#### No one asked to be privileged but what we choose to do with that privilege is a choice that must be continually negotiated throughout our lives – Darnall Moore explains that…

(Darnell L. Moore 2011, writer and activist whose work is informed by anti-racist, feminist, queer of color, and anti-colonial thought and advocacy. Darnell's essays, social commentary, poetry, and interviews have appeared in various national and international media venues, including the Feminist Wire, Ebony magazine, and The Huffington Post, "On Location: The “I” in the Intersection," http://thefeministwire.com/2011/12/on-location-the-i-in-the-intersection/)

The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular ask the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. 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. -The Combahee River Collective in A Black Feminist Statement Many radical movement builders are well-versed in the theory of intersectionality. Feminists, queer theorists and activists, critical race scholars, progressive activists, and the like owe much to our Black feminist sisters, like The Combahee River Collective, who introduced us to the reality of simultaneity–as a framework for assessing the multitude of interlocking oppressions that impact the lives of women of color–in A Black Feminist Statement (1978). Their voices and politics presaged Kimberlé Crenshaw’s very useful theoretical contribution of “intersectionality” to the feminist toolkit of political interventions in 1989. Since its inception, many have referenced the term—sometimes without attribution to the black feminist intellectual [genealogy](http://thefeministwire.com/2011/12/on-location-the-i-in-the-intersection/) from which it emerged—as a form of en vogue progressive parlance. In fact, it seems to be the case that it is often referenced in progressive circles as a counterfeit license (as in, “I understand the ways that race, sexuality, class, and gender coalesce. I get it. I really do.”) to enter resistance work even if the person who declares to have a deep “understanding” of the connectedness of systemic matrices of oppression, themselves, have yet to discern and address their own complicity in the maintenance of the very oppressions they seek to name and demolish. I am certain that I am not the only person who has heard a person use language embedded with race, class, gender, or ability privilege follow-up with a reference to “intersectionality.” My concern, then, has everything to do with the way that the fashioning of intersectionality as a political framework can lead toward the good work of analyzing ideological and material systems of oppression—as they function “out there”—and away from the great work of critical analyses of the ways in which we, ourselves, can function as actants in the narratives of counter-resistance that we rehearse. In other words, we might be missing the opportunity to read our complicities, our privileges, our accesses, our excesses, our excuses, our modes of oppressing—located “in here”—as they occupy each of us. Crenshaw’s theorization has provided us with a useful lens to assess the problematics of the interrelated, interlocking apparatuses of power and privilege and their resulting epiphenomena of powerlessness and subjugation. Many have focused on the external dimensions of oppression and their material results manifested in the lives of the marginalized, but might our times be asking of us to deeply consider our own “stuff” that might instigate such oppressions? What if we extended Crenshaw’s theory of intersectionality by invoking what we might name “intralocality”? Borrowing from sociologists, the term “social location,” which broadly speaks to one’s context, highlights one’s standpoint(s)—the social spaces where s/he is positioned (i.e. race, class, gender, geographical, etc.). Intralocality, then, is concerned with the social locations that foreground our knowing and experiencing of our world and our relationships to the systems and people within our world. Intralocality is a call to theorize the self in relation to power and privilege, powerlessness and subjugation. It is work that requires the locating of the “I” in the intersection. And while it could be argued that such work is highly individualistic, I contend that it is at the very level of self-in-relation-to-community where communal transformation is made possible. Might it be time to travel into the deep of our contexts? Might it be time for us—theorists/activists—to do the work of intersectionality (macro/system-analysis) in concert with the intra-local (micro/self-focused analysis)? Intersectionality as an analysis, rightly, asks of us to examine systemic oppressions, but in these times of radical and spontaneous insurgencies—times when we should reflect on our need to unoccupy those sites of privilege (where they exist) in our own lives even as we occupy some other sites of domination—work must be done at the level of the self-in-community. We cannot—as a progressive community—rally around notions of “progression” and, yet, be complicit in the very homo/transphobias, racisms, sexisms, ableisms, etc. that violently terrorize the lives of so many others. If a more loving and just community is to be imagined and advanced, it seems to me that we would need to start at a different location than we might’ve expected: self.

#### The performance and methodology of the 1AC exude privilege and produce intersectional oppression – the 1As refusal to speak about their own privilege is a symptom of denial but is expressed in many other ways as well.

#### What’s reality? A system.

#### Society? Hypocrisy.

#### Intralocality and self-criticism must be a process and a goal – our solutions and strategies must be grounded in the stand-point of the oppressed in order to investigate the interlocking systems of oppression that exist in society – Not only is this necessary for an accessible knowledge production, its only through interrogating the oppressor within ourselves as a starting-point that we can figure out how to best act in the world – Brent Henze suggests

Though I argue against efforts to speak for those otherwise able to produce and enact liberatory agendas for themselves,¶ **“starting off thought” from the lives of the oppressed is useful for grounding the knowledge of outsiders¶ seeking to understand their own complex relations to systems of oppression. Outsiders cannot simply¶ investigate the effects of oppressive power structures in their own lives; on the contrary, their relationships to¶ the oppressed require them to understand systems of oppression from the perspective of the oppressed,¶ producing a less partial awareness of matrices of power, as well as their specific relationships with those¶ matrices** (including the broader implications of their experiences of enablement). **Only by becoming conscious of the¶ experiences** of the garment worker **can I properly understand my contribution to the power structure** that¶ incongruously yields me a T-shirt and yields the laborer a penny on every dollar I spend. **Without working to¶ understand her perspective, my own partial perspective is ineffectual. But by supplementing my perspective¶ with hers, I am enabled to make better-informed choices about my own actions—actions that resist or¶ contribute to the oppression that I may only witness secondhand.** Hence the first result of this approach is a more¶ suitable platform from which to understand and manage the effects of our own actions as they feed into and are shaped by¶ systems of power that oppress others. Instead of seeing our activity simply as a kind of transaction between ourselves and¶ a system of power (which we may manipulate to our benefit), we may become better able to understand the effects of our¶ involvement in relation to the involvement of others. In other words, **the standpoint of the oppressed is necessary to¶ manage our own involvement with systems of oppression so as most effectively to combat oppression as a¶ systemic yet particular effect of power.7¶**

Vote neg to occupy the periphery of the institutions of power as a method of re-examining our contrived relationships to authority and identity in this debate space.

Badiou 2012 [Alain Badiou, *The Rebirth of History*, pages 94-95]

We can extend our analysis of collective eventual passion in a different direction: the thrilling sense of an abrupt alteration in the relationship between the possible and the impossible. A massive popular event creates a de-statification of the issue of what is possible. In general, and especially in recent decades, the state has arrogated to itself the right to say what is possible in the political order and what is not. It is thus possible to ‘humanize’ capitalism and ‘develop’ democracy. But to construct a productive, institutional social order normed by equality and genuine popular command – that is completely impossible, a fatal utopia. Similarly (and this is what the identitarian object is for), in the past it was possible for France to extend its generous hospitality to some poor foreigners from Africa (‘hospitality’ involved making them slave away on the assembly line in factories and housing them in revolting hostels, without allowing them to be joined by their family. But let us pass on…). Today, however, it is impossible to extend this so-called hospitality to all these people, who do not share ‘our values’ and who, in addition, have children. And so on and so forth. The state is ideally relieved of this normative function as regards what is possible by a massive popular event – and on point after point, issue after issue, by the political organization that deals with its consequences. It is the assembled and/or organized people who unconditionally prescribe a new possibility. Their subjective energy is precisely defined by this engagement in the idea that they have the right to define what is possible, in an entirely new way and without the guarantee of the state. Already on the original site, in the great rallies of an historical riot, there occurs what might be called a subjective de-localization of the site. What is said in the new site always claims that its value extends beyond it, in the direction of universality. ‘Tahir Square’ is a site the whole world is listening to. The Spanish indiganodos have encapsulated such de-localizing extension of the site very well: ‘We are here, but anyway it’s global, and we’re everywhere.’

#### history – It conceals political apathy under the guise of activism and ensures the continuation of the problems they seek to solve – Fasching and deChant argue that

(Darrell and Dell, Prof. of Religious Studies @ University of South Florida, Prof. of Religious Studies @ USF, Comparative Religious Ethics: A Narrative Approach, Pg.  42-43)

Interpreting our own historical situation is a risky business, for we are still too close to the events. We do not have the distance needed to put everything into proper perspective. Nevertheless, without such an interpretation it is impossible to identify the ethical challenges that face us, so we must risk it. In this chapter we argue that two major trends unfolded in the twentieth century that are of significance for thinking about ethics: (1) the phenomenon of mass killing encouraged by sacred narratives that authorize "killing in order to heal," as symbolized by Auschwitz and Hiroshima, and (2) a cross-cultural and interreligious ethic of non-violent resistance or civil disobedience symbolized by figures like Gandhi and King – one that functions as an ethic of audacity on behalf of the stranger. The second, we suggest, offers an ethic of the holy in response to the sacred morality of the first. The modern period, which began with a utopian hope that science and technology would create an age of peace, prosperity, and progress, ended in an apocalyptic nightmare of mass death, symbolized by Auschwitz and Hiroshima, leaving us with the task of creating a post/modern ethic that can transcend the techno-bureaucratic tribalism that expressed itself in two world wars. Technobureaucratic tribalism occurs when sacred narratives are combined with the technical capacity to produce mass death. While we do not pretend to offer an exhaustive explanation of the modern propensity for mass death, we do suggest two key elements: (1) the use of sacred narratives that define killing as a form of healing, and (2) the undermining of ethical consciousness by techno-bureaucratic organization through a psychological process of doubling (separating one's personal and professional identities), which enables individuals to deny that they are responsible for some of their actions. Through sacred stories, the stranger is defined as less than human and therefore beyond the pale of ethical obligation, as well as a threat to sacred order. At the same time, bureaucracies encourage one to engage in a total surrender of self in unquestioning obedience to higher (sacred) authority (whether God, religious leaders, or political leaders), so that when one acts as a professional self on behalf of an institution (the state, the military, the church, etc.) one can say, "It is not I that acts: a higher authority is acting through me, so I am not personally responsible." Yet, despite the seemingly overwhelming dominance of techno- bureaucratic tribalism and mass killing in the twentieth century, a modest but important counter-trend also emerged – a cross-cultural and interreligious ethic of audacity on behalf of the stranger, linked to such names as Tolstoy, Gandhi, and King. The purpose of this chapter is to grasp the ethical challenge of modernity as symbolized by Auschwitz and Hiroshima. The purpose of the remainder of this book is to examine the potential of the ethical response to that challenge offered by the tradition of non-violent civil disobedience, symbolized by Gandhi and King, for a cross-cultural and interreligious post/modern ethic of human dignity, human rights, and human liberation

#### vote neg to refuse to avert your gaze from the obvious problems within our activity and to abandon the cognitive dissonance widespread in debate

We interrupt the business as usual mechanisms which the 1AC has strategically implemented in order to prevent themselves from answering questions which locate the piece of the oppressor inside of all of us – this interruption is essential to confronting the inequalities extremely pervasive within the debate space – voting negative is a refusal to averting the gaze from apparent problems within our activity and to abandon

Perucci explains that (Tony, ssistant Professor of Co mmunication Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, "What the F uck is T hat? The Poetics of Ruptural Performance," Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies Vol. 5, No. 3, September 2009)

Recent years have seen a rise in the practice of political street performance. Often called “interventions” or “performance activism,” many of these actions exceed the transparent political messaging of traditional agit - prop performance. Rather, they mobilize the particular qualities of performance as embodied action — what I call “ruptural performance” — as a modality in opposition to the stultifying effects of the society of the sp ectacle. Drawing on Brechtian aesthetics and the Artaudian embodiment of “the poetic state” as well as the (a)logic of Dada and the materialism of Minimal Art, **ruptural performance enacts interruption, event, confrontation and bafflement as a form of direct action**. “ Every day, do something that won’t compute” — Wendell Berry, The Mad Farmer’s Manifesto 1 Much of today’s activism emerges out of an experience of the totality, of the intractability and intransigence of consumer culture, and of what Guy Deb ord once called “the society of the spectacle.” It is an aesthetic response to a political/cultural crisis, not to mention an ecological, psychic and economic one. This essay addresses what is particular to the performance of what are variously called “interventions” and “performance activism.” These actions’ characteristics as performance work in ways that are specific to their form and exceed any “message” or content that they might (or might not) seek to convey. The conditions of inequity and ecological disaster that are intrinsic to consumer culture are now an open secret – or not even a secret but an accepted fact of life. Perhaps this is even truer now in the face of what has been named “the current economic crisis,” which spurs the call to “drill baby drill” and sends Wal - Mart sales through the roof while the rest of the economy collapses. Ecological crisis and sweatshop labor are no longer concerns that we think we can afford to address in daily life. In the face of such conditions, Jacques Rancière points out the challenge of what he calls the dilemma of “critical art” thusly: “understanding alone can do little to transform consciousness and situations. The exploited have rarely had the need to have the laws of exploitation explained to them. Because it’s not a misunderstanding of the existing state of affairs that nurtures the submission of the oppressed, but a lack of confidence in their own capacity to transform it” (83). In what follows, I argue for and trace out the critical characteristics of this insurgent form of performance activism that I am calling “ruptural performance.” Ruptural performances are distinct less because of a communicated message of their content and more by their qualities as performance: they are interruptive, becoming - event, confrontational, and baffling. Understanding performance as rupture provides a significant way to think about and create interventionist and political performance that places the focus centrally on the act of performance. This emergent genre of performed activism pays a particular debt to the pranksterism of Abbie Hoffman, the d é tournement of the Situationists, and the absurd enactments of Dada performance. These performance interventions are best known today through the practice of culture jamming and by the staged performances of Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping, The Billionaires for Bush, and the Yes Men. Such interventions, as well as those by lesser - known artists (partly because their strangeness cannot be easily accommodated by media coverage, political activists and academic theorization), can be understood through the notion of “performance as rupture” (Perucci “Guilty” 315 - 329). Rupture itself is not a “new” element in culture, and it certainly has a long legacy in modernism as the bre ach, shift or break. But it has a particular resonance in current activist practices that are both freer and more delimited than previous such enactments. To define performance as rupture, we must articulate what it ruptures. At the risk of constructing a false binary, let me propose that the obverse of “performance as rupture” is Debord’s “spectacle.” Debord explains that while the society of the spectacle is indeed an “accumulation of spectacles ,” ( Society 12) he distinguishes that “The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images” ( Society 12). While he calls it a “weltanschauung” ( Society 13) it is more than an ideology or a veil of false consciousness. Rather it is “the very heart of society’s real unreality,” ( Society 13) and in that materiality extends the alienation of the production of the commodity to its consumption: the spectacle produces “isolation” through the shift from doing to “contemplation,” where “The spectator’s alienation from and submission to the contemplated object [...] works like this: the more he contemplates, the less he lives” ( Society 23). Ultimately, the spectacle as “social relationship” represents the triumph of the commodity - image, the “ruling order’s ... un interrupted monologue of self - praise” ( Society 19) where “the commodity completes its colonization of social life” ( Society 29). In understanding the spectacle as not merely spectacles, but a modality of experience, in which separation and contemplation fl atten the encounter with presence, Debord proposes “situations” specifically to intervene at the level of the experience. However, in his recent attempt to characterize the new activism, Dream: Re - imagining Progressive Politics in the Age of Fantasy , Steph en Duncombe proposes that spectacle is itself the basis for protest, and that the distinction of the spectacle and the situation is merely “semantic” (130). Instead, he proposes “the ethical spectacle”: **our spectacles will be participatory** , dreams the public can mold and shape themselves. They will be active : spectacles that work only if people help create them. They will be open - ended : setting stages to ask questions and leaving silences to formulate answers. And they will be transparent : dreams that one knows are dreams but which still have the power to attract and inspire. And finally, the spectacles we create will not cover over or replace reality and truth but perform and amplify it. (17, emphasis added) There is much to be gained from Duncombe’s schema tization here. And what I wish to do is revise and amplify it by challenging his dismissal of the distinctive character of “spectacle.” 2 As I have tried to show in my brief summary above, the spectacle is not just a thing to be seen, but is also a mode of performance . Interventionist performance, particularly that which seeks to challenge and disrupt the values and especially the experience of the society of the spectacle, is another modality of enactment rather than a variation of spectacle. While performa nce interventions share with spectacle the qualities of being dramatic and theatrical, what distinguishes them is that they disrupt the experience of daily life, a rupture of the living of social relations — what Reverend Billy of the Church of Stop Shopping calls “the necessary interruption” ( What Should I Do, xiii). The interruption, which Benjamin might call the “sudden start” or the “shock” (163), creates the space for and initiates the experience of a ruptural performance. While bearing in mind the promi sing schema laid out by Duncombe, but also taking into consideration the particular characteristics of the society of the spectacle upon which much “interventionist” work means to engage, I am calling for a proliferation of ruptural performances. Below is an attempt to trace out rupture as a “modality” of performance that means to disrupt, or at least, to fuck with the spectacle. Given Duncombe’s setting of “dreaming the impossible” (158) as a critical element of performance activism, I will introduce my sc hematic be means of an example from a fiction film. The 2004 film, Die Fetten Jahre Sind Vorbei ( The Fat Years are Over , released in the US as The Edukators , d. Weingartner) begins this way: an affluent German family returns to their home to discover a bre ak - in. Their first sign of trouble is a massive tower made of their dining room furniture. They gaze at the sculpture, frozen with bafflement. Nothing, however, has been stolen. But their many commodities have been humiliated: a porcelain bust is hanging f rom a noose, glass figurines are found stuffed in the toilet, the stereo is in the refrigerator, and finally a letter that says “Lesen!” (“Read! ” ). Inside reads the message from the anarchist group that reorganizes the possessions of wealthy residents: “Di e fetten Jarhre sind vorbei.” They stop and stare, confounded. 1. Ruptural performances are interruptive. In some way these performances halt, impede, or delay the habitual practices of daily life. They intervene at the level and in the midst of the quotidian. Such performances engage the “necessary interruption” which seeks to make conscious what is habitual so that it is available for critique. In this way it shares Debord’s notion of the con structed situation — “the concrete construction of temporary settings of life and their transformation into a higher, passionate nature” is inherently interruptive as it “asserts a non - continuous conception of life” (“Report” 48). They seek to destabilize wh at the Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky called the “automatism of perception” (13). For Shklovsky, the role of art is to undo “habitualization,” which he says, “devours works, clothes, furniture, one’s wife, and the fear of war” (12). Such a reclamation of perception Shklovsky calls “defamiliarization” (13), for which the Russian phrase is priem ostraneniye , and that translates literally as “making strange.” Brecht realized the political potential for this concept as the Verfremsdungeffekt , which is foundational in that it focuses on the experience of making the familiar strange as much as the transmission of a political message. In the speed - up of a contemporary life characterized by images and simulations, these performances engage what Walter Benjamin c alls the “interruption of happenings” that estranges the “conditions of life” (150). It is this interruption, Benjamin suggests, that allows performance to obtain the “special character [of] ... producing astonishment rather than empathy” (150). Interruptive performance, however, occurs not at the level of representation, but on the field of presence. It is achieved by “putting a frame” around experience (more in John Cage’s than Erving Goffman’s sense) that produces what Richard Bauman calls a “heightened in tensity” or “special enhancement of experience” (43). The Brazilian group, Opovoempé , 3 has performed their Guerrilha Magnética (Magnetic Guerilla) and other intervenções (interventions) throughout public spaces in São Paulo. In 2006, they composed and per formed Congelados (Frozen), a series of intervenções , throughout the city’s supermercados . The performances consisted of simple and improvised ensemble compositions constructed through the use of gesture, repetition, spatial relationship, and kinesthetic r esponse. 4 The piece, in its basic performance of the actions of shopping, defamiliarizes the activities of shopping. The “choreography” that constitutes the “dance and music of buying” only gr adually becomes evident, as the repetition of the banal gestures of shopping begins to mark their strangeness as performance (“Nos Supermercados” Esteves). 5 Though the content of the action is not overtly political (it does not scream its ideology), it ma kes the encounter with shopping, and especially its mindlessness and repetitiveness, seem strange. At its foundation, the pieces are rupture - producing machines : “ The interventions intend to cause rupture of communication barriers, revelation of humor and play, change in the use of public space, and the manifestation of latent contents or social tensions previously unnoticed” ( “What is” Esteves). That rupture is specifically political — particularly in mobilizing the poetic state of quotidian settings. Guerri lha Magnética performances are intended “to break apathy and indifference, to install a creative atmosphere of play and to reveal the poetic content of the city” ( “What is” Esteves). 2. Ruptural performanc es are becoming - events. That is, they do, as Dell Hymes suggests, “breakthrough into performance” (11). And while their boundaries are unstable and unfixed, it is the ruptural performances’ eventness, their status as singular in time and space, which enables the presencing that the spectacle confounds. Alain Baidou puts it this way: “This other time, whose materiality envelops the consequences of the event, deserves the name of a new present. The event is neither past nor future. It makes us present to the present” (39). And yet the instability of the boundaries of the event is equally significant. Ruptural performances tend to confound boundaries of the real and artificial. The actual event of performance is generated by means of artifice, in which audience s often don’t initially realize that they are in a performance. In ruptural performances, audiences often first suspect that something isn’t right, but are not sure if something is amiss. Ultimately, though, the “breakthrough” occurs that things aren’t nor mal, they are strange, and we are in the midst of an event. It is this eventness (and the anticipatory process of becoming event) that enlivens the occasion of the here and now. And that temporal immediacy is captured well by Benjamin’s invocation of Jetzt zeit or the “presence of the now” (261). One becoming - event that has been performed around the world is the “whirl.” The whirl consists of a group of fifteen or more people entering a sweatshop store a few at a time (most often a Wal - Mart, thus the someti mes - used moniker: “Whirl - Mart”) who move empty shopping carts throughout the store. Once all performers are inside and with carts, the participants create a single line of carts that snakes throughout the store, splitting and refiguring as the snake of car ts meets up with blocked aisles and shopping customers (which must look like a Busby Berkley dance sequence to the overhead security cameras). 6 During the hour or more of the performance, if asked by management, security, employees, or customers what they are doing, performers respond kindly with “I’m not shopping.” As performers make their rounds, it is the employees who first encounter the becoming - event, then the customers, then management (who begin manically communicat ing on walkie - talkies), and finally security. When security gets wise, it’s time to return the carts and exit the store. As ruptural performance, the whirl does not make any specific claim on protesting the many things one could advocate against — sweatshop labor, poor treatment of store employees, predatory business practices, etc. ad infinitum — given that all present could recite this litany of wrongs. Rather the whirl enacts the becoming - event of “not shopping,” which in itself can be read as an engagement against over - consumption, Wal - Mart’s imperialism, unfair labor practices, or ecological devastation. 7 3. Ruptural performances are confrontational. By this, I don’t necessarily mean aggressive, though they may be that. Rather, it is as Benjamin puts it, where a “stranger is confronted with the situation as with a startling picture” (151). Ruptural performance is thus distinguished from the “revelatory” performance that unmasks the hidden truths (though it may also do this). In our age, what Marx called the “secret of the commodity” — that its price masked the alienated labor that produced it — is now exposed. We know, for instance, that many of the products we buy are produced by sweatshop, child and slave labor; but we have developed what Adrian Piper calls “ways of averting one’s gaze” (“Ways” 167). Ruptural performance is thus less a critique of ideology or false consciousness, and is more about the experience of the encounter of returning one’s gaze to that which one avoids to maintain acceptance of the inequities of the contemporary social orders. As Husserl notes, “Things are simply there and just need to be seen.” Bruce Wilshire also gets at what I’m talking about when he describes phenomenology as a “systematic effort to unmask the obvious” (11). In fact, this quality is what Michael Fried complained about as the central quality minimal art: its “stage presence” or “theatricality” where “the work refuses, obstinately, to let him alone — which is to say, it refuses to stop confronting him” (140). And in this way, ruptural performance owes as much to Minimalism as it does to Dada. As such it enacts what Fred Moten suggests is not only an “excess of meaning” but also “the anti - interpretive nonreduction of nonmeaning” (197). Ruptural performances, like Minimal Ar t , are characterized by a “concrete thereness,” that Barbara Rose says is a “literal and emphatic assertion of their own existence” (216). As Rosalind Krauss says of Donald Judd’s work, we can say of Ruptural Performance: it “compels and gratifies immediat e sensual gratification” (211)

#### Our method is necessary to confront the current process of arriving at truth claims

Collins 90 (Patricia Hill, Distinguished University Professor of Sociology at the University of Maryland, College Park, Former head of the Department of African American Studies at the University of Cincinnati, and the past President of the American Sociological Association Council, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*, p. 62-65)

A second component of the ethic of caring concerns the appropriateness of emotions in dialogues. Emotion indicates that a speaker believes in the validity of an argument. Consider Ntozake Shange’s description of one of the goals of her work: "Our [Western] society allows people to be absolutely neurotic and totally out of touch with their feelings and everyone else’s feelings, and yet be very respectable. This, to me, is a travesty I’m trying to change the idea of seeing emotions and intellect as distinct faculties." The Black women’s blues tradition’s history of personal expressiveness heals this either/or dichotomous rift separating emotion and intellect. For example, in her rendition of "Strange Fruit," Billie Holiday’s lyrics blend seamlessly with the emotion of her delivery to render a trenchant social commentary on southern lynching. Without emotion, Aretha Franklin’s cry for "respect" would be virtually meaningless. A third component of the ethic of caring involves developing the capacity for empathy. Harriet Jones, a 16-year-old Black woman, explains to her interviewer why she chose to open up to him: "Some things in my life are so hard for me to bear, and it makes me feel better to know that you feel sorry about those things and would change them if you could." Without her belief in his empathy, she found it difficult to talk. Black women writers often explore the growth of empathy as part of an ethic of caring. For example, the growing respect that the Black slave woman Dessa and the white woman Rufel gain for one another in Sherley Anne William’s Dessa Rose stems from their increased understanding of each other’s positions. After watching Rufel fight off the advances of a white man, Dessa lay awake thinking: "The white woman was subject to the same ravishment as me; this the thought that kept me awake. I hadn’t knowed white mens could use a white woman like that, just take her by force same as they could with us." As a result of her newfound empathy, Dessa observed, "it was like we had a secret between us." These components of the ethic of caring: the value placed on individual expressiveness, the appropriateness of emotions, and the capacity for empathy-pervade African-American culture. One of the best examples of the interactive nature of the importance of dialogue and the ethic of caring in assessing knowledge claims occurs in the use of the call-and-response discourse mode in traditional Black church services. In such services both the minister and the congregation routinely use voice rhythm and vocal inflection to convey meaning. The sound of what is being said is just as important as the words themselves in what is, in a sense, a dialogue of reason and emotion. As a result it is nearly impossible to filter out the strictly linguistic-cognitive abstract meaning from the sociocultural psychoemotive meaning. While the ideas presented by a speaker must have validity (i.e., agree with the general body of knowledge shared by the Black congregation), the group also appraises the way knowledge claims are presented. There is growing evidence that the ethic of caring may be part of women’s experience as well. Certain dimensions of women’s ways of knowing bear striking resemblance to Afrocentric expressions of the ethic of caring. Belenky et al. point out that two contrasting epistemological orientations characterize knowing: one an epistemology of separation based on impersonal procedures for establishing truth and the other, an epistemology of connection in which truth emerges through care. While these ways of knowing are not gender specific, disproportionate numbers of women rely on connected knowing. The emphasis placed on expressiveness and emotion in African-American communities bears marked resemblance to feminist perspectives on the importance of personality in connected knowing. Separate knowers try to subtract the personality of an individual from his or her ideas because they see personality as biasing those ideas. In contrast, connected knowers see personality as adding to an individual’s ideas and feel that the personality of each group member enriches a group’s understanding. The significance of individual uniqueness, personal expressiveness, and empathy in African-American communities thus resembles the importance that some feminist analyses place on women’s "inner voice." The convergence of Afrocentric and feminist values in the ethic of caring seems particularly acute. White women may have access to a women’s tradition valuing emotion and expressiveness, but few Eurocentric institutions except the family validate this way of knowing. In contrast, Black women have long had the support of the Black church, an institution with deep roots in the African past and a philosophy that accepts and encourages expressiveness and an ethic of caring. Black men share in this Afrocentric tradition. But they must resolve the contradictions that confront them in searching for Afrocentric models of masculinity in the face of abstract, unemotional notions of masculinity imposed on them. The differences among race/gender groups thus hinge on differences in their access to institutional supports valuing one type of knowing over another. Although Black women may be denigrated within white-male-controlled academic institutions, other institutions, such as Black families and churches, which encourage the expression of Black female power, seem to do so, in part, by way of their support for an Afrocentric feminist epistemology. The Ethic of Personal Accountability An ethic of personal accountability is the final dimension of an alternative epistemology. Not only must individuals develop their knowledge claims through dialogue and present them in a style proving their concern for their ideas, but people are expected to be accountable for their knowledge claims. Zilpha Elaw’s description of slavery reflects this notion that every idea has an owner and that the owner’s identity matters: "Oh, the abominations of slavery! ... Every case of slavery, however lenient its infliction and mitigated its atrocities, indicates an oppressor, the oppressed, and oppression." For Elaw abstract definitions of slavery mesh with the concrete identities of its perpetrators and its victims. African-Americans consider it essential for individuals to have personal positions on issues and assume full responsibility for arguing their validity. Assessments of an individual’s knowledge claims simultaneously evaluate an individual’s character, values, and ethics. African-Americans reject **the Eurocentric, masculinist belief that probing into an individual’s personal viewpoint is** outside the boundaries of discussion. Rather, all views expressed and actions taken are thought to derive from a central set of core beliefs that cannot be other than personal. "Does Aretha really believe that Black women should get ‘respect, or is she just mouthing the words?" is a valid question in an Afrocentric feminist epistemology. Knowledge claims made by individuals respected for their moral and ethical connections to their ideas will carry more weight than those offered by less respected figures. An example drawn from an undergraduate course composed entirely of Black women which I taught might help to clarify the uniqueness of this portion of the knowledge validation process. During one class discussion I asked the students to evaluate a prominent Black male scholar’s analysis of Black feminism. Instead of severing the scholar from his context in order to dissect the rationality of his thesis, my students demanded facts about the author’s personal biography. They were especially interested in concrete details of his life, such as his relationships with Black women, his marital status, and his social class background. By requesting data on dimensions of his personal life routinely excluded in positivist approaches to knowledge validation, they invoked concrete experience as a criterion of meaning. They used this information to assess whether he really cared about his topic and drew on this ethic of caring in advancing their knowledge claims about his work. Furthermore, they refused to evaluate the rationality of his written ideas without some indication of his personal credibility as an ethical human being. The entire exchange could only have occurred as a dialogue among members of a class that had established a solid enough community to employ an alternative epistemology in assessing knowledge claims. The ethic of personal accountability is clearly an Afrocentric value, but is it feminist as well? While limited by its attention to middle-class, white women, Carol Gilligan’s work suggests that there is a female model for moral development whereby women are more inclined to link morality to responsibility, relationships, and the ability to maintain social ties. If this is the case, then African-American women again experience a convergence of values from Afrocentric and female institutions. The use of an Afrocentric feminist epistemology in traditional Black church services illustrates the interactive nature of all four dimensions and also serves as a metaphor for the distinguishing features of an Afrocentric feminist way of knowing. The services represent more than dialogues between the rationality used in examining bible texts and stories and the emotion inherent in the use of reason for this purpose. The rationale for such dialogues involves the task of examining concrete experiences for the presence of an ethic of caring. Neither emotion nor ethics is subordinated to reason. Instead, emotion, ethics, and reason are used as interconnected, essential components in assessing knowledge claims. In an Afrocentric feminist epistemology, values lie at the heart of the knowledge validation process such that inquiry always has an ethical aim. Alternative knowledge claims in and of themselves are rarely threatening to conventional knowledge. Such claims are routinely **ignored, discredited, or simply absorbed and marginalized in existing paradigms**, Much more threatening is the challenge that alternative epistemologies offer to he basic process used by the powerful to legitimate their knowledge claims. If the epistemology used to validate knowledge comes into question, then all prior knowledge claims validated under the dominant model become suspect. An alternative epistemology challenges all certified knowledge and opens up the question of whether what has been taken to be true can stand the test of alternative ways of validating truth. The existence of a self-defined Black women’s standpoint using an Afrocentric feminist epistemology calls into question the content of what currently passes as truth and simultaneously challenges the process of arriving at the truth.