Brown Menace or Poem to the Survival of Roaches*, in which she "likens blacks to cockroaches, hated, feared, and poisoned by whites."[20] Although a great deal of her criticism is pointed at white America, Lorde's work also criticizes Black men for partaking in male privilege, but still acknowledges their oppression. In her book *Black Women Writers,* Lorde states:

> As Black people, we cannot begin our dialogue by denying the oppressive nature of *male privilege,* and if Black males choose to assume that privilege, for whatever reason, raping, brutalizing, and killing women, then we cannot ignore Black male oppression. One oppression does not justify another.[21]

Lorde's work serves as a poetic vocalization of Black pain, as does *Lemonade* through a platform of music. Lorde is then, perhaps, a precursor and inspiration to Knowles'

[20] "Audre Lorde." Poetry Foundation. Accessed September 30, 2017.
[21] Ibid.

choice to combat spaces of privilege through visual and audible art. Ultimately, through the efforts of the NFBO, the Collective, and other Black feminists, these legacies of resistance live on, as Black feminism continues to be overshadowed by other movements, but has solidified a place within the continuum of social justice advocacy. Currently in 2017, modern iterations of feminism are the result of a long history of generational connections between feminists of the past and present. Thus, unsurprisingly, intergenerationality is a main concept relevant throughout *Lemonade,* supporting the idea that Black women are more than capable of creating their own emancipatory potential to free themselves from white, male, and other oppressive gazes.

Three Crucial Characteristics of Black Feminism

In order to analyze *Lemonade* as an artifact of women's empowerment, I turn to several characteristics of Black feminism that appear throughout the album and frame my argument of Black women's presence in discourses of rage. Each characteristic is drawn from my personal interpretations of a selection of Black feminist literature that provides Black women with the means to be seen, heard, and acknowledged by the public. Through these resources, I identify three tenets that I deem as important foundations of Black feminist thought. These characteristics (although not the *only* characteristics of Black feminism) include: intergenerationality, giving Black women a platform to express emotion, and a demand for a right to humanity. Each characteristic is crucial in coding *Lemonade* as an artifact designed to speak directly to Black

women, as they help expand rhetorical critic Bryan McCann's concept of Black rage through affirming women's agency of rage.

Affect Theory and Black Rage: Including Women in Narratives of Anger

In addition to the characteristics of Black feminism, Black rage and affect theory must be firmly defined, as these concepts allow *Lemonade* to be coded as a woman-centered artifact. Within rhetoric studies, affect is defined as a malleable, bodily dimension of persuasion that relates to human emotions. Some scholars define affect as a tool of agency and legitimization,[22] or a "sticky" force that binds emotions, bodies, and thoughts together.[23] According to feminist scholar Sara Ahmed, when individuals emote affect, others may accept, engage with, or reject that particular affect, causing both parties to potentially "stick" to it.[24]

Through these definitions of affect theory, visual texts such as *Lemonade* can successfully ignite a variety of affects, allowing audiences to engage visually, rhetorically, and audibly with similarly structured artifacts. Specifically, *Lemonade* awakens the affect of self-love, which is often met with resistance when exhibited by

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[22] McCann, Bryan J. "Affect, Black Rage, and False Alternatives in the Hip-Hop Nation."
Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies 13.5 (2013): 408-18. Web.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Gregg, Melissa, and Gregory J. Seigworth. *The Affect Theory Reader.* Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press Books, 2010.

Black bodies. Furthermore, the album engages with the affect of Black rage, a term that is coded as dangerous due to its relation to Blackness. In his work, McCann defines Black rage as a physical, emotional, or psychological response to rejections of Blackness,[25] as through declarations of Black rage, members of the Black community can release their various reactions to a long history of resistance from white America. Additionally, McCann elucidates Black rage as "the key register through which affect finds capture and circulation…[,]is both malleable and relatively autonomous...[and is] indispensable for contextualizing responses to racist oppression."[26] Cornel West further defines Black rage as an "intense love for one's race,"[27] while bell hooks describes it as "a useful concept to the extent that it informs 'a vision of militancy that is necessary for transformative revolutionary action.'"[28] The definition of Black rage that West offers exemplifies the deep-rooted love for Blackness that incites anger when that love is dismissed, as directly disrespecting the very thing that one loves most conjures a sense of rage that often cannot and should not be contained. Both hooks and West's interpretations of Black rage are important; each affirms the self and in-group love that accompany Blackness, while recognizing the potentially violent, rightful responses that may come with any challenge to that love. McCann also includes psychiatrists William Grier and Price Cobb's beliefs that "public expressions of...Black rage tend to reinforce, rather than challenge, crass racial stereotypes about violence in the African

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[25] McCann, Bryan J. "Affect, Black Rage, and False Alternatives in the Hip-Hop Nation."
Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies 13.5 (2013): 408-18. Web.
[26] Ibid., 409.
[27] Ibid., 409
[28] Ibid., 409.

American community."[29] Through these interpretations, I define Black rage as the breaking point that many Black Americans experience while constantly living in a world in which they are unwelcome. This rage is best understood through a combination of hooks, McCann, and West's interpretations, as it calls for equality amongst all individuals while simultaneously allowing African Americans to engage with the redeeming affects of love for and acceptance of their Blackness.

Within his exploration of Black rage, McCann turns to rapper Tupac Shakur's utilization of the concept as an example of its functionality. Shakur was an extremely prominent voice within Black communities during his life, as he spoke out against the daily injustices that accompany being Black in America. He, like many other rappers during the 90s (e.g. NWA) was not afraid to criticize systems of injustice through his lyrical declarations of Black rage. Within his short career, Tupac mastered the usage of Black rage as a tool for protest and celebration which he used to uplift his people, highlighting the joys of being Black in a poetic and gruesomely honest manner that ignited his audience's affective registers and revealed several exigencies within the Black community. Beyoncé explores similar issues of race and gender throughout *Lemonade* through a feminist lens as she too capitalizes on the same Black rage in order to exhibit an inclusive performance of the term. McCann also discusses Black rage in a context of violence and mental illness by analyzing the 1970 murder trial of Chrysler worker James Johnson. Johnson, an autoworker at the Chrysler Corporation, produced brake shoes for the company; one of the "dirtiest, the most

[29] Ibid., 409.

dangerous…[and]...generally degrading points in the plant's production process."[30] As a Black worker, Johnson encountered racist commentary from his white coworkers, which later caused him to experience an uncontrollable anger. Unable to keep a grip on his rage, Johnson fatally shot several of his white coworkers who he felt were responsible for his subordinate position and emotional turmoil. This act, according to McCann, can be coded as a physical expression of Black rage, as Johnson reached the breaking point at which his affect built and he could no longer respond to the stimuli in his environment without negative retaliation.

Johnson's case is an important example of Black rage, as by his own agency, he picked up a gun, pulled the trigger, and ended several lives all through a performance of rage. The jury deemed Johnson "not guilty for reasons of insanity,"[31] as his defense team "argued that the dual forces of poor workplace safety and racial discrimination from his superiors, as well as Johnson's experiences as a child growing up in the Jim Crow South, drove their client mad."[32] Examining Black rage through a framework of insanity complicates Johnson's case by providing a psychologically unsound cause for his raw emotional release of anger through Black rage and potentially damages the validity of violence exhibited by a Black body. This framing of Black rage, however, effectively critiques white supremacy and affirms Black affect as real, acknowledging that white supremacy's effects on non-white bodies can be detrimental. As Kendi mentions, African men *and* women were considered as aggressive beings incapable of

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[30] McCann, Bryan J. "Chrysler Pulled the Trigger: The Affective Politics of Insanity and Black
Rage at the Trial of James Johnson, Jr." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly 46.2* (2016). Web.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

civilization. It is tropes such as these that have linked Black bodies to displays of rage similar to Johnson's, and thus, it is important to normalize the possibility of Black rage as a reasonable response to oppression. Grier further supports this claim, stating:

> People bear all they can, and if required, bear even more. But if they are black in present-day America they have been asked to shoulder too much. They have had all they can stand...Turning from their tormentors, they are filled with rage...contemporary expressions of black affect were results of white supremacy—the product of captured affect finding escape routes that were often unpredictable and quite possibly destructive but also potential resources for political mobilization.[33]

Through analyzing cases similar to Johnson's, it is crucial now more than ever that the work done by Tupac, Beyoncé, and other pro-Black voices forces audiences outside of the Black community to engage with Black affect in all its forms, even rage. There is a long way to go before society can affirm Black rage in all its iterations, but the grander term of affect and other rhetorical tools can hopefully help reinterpret anti-Black discourses.

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[33] Ibid.

Hold Up: A Physical Rage

Within *Lemonade,* Beyoncé provides a platform on which to share performances of Black *women's* rage, providing a catalogue of images, lyrics, and poetry that allow audience members to affectively connect to Black women and their daily experiences. Rage is the most consistent of affects within the album (though others such as joy are present), as its multidimensional presence supports the album's expansion of McCann's definition of Black rage through a woman's perspective. Though McCann discusses Black rage within his articles, he fails to acknowledge the rage of Black women, therefore, *Lemonade* acts as an artifact that can fill his rhetorical gaps. Examples of women's rage can be found within four songs on the album; *Hold Up, Don't Hurt Yourself, Formation,* and *Freedom.* Each song acts as a platform for the agency to express a unique rage that is common within various forms of Black womanhood. Thus, it is the unapologetic ability and permission to freely vocalize multiple iterations of rage that codes *Lemonade* as an artifact centered around women and Blackness, as it allows Black women to engage in an affect they are ridiculed for partaking in.

The first example of Black feminized rage can be found in *Hold Up*. Within the track, Beyoncé calls out her cheating spouse, exhibiting a physical and vocal rage that resembles that expressed by Johnson. She sings:

> Something don't feel right because it ain't right, especially comin' up after midnight. I smell your secrets, and I'm not too perfect to ever feel

> this worthless. How did it come down to this? Scrolling through your call list. I don't wanna lose my pride, but I'mma fuck me up a bitch.[34]

These lyrics suggest that Beyoncé is unhappy with the way her husband has labelled her as unworthy of his love. In American society, women are often dismissed when they express frustration in being devalued, especially when they confront partners with that frustration, but Beyoncé turns this trope on its head by addressing her perpetrator and enacting rage through verbal warfare. Beyoncé ends the song by singing, "what's worse, lookin' jealous or crazy, jealous or crazy? Or like being walked all over lately...I'd rather be crazy,"[35] solidifying her verbal anger in response to her spouse's actions. In addition to her lyrical content, Beyoncé challenges tropes of masculinity and femininity through her wardrobe and "violent" physical actions throughout *Hold Up*. Within the song's video, we see Knowles wearing a bright yellow, ruffled dress with tall black stilettoes, skipping down the street with a baseball bat in hand. Although dressed in an outfit that could be coded as womanly (as dresses, skirts, and similar pieces of clothing are often considered to be only appropriate for women), Beyoncé uses her bat to wreak havoc throughout the city she strolls through. Along with her dress, Beyoncé can be further coded as a woman through other markers of traditionally sexualized beauty such as wearing makeup, possessing long flowing hair (in the form of a weave in this case), and adorning her body with jewelry. Along with her wardrobe's signification of assumed womanhood, Beyoncé's male-coded physical acts

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[34] Chase, Brian, Uzoechi Emenike, Emile Haynie, Beyoncé Knowles, Ezra Koeing, Kelvin
McConnell, Karen Orzolek, Thomas Pentz, Doc Pomus, Antonio Randolph, Sean "Melo-X" Rhoden, Mort Shuman, DeAndre Way, Nick Zinner. *Hold Up*. Beyoncé. Recorded August 16, 2016. Parkwood Entertainment.
[35] Ibid.

of violence are used to question tropes of feminized behavior. One would not expect a woman to engage in acts of aggression, however, Beyoncé once again challenges discourses of feminization by actively expressing rage with her baseball bat, smashing objects in her path. Witnessing these actions, one might ask why when violence is feminized it becomes negative and illegitimate, as Beyoncé's form of womanly savagery is an understandable reaction to her spouse's betrayal. Feminists such as hooks might conversely argue that when Knowles feminizes violence, she allows room for its sexualization, but I code this performance as a positive infiltration of male agencies of violence.

To perform her physical version of rage, Beyoncé also references the Nigerian goddess Oshun within *Hold Up*. Oshun is the river deity of fertility, water, purity, sensuality, and love, belonging to the Yoruba people of Southwestern Nigeria who practice the Orisha religion. Though Oshun is associated with fertility and other traits of life, she is also known to take life away when angered. She is described as "the protector, saviour, or nurturer of humanity...[possessing] human attributes such as vanity, jealousy, and spite,"[36] attributes that Beyoncé cleverly references through her choice to frame *Lemonade* in her experience with infidelity (an act that inevitably ignites spite, jealousy, and similar affects that mirror Osun's human traits). Beyoncé's wardrobe is also a visual citation of Oshun, who is usually depicted wearing a similar yellow dress and golden jewelry. Additionally, the theme of water is constantly present throughout the song, as Beyoncé enters the track's video by bursting through two large

[36] Jeffries, Bayyinah. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Oshun." Encyclopedia Britannica, inc, 2017.

doors of a large building which release a flood of water behind her that spills down the building's steps. Although it is unclear as to what exactly the structure might be, it aesthetically resembles a courthouse, as it is laden with Romanesque columns, wide steps leading to its entrance, and is painted in several shades of a tan-ish color. The building could reference Beyoncé's experience with infidelity, an act that is often paired with court appearances and results in divorces or other legal actions, while the flood itself is an example of the type of wrath Oshun is said to release (along with famine) upon those who anger her.

The recurring theme of water can also be found in the latter half of the video, as Beyoncé smashes cars and a fire hydrant that releases a rainfall of water over children (who hint at fertility and life) who are playing in the streets she walks through. A popular Orisha myth serves as evidence for Beyoncé's choice in including a water theme, as Oshun is said to protect the town of Osogbo, where the Yoruba people were granted permission to build a town next to her river under her protection. In return, residents were told to worship Oshun and create a festival in her name. This myth is referenced in *Hold Up* as the people scattered throughout various scenes of the video seem to be joyful and celebratory of Beyoncé's presence, each seen with a smile on their face as she walks by. Along with the bystanders, the children who dance happily in the hydrant's spray mimic the people residing in Osogbo, suggesting that the city Beyoncé walks through is similar to that within the myth. Beyoncé herself dances in the water as Oshun might in celebration of her protection of the Yoruba people, thus, Oshun's rage on the courthouse steps transforms into an infectious joy that Beyoncé

uses to exhibit her womanly rage that doubles as a celebration of womanhood, fertility, and life.

Hold Up's opening scene serves as a final example of rage, as Beyoncé is seen fully submerged in water as she recites a poem written by poet Warsan Shire that leads to the song's musical introduction. Within the poem, Beyoncé speaks to the issue of tailoring her womanhood to fit the needs of her husband, which leads her to metaphorically baptize her identity as a woman once she is verbally free of his gaze. The poem states:

> I tried to change. Closed my mouth. Tried to be softer, prettier, less awake. Fasted for 60 days. Wore white. Abstained from mirrors. Abstained from sex...In that time my hair I grew past my ankles, I slept on a mat on the floor, I swallowed a sword, I levitated…Confessed my sins and was baptized in a river. Got on my knees and said 'amen.' And I said 'I mean,' I whipped my own back and asked for dominion at your feet...I sat alone and begged and bent at the waist for God.[37]

As she speaks, Beyoncé visually undergoes several physical transformations, twisting in the water as if possessed. With Oshun's references in mind, this poem's recitation under water hints at Beyoncé's own rage that causes her to reinvent herself as a woman free of the male gaze. By abstaining from the very things that arguably code Knowles' expression of womanhood (sexuality, image and beauty, purity through the color white), she is able to reach a raw form of her identity as a woman that allows her to express her rage physically in the rest of *Hold Up.* It is this reinvention of Knowles' manifestation of womanhood that drives her to shed the shackles of patriarchy and

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[37] Åkerlund, Jonas, Beyoncé Knowles, Kahlil Joseph, Melina Matsoukas, Dikayl Rimmasch, Mark Romanek, Todd Tourso. 2016. *Lemonade,* [Visual Album]. United States: Parkwood
Entertainment and Columbia Records.

allows her to channel the anger and joy that Oshun represents throughout the song to act as tools that solidify her agency of rage.

Through references to Oshun, water, physical performances of violence, and candid lyrics, Beyoncé uses these themes to create *Lemonade's* first example of rage. This physical manifestation of womanly rage serves as an outlet for the anger that stems from repercussions of adultery, an anger similar Johnson's. Though the two forms of rage seem to derive from different causes (one from infidelity and the other from racism), they both come from forms of institutional oppression and psychological, emotional trauma. By engaging with both forms of rage, Beyoncé reclaims and revalues her own anger, recreating herself as a woman through her own terms free of patriarchal influence. This agency of reclamation thus allows Beyoncé to exhibit Black rage freely as well as literally smash tropes of women's participation in rage through the song.

Don't Hurt Yourself: Raw Aesthetic Black Rage

Another representation of womanly rage can be found in *Don't Hurt Yourself,* a song in which Beyoncé once again confronts her spouse. This song is perhaps the rawest intersection of Blackness and womanhood as it relies on physical action, masculine tropes, and Black traditions to tell the story of rage. In the song, Beyoncé is dressed in a pair of gray leggings, a gray bralette, a fur drape, large jewelry (an ankh necklace and earrings), and cornrows. This version of Beyoncé presents another iteration of her rage as a woman, as she references the feared representation of "ghetto" Black women. Although the pieces of Beyoncé's ensemble might be coded as trashy, each piece is a representation of certain material markers found within Black, hip hop, and rap cultures. Cornrows, for example, are coded as ghetto, yet they are a popular style within Black communities, while the fur coat and jewelry represent power, wealth, and dominance flaunted by men in hip hop videos. For example in rapper Wiz Khalifa's song *Something New,*[38] Khalifa is adorned in gold chains, sunglasses, earrings, and a gold tooth, adhering to the common aesthetic trend of displaying material wealth within rap culture. Additionally, cornrows were historically worn as a way to decipher membership to different African tribes,[39] but have since then become a method of maintaining curly hair. Cornrows have also been appropriated by white culture, as celebrities have re-appropriated the style as edgy, ignoring its historical

[38] Griffin Jr., Tyrone, Wiz Khalifa,Ty Dolla Sign, Cameron Thomaz. "Something New." YouTube. August 14, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxGapEwtq6g
[39] Gabbara, Princes. "The History of Cornrows." *Ebony*. (2017).

roots. Each piece of Black culture Beyoncé wears has been rejected by non-Black communities, as they are material performances of Blackness. Thus, through her wardrobe, Beyoncé uses her agency to express a rejected version of Blackness and masculinity in order to aesthetically represent her rage.

In addition to her wardrobe, throughout *Don't Hurt Yourself,* Beyoncé performs the song in an aggressive manner, charging the camera, placing her hands on her crotch, and displaying animalistic movements (which are usually coded as male and "thug" or "violent" by the public) similarly exhibited by men in rap music videos. For instance, along with her movements, Beyoncé does not let viewers escape her gaze; not only is she the camera's center focus during the entire song, she also moves closer to the camera as it backs away, taking up all available visual space. Rappers such as Jay Z, Kanye West, and Missy Elliott take on corresponding actions in their own music videos, engaging with masculinely-gendered tropes of manspreading and trapping viewers in their gaze. Take the music video for *Otis* by Jay Z and Kanye for example. Within the video, the pair dance and rap in front of the camera, flashing scenes of expensive cars with girls in the back seats, flaunting their wealth with grills and chains, and forcing their position as the center of attention. In one scene, the two walk towards the camera (which too backs away as they come closer) moving their hands around as if to speak with them and make quick advances towards the audience. In doing so, the rappers' actions liken Beyoncé's as she too refuses to leave the camera's focus and uses her hands to articulate the anger in her lyrics. The utilization of hands while one raps is common within the rap community, as the gesture enhances the importance of what is being lyrically stated. Women in the music business tend not to engage in this

bodily rhetoric, unless they are part of the rap or hip hop community, as the movement is typically enacted by men. Rapper Missy Elliott appropriates this gendered act through her song *Work It.* In the video, Elliott dresses in baggy clothes and chains just as her male counterparts do in their own videos. Throughout *Work It*, Elliot also places herself in the main view of the camera, dancing with girls while she raps and engages in similar hand gestures. Beyoncé also utilizes the trope of sexualized video vixens as we see a woman laying on a car in the backdrop of the *Don't Hurt Yourself* video. By infiltrating these masculinely-coded actions, Beyoncé and other women such as Elliott can successfully resist tropes of exclusion from this particular form of aesthetic rage.

In addition to movements in *Don't Hurt Yourself*, Beyoncé's lyrics add to the rage found within the song, as she takes the previous inclination her husband is cheating and outs him, opening the song with the lyrics, "who the fuck do you think I is? You ain't married to no average bitch, boy… And keep your money, I got my own, keep a bigger smile on my face being alone."[40] Later in the song, Beyoncé offers a final blow, singing, "blindly in love, I fucks with you, 'til I realize, I'm just too much for you...This is your final warning, you know I give you life. If you try this shit again, you gon' lose your wife,"[41] reminding her husband that he needs to realize her worth or lose her for good. Within these lyrics, Beyoncé is clearly upset, vocalizing her rage through threats and promises of heartbreak, using her agency to release her emotions, control her relationship, and resist the male gaze. These verbal and aesthetic versions

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[40] Bonham, John, Diana Gordon, John Paul Jones, Beyoncé Knowles, James Page, Robert Plant,
and Jack White. *Don't Hurt Yourself.* 2016. Parkwood Entertainment and Columbia Records.
[41] Ibid.

of Black rage allow Beyoncé to further expand McCann's interpretation of the term, placing rage in conversation with challenges against masculinely-gendered tropes of anger and aggressive physical movements. By referencing hip hop tropes and stereotypes of Blackness and maleness, Beyoncé brings another iteration of Black womanly rage to the forefront that compliments the physical version of that rage in *Hold Up. Don't Hurt Yourself* grants Beyoncé the agency as a woman to to perform masculine actions as well as verbally address her spouse in order to present the rawest forms of her Blackness and womanhood possible.

Formation: A Demand for Humanity

Along with performances of rage, *Lemonade* incorporates the demand for humanity discussed in Black feminist literature into its themes. This characteristic of Black feminism is found in the Combahee manifesto which cites the demand as another piece of the organization's mission. The authors state:

> To be recognized as human...is enough…Black women are inherently valuable, that our liberation is a necessity not as an adjunct to somebody else's but because of our need as human persons for autonomy.[42]

Black individuals have fought for the right to humanity for years, as slavery legally deemed African Americans as property unworthy of human rights. Kendi states that Prince Henry enacted the first slave auction in 1444, during which more than 200 Africans were bought and sold for their labor and physical abilities by slave traders. This auction and its rhetorics of capitalism (along with other circulating discourses of racism) led to economic transactions involving Africans who were a supplement for Native Americans, as Native Americans were the first victims of slavery in the New World. Christopher Columbus' son, Bartolome de Las casas, who was involved in slave trading, offered the suggestion to "[import] enslaved Africans to replace the rapidly declining Native american laborers."[43] At the time, Native Americans had been captured by Europeans attempting to civilize the "savage" people. Once in a position of

[42] Fraizer, Demita, Barbara Smith, and Beverly Smith. *The Combahee River Collective statement: Black Feminist organizing in the seventies and eighties*. Albany, NY: Kitchen
Table, (1986). 211.
[43] Ibid.

control, the Europeans forced Native American individuals into subordinate positions of labor, just as the Portuguese did with African slaves on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Although this seemed to be an ideal plan, European intellectuals such as Alonso de Zuazo realized that the labor quality of the Native American community was indeed declining and wasting European slave holders' money and time. Lucky for the Europeans, tropes of incredible African strength were circulating throughout the world, as statements of "the physically strong, beastly African, and the myth of the physically weak Native American who easily died from the strain of hard labor"[44] eventually reached America and justified a reason for a switch in labor source. Zuazo then suggested that "general license should be given to bring negres, a [people] strong for work, the opposite of native, so weak who can work only in undemanding tasks,'"[45] was an ideal change in the slavery system.

Although institutional slavery transformed over time (e.g. the cotton gin), there remained a common thread of removing one's humanity and right to humanness when *becoming* a slave. Once placed on an auction podium, a person was no longer legally recognized as human, as they were considered as property. Through this view of Black bodies, Europeans came to the conclusion "that Black people were naturally and permanently inferior, and totally incapable of becoming White,"[46] thus lacking the ability to become human (as the white, heterosexual male was the quintessential model of human at the time according to Enlightenment philosophers). Theories such as Curse theory (the belief that Black individuals could never become white, as they are the

[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.

"loathsome"[47] and inferior descendants of Noah's son Ham who had sex on the Ark against Noah's will) were later used to continually justify the inferiority of Black individuals despite ridiculous justifications. Similar discourses of anti-Blackness that rely on revoking humanity from the Black body are also relevant within current critical race theory literature. Race theorist Victor Erik Ray states, "the construction of blacks as nonhuman structures the status of all other racial groups (Sexton 2016),"[48] as non-Blackness has become the standard for goodness in America.[49]

Favoring discourses of anti-Blackness, American society continuously made it difficult for Black people to escape tropes of inhumanness, as racist artwork and advertisements in the early 1900s portrayed African Americans negatively. Black individuals in the media were pictured with big red lips, pitch Black skin, and no civility, confirming the tropes that European slave traders relied on to justify Black inferiority. Harmful images of Blackness such as Blackface (which dates back to the 1605 *Black Masque* play; the first known use of Blackface[50]) condoned future discourses of Black inferiority that later affected other Black generations. Despite the attempts of the civil rights, Black Power, and even Black Lives Matter (BLM) movements to reduce these damaging rhetorics, Black bodies are still coded as "other" although they are now considered as legally human in the basic meaning of the word.

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[47] Ibid.

[48] Ray, Victor. "Critical Race Theory, Afro-pessimism, and Racial Progress Narratives." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*" *3.2* (2017). 1

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibram, Kendi. *Stamped From the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America.* Nation Books; First Edition/First Printing edition. 2016. Kindle edition.

Within *Lemonade,* Beyoncé incorporates the demand for humanity in the songs *Formation* and *Freedom. Formation* offers a political version of Black rage that is vocalized by a woman's demand for her right to humanity. During the song, Beyoncé sings "okay ladies, now let's get in formation, prove to me you've got some coordination,"[51] asking her fellow Black women to add their own voices to hers and join her efforts for emancipation. Throughout the song, Beyoncé strategically uses her Blackness as a tool for protest, critiquing non-Black communities for placing Black individuals in their current inferior position. In order to make these critiques, Beyoncé engages in protest rhetoric by visually supporting BLM and other pro-Black efforts, highlighting her love for being a Black woman, further affirming Black agency and affect through identification with her audiences, and acknowledging Black excellence (or the celebration of *being* Black). As for the celebration of her identity as a Black woman, Beyoncé's lyrics suggest her love for Blackness, as she sings:

> My daddy Alabama, momma Louisiana. You mix that negro with that Creole, make a Texas, bama. I like my negro nose with Jackson Five nostrils. Earned all this money, but they never take the country out me.[52]

Here, Knowles' lyrics are a verbal affirmation of a deep love for her Black features (her "negro nose") and her southern heritage ("mix that negro with that Creole, make a Texas, bama," which speaks to her roots that stem from Texas, Alabama, and Creole lineages). Through these lyrics, Beyoncé unapologetically declares her Blackness, creating a space for other Black individuals to do the same. Throughout the video,

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[51] Brown, Khalif, Johnny Coffer, Jordan Frost, Asheton Hogan, Beyoncé Knowles, Michael Len
Williams II. *Formation*. Recorded February 6, 2016. Parkwood Entertainment and Columbia Records.
[52] Ibid.

audiences also encounter celebrations of Blackness such as a scene of Beyoncé's daughter, Blue Ivy, and two other young African American girls posing for the camera with natural curly hair. During this particular scene, the lyrics state, "I like my baby hair with baby hair and afros,"[53] a reference to the pro-natural hair movement within the Black community.

Along with affirmative lyrics, Beyoncé also references her support for pro-Black efforts by incorporating images representing exigencies of the Black community throughout the music video. For example, in the video's opening scene, Beyoncé sits on top of a sinking police car as she sings the song's intro lyrics. The car is placed in what looks like the aftermath of a natural disaster such as a flood or hurricane; it sits in a large body of water that is decorated with sunken houses and trees in the background. This is a potential critique on the lack of aid that the government provided those affected by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 which was a controversial racial issue within poor, Black communities. African American individuals such as Kanye West were extremely condemning of then president George W. Bush's slow and useless response to the victims of the hurricane. West even went so far as to claim that Bush hated Black people, which explained his lack of sending relief. Beyoncé's inclusion of a sinking cop car could be her own critique of the U.S. government not aiding Katrina victims and continually depriving marginalized communities with proper aid in similar disasters. The car's sinking suggests that the police and the government are virtually useless and better off sunk under the water and out of the way.

[53] Ibid.

Beyoncé also includes references to police brutality within *Formation.* Throughout the video, there are odes to the BLM slogan, “hands up, don’t shoot,” as Beyoncé presents a scene in which a young Black boy dances in front of a row of fully armed policemen (who carry batons, shield, and masks) who at the end of his solo, raise their hands to resemble “hands up, don’t shoot.” This a reference to police brutality, as the policemen and presence of a young Black man represents the current issue of the countless shootings of Black individuals that date back to the beating of Rodney King in 1991. The raising of the cop’s hands infers a new direction of Black empowerment by controlling the police through the boy’s actions and Blackness. Finally, Beyoncé and her backup dancers appear in several scenes throughout the video sitting in a plantation home dressed in southern belle garb. Each wears an old-fashioned off-white dress or skirt with corsets and the hand fans that were often used to protect against heat. Because this was the garb of many slave owners’ wives during the slavery era, Beyoncé and her dancers wear their hair in traditionally Black styles (natural, braided, etc…) to comment on the infiltration of Blackness into white spaces.

These are just a handful of instances of visual protest in *Lemonade*, but each is powerful in what it individually adds to the universal demand for humanity. Witnessing Black people in positions that were historically occupied by white individuals such as the plantation house, allows Beyoncé’s audiences to identify with her message and join her in the quest for freedom from all oppressive gazes. Overall, *Formation* acts as a militant call to action within the grand scheme of *Lemonade,* urging the Black community to continue to fight for its rights while also creating room for the public acknowledgement of Blackness within white spaces.

Freedom: An Intergenerational Support

With the first two tenets of Black feminism previously discussed, the final characteristic must be explored in order to fully officiate *Lemonade's* role as a woman-centered artifact. That characteristic is intergenerationality, which is examined through the song *Freedom* and several accompanying chapters of the album. Although Black feminist thought is very much comprised of many independent voices speaking together to achieve a common goal of freedom, there is an intergenerational aspect of Black feminism that is crucial to its existence. This focus on intergenerational support is often displayed through the passing of knowledge, stories, and traditions from past generations to those of the present. Along with these secrets, there are strategies for survival that Black women have also accumulated over time that have helped their communities survive under institutional oppression.

The authors of the Combahee manifesto argue that "contemporary Black feminism is the outgrowth of countless generations of personal sacrifice, militancy, and work by our mothers and sisters,"[54] reinforcing the idea that the work done by women of the past fuels those of the present to continue to fight for emancipation. Audre Lorde, especially, placed intergenerational support in the forefront of her work through creating poetry revolving around her identity as a mother of Black children. This tenet of Black feminism creates the generational backbone needed to transfer the tactics for

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[54] Fraizer, Demita, Barbara Smith, and Beverly Smith. *The Combahee River Collective statement: Black Feminist organizing in the seventies and eighties*. Albany, NY: Kitchen
Table, (1986). 211.

survival and success to those in the future. This intergenerational knowledge is incredibly crucial, as it allows a past of slavery and other trauma to stay relevant in the minds of those partaking in Black feminist thought. Today, young Black women such as actresses Yara Shahidi and Amandla Stenberg have picked up where their ancestors left off, speaking out in favor of Blackness and womanhood in their own ways.

In *Lemonade,* Beyoncé includes examples of intergenerational support throughout the entire album, which are first encountered in the opening chapter titled *Intuition.* In *Intuition,* Knowles presents images and poems that cite slavery. During slavery, women took on roles of caregiving, nannying, sexual servants, as well as others, but once slavery was abolished and Jim Crow laws emerged before the civil rights movement, Black women took on more radical positions in society, joining political groups that had agendas of sovereignty. These roots are the building blocks of Black history that have helped pave the way for Black women to build the lineage of protest discourse shared between generations. The first citation of Black roots is found in the opening film sequence of *Intuition* which includes a scene of an abandoned plantation home. Shot in black and white, the scene is visually scarce, only occupied by the house. Despite the lack of bodies within the scene, the plantation home emotes a haunting reminder of where Black Americans began their journey in this country. Within the same chapter, Knowles presents an image of a group of Black women dressed in a modern interpretation of slave garb somewhat similar to the wardrobe in *Formation* standing together on a stage. Each woman is dressed in off white dresses or skirt that is reminiscent of southern belle outfits worn by white women. The dresses and skirts are almost ghostly, clinging to the women's upper bodies while the bottom

halves of the outfits hang loosely. Additionally, each woman's hair is worn naturally, citing the way Black women wore their hair naturally during the slavery era. Beyoncé herself is similarly dressed, as she later stands on the stage facing the women, wearing a long white dress with her hair down and her face adorned with simple makeup. This is another nod to intergenerationality, as each woman ranges from from young to old adulthood, showing an array of individuals spanning across generations. As the camera pans across the plantation house, Beyoncé recites another of Shire's poems in the background that discusses the merging of the past and present. Within the poem, Knowles states, "the past and the future merge to meet us here. What luck, what a fucking curse."[55] Although a brief sentence in the poem, Shire's mention of the past and present merging hints at the meeting of multiple generations of Black women who likely share similar experiences present throughout *Lemonade* that potentially connect them. The line suggests that the meeting of these generations is important and lucky in the sense that future generations will learn from the women of the past, but also represents a cursed reiteration of the same obstacles keeping marginalized communities from thriving regardless of time.

Later in *Lemonade*, Beyoncé introduces the chapter *Accountability* which suggests an accountability of all generations to create a better future for the next. *Accountability* is dedicated also to the discussion of support between Black women and their daughters, as images and another of Shire's poems support this concept. Beyoncé recites:

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[55] Tourso, T., (2016). *Lemonade,* [Visual Album]. United States: Parkwood Entertainment and
Columbia Records.

> You find the black tube inside her beauty case… you desperately want to look like her. You look nothing like your mother. You look everything like your mother... Your mother is a woman and women like her cannot be contained.[56]

This section of the poem is an ode to the Black mother figure; a teacher and holder of immense knowledge. As we listen to Knowles regurgitate Warsan's poem (all of which are adaptations of poetry from Shire's books *Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth* and *The Salt Book of Younger Poets*, amongst others), images of different aged women interacting with one another in various ways scatter the background. In one scene, a young girl with a scarf wrapped around her head looks at Beyoncé who is tying her own scarf in the same fashion (an important cultural reference, as many Black women often gather ritually to do their hair together as an intimate event).

Perhaps the most prominent example of intergenerationality is found in the chapter *Resurrection*. This chapter explores the transferring of knowledge between generations and welcomes audiences into a world decorated with beautiful Black bodies. At the beginning of the chapter, an image of a baby swaddled in a blanket lying peacefully on a bed suggests a new beginning for the Black community through the creation of life and continued passing of knowledge. As the camera pans closer to the bed, the beginning chorus of *Freedom* begins to play in the background while the audience comes face to face with the infant who seems to also be a young Black woman. Though a brief scene, the baby's sweet, infantile presence symbolizes the next iteration of the Black feminism that will carry the torch and hopefully achieve freedom.

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[56] Ibid.

Following *Resurrection* (which in itself points at a resurrecting of old traditions, lessons, and wisdom needed to move forward) are two chapters titled *Freedom* and *Hope.* The song *Freedom* offers lyrical emancipation from Knowles' traumatic history as a Black woman, as she demands literal freedom, singing:

> Freedom! Freedom! I can't move freedom, cut me loose! Freedom! Freedom! Where are you? Cause I need freedom too! I break chains all by myself. Won't let my freedom rot in hell Hey! I'ma keep running cause a winner don't quit on themselves.[57]

Beyoncé also recruits rapper Kendrick Lamar on this track, a fellow Black artist who is known for sharing his thoughts on the current state of the Black body in America within his own work. One crucial part of his short verse states:

> Channel 9 news tell me I'm movin' backwards. Eight blacks left, death is around the corner. Seven misleadin' statements by my persona. Six headlights wavin' in my direction. Five-O askin' me what's in my possession.[58]

Here, Lamar (who is younger than Knowles) adds another layer of generational emancipatory potential to the song, speaking to the social position African Americans, offering the male version of Black rage that McCann discusses. As a Black man, Lamar's anger is not questioned by other Black men (only by white audiences), rather it is celebrated within his music. In *Freedom,* Lamar's rage is performed in his lyrics, coinciding with Beyoncé's rage, creating a powerful expression of a Black rage that offers universal solidarity. The song ends with a black and white shot of women sitting

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[57] Jonny Coffer, Kendrick Duckworth, Beyoncé Knowles, Alan Lomax, John Lomax, Dean
McIntosh, Frank Tirado, and Clara Marie Williams, writers. *Freedom*. Beyoncé. Recorded September 6, (2017). Parkwood Entertainment, 2016.
[58] Ibid.

in a large tree and standing on the ground below its branches, signifying a reclaiming of the visual horrors of lynching.

Lastly, *Redemption* possesses the final example of intergenerationality, which is succinctly packed into another Shire poem:

> One point of water, add a half pound of sugar. The juice of eight lemons, the zest of a half lemon. Pour the water from one ug and then into the other several times, strain through a clean napkin. Grandmother the alchemist. You spun gold out of a hard life. Conjured beauty from the things left behind. Found healing where it did not live. Discovered the antidotes in your own kitchen. Broke the curse with your own two hands. You passed these instructions down to your daughter who then passed them down to her daughter. My grandma said 'nothing real can be threatened. True love brought salvation back in to me. With every tear came redemption. My torturer became my remedy.' So we're gonna heal. We're gonna start again. You brought the orchestra, synchronized swimmers. You are the magician. Pull me back together again the way you cut me in half. Make the woman in doubt disappear. Pull the sorrow from my legs like silk; knot after knot, after knot. The audience applauds. But we can't hear them.[59]

Knowles' grandmother-in-law adds her own wisdom to the poem, reciting a speech that inspired *Lemonade's* title and explains the symbolism of lemonade as a descriptor of Black women's experiences, stating, "I've had my ups and downs, but I've always found the inner strength to pull myself up. I was served lemons, but I made lemonade."[60] This statement offers the recipe for survival that so many African Americans search for, revealing itself through the voice of a Black woman.

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[59] Åkerlund, Jonas, Beyoncé Knowles, Kahlil Joseph, Melina Matsoukas, Dikayl Rimmasch, Mark Romanek, Todd Tourso. 2016. *Lemonade,* [Visual Album]. United States: Parkwood
Entertainment and Columbia Records.
[60] Ibid.

Conclusion and Intervention

Within this thesis, I argue that through her album *Lemonade,* Beyoncé expands the concept of Black rage in order to place value on Black women's expressions of rage. To do so, Knowles exhibits rage through a woman-centric lens that challenges negatively coded, feminized participation in rage, challenging women's historical exclusion from the affect. Through a framework of Black feminist thought, I suggest that *Lemonade* is an important artifact in the emancipation of Black women's bodies from the shackles of both the male and white gazes. By engaging with tropes of masculinity, womanhood, and Blackness, the album offers a structure for future artifacts that also aim to free other bodies from the grasp of institutional oppression. Since the album's release, Beyoncé has become the face of a controversially crucial piece of visual art that suggests music can act as a tool of resistance *and* celebration, just as other literature and rhetorical devices can. With her social capital, Knowles cannot be forgotten in this moment, as her unapologetic exhibition of Black women's experiences coupled with her infiltration of whiteness ensures Blackness as a permanent fixture within the public sphere.

Additionally, by creating a space of value for Black women's rage, Beyoncé has inspired other marginalized communities to also reclaim their freedom. For example, following *Lemonade's* debut, a group of transgendered women known as the Glass Wing Group recreated the album, calling their version of the visual album *Lemonade Served Bitter Sweet.* Beyoncé impersonator and group member Miss Shalae states:

> I hope the video will show that we as trans-women are here and talented. I hope to inspire other trans-women and people to follow their hearts and dreams no matter who is against them. Instead of judging [accept] us as human beings because that's what we are first regardless of gender or sex.[61]

Thanks to the platform of affirmation Knowles creates, members of many communities have interpreted *Lemonade* differently, rejecting it as bell hooks does, or embracing it in the way the Glass Wing Group chooses to.

Though *Lemonade* resulted in a viral engagement with discourses concerning Blackness and womanhood, it ultimately calls the public to question the harmful connotations of feminized rage by placing women's bodies in the forefront of dominant narratives of violence for a change. Through her artistic vision, Beyoncé has created a special artifact that can be referenced as a tool for resistance in the future. The album is not the first of its kind, as messages of emancipation have been circulated for centuries by marginalized communities. However, Beyoncé's open celebration of her own identity as a Black woman is infectious and allows other Black bodies to potentially find solace, joy, identification, solidarity, and hope within a world that is unwelcoming to their kind. In this way, the album's structure of identification and recognition has the potential to help emancipate other disenfranchised bodies, as its framework can be utilized by any group (e.g. Black queer or transgender communities) seeking freedom through an artistic lens. In other words, through *Lemonade's* freeing of Black women from censorship, future rhetorical artifacts can potentially expand the concept of rage to not only include Black women's bodies, but *all* marginalized bodies, questioning

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[61] Nichols, James. "These Trans Women Just Epically Remade Beyoncé's 'Lemonade.'" *HuffPost Queer Voices.* July 25, 2016.

any gendering of rage. Beyoncé chooses to specifically examine the experiences of Black women, however, allowing a socially disenfranchised group to partake in rage. In doing so, she inadvertently offers the same space of emancipation and participation to other groups.

Though characterizations of angry Black women such as Cookie Lyon from the popular television show *Empire*, or Taystee from *Orange is the New Black* exist, these examples of rage are highly racially stereotyped and do not represent honest forms of rage in the context of Blackness. Rather, they are formulated versions of Black women's rage that are used to entertain viewers and potentially identify with Black audiences. *Lemonade*, on the other hand, does just the opposite, presenting audiences with a raw, honest version of the intersection of womanhood and Blackness, a combination that can ignite a great deal of rage. Giving Black women a voice is a feat in its own, but to do so authentically as Beyoncé does is rare. It is my hope that we encounter other artifacts in the future that continue the work of *Lemonade* (especially within the field of rhetoric) and free other bodies suffering at the hands of oppression. It is time that feminism be taken seriously by the public sphere in order to create necessary social change. After all, the future is feminist and so is the revolution.

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