Licking Salt: A Black Woman's Tale of Betrayal, Adversity, and Survival

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My story of exiting is as much a story of healing as it is a story of being. It is a story that challenges the notion of a democratic, merit-based space. This story is one of existing in the cracks of the academy. As I explore my epistemology of being, I focus on the impact of race and gender and their effect on my interactions as I traverse academia. I offer a glaring account of my intimate thoughts about my exposure and response to race-gender trauma and to the betrayal I experienced as a "member" of the academy. My focus on the epistemology of being—both mine, critical scholars, and my grandmother's—affords me with the opportunity to gaze (somewhat differently) at institutional failures that prompt exits and also how institutions may begin to address the structures and processes—particularly silence—that prompt such exits.

I. Archives of Suffering: A Site of Loss

> I sat, in front of my desk. The curtains tied back with Kente stoles. He stood over me, White male with fist clenched. "Don't f**king tell me what to think! I'm not a racist!"
> "I never called you a racist. But what you said was racist and very problematic," was my response.

Eventually, I invited him to leave my office. He left. I sat there and sucked salt. The salt that was my tears. They slid quietly down my face, the Kente stoles blurred as I tried to process it all.

In that moment, all of the race-gender trauma I had experienced was wrapped in his balled fists. It was not just him standing in front of me, his anger boiling over. His 5-foot-7-inch frame embodied every race-gender oppression/

assault I experienced and continue to experience. I held my tears back. I refused to share them with him. I refused to allow him into my sacred space.

As a little girl when I cried my grandmother would say "cuh-dear, yuh suckin' salt." I can remember sitting there with my feelings of despair, sliding my tongue out to catch my tears as they ran down my cheeks. "Don't cry darlin," she would sometimes say, but that depended on what I had done. Her words and the salt often brought me comfort. Somehow, the salt reminded me of living. But my grandmother was not there that day when this white male stood over me with his fists clenched. I wish that I could hear her gentle words, the tone soothing the hurt that was the manifestation of institutional betrayal. And then I remembered she would say "Evah pig got he Saturday"—Everyone will pay for his deeds at some point.

I present to you this story of race-gender institutional betrayal (historical and contemporary) and the exits (psychological and other) I have had to perform in response to the trauma that results from betrayal and how I work to resist such. In four strophes, I try to capture my experiences with race-gender institutional betrayal and my resulting practice of exiting: Archives of Suffering, Epistemology of Being, Traumatic Wound in History, and Spaces of Possibilities. The four strophes constitute a story of exiting from race-gender-based institutional trauma (a manifestation of betrayal), as much as they are a story of healing, as it is my story of being. Across these four separate but intertwined strophes is a story that challenges the notion of a democratic, merit-based space that often cloaks academia. This story is one of existing in the cracks of the academy—it is a story of how I lick salt as a way of resisting soul murder, which is one possible outcome of race-gender-based institutional betrayal.

As I explore my epistemology of being, Black feminist praxis, I focus on the impact of race-gender oppressions and their effect on my interactions as I traverse academia.[1] In what follows, I (sometimes) offer a glaring account of my intimate thoughts about my exposure and response to the institutional betrayal and race-gender trauma I experience as a "member" of the academy. At moments, I interspace my offbeat ramblings with the words of critical scholars and theorists such as Patricia Hill Collins, Meredith Gadsby, Tamura Lomax, and others. But more importantly, my musings are often interspersed with the words of the woman who first introduced me to an epistemology of being—my grandmother—a way of living that is grounded in her (and her ancestors') lived realities that is intimately wrapped in Black womanness. My focus on the epistemology of being, both mine, critical scholars', and my grandmother's, for example, affords me with the opportunity to gaze (somewhat differently) at institutional betrayal that is grounded in race-gender oppression, and how that prompts exits, a mode of survival, and also how institutions may begin to address the structures and processes—particularly silence—that prompt such exits.

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Not only did my white male colleague stand over me with his fist clenched, but he visited other members of the department to tell them that I called him a racist. From a department of fourteen, only one person reached out to ask, "Julia, are you okay?" By then I had sucked all the salt I was willing to suck at that time. I have existed for twenty-plus years in academia and often as the only Black woman in some spaces. During that time, I have rarely been asked, are you "okay"? That colleague helped me to perform yet another exit.

Much of my career in academia has involved a series of exits. Existing on the margins sometimes affords me the opportunity to exit as needed. My exits are not always evident. But they started as early as my undergraduate career. This was the first time that I learned how to exit. On paper, my career presents as a success. I completed my dissertation in a year. But this followed an exit. I was promoted to associate professor. This followed several exits. Eventually, I was promoted to full professor, and yes, this came as a result of my exiting and (re)entering these hallowed halls of academe. This is my politics and practice of exiting in the face of race-gender institutional betrayal.

According to Smith and Freyd (2014, 575), institutional betrayal occurs when trusted and powerful institutions, for example, schools, churches, the military, and governments, behave in ways that harm those dependent on them for safety and well-being. Smith and Freyd identify the following institutional characteristics as indicators that may give rise to institutional betrayal:

> Membership Requirements: Clearly defined group identities with inflexible requirements for membership often precede institutional betrayal.
> Prestige: When institutions or their leaders enjoy an elevated role within the community or society, their potential to perpetrate or facilitate abuse can be obscured.
> Priorities: Institutional betrayal may remain unchecked when performance or reputation is valued over, or divorced from, the well-being of members. (580)

These institutional ways of being result in trauma. It is this experience with trauma that causes many systemically marginalized individuals to exit the academy.

In discussing Black professor's departures from the academy, Griffin and colleagues (2011, 497) write,

> Encounters with racism can be frustrating and hurtful, deterring black scholars from entering academia and leading to early departure from an institution or, more significantly, from academe. . . . Thus, simply examining patterns of institutional departure as an indicator of hostile campus climate may lead to false assumptions about black professors' level of comfort and satisfaction.

. . . Rather, departure can be both behavioral and psychological, ultimately having the potential to affect a professor's well being in a variety of ways.

In thinking through how institutions betray those of us who dance on the margins, Karen Pyke (2018) discusses three forms of betrayal: Retaliation against Whistleblowers, Blaming Women Faculty for Gender Inequity, and The "Just Say 'No' to Service" Response. While these forms of betrayal capture some of my experience in academia, they ignore aspects that speak to my race-gender experience with betrayal. This is due in part to the ahistorical and race-neutral nature of the analysis presented by Pyke. I do agree that the three forms of betrayal they describe are very prevalent and impact us regardless of social location, but what about my story as an immigrant Black woman?

I have worked at different organizations during my twenty years of being in academia. Over this time, I have witnessed and experienced different manifestations of institutional betrayal. At this moment in my career, I am working on a college campus that is ripe with a historical climate of oppression, a consistent pattern of political power domination that is impregnated by race-gender-based privilege. This gives way to various manifestations of betrayal; I focus primarily on the acts of pathologizing the "other" and silence.

As a result of this climate, I find myself engaging in a practice of exiting that is simultaneously fluid and dynamic. Exiting involves physical, spiritual, and psychological departures. It involves me asking myself, "how do I want to be in this context"? Taking the time to ask myself this question influences my behaviors in terms of writing styles (what has evolved into a method/approach of testifying that is in line with Black feminist work), research questions, forms of resistance, my responses to the hostile climate I work in, and naming my experience when others refuse to name it—this is a practice of licking salt that is simultaneously evaluative and survival based. My exits are always grounded in my truth (which involves a critique of systems, naming systems, and resisting such systems—a Black feminist praxis).

II. Epistemology of Being

Like my grandmother, all of us have a way of being—individually, institutionally, and collectively. My epistemology of being is reflective of these three components and embodies my positionality as a Black immigrant woman who has existed and danced on the margins of academy. A part of my epistemology of being is Licking Salt. Licking salt reflects my understanding of who I am and how I navigate my lived reality. As Gadsby (2006, 13) asserts, sucking salt is "a commitment to overcome and transcend adversity." Furthermore,

In my view, "sucking salt" is also a strategy for preparing oneself for impending hardship, often in an environment marked by constant upheaval, transition,

and economic impossibility. It is a survival skill passed on from generation to
generation of Caribbean women. (3)

In Barbados, we tend to say either licking or sucking salt. I grew up hearing licking salt so that is what I opt to use in this story. Licking salt, as it relates to my politics of exiting, is conceptualized as an understanding of my identity—one rooted in slavery, colonization, and migration and survival—offering me survival strategies that are rooted in the legacy of Black women's survival strategies; perseverance and resistance to attempts to "remove" me from some spaces; a lens of critique based on lived reality; and truth telling. The notion of licking salt helps me to move beyond the individual experiences of betrayal to institutional time-transcendent understandings of betrayal. This is what I mean when I say that licking salt is my battle cry and my sacred space.

Licking salt has become my battle cry—my sacred space—that space that allows me to perform my strategy of exiting in the face of betrayal. Literature tells us that Black women need a battle cry at their disposal to navigate the academy. This battle cry is needed to make it through what Ann DuCille (1994, 615) refers to as the "Driving Miss Daisy Syndrome."[2] This syndrome is thought of as "an intellectual sleight of hand that transforms power and race relations to make best friends out of driver and driven, master and slave, boss and servant, white boy and black man." One of the ways this syndrome manifests for Black women is via how we are "integrated" into the academy and how the knowledges we produce are responded to. Consider that,

> because there are so few Black faculty women members . . . there is a tendency
> for the majority to see these women as spokespersons for all Blacks rather than
> as individuals with other qualifications. Black women are often asked to sit
> on committees as experts on Blacks, and they are asked to solve problems
> or handle situations having to do with racial difficulties that should be dealt
> with by others. There is often no reward for this work; in fact, Black women
> may often be at a disadvantage when they are eligible for promotion or tenure
> because so much of their time has been taken up with administrative assign-
> ments. (Moses 1989, 15)

The irony is that while Black women are asked to serve in these multiple roles, their knowledge production in their chosen filed is often dismissed. In 1994, Barbara Christian took up the question of whether or not Black feminism(s) can survive the academy. This was a question on the functioning of power structures and practices that serve to reinforce the myth of the superiority of Western culture to the expense of knowledge produced by Black women. In addressing this question, Christian shows how perceived and sanctioned academic norms govern what can be validated as scholarly knowledge, and how these norms allow and validate the university's exclusion of Black feminism. She does not

term this betrayal, but it is a form of institutional betrayal grounded in political and economic structures of race-gender hierarchy.

As a Black immigrant woman, my experience in academia is predicated on me exiting. I exit physically—choosing to leave programs, departments, and even institutions that were/are harmful to my soul. I exit spiritually and psychologically in an attempt to resist the soul murder (which I address later) perpetrated by the White masculinist, xenophobic, heteronormative spaces that are often cloaked in a language of "acceptance." However, some of us know that "unfortunately, such [race-gender] biases are ideologically inscribed and institutionally reproduced and as such are not easily elided—not even by the most liberal, the most sensitive, the most well-intentioned among us" (DuCille 1994, 612). I also exit in terms of the nature of the research I engage in and how I choose to write—as represented, for example, in this piece. I choose to write this piece without some of the usual elements that tend to accompany academic writings. For example, I use, minimally, headings and subheadings. As I have grown as an academic, I have grappled with why this form of writing has never sat well with me. It always felt that performing my writing in a particular manner reinscribed Western notions of knowledge production and the ways of translating "knowledge." Beyond this, I simply wanted to write this part of my story on my relationship with academia in a way that was reflective of my identity—a Black woman from Barbados—and how the women like my grandmother often told their stories and how they developed theory based on lived realities to challenge power structures. So much of Black women's knowledge has been viewed as illegitimate because we do not always follow the sanctioned norm. Part of my exiting the academy is to try to write, whenever possible, in a manner that is reflective of my grandmother's stories and the Black women who taught me how to be a Black woman.

Exiting is not always easy. It has meant that I suck salt quite often. As Gadsby writes, "[S]ucking salt carries a simultaneously doubled linguistic sign of adversity and survival" (2006, 3). This is why I often think of licking salt as a sacred space—a place of living. The notion of licking salt is a way for me to bring together my identities and the theories of Black feminism, cultural studies and history to critically analyze how the structures of academia often push some scholars, especially those that are marginalized, out. I use the metaphor of licking salt to explore the adversity, resulting from the race-gender betrayal and trauma, I face as a Black immigrant woman in the academy.

Being the "other" in academia has afforded me opportunities to gaze back at academia in a way that allows me to see the legacies that make this an often hostile place for Black women who seek to produce knowledge, especially knowledge focusing on Black women, I sit in both places—I produce knowledge on Black women and I experience the hostility such knowledge production induces. In *Picture Freedom*, Jasmine Cobb (2015) shows how formerly enslaved indivduals rejected notions of the gaze, thereby rejecting "othering" and in turn gazed

back at the viewer. Nash (2014, 6) ask us to consider "how representation can be a site where spectators and protagonists exercise freedom even within the confines of a visual field structured by race and gender." What this suggests is that Black women as "performers" can be simultaneously influenced by oppressive structures and in turn influence oppressive strucures by exercising agency in terms of how they represent themeslves within these structures (even if there are limitations on how they are able to exercise agency). The question remains: how does a Black immigrant woman exercise agency in the face of a long legacy of institutional betrayal?

III. Traumatic Wound in History: Bearing Witness

My betrayal has to be contextualized. And this involves incorporating the legacy of slavery, colonialism, and the resulting race-gender structures that evolved and are perpetuated over time and space. When I think of betrayal committed by academia, I understand it as historical, simultaneously individual and collective, relational, and generational. I think of betrayal in this manner as a result of academia's proximity to colonialism and the institution of slavery. It is colonialism and slavery where my betrayal first took place.

I entered into this particular moment of my academic career unaware that I was walking into a history, a history that underlies why I never fully felt a member of the "family." I was situated in a place with a deep and somewhat "forgotten" history of slavery that is also intimately connected with Barbados. I did not know how the salt waters of the Atlantic Ocean connected Barbados and Rhode Island (whose official name is State of Rhode Island and Providence *Plantations*). Neither did I know of the role of a particular sect of Catholicism and its functioning with the institution of slavery. This is but one example of the betrayal and resulting silences I experience.

As Stuart Hall argues, Black Caribbean identities are "'framed' by two axes or vectors, simultaneously operative: the vector of similarity and continuity; and the vector of difference and rupture. Caribbean identities always have to be thought of in terms of the dialogic relationship between these axes" (1996, 226). My current politics of exiting is understood through this history of slavery and the vectors Hall (1996) described. Eric Williams's research helped me to fill in a piece of the history, which in turn afforded me a better understanding of why I never fit into the "family"—the term used to define the community of students, faculty, and staff. Eric Williams writes,

> In order to protect the Indians from the excessive labor imposed on them, Las Casas accepted the solution proposed by the *Dominican monks* in an approach to the King in 1511, to the effect that, "as the labour of one Negro was more valuable than that of four Indians, every effort should be made to bring to Hispaniola many Negros from Guinea." The rationalization of Negro slavery and the Negro slave trade had begun. (1984, 37, emphasis added)

This is the background context that gives meaning to my experiences as a Black immigrant woman in academia—within my current context, which is the primary focus of this part of my academic story. Barbados, Rhode Island, and the Dominican monks all merged into my current context and have shaped the betrayal I experience and my politics of exiting. As Nancy Peterson argues, "[H]istory is what hurts" (2001, 59). It hurts because the trauma of slavery knows no boundaries—with regard to time and space. My sense of a Black immigrant academic became fractured by the history of slavery, colonialization, and race-gender oppression. My experiences have been haunted by a past steeped in the legacy of slavery.

Black women as a result of colonialism and slavery are "expected to labor fully and in silence—for less. And they are punished, banished and re-contextualized as problemed, problematic, narcissistic, angry, bitchy and aggressive for naming or refusing to accept the terms of subordination, exploitation or abuse as normative" (Lomax 2015). It is the legacy of colonialism and the functioning of race-gender oppressions that perpetuate silence in response to the marginalization experienced by those of us in academia who do not fit the "norm."

Furthermore, the institution of slavery established the hierarchy of who can produce knowledge and whose knowledge is valid. Citizenship in the university is by invitation only, and some of us remain "undocumented" regardless of the degrees we accumulate. Recently, I made it as a finalist for a job as chair of a political science department, this is after multiple publications, serving as coeditor for a political science journal (one centered on the Black experience), only to learn that some questioned my commitment to political science and wondered if my work was truly political science. I often wonder who gets to define the borders of political science. I study public policy, I analyze how Congress frames policy decisions (Jordan-Zachery 2009) and how race-gender shapes responses to social issues (Jordan-Zachery 2017), but for many, my work is not political science. I dare say it may have to do with the fact that my studies of politics, public policy, and power are primarily focused on Black women and as such are not counted as political science (see Christian [1994] for an exploration of how the academy often rejects Black feminism). As Black feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins asserts,

> The shadow obscuring [the] complex Black women's intellectual tradition is neither accidental nor benign. Suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group makes it easier for dominant groups to rule because the seeming absence of dissent suggests that subordinate groups willingly collaborate in their own victimization. (2007, 395)

Some, to protect the "borders" of the discipline, to keep it pure, necessitate the denial of my knowledge as contributing to political science.

The politics of knowledge production has resulted in systemic betrayals and my multiple exits. The white women who felt it appropriate to question

my "commitment" to political science display how my citizenship is constantly under scrutiny. And it shows how the university betrays some of us. On the one hand, the university says that it recognizes my degrees; it says that book awards are valued. Despite my scholarly record and activities, I am always suspect, always having to prove that I "fit" into the constructed notions of citizenship.

In my current context, how does one fit into these constructed notions of citizenship, when the Catholic Church, through the actions of the Dominican monks, and other institutions systematically worked to strip me of my belonging even before I came into the academy? Hortense Spillers (1987) stresses how colonial structures function to reimagine Black life as mere flesh that was valuable and quantifiable by their capacity to increase their owner's stock/capital. My first betrayal came when "I" was stolen from the African Continent and not recorded in the annals. I was erased, my history was erased, my knowledge forgotten and rendered irrelevant. Those in power who decided what story history books would record and tell marked my "invisibility." In the imaginaries of the academy, I was conceptualized as an "object" and a commodity there only for their interests, like the Black male chauffeur in *Driving Miss Daisy*.

"Human slavery was the precondition for the rise of higher education in the Americas" (Wilder 2013, 114). Race, racism, and slavery were integral aspects of higher education that continue to influence colleges and universities—not just in the framing of their own histories and experiences, but also in how knowledge is produced, received, and deployed. This historical context helps me to explain and understand the modes of containment—which result from the characteristics of institutions that tend to engage in betrayal—I face in the academia. The academy works to control our words—how they are linked together on a page, the fact that they have to be written on a page to be judged as valid. Furthermore, the academy requires me to become a machine and not a human being by constantly demanding production while asking me to ignore my emotions and the pain resulting from betrayal. So it tells me I need to work, how I should work, and what the product of my work ought to look like. This is another site of betrayal. At the same time, the academy tells me that there is such a thing as "academic freedom." The same lie told to me by the state of Rhode Island is the same lie told to me by the state of academia—that freedom exists. But I realized that there is no such thing as a free Black woman. By no stretch of the imagination is my life equal to the African women whose labor and bodies were traded between Barbados and Rhode Island, but in some respect it mirrors theirs.

Betrayal also results when the institution fails to take appropriate action to protect students, faculty, and staff from racism, sexism, heteronormativity, inequity, bullying, and retaliation and instead pathologizes them when they seek redress for such actions. And it also involves academic institutions' failure to hold perpetrators of oppression and the like accountable for their actions. Consider this incident: a White male faculty member sent an email to a Black female junior professor instructing her to go back to her class and make a

correction based on information that had been "reported" to him by a student. When she reported this incident, the response was "that was not his intent."[3] The assumption was made that they did not intend to bully the junior faculty member and that their understanding of what had transpired was a result of their misunderstanding the nature of the instructions that was explicitly stated in an email from the senior faculty member. This is not a unique experience: one only has to visit any "hush harbors" (Nunley 2011) to read similar stories of bullying, marginalization, and race-gender oppression. Hush harbors are the places African Americans visit to "temporarily escape the disciplining gaze of the guardians of dominant culture" (Nunley 2007, 234). When some of us are made to fit the ideology of "driving Ms. Daisy," we are not afforded harbors of safety in the hallowed halls we walk. Consequently, we find other ways of sucking salt—ways of telling our stories, finding validation and strategies for moving forward.

Another form of institutional betrayal I experienced is captured in the words of Patricia Hill Collins, who writes,

> While Black women can produce knowledge claims that contest those advanced by the white male [and female] community, this community does not grant that Black women scholars have competing knowledge claims based in another knowledge-validation process. As a consequence, any credentials controlled by white male [and female] academicians can be denied to Black women producing Black feminist thought on the grounds that it is not credible research. (1989, 753)

As an example of this form of race-gender betrayal, I use the experience related to my recent book, *Shadow Bodies: Black Women, Ideology and Representation*.[4] Reviewer 1 said, "The key strengths are the topic, approach, and analysis. This is fine scholarship—an exemplary piece of work." Reviewer 2 described the scholarship as "sound and innovative," and argued that the argument had a "broad reach" that "contributes to research in Black feminism, Black women and politics, public health, and qualitative inquiry." Both reviewers asserted that the book should be published and with minimum revisions. The editor was particularly confident that the book would be published by The Press— an academic press. Weeks later I received this email: "Your book addresses a number of topics of clear importance, but in the end the board did not feel the work cohered sufficiently for it to be published as a [The Press] book." We were both shocked. The editor stated, "As you know, I have seen real promise in your manuscript."[5] I was reminded of the words of Patricia Hill Collins (2007) and others that speak to how knowledge produced by Black women is often discarded and "suppressed." In my case, the work by a Black woman and on Black women was deemed unworthy of publication. Any remaining illusion I had of race-gender "objectivity" of the review process and academe in general

flew gently out the window, the same window I stared out of as my white male colleague stood over me with their balled fists.

After receiving this rejection, in light of the reviews, I took it upon myself to look at the constitution of the Board of The Press. I smiled. According to Moore (2017, 200), "[T]he work of women of color, particularly when it focuses on marginalized groups, has a more difficult time achieving legitimacy through traditional channels when the gatekeepers of those channels are white men." The Board was comprised of who appeared to be white males, one white woman, and one man of color. I was no longer surprised by the rejection—it was just another episode of betrayal.

Finally, betrayal also results from silence. Institutional silence of marginalized people's experiences in academia and how race-gender shaped the academy can be analyzed as a systematic attempt at "forgetting." Paul Connerton suggests that systemic forgetting holds knowledge and a knowledge that has been "progressively lost" (2009, 47). Such forgetting allows for those who engage in some oppressive practices not to be held accountable.

Institutions strategically deploy silence. A consequence of this is that these silences can render Black women "mute" as it works to dismiss their experiences with race-gender oppression (both historical and contemporary). They are also made mute when knowledge is rejected and often without legitimate rationales. Muting, as understood in muted group theory, allows for "theorizing from the margins" (Orbe 2005, 65–66). Muting should be seen as the hindrance of a marginalized group's communicative outlets and abilities at the hands of those in power who often work to limit marginalized groups' ability to speak and choose how they want to speak. Black feminists have systematically rejected such muting by choosing to tell their stories, to render visible what is often met with invisibility (for example, see Higginbotham 1992).

Silencing is but one of the tools of domination and subsequent betrayal. Gordon (2012) suggest that those of us on the margins should use our energies to question the structures as opposed to simply trying to succeed within them, and that we should criticize the exclusion of women of color within these structures. I agree. However, I know how it feels when such questioning is met with silence and/or attempts to silence one's voice via a narrative for pathology, for example—it is not easy. I, speaking on the issue of racial profiling, often hear "that was not his/her intention" or "sorry that you perceived it that way." As such, articulating my experiences as a Black immigrant woman within academia becomes a fight over competing narratives. My narrative is one of humanity and equity. The counternarrative is one determined to maintain the power status quo by suggesting that institutionalized race-gender oppression is not systemic and prevalent. We see this in some attempts to reimagine the institution of slavery as a means of "cleansing" history and protecting identities. Academia behaves the same way.

Asking why there is no diversity requirement in the curriculum or challenging the statement such as of course she can teach in Black Studies because she is Black or the statement that the Black man (a Black man from the South) can barely speak English positions me as the enemy to be silenced. As a consequence, I am constructed as a "trouble maker." Meanwhile, the institution, despite its long history of engaging in oppression, is perceived as innocent. Such construction, similarly to the mammy and angry Black woman trope, is used to delegitimize concerns that spotlight the failings associated with the rhetoric of inclusion and diversity, thus embodying elements of institutional betrayal. There is an imagination of "racial harmony" that is often couched in a language of diversity and inclusion—the "Family." But inclusion can only exist if I (and others) remain silent and if I (and others) do not question the historical and contemporary failings that are deeply rooted and intertwined in the structures of academia. This is how universities and colleges engage the process of forgetting and ultimately betrayal.

Black women can engage in self-silence for various reasons, as a result of fear or as a result of a sense of exercising power, for example. However, institutional deployment of silence serves to disenfranchise some people of color from being fully able to participate in the academy. Membership is often denied in attempts to protect the interest and reputation of the institution. Consequently, silence, because it is a form of betrayal, becomes a site of pain and trauma despite our collective support for diversity and inclusion. As I discuss below, silence can lead to soul murder.

IV. Spaces of Possibilities: A Black Feminist Performance

In "Betrayal: A Poem On 'Unappointable' Black Women In Academia" Shose Kessi (2017) writes, "How does it feel when the 'benevolent' white massa finally reveals his true colours? / . . . Please tell me, my sista, what is the price of betrayal?" The price, sista Shose, is soul murder. French, Gosling, and Case (2009, 146) write, "Betrayal too can be experienced as a destructive attack, it strikes at an individual's deeply held sense of self, leaving them devastated, enraged and bewildered at being treated so unexpectedly and deceitfully or dishonourably." Individual, collective, relational, generational, repeated, and sustained acts of betrayal result in soul murder.

Soul murder, a cost of betrayal, occurs when what is most essential to the person—in my case, freedom, human dignity, and the sovereignty to produce knowledge—is killed but the body is alive (see Schwab 2010). Individuals who wear robes as part of their Catholic faith—historically and contemporaneously—committed my soul murder. The whiteness, of their robes and skin, is often thought of as symbolizing hope and redemption, life eternal. For me, the white robes represented death—a type of intellectual and spirit death.

Black women do not only carry the cost of betrayal alone. Indeed, the trauma "for the racist and the victim, [is] the severe fragmentation of the self" (Morrison 1989, 16). Fragmentation of self, individual and institutional, results in the silences that speak loudly to betrayal. Whether inside or outside of the academy, betrayal is omnipresent in the lives of Black women. So the question is, how do we begin to address betrayal? What might restorative practices look like? I offer an introduction to how I imagine the nature of these restorative practices. Resistance to soul murder, one result of betrayal, is but one element of a restorative practices, needs to be addressed at multiple levels. I explore below the intrapsychic and intersubjective means of resisting soul murder.

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In *This Bridge Called My Back*, Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa write that,

> The exhaustion we feel in our bones at the end of the day, the fire we feel in our hearts when we are insulted, the knife we feel in our backs when we are betrayed, the nausea we feel in our bellies when we are afraid, even the hunger we feel between our hips when we long to be touched. ([1981] 1983, xviii)

Betrayal becomes part of our being. It can manifest itself as suffering, isolation, and alienation. Based on my experience, I can safely say that betrayal will manifest itself in our bodies, minds, and spirits, thus resulting in soul murder. This manifestation is historical and contemporary. However, when we think of Black women's experience in the academy, there is a tendency to overlook this historical legacy of betrayal. As a result, when discussing why Black women exit the academy our analyses are missing an historically, and complex, specific analysis. Such analyses allow us to not only challenge the imaginary that is academia exposing how it works to contain us, but offers a type of space that is necessary to exist.

As a consequence of race-gender institutional betrayal, I felt myself existing in what I eventually termed the swamp. According to Steward, "Black women who have gained access to higher education and higher-paying positions, often find themselves in less optimal work environments" (1987, 3). Additionally, "the racist and sexist attitudes of colleagues can often result in less than satisfactory work conditions and increased stress in the life of a Black female professional (Steward 1987, 3). I use the term "swamp" to capture these experiences. Naming my current context is part of my politics of exiting and is aligned with Black feminist praxis that seeks to name our oppressions (see Collins [1989] and others) as a means of resisting and imagining an alternative. The swamp is that place of evil where soul murder is committed; it is a form of containment I face that limited me in terms of my engagement with academia. Finally, the swamp is a visual representation of my understanding of soul murder.

One of the most energy-draining aspects of existing on the margins (for me, in the swamp), according to Stephanie Shields (2012), is the constant requirement to justify your existence. I will be forever the outsider in academe. Consequently, I have to guard against the energy drain that can result in soul murder. In a regime of betrayal, which extends beyond the academy, women such as me find ourselves simultaneously embodying inclusion and exclusion. We are there, but not fully. Our citizenship is conditional and can be revoked at any time. This is the dialectic Hall discusses when speaking of the reality of Caribbean immigrants. This is the reality that causes us to lick [suck] salt.

Licking salt is a survival strategy. Licking salt has meant going from object to subject. This requires me to shift my energies from trying to be invisible (a form of self-protection) into resistance. As a little girl, when I would come to my grandmother about feeling mistreated by someone based on what they had said, she would respond "chile, if they talk bad 'bout Jesus who you think you are?" I did not always appreciate my gran's words. However, as I weaved my way through academe, I found myself pondering her words. It finally dawned on me that my gran was speaking on an epistemology of being. She was asking me how do I stay true to myself regardless of my context. I had to find my way—a way to resist these narratives of what it means to be a Black woman in spaces that depend on my existence while simultaneously telling me to be quiet and not be seen—in essence pathologizing me. In the words of Barbara Christian, "To be able to use the range of one's voice, to attempt to express the totality of self, is a recurring struggle in the tradition of [Black women] writers" (1985, 172). So, I write—it is a part of my practice of exiting and remaining whole. I engage in a practice of truth telling—through writing and testimony. This story represents one such act.

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Institutions, to address the impact of betrayal, need to explore and engage with the larger collective injuries and impacts resulting from such behaviors. To this end, institutions need to center their relationship with the past if we are to begin to substantively engage in a practice of inclusion as a means of addressing race-gender-based institutional betrayal. Colonialism and slavery are intimately connected to contemporary systems of oppression. The institution, like the individual, is haunted by this past. Justice is the only way to stop the haunting. In articulating a theory of Black feminist hauntology, Viviane Saleh-Hanna (2015) writes,

> Black Feminist Hauntology is an anti-colonial analysis of time that captures the expanding and repetitive nature of structural violence, a process whereby we begin to locate a language to speak about the actual, not just symbolic or theorized violence that is racial colonialism.

She further argues, "As we know, ghosts remain because justice has not been achieved." Justice is achievable when we break the conspiracy of silence that shrouds academia.

Mariah Stewart asks, "How long shall the fair daughters of Africa be compelled to bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pots and kettles?" ([1831] 1987, 38). I find myself asking a similar question in 2019. How long will the intellect of and scholarship produced by Black women be buried so that we can maintain a racial-gender order? Academic institutions have to address the ambiguity regarding their treatment of Black women; they have to address the race-gender violence that haunts and manifest in betrayal. We cannot be treated as visitors or as tokens used to advance "massa's" wealth or standing in the rankings of diversity/inclusion Olympics. The ambiguity of citizenship surrounding the legitimacy of Black women's presence causes many of us to exist within ever-present race-gender danger—real and imagined assaults on our psyche (individual and collective).

To address this, academic institutions need to engage in a practice of (re)memory and not one based in paternalism. Instead, this practice needs to be democratic and attention must be given to race-gender oppression. This is how we address the ghosts, as articulated by Saleh-Hanna, that haunt academia. Failure to do such prevents embodied and institutional healing from betrayal and allows for the soul murder of marginalized groups. Once we are able to stop systematically forgetting the race-gender legacies of betrayal and begin to address trauma, then we can engage in a conversation of justice and equity, which is what is needed to stem the exits performed my myself and many Black women.

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Notes

1. I argue that "intersectionality, as envisioned by Black feminist, becomes subverted and a victim of race/ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality hierarchies" (2014, 14). The result is that Black women as research subjects, particularly in emerging scholarship on intersectionality, become marginalized and often disappeared. This, in part, is why I do not deploy the term "intersectionality" and instead use race-gender trauma/oppression and Black womanness/woman instead. See also the work of Nikol Alexander-Floyd (2012) for a discussion on how Black women are disappeared from social science research.

2. *Driving Miss Daisy*, a play adopted for a movie in 1989, depicts an interracial relationship between a White Jewish older woman and the hired help—a Black male chauffeur. The movie, set in Atlanta Georgia, portrays their evolving and often contentious relationship between 1948 and 1973. This movie is sometimes viewed as a movie that transcends race. However, it is fraught with a series of racial tropes where for example the chauffeur is belittled and treated as ignorant and unlearned—there are a number of moments where Ms. Daisy refuses to see his humanity and only views him as a servant there to meet her every need while accepting her anger and dismissal.

3. E-mail message to anonymous faculty member, April 2, 2017.

4. Grounded in Black feminist thought, *Shadow Bodies* looks at the functioning of scripts ascribed to Black women's bodies in the framing of Black women's talk on HIV/AIDS, domestic abuse, and mental illness and how such functioning renders some bodies invisible in Black politics in general and Black women's politics specifically.

5. Anonymous e-mail message to author, February 23, 2016.

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