

Black Women Matter

Protect Black Women:

Why American Society Should Show Their Appreciation For Black Women More

by:

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to explore how Black women have played a pivotal role in the progression of American society. This study seeks to answer the following: with all the things Black women have done for American society, why does American society continue to turn their backs on Black women when Black women need them most? I will highlight the work black women have done in social movements and show how some of the movements they have helped have excluded them as well. Then by analyzing the history of Black women in nursing and caregiving and connecting it to the work Black women have done in Covid care, I will further show how influential Black women have been for America in times of crisis. The goal is to spread awareness to people who benefit from Black women and their work throughout American history. Also, the goal is to make people aware of the importance of Black women so that they can be more mindful of why Black women deserve to be treated better.

Why Black Women?! :

This senior project is bigger than just some research I could do in order to get my degree. This project is important to me and it has sparked a battle within myself that made me question if I was the right person for this topic. On Friday November 19th 2021, I finally got the answer I needed that would allow me to finally accept that I am worthy of speaking on this and bring some necessary light on this topic. On November 19th 2021, I attended a show called *For Colored Women* by Fatou Diouf which featured an all Black cast. The show gave its audience a glimpse of the Black women's plight and the show conveyed to its audience some stories about Black women's lives that are usually unheard. The stories were centered around empowering Black women and telling stories that show other black women that they aren't alone in any experiences they go through. *For Colored Women* brought back the same feeling I felt during the pandemic when I saw Black women leading protests against police brutality because Black women are focal points in empowering people who feel alone and marginalized including themselves. By resparking emotions of guilt and the feeling like I am not doing enough for Black women, *For Colored Women* made me realize that Black women's voices need to be heard more and that the stories of their greatness needs to be shouted from the rooftops for everyone to hear. As I previously stated, during the pandemic I watched Black women take charge of the fight against injustices that Black people and other marginalized groups are faced with in America. My observation of the work Black women were doing during the pandemic is what initially drew me to wanting to write about the ways Black women help everyone but are yet left alone or overlooked when it comes to their plight. This project will not only speak on the problems that Black women are faced with but it will also shed light on why I believe everyone needs to play a role in helping Black women continue to rise in American society. Black women are pivotal to

social movements like the civil rights movement and the Black power movement, yet the exclusion of Black women in historical movements in America still exists. This exclusion adds to the fact that people do not seem to rush to fight against the struggles of Black women. Also this exclusion makes it easier for people in the American society to turn a blind eye to what Black women are faced with on a daily basis

In order to understand my stance that more people need to step up and support Black women, one must analyze the history of marginalization to Black women in the United States. One must also break down the term, best known from Kimberly Crenshaw, intersectionality. Learning the term “Intersectionality” will help us understand why it is so difficult for Black women in American society and it will highlight the layers of oppression Black women are under. Also we must look back at other Black theorists like Dorothy Smith and Patricia Hill Collins. Smith’s theory of the need for a woman’s standpoint in sociology isn’t a theory directly about Black women, but it can be used to highlight how prioritizing Black women’s journey in an oppressive world could also bring light on other oppressed groups just like them. Collins’s theory, Black Feminist Thought, will be vital in supporting how Black women have a unique point of view of oppression in American society which makes them very open to helping other oppressed groups. In addition, we as a society must also band together to highlight the importance of Black women in American society because this will bring light to a huge reason why everyone needs to help Black women. Furthermore we need to call attention to Black women’s exclusion in historical movements as this exclusion leads American society to believe that Black women aren’t as valuable to American society’s progression as they are.

This thesis will conclude with an examination of how Black women have done during a very stressful time in America's history, the pandemic. This will include how many Black women

did not receive enough support from the government, and how Black women may have struggled the most throughout the pandemic from losing jobs to losing pregnancies. I end by advocating and making it clear that we need to make sacrifices as a community in order for Black women to get their just due. These sacrifices will need to come from people who are also oppressed but by building up Black women all oppressed groups will be built up.

Theories of Black Women's Roles in American Society

Before we can understand the ways Black women are excluded in American society, we must analyze theorists who spoke on the roles that Black women have played in American society. We must too realize how these theorists' works have illustrated the ways Black women were and continue to be mistreated and devalued in American society. It is important that we pay attention to how these theorists address issues that Black women are faced with because we then can realize how prevalent and deep rooted this problem is in American society. We cannot do this without uncovering the theorists from the past who brought light to Black women's role in society and the layers of oppression they have suffered under.

Kimberle Crenshaw: Intersectionality

Black women's oppression stems from not only being Black, but also being women. In a society where men are seen as superior to women and Black people are seen as less than white people, Black women are faced with intersecting systems of oppression, gender and race.

Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) explains this with the theory called Intersectionality:

“Women of color are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas. The need to split one's political energies between two sometimes opposing groups is a dimension of intersectional disempowerment that men of color and white women seldom confront. Indeed, their specific racial and gendered experiences, although intersectional, often define as well as confine the interests of the

entire group. For example, racism as experienced by people of color who are of a particular gender male-tends to determine the parameters of antiracist strategies, just as sexism as experienced by women who are of a particular race-white-tends to ground the women's movement. The problem is not simply that both discourses fail women of color by not acknowledging the "additional" issue of race or of patriarchy but that the discourses are often inadequate even to the discrete tasks of articulating the full dimensions of racism and sexism. Because women of color experience racism in ways not always the same as those experienced by men of color and sexism in ways not always parallel to experiences of white women, antiracism and feminism are limited, even on their own terms." (Crenshaw 1991)

Intersectionality explains the intersecting systems of oppression that Black women are faced with and it also explains why American society is so negligent when it comes to actually addressing the problems that Black women are faced with. American society is ok with being negligent because America is not ready to address their patriarchal and racist ways at once. If American society focused on the mistreatment of Black women, America would have to face their patriarchal and racist history at the same time and this could mean drastic changes would need to be made. The ones that benefit from the patriarchal and racist ways America is run do not want to see the plight of Black women be spoken about because it can be an end to the American Dream as they know it. Black women deserve to be in the forefront of social movements like civil rights movements and feminist movements because they are the ones who are affected by them the most. Yet, they are the ones who participate in these movements and initiate change, but are never highlighted for their work. Nor are their problems fixed or addressed when these movements get victory.

The Civil Rights movement is a great example of the intersecting system of oppression that Black women are faced with. As Congresswoman Norton said in an interview at Brookings Institute on November 21, 2016,

“when feminism arose in the 1960s, it was different for women of every kind because women had never thought of themselves, at least white women, as a particularly disadvantaged group. As far as Black women were concerned, the overlap between the women’s movement and the civil rights movement caused some confusion. Black people were trying to get their arms around what it meant to bring change in this country and here come a large group, a much larger group, who are not necessarily Black, in fact, were white, who were trying to do the same thing. And it really took some leadership on the part of some Black women, and they ought to be understood, who understood they were both Black and women. People like Shirley Chisholm. Like Dorothy Height. It took that kind of leadership to engage this confusion, to understand this confusion, to deal with this confusion within the community.” (Norton 2016)

Congresswoman Norton points out the impact that intersectionality had on Black women when it came time to fight for their rights as Black people and as women. It was as if Black women had to pick which movement was more important being a woman or being Black. I highlight this point because it shows that Black women have been oppressed by being Black and women in society. In addition, this point illustrates why Black women’s problems need to be brought to light more often because they should not have to fight against intersecting systems of oppression alone. Especially if they always make it known that they will protest and lead the charge for change when oppression is affecting others.

Dorothy Smith: Knowing a Society from Within: A Woman’s Standpoint

While Crenshaw argued about the ways that being Black and a woman is difficult and creates layers of oppression which supports my thesis, Smith queries the importance

of women's knowledge. This supports my argument because although Dorothy Smith theory of the need for a woman's standpoint in sociology is not directly about Black women, Smith's work connects to my belief that pushing Black women into the forefront of American society can influence change for other marginalized groups. Smith (1974) explains in her theory how white women's standpoint in sociology is more inclusive than white men's standpoint. According to Smith (1974),

“The sociologist who is a woman finds it hard to preserve this exclusion, for she discovers, if she will, precisely that uneasiness in her relation to her discipline as a whole.....There are and must be different experiences of the world and different bases of experience. We must not do away with them by taking advantage of our privileged speaking to construct a sociological version that we then impose upon them as their reality.” (p.304 & 307)

This quote doesn't specifically say “white women's standpoint” but during this time Black people's voices were not being acknowledged so it's easy to see which women Smith was referring to when she said “a woman's standpoint”. Smith highlights how a white woman's standpoint is against exclusion and that adding a white woman's standpoint into sociology can help speak on the experiences of others who aren't men. Smith believed that there weren't just men experiencing the world around them and that it was important to speak on other people's experiences in order to fully understand the world around them. I connect Smith's theory to Black women as well because if she argued the effects a white woman's standpoint would have on sociology being more inclusive imagine what a Black woman's standpoint would do in the world. Whereas white women are only oppressed due to their gender, Black women are oppressed by their gender, race and many more intersecting layers of oppression which would make it easier for Black women to connect with all types of marginalized people. To conclude, I

bring up Dorothy Smith's theory on a woman's standpoint being important to advancing sociology because I believe that having Black women in the forefront of American society to be heard and highlighted could affect American society the same way adding a white woman's standpoint to sociology helped sociology advance.

Patricia Hill Collins: Black Feminist Thought in the Matrix of Domination

Being that I speak on my belief that it is important to put Black women in the forefront of American society, I want to analyze the woman who gave me this belief.

Patricia Hill Collins' work expresses how Black Feminist Thought can significantly contribute to American society. Collins (1990) believed,

“First, Black feminist thought fosters a fundamental paradigmatic shift in how we think about oppression. By embracing a paradigm of race, class, and gender as interlocking systems of oppression, Black feminist thought reconceptualizes the social relations of domination and resistance. Second, Black feminist thought addresses ongoing epistemological debates in feminist theory and in the sociology of knowledge concerning ways of assessing “truth.” Offering subordinate groups new knowledge about their own experiences can be empowering. But revealing new ways of knowing that allow subordinate groups to define their own reality has far greater implications.” (p.413)

Collins' work not only showed how it would help Black women advance in society, but it also expressed how spreading new knowledge to marginalized groups or “subordinate groups” can uplift them and help them open their eyes to the realities of their treatment in society.

Collins' work illustrates why I believe that Black women should be put into the forefront of American society because they think about others and want to do work that does not only get Black women out of oppression, but also wants to get other marginalized groups out of oppression. Whereas Dorothy Smith spoke vaguely about there being other experiences going on in the world, Collins emphasized that there are other subordinate groups in the world who deserve to be heard. President Obama (2015) once said, “all of us are beneficiaries of a long line

of strong Black women who help carry this country forward”. His words are present when I read Collins’ work because her work is a part of forward thinking that helps American society get closer to become a place that they claim to be. Collins’ work opened my eyes to the fact that Black women are continuously fighting for everyone who is marginalized to be pushed into the center. Collins’ work made me question how could Black women continue to fight for others and not get the same in return.

Role of Black Women in social movements in American history

Civil Rights Movement

Keep in mind those three theorists throughout this paper because they all have sparked my belief that Black women deserve to get more attention brought to them. This attention should begin with acknowledging Black women’s roles in American history. Black women have always played an influential role in social movements that do not put them in the forefront. Social movements like the Civil Rights movement have benefitted from the help of Black women.

Black women had substantial roles in the Civil Rights movement(1993),

“Black women were much more than followers in the modern civil rights movement; many were also leaders who performed a variety of roles comparable to those of Black male leaders” (p. 163).

This narrative is rarely ever pushed when people speak about the Civil Rights movement. People in our society always push the narrative forward that the Black men were the leaders and got the Black community together to fight for their rights.

In actuality(1993), “ Although seldom recognized as leaders, these women were often the ones who initiated protest, formulated strategies and tactics, and mobilized other resources(especially money, personnel and communication networks) necessary for successful collective action” (p. 163).

Black women have always been a part of activism and bringing change since the Civil Rights Movement. Black women were some of the hardest working people when it came to fighting against injustice and their roles should be highlighted more often although they were seldomly leaders.

A more important question here is why were Black women “seldom recognized as leaders”? The author Bernice Mcnair Barnett(1993), talks about overshadowed Black women who were leaders in the Civil Rights movement,

“Black women activists in communities throughout the South nevertheless performed roles that by any standard would merit their being considered "heroes" and "leaders" of the movement. However, until recently, most of these women have remained anonymous, a category of invisible, unsung heroes of one of the most revolutionary periods of modern American history. During the period of more than thirty years of scholarship since the heyday of the civil rights movement, their experiences and their leadership roles virtually have been neglected, forgotten, or considered inconsequential or of secondary importance relative to those of men.”(Barnett 163)

Barnett brings up a vital point that has led to the continuation of overlooking Black women.

During the Civil Rights movement Black women were overlooked and deemed as less than Black men. Why? You may ask. Because Black women were women, meaning they could do the same things the Black men were doing and still be seen as less than. This is due to patriarchy.

This connects to Kimberle Crenshaw’s theory Intersectionality because even among another oppressed group, Black men, Black women were oppressed due their gender and patriarchy. To continue Barnett’s point on Black women who were leaders during the Civil Rights Movement being overshadowed vividly conveys a present day problem present today. This problem being that Black women are overshadowed and pushed to the back of the oppression “line” by Black

men. Whether it is purposely or not is not important to me, but the important thing is that it is happening. For instance, if you look at the media, you will see that the cycle of overlooking Black women continues even in movements that are meant to help them as well. To continue, Black men are the faces of the Black Lives Matter movement today. Yet Black men aren't the only Black people affected by the injustices the BLM movement fights against nor are Black men the creators of the BLM movement. Black women get their credit for being leaders and support when they are victims. Yet Black women can be both leaders and victims and get neither. They receive no credit and minimal support. American society does not highlight the work that Black people do, but it is even worse when it comes to the work that Black women do. At least the Dr. Martin Luther King(s) and the Malcolm X(s)(*both Black men*) of the world who fought for justice were highlighted and praised, the Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi(s) (*all Black women*) of the world were overshadowed. If you do not know who those people are, they are the creators of the BLM movement.

Bernice McNair Barnett shines light on the courage it took for Black women to be “engaged in the civil rights struggles in the South, a region historically characterized by a dangerous climate of legalized bigotry, labor exploitation, sexual assault and insult, and institutionalized violence and intimidation” (p. 163).

I, like Bernice McNair Barnett, think that it is courageous and powerful of Black women to be big parts of social movements that can endanger their lives. Also, it is courageous and selfless to be a part of movements that give you minimal credit as leaders even when you are pivotal to the movements success.

During the Civil Rights movement, Black men were the faces of the mistreatment of Black people. The Civil Rights movement did not specifically speak on Black women as much as Black men. I say this because intersectionality puts Black women at the back of the line when it comes to Black people who need things to change. You have to understand that with the effects of

intersectionality, fighting for the injustices against Black people does not directly change the oppression that Black women are faced with. Black women understand that fighting for the injustices against Black people as a whole does not directly change the oppression that they are faced with, but they still participate and take on leadership roles in those movements. They are true leaders that sacrifice for those they feel need help and they do not get any recognition for doing that. I believe that is a societal problem.

To add on to the roles Black women played during the Civil Rights Movement, Black women like Diane Nash were bridge leaders. Bridge leaders like Diane Nash were able to express the opinions that participants in the movement had and also state the terms that formal leaders had for those participants in the movement (Robnett, 1954-1965, p.1685). Diane Nash was a bridge leader for a historical event, The Freedom Riders, which attacked racism in Southern structure (Robnett, 1954-1965, p.1685). Black women as Bridge leaders were very vital to the function of the Civil Rights movement. They (1954-1965),

“operated semi autonomously in what Evans and Boyte (1986) term a "freespace." Here women controlled their day-to-day activities and kept in touch with the desires of the community and the movement's constituents... Bridge leaders provided the maintenance necessary to sustain the identity, consciousness, and solidarity of the movement.”(p.1687)

Black women held many roles during the Civil Rights movement that helped the movement be run effortlessly. Black women's work may get overlooked by the formal leaders or faces of the movement but without them who knows if this historical movement would be as known as it is today.

Black Power

The Black Power movement was a movement that empowered Black people as a whole and brought them together to make them a stronger unit. As much as Black

women played a part in the Civil Rights movement, they also played a huge part in the Black Power movement. There were many organizations that arose during the Black Power movement. One organization was the Black Panthers. The Black Panthers consisted of both men and women. The Panther women were pushing Black women who were a part of pushing Black people forward in society (Farmer, 2019). Ashley Farmer (2019) wrote in her book that,

“From 1967 to 1975, Panther women expanded the party's gendered imaginary and organizing ethos through their debate over Black womanhood in the Black Panther newspaper. Early female Panther recruits used the publication to theorize new ideas about the Black Revolutionary Woman as a way to challenge the Panthers' patriarchal political imaginary. As the organization evolved, Panther women began to define the female revolutionary in ways that purposely transgressed organizational and societal gender constructs. By the early 1970s, they solidified the Black Revolutionary Woman as a viable form of self-representation and a symbol of their radical politics. Their rhetorical and pictorial constructions of the Black Revolutionary Woman expanded and diversified the party's collective subjectivity, political identity, and everyday culture. It also shifted Panther leaders' stance on sexism and gender equality, making the party more inclusive.” (p.27)

During the Black Power movement, Black women were not staying in the background and were making sure that their voices were being heard. Black women's impact on American society was very prevalent during the Black Power movement. Black women were not only trying to change the way Black people were seen by American society, but they were also trying to change the way Black women were perceived in their own communities. Black women began to challenge their roles during this time and they realized that (2019)

“female Pan-Africanist should take a leading role in addressing the simultaneous manifestation of white domination. Moreover, they consistently foregrounded instances in which Black women were the victims not only of racism and imperialism but also of the white, heteronormative gender constructs that these systems supported.”(p.157)

Black women fought against all oppression during the Black power movement; which shined light on the effect that they had on the Black Power movement during this time. Black women wanted to play a role in initiating change and their actions during the Black Power movement showed their intent to change American society. They continued to be leaders of organizations as they did during the Civil Rights movement.

Ruby Doris Smith was a prominent leader during the rise of the Black Power movement, but at this time people were starting to get used to seeing Black women as leaders and weren't shocked at her leadership role, "So many of these student activists had grown up in families with strong Black women who worked outside the home and exercised authority inside the home, Black female authority figures seemed quite normal." (Collier-Thomas, 2001, p. 205)

It is becoming the norm that Black women are pushing Black culture forward through their own leadership. Black women were creating and leading a lot of organizations during this time. Another example of this is TWWA(2017),

"The Third World Women's Alliance (TWWA), a multiracial coalition created and led by Black women, spearheaded this facet of Black Power organizing. By the early 1970s, the women's group became a critical part of the U.S. Third World Left, a collection of activists who created material and ideological links with people of color in African, Asian, and Latin American countries in order to critique the U.S. social and political order."(p.159)

Black women were very active during the Black Power movement; they had their hands in everything. These are stories that we do not hear. These stories show us how vital Black women were during the Black Power movement. The Black Power movement advanced Black culture and also American society because it critiqued the ways Black people were seen in American society. Due to Black women critiquing American society and influencing change for the betterment of Black people, Black women made their value known. Black women are intellectuals and leaders in American society. They have shown this with the roles they played

during these two historical times periods in American history: the Civil Rights movement and the Black Power movement.

Exclusion of Black Women in historical movements in America

One would think Black women would be included in more historical movements in America because they have shown that they are influential in social movements and they can help movements spread their message. But this was not always the case for Black women. Black women would have to jump over hurdles to be included in other historical movements in America. There would be people who would think that Black women should not be leaders in historical movements. This would lead to Black women's voices being silenced. This would allow Black women to be overshadowed.

Black Church

The Black Church was an institution created by Black people. The Black Church was a safe place for Black people where they could be themselves outside of the white oppressive American society that faced them everyday of their lives. The Black Church was supposed to be a place where no Black person would feel oppression nor would a Black person be marginalized. Henry Louis Gates (2021) explains the role Black Church played in the Black community,

“For a people systematically brutalized and debased by the inhumane system of human slavery, followed by a century of Jim Crow racism, the church provided a refuge: a place of racial and individual self-affirmation, of teaching and learning, of psychological and spiritual sustenance, of prophetic faith; a symbolic space where Black people, enslaved and free, could nurture the hope for a better today and a much better tomorrow. For a community disenfranchised and underserved by religious institutions established by and catering to the needs of white people, it served both secular and spiritual needs.”(pp.8)

The Black Church would be important for Black people as a whole and would let them use their voices to speak on the world around them. For Black women this was not completely true. The Black Church actually made Black women dim their light and tried to suppress them.

The difference with the oppression Black women faced in the Black Church is that it did not come from its usual oppressor, it came from Black men. Higginbotham (1993) wrote that,

“Black Baptist churchmen certainly recognized the importance of women's active support for the denomination's efforts towards racial self-help and self-reliance. Yet male biased traditions and rules of decorum sought to mute women's voices and accentuate their subordinate status. Thus tainted by the values of the larger American society, the Black church sought to provide men with the full manhood rights while offering women a separate and unequal status.”

Black men in the church understood how important Black women were to the success of the Black Church, but they still treated Black women poorly. The Black Church tended to be an institution that solely focused Black men's success and ways that Black men could combat the injustice they faced in America's Society, but Black women had to be in the background. Black women are good enough to support but not good enough to be the face and fight for what they need. I believe that the Black Church wanted to focus on Black men for the same reason why it took a long time for Black women to be noticed as leaders. As previously stated by Bernice Mcnair Barnett(1993), Black women's experiences and leadership roles were “considered inconsequential or of secondary importance relative to those of men.” Collier-Thomas (2001) similarly addresses this point saying that in Black communities there was a belief that,

“...Black men were virtually emasculated by white American society. Thus, they must assume leadership roles and reclaim their masculinity as a prerequisite to the empowerment of all Black people. Some reasoned that men could only assume their rightful place, though, if women would step aside and stop interfering. Such a negative judgment of Black female leadership was inextricably bound to a twisted assessment of Black female self-reliance. This fallacious assessment blamed Black women for the emasculation of their men because of their willingness to assume dominant roles.” (p. 207)

So Black women should stop interfering but they have played such a pivotal role in Black people's success with their support. Still there are some who believe that they should stop "interfering". This notion is not brought up when Black women are helping Black movements grow but as soon as Black men need to assert their "dominance" in a society that could care less about them, they point the finger at Black women to move away and let Black men be in the forefront. I believe that this was the same reason why Black women had to play second fiddle to Black men in the Black church. In places of importance to Black people, Black men were supposed to be seen as the "leaders" and the focal points. Black women were the reason that the Black Church became as renowned as it was. Black women were responsible for how the Black Church began to solidify into the Black community. The Black Church continued to grow as an intuition and this led them to have conventions like the Black baptist convention movement.

Higginbotham (1993) added that Black women made up,

"two-thirds of this movement, they had a crucial role in the formation of public sentiment and the expression of a Black collective will. Particularly through women's efforts, Black communities with very limited income raised funds sufficient to build and sustain churches, schools, and social welfare services."(p.7)

Again, we see how important Black women are to the progression of Black people, but this means nothing because Black men need to assert their dominance to be seen as powerful in a society that again does not care about them. Although the church may try to suppress them and deny them leadership, The Black Church can not deny the fact that it would not be as successful as it is without Black women. Black women's support and help with the development of the Black Church still didn't stop the Black church from questioning their role. Pauli Murray , a Black civil rights activist, is an example of a Black woman who had to deal with this oppression

in the Black Church. Black women were not allowed to be ordained in the Black church. Murray was fighting to be ordained into the church when (Jones, 2020),

“The episcopalian hierarchy was debating the future of women in the church, and Murray was not shy about calling for change. In a final year spent at Virginia Theological Seminary, where overall thinking was more compatible with hers, Murray confronted women’s ordination head on. The debate heated as women were ordained by progressive bishops and denied licensees by conservative others. In september 1976, the church-wide General Convention finally concluded that “no one shall be denied access” to ordination on the basis of sex.”(p.247)

The problem that this highlights is that after all that Black women had to to push the Black church forward, why was there any debate whether Black women should be able to be ordained? I ask this question because it highlights how oppressive the Black Church was to Black women. The same way Black people helped advance America is the same way Black women helped the Black Church and in both instances, both oppressed groups had to fight and claw for treatment that they undoubtedly deserved. The saddest part about the Black Church oppressing and trying to exclude Black women is that in this instance, the people excluding Black women were Black men.

Social Movements

Social movements that could help Black women usually ignore them. Black women are usually ignored by social movements like the feminist movement or antiracist movements because intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). Coles and Pasek (2020) explain that social movements like the feminist movement or the Black Lives Matters movement can ignore Black Women’s needs because,

“ Black women may be systematically harmed by single-axis feminist movements that fail to recognize Black women as women or for their unique concerns as Black women. Likewise, Black women may be harmed by single-axis antiracist movements that neglect the unique, intersectional experiences of race and gender discrimination that sometimes

distinguish Black women's experiences of racism from Black men's experiences of racism (Crenshaw, 1989). As such, both kinds of single-axis social movements fail to address Black women as Black women, whose experiences of discrimination are not equivalent to White women's or Black men's. In doing so, both movements fail to address Black women's unique concerns."(p.2)

Therefore it is easier to just exclude them from both social movements because Black women's concerns and issues are unique and hard to decipher. Not only does movements like the Feminist movement and anti-racist movement exclude Black women, they can also add to their oppression. Black women, a part of the Combahee River Collective, wanted to address this problem. The Combahee River Collective were Black feminist and they addressed this issue (Taylor, 2012),

"we have begun to publicly address is racism in the white women's movement. As Black feminist we are made constantly and painfully aware of how little effort white women have made to understand and combat their racism, which requires among other things that they have a more than superficial comprehension of race, color, and Black history and culture. Eliminating racism in the white women's movement is by definition work of white women to do, but we will continue to speak to and demand accountability on this issue" (p. 26-27)

Black women not only have to fight to be included in movements that speak on women's rights, but they also have to wonder if these movements aren't racist. It becomes a challenge for Black women to feel like they have a place where their concerns could be heard. Coles and Pasek(2013) believe that it is also challenging for Black women because, "Black women are at first victimized in raced and gendered ways by an apparatus of the state, then revictimized via neglect by the very movements that should aid them"(p.2) This highlights my stance that social movements can play a part of excluding Black women out of historical events in America due to social movements lack of sacrifice. If these social movements would sacrifice the time it takes to analyze Black women's unique concerns in America, they would see why it is important to include Black women into these social movements. A lot of progress for Black women could be

accomplished if groups that address problems Black women face did not exclude them or make it hard for them to feel accepted into these movements.

Covid-19 and Black women disparities in suffering :

This pandemic has made me more intrigued by the erasure of Black women's accomplishments and work that have pushed our society forward. I would like to focus on the work Black women do in the nursing field because currently they are essential to the health of this country. By examining Black women's journey to be accepted into the nursing field and showing how the discrimination through this journey did not deter Black women from continuously helping keep this society's health a priority, I will be able to clearly show my contention with the way Black women have still been treated. This will hopefully build an uproar that leads to change because it will show that even though they had to go through hoops to become nurses, they never turned their backs on this society when they were dearly needed. In doing this, a person would wonder after everything Black women have done to help people in America, how come they still seem to fight battles of oppression alone. The nursing field is crucial to the function of our society and it is where Black women make up 11% of the labor force(Zippa). This is another place where their work and value goes unnoticed. This is due to our society's tendency to ignore the work Black women do for the betterment of a society and it shows that this country does not appreciate them. To sum this up, I will praise Black women for their triumphs on this journey and their triumphs during the pandemic. To then question why, after all the positive things they are doing in this country, do they have to combat the horrific effects of the pandemic alone?

To begin, Black women as nurses is not a new trend. Black women have a long lasting history of nursing those in need in America. Marian Moser Jones, PhD, MPH, and Matilda Saines, BSc explain in their study that,

“Throughout US history, Black women have nursed the sick. Enslaved women cared for members of slaveholding families while nursing their own communities. Antislavery crusaders Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman nursed soldiers and civilians during the Civil War.” (2016)

An important thing that Marian Moser Jones, PhD, MPH, and Matilda Saines, BSc highlight is that the work of Black women as nurses goes as far back as slavery. In doing this, they help track the influence Black nurses have had on this country for a long period of time. By emphasizing that enslaved women cared for members of slave holding families while nursing their own communities, authors Marian Moser Jones, PhD, MPH, and Matilda Saines, BSc convey the importance Black women held in both communities they were in. Black women were not only present during this time, they were a part of pushing this country forward and they were also a part of keeping people safe.

Then by highlighting that there were AntiSlavery crusaders who were nurses during the Civil War the authors strengthen to my point that the work of Black women goes unnoticed because this is not information many are privy to. Marian Moser Jones, PhD, MPH, and Matilda Saines, BSc briefly addressed that one of the most historical antislavery crusaders, Harriet Tubman, was a nurse. The authors also mentioned Sojourner Truth, another historical antislavery crusader, but I want to bring your attention to the fact that Harriet Tubman was a nurse. This was fascinating because most people only know Harriet Tubman for her work with the Underground Railroad. Most people knowing the phenomenal Harriet Tubman for the Underground Railroad is not a bad thing because what she did was very significant, but that does not mean that people should not also know about the other significant work she did. Being one of the early nurses in

this country is very important because it adds to a timeline that explains how Black women were a part of protecting the health of others. When this gets overlooked, it does not shine any light on the work Black women have partaken in in the nursing field.

During the Civil War, Harriet Tubman had her hands very full. She was not only a nurse. She was also a spy, guide and she supported the soldiers and freed people during the war. She never received any recognition or accomodation for her years of service. (Sandra 2005) Tubman's work as a nurse and care taker did not stop after the war. She continued her work helping those in need. At the age of seventy-six, Tubman bought property near her Auburn home. The property she purchased included two houses and twenty five acres of land. The total of this purchase was 1,450. She acquired these homes and land because she wanted to help those in need. Harriet wanted to create a safe haven for "the young and the old, the sick and the healthy, and the blind and the sighted".(Sandra 2005) Harriets mission was to care for those who weren't able to take care of themselves. (Sandra 2005) I wanted to take time to highlight Tubman's work outside of what everyone knows about her already because it is important that people acknowledge that Tubman was a nurse, activist, caretaker and many other things. She deserves to be remembered for more than just the Underground Railroad. This also highlights an example of the work Black women have done in America as nurses and caretakers. There will be another example of Black women as nurses and caretakers address as this project continues.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the mistreatment Black women have had to endure in their journey of becoming nurses and wanting to be a part of the group of people in society who wanted to make the health of Americans important.. The history of Black nurses in America's history is full of hurdles that Black women had to get over and full of unacknowledgement. None of the hurdles or unacknowledgement stopped Black women from wanting to help Americans. In Marian Moser Jones, PhD, MPH, and Matilda Saines, BSc they address the challenges Black nurses had to go through to get the respect they deserved. Black nurses were put through a gauntlet of discrimination before they were able to finally allowed access in the nursing field. Black nurses in the 1910s faced plenty of obstacles. Some of these obstacles came from both white people and Black men. Black men and white people viewed Black women as nurses through a "triple index of inferiority" lens. (Jones and Saines 2019).

The triple index of inferiority lens that Black men and white people saw Black nurses through referred to Black nurses as being seen as second class to doctors because they are nurses, being less than men because they are women and them being inferior to white people because they are Black. (Jones and Saines 2019).

Be aware that this is yet another instance in history where Black men have played a role in setting Black women back. It is important to highlight because this is a pattern in history that Black men have a hand in the plight of Black women and add to the difficulties Black women have to fight against just to be acknowledged for the great things they do in America. In history, Black women have been the main people championing Black men. So seeing another time Black men are not uplifting Black women is disheartening but important to say the least.

I would compare Jones and Saines findings to Kimberle Crenshaw's idea of intersectionality. According to Crenshaw Black women are not only oppressed/ seen as inferior because of their gender but also because of their race. The triple index of inferiority that Jones and Saines speak about and intersectionality are very similar. Both ideas bring up an important point that Black women have many obstacles to navigate around in the world. Although triple index of inferiority refers to obstacles Black women will face in the nursing field, it is a microcosm for what Kimberle Crenshaw speaks about with intersectionality.

To address the Black men who believed saw Black women as second class nurses, I would like to express that people should be very aware that this is yet another instance in history where Black men have played a role in setting Black women back. If Black men saw the Black women as this, what would lead you to think white people wouldn't. It is important to highlight because this is a pattern in history that Black men have a hand in the plight of Black women and add to the difficulties Black women have to fight against just to be acknowledged for the great things they do in America. In history, Black women have been the main people championing

Black men. So seeing another time Black men are not uplifting Black women is disheartening but important to say the least. The issue I have with specifically the Black men during the 1910s is that I think it would have been more productive and helpful to Black nurses if they banded with them instead of acknowledging the challenges that Black nurses have ahead of them. This also goes back to events that I pointed out in the Black church and in social movements. Black men tend to be a part of the oppression of Black women. In the instance of Black women as nurses, Black men aren't vehemently going against Black women but they aren't being their allies either. As for the white people that saw Black nurses in the triple index of inferiority lens, it did not surprise me that they weren't standing with Black nurses in the 1910s.

Another barrier Black nurses came face to face with was the American Nurses Association(ANA). The ANA is an organization that is fighting to protect the lives of nurses, to make sure that nurses' in their work environments, and to address the issues that nurses are faced with. Although the ANA was created to be advocates, the ANA played a role in making the road harder for Black nurses. As of 1916, the ANA started to require membership in many states but associations in sixteen states and the District of Columbia excluded Black nurses from getting membership(Jones and Saines 2019). The ANA main objective during this time was to make more women interested in the nursing profession, yet while accepting white women into the fold, they excluded Black women (Gasman, Regla-Vargas, A., Sandoval, C., Samayoa, A. C., & Nguyen, T.-H. 2020). Bringing light to another challenge Black nurses had to deal with on their journey of becoming accredited nurses is a key part of my argument because none of these challenges altered Black women wanting to be nurses nor did it stop them from wanting to help this country when the country was in need.

It was extremely difficult for Black nurses to be seen as equal in the nursing profession and white nurses did not make it any easier for them to feel welcomed. White nurses tried every way to discredit Black nurses. In fact, many white nurses believed that Black nurses were not as intelligent as them and that Black nurses were irresponsible (Carnegie, 2000; Hine, 1989). Since white nurses believed these things to be true, they came to the conclusion that Black nurses were only hired to provide basic care (Robinson 2013). White nurses did not think Black nurses were capable for managerial roles (Robinson 2013). There were tons of white nurses who did not believe that Black nurses had the same schooling as them and that Black nurses lacked the necessary skills to be executives. Consequently, white nurses did not think Black that had the ability to put up with the pressures of organizing a hospital environment (Robinson 2013). To summarize, white nurses did not have any faith in Black nurses. They saw Black nurses as inferior to them. It would be naive of me to believe that white nurses believed these things based on rational evidence. These opinions white nurses had were influenced by race. It was a shame that Black nurses wanted to give back and take care of those in need and had to fight for a fair chance. Although I feel like Black women deserved better treatment along their journey, this journey evidently illustrates how courageous Black women are. Also it depicts that even with the numerous times people tried to deny them, they were not going to stop fighting for what they wanted.

Black nurses did not allow these obstacles to stop them from attaining their rightful spots in the nursing profession. After being excluded from the ANA, Black women created their own association that would look out for them. This association was the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses. The association was very inclusive, accepting Licensed Practical Nurses, Licensed Vocational Nurses and Registered Nurses. The National Association of Colored

Graduate Nurses was different from the ANA in that they accepted other nurses and not only RNs and graduate nurses (Gasman, Regla-Vargas, A., Sandoval, C., Samayoa, A. C., & Nguyen, T.-H. 2020). Black nurses had it rough fighting for a spot in the nursing profession, but there were more organizations coming to bat for them. Historical Black Colleges and Universities(HBCU) were one of many who stood next to Black women who wanted to get their foot in the door as nurses. It is said that, HBCUs worked hard to create ways to open doors for those interested in nursing. HBCUs found ways to create opportunities for nursing students(Brathwaite, 1999); (Brown, 2014); (Brown, 2008); (Brown & Marshall, 2008); (McNeal, 2003); (McQueen & Zimmerman, 2004); (Merrill et al., 2006); (Singleton & Rami, 2002); (Talley, Talley, & Collins-McNeil, 2016). Additionally, there were HBCU nursing schools that were created merely to accepting Black people who always had the desires to become nurses but little to no other academic options because the discrimination they had to endure at other national institutions (Gasman, Regla-Vargas, A., Sandoval, C., Samayoa, A. C., & Nguyen, T.-H. 2020). Florida A&M University, Tuskegee University, Hampton University, Howard University, and Dillard University were some of the first HBCU that adopted nursing education divisions(Gasman, Regla-Vargas, A., Sandoval, C., Samayoa, A. C., & Nguyen, T.-H. 2020). With the help of HBCUs, many Black nurses got the opportunity to be baccalaureate prepared and have the same credentials as white nurses. It is great to see that Black women did occasionally have people that backed them and fought for them to succeed. The work that HBCUs did is something our society should emulate. Helping Black women succeed is very crucial because they tend to fight alone. Unfortunately being baccalaureate prepared, did not stop the constant racism Black nurses were faced with. White nurses would still believe that Black nurses did not belong where they worked so hard to get. As I said previously the problems that

Black nurses were faced with in the nursing profession, were just microcosms for the oppression and discrimination they were faced with in society in general.

Before we address how history is repeating itself with the mistreatment of Black women continuing during the pandemic. I would like to acknowledge one of the many Black nurses in history who fought adversity and made an imprint on the nursing profession. There are many Black nurses that I have taken the time to research like Mary Seacole, Harriet Tubman, Mary Eliza, Mabel Keaton Staupers and Adah Belle Thoms. I would like to focus on Adah Belle Thoms. She is a pioneer in the nursing profession. She was one of the first Black women to create a way for Black nurses to gain respect in the nursing profession. As I stated previously, Black nurses had extreme circumstances to push through in order to gain space in the nursing field. So by highlighting her, I hope it will shed light on the work that she has done that may have gone unnoticed. By highlighting her individual journey, you will see that she is a woman that needs to be talked about more and potentially her story can impact people who have never heard about her and show a journey of triumph, but not an anomaly for Black women striving to help a country that doesn't want to accept them.

Adah Belle Samuel Thoms is most known in the nursing world for her advocacy and the work she did to fight against injustice towards Black nurses. Thoms was born in Richmond, Virginia on January 12, 1870(Davis 1999). There is little recorded about her childhood and her family life. Although it is known that she had one sibling, she grew up with her parents (Harry and Melvina Sameuls)(Davis 1999). During the time of her childhood, Richmond, Virginia was very segregated. The school system and churches were no exception to segregation in Richmond during this time (Davis 1999). Richmond was not a place that treated Black people well. Black people were degraded and discriminated against. During the 1870s, Black people were victims of

many injustices including wrongful arrest, police brutality and exploitation (Davis 1999). The extent of the disrespect and mistreatment of Black people in Richmond was egregious. Even in death Black people were disrespected. It was stated that Black bodies were stolen from cemeteries and vandalized (Davis 1999). This was the environment that Thoms grew up in and this environment will be the motivation that will influence Thoms passion for advocacy.

When Thoms was younger, she had initially had aspirations of being a teacher (Davis 1999). Her aspirations of being a teacher surprised me, but it showed me that she has always wanted to help people in some fashion. She attended Richmond Normal which was known for being the only “Black” school that would prepare Black teachers in a two-year program (Davis 1999). Richmond Normal did a lot to help Black aspiring teachers and had a mission to educate the new generation of Black people. After completing her time at Richmond Normal, Thoms taught for a while before changing professions (Davis 1999). Later on in Thoms’s life, she dove into the nursing profession. Her reasoning for the switch from teaching to nursing was not ever recorded. Yet, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was stated that many women were moving away from being teachers because it was becoming oversaturated (Davis 1999).

In 1893, Thoms moved to New York where she would begin studying education and public speaking at the Cooper Union (Davis 1999). Thoms then moved on from the Cooper Union and entered the Woman’s Infirmary and School of Therapeutic Massage. At the Woman’s Infirmary and School of Therapeutic Massage, she took a course in nursing where she was the only Black person out of 30 students taking the course (Davis 1999). This did not discourage her one bit, but this shines light on the fact that during the time Black nurses were rare. Black nurses were not as welcomed into the nursing profession as white women, but there were women like

Thoms who were too determined to be deterred. She graduated from the Woman's Infirmary and School of Therapeutic Massage in 1900 and began to work as a nurse in New York and North Carolina for three years. Thoms passion for nursing was unmatched and she worked extremely hard to be the best nurse she could be. Unpleased with the education she learned from Woman's Infirmary and School of Therapeutic Massage, she was destined to find more ways to deepen her training as a nurse. Thoms work ethic was laudable and always looked for ways to improve. Thoms did not want to just take a course in nursing; she wanted to be put in a full time nursing program. She ended up getting the nursing education she wanted at Lincoln Training School for Black Nurses where she was known for being the first graduate in 1905(Kean 2022). Thoms was so impressive that a year after graduating she was made the acting director of Lincoln Training School for Black Nurses (Mcdaniel 2019). This was a huge accomplishment, not only for Thoms, but for Black women all over who wanted to become nurses.

Mabel Staupers, another pioneer for Black nurses, gave her thoughts of Thoms getting this position:

“..seldom was a qualified negro nurse appointed to a high level position. Mrs. Thoms's experience was an example of this type of discrimination. Even though the School of Nursing at Lincoln Hospital was set up as an institution for negro students, although qualifies, Adah Thom was never appointed as a director. She serves in capacity as director, but was given the title of acting director.”(Staupers 1961)

Staupers's analysis of Thoms getting the acting director position summarized the way Black nurses were treated. Staupers's analysis of Thoms is why it is important to tell this story because it shows that Black nurses had a bumpy road to get across just to help those in need. Black nurses had to work hard to get their foot in the door. Once they get their foot in the door and are qualified to lead, they still do not get the respect they deserve. Thoms was more than qualified and adequate to be in a leading role but instead she was the “acting director”. It was

stated that as acting director she did everything an actual director did, but during the time it was not a tradition to put Black women into major administrative positions(Davis 1999). Some of the things Thoms did as “acting director” were incredible. She maintained this position for eighteen years before a director was selected for the position, but this did not stop her work pushing Black nurses forward. Thoms was a pioneer in the nursing profession for Black women. Without her showing other Black women that they could overcome the discrimination against them, many would not have thought it was possible.

Another major way Thoms impacted the lives of Black nurses was with her involvement in the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses(NACGN). The NACGN was an organization that wanted to get Black nurses integrated into the nursing world without having to be discriminated against. The NACGN was an organization that tried to lead the movement of change that would allow Black nurses to get the same access white women who wanted to be nurses got. As for Thoms’s involvement with the NACGN, Thoms played a key role in making the NACGN as big as it was. Thoms initially invited the nurses who were interested in gathering together to create change to a meeting that led to the creation of the NACGN (Davis 1999). Thoms was later made the treasure of the NACGN and worked very closely with the founder and first president of the NACGN, Martha Franklin (Davis 1999). She eventually became the president of the NACGN and once she became president, she did historical things. She was the president for seven years and did a lot in those seven years. During her time as president, Thoms put in place many policies that were the foundation for the NACGN and exemplified NACGN’s mission. Thoms started to work with different organizations (the National Urban League and the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People) to improve the shape of Black hospitals and the schools for Black nurses (Davis 1999). Thoms wanted to make real change and

did not allow Black nurses to be mistreated or go through things other nurses did not have to. Thoms saw and experienced that some Black hospitals were not in good shape. Black nurses had to navigate through working in inadequate conditions (Davis 1999). Changing the spaces Black nurses had to work in was a priority for Thoms during her presidency. She was not content with the things Black nurses had to endure and as president of the NACGN she wanted to make the life of a Black nurse easier. The NACGN was an organization that wanted to improve the lives of all Black nurses so Thoms was interested in expanding and wanted to Black nurses to unite together. She would have conventions where Black nurses would gather together and discuss their concerns and establish their sisterhood. Thoms was all about bringing Black nurses and women together.

Being the president was not at all easy, but Thoms was adamant in her role and fought for Black nurses. For instance, there was a time when Congress declared war with Germany and Thoms encouraged Black nurses to join the Red Cross to help but there had been a long history of Black nurses being denied the opportunity to enroll (Davis 1999). The NACGN and Thoms knew that the rejection of Black nurses was due to their race. It was stated that in 1911 there was a meeting with the National Committee on Red Cross Nursing Service where they had a discussion about Black nurses (Davis 1999). In the meeting, they argued that it was going to be hard to organize separate quarters for the Black nurse and this led them to come to an agreement that Black nurses should not enroll into the Red Cross. Thoms disagreed with the rejection of Black nurses into the Red Cross and felt that joining the Red Cross would be a chance for Black nurses to show that they are competent. Black nurses understood their position in society and understood that they would never be allowed to be on the same level as white nurses so they felt that if they were involved in the Red Cross this would be their chance to prove that they could

work with white Americans during the war (Davis 1999). Black nurses continued to be rejected, but this did not stop Thoms's effort to fight for Black nurses. Thoms knew that Black nurses could help as much as the white nurses did. Instead of paying attention to the fact that Black nurses were not allowed to join the Red Cross, she decided to gather the Black nurses together in a plan to find another way that they could help during the War. In 1917, Thoms spoke at a NACGN convention where she highlighted that although White nurses were allowed the privilege to serve their country in the war and Black nurses were not, Black nurses could work for the war at home (Davis 1999). Thoms and all Black nurses vividly saw the difference in treatment of nurses who were Black versus nurses who were white. When speaking to the Black nurses at the convention, Thoms said, "It is a fact that we cannot at this time serve at the front with our more fortunate sisters by profession. Perhaps there remains for us a greater work at home" (Of Interest to Nurses 1917, pp 209). The more fortunate sisters by profession that Thoms refers to are the white nurses who were allowed to serve. It had to take Thoms self control to know that Black nurses were not being treated right and continue to find a way to not allow it to bring her or other Black nurses down. The importance of what Thoms did during this time is that Thoms's actions show how Black women will do anything to give back and help people.

Over and over again, Black nurses are being told that they are not worthy and over and over they found a way to show their power. Thoms moved forward and began the Blue Cross Circle of Nurse. The Blue Cross Circle of Nurses worked with the Circle of Negro Relief and got paid to work at home. The Blue Cross Circle of Nurses worked in local communities teaching proper nutrition, sanitation, the proper way to dress and make home visits (Davis 1999). Thoms overcame the discrimination and made another way for Black nurses. Thoms again tried to unite with the Red Cross by trying to combine the Blue Cross Circle of Nurses with the Red

Cross, but was denied(Davis 1999). Black nurses had to be extremely determined during this time because the way they were denied left and right had to be discouraging. The Blue Cross Circle of Nurses later ended due to lack of funding, but this would not be the end of Black nurses helping during a time of need.

As for the denial of Black nurses into the Red Cross, this would change when the winter of 1917-1918 hit. There was a huge epidemic and there started to be a shortage of nurses. It took until many nurses became the patients for Congress and the surgeon general to start allowing Black nurses to help(Davis 1999). This highlights the stupidity of the society at the time. Instead of allowing Black qualified nurses to help, they let people get sick and allowed nurses to get sick as well. Then they figured let's finally accept Black nurses in and Black nurses did nothing short of greatness. Black nurses, most notably the First 18, were changing the ways Black nurses were seen after their help during the Flu Epidemic. The First 18 were the first Black nurses sent to army camps to help care for sick soldiers. The work of the First 18 did not go without praise. They were looked at highly, some stated that they responded to the country's call for help when they were needed and serviced many while still being faced with discrimination(Jones and Saines 2019). For the time period the First 18 were seen as groundbreaking, but Thoms was not fully amused because she knew that there were still a large number of Black nurses who were still being denied the opportunity to help(Jones and Saines 2019). Thoms views on the First 18 is important because it showed that she wasn't satisfied by a few Black nurses being accepted. She knew that there were still many qualified Black nurses that deserved those opportunities to help this country. Thoms never stopped fighting for Black nurses. Thoms's story of fighting for the respect of Black nurses is a story that should be mentioned more. Thoms's story reveals a story of a journey full of hurdles which is common to most Black nurses. Thoms and other Black

nurses had to fight for every piece of respect and every opportunity to show that they were valuable for the advancement of public health. Although Thoms's story doesn't get spoken about a lot, her story portrays how it did not matter how much the country benefited from Black nurses, they will do anything to keep them suppressed and try to not acknowledge them. Furthermore, just as Thoms was not satisfied by some Black nurses being accepted into the fold, I am not satisfied by how Black nurses are seen in our society today. Black nurses are essential to public health, but they are still going through hardships as Black women. With all the work Black women have done in this country as advocates for equality and as nurses fighting for the betterment of public health, it is bizarre that this country does not support them more. .

Years later we can still see the presence of negligence towards Black women as nurses and women in general. I am using the treatment of Black nurses as a small piece of a bigger picture. The mistreatment of Black nurses is a part of the layers of the mistreatment Black women in America are faced with. By showing that Black nurses are important to this country in times of need like the Covid pandemic and the Flu Epidemic, I am able to show their importance to society and also question why they don't get help with their problems in society. My answer to this question is that they don't get the help they need because Black women just like Black nurses are not acknowledged enough for the things they do. If they were praised and if people saw how

much Black women help others, our society would recognize their value and help them because without them our society would not advance.

Some of the problems that Black women are faced with were exacerbated in the pandemic. Firstly, Black nurses were vital during the pandemic as essential workers just like they were in the 1917- 1918 Epidemic, but during the pandemic they still felt that they were being discriminated against.. According to Alysha S. Hart, there was a high rate of them that were hit hard during this pandemic and there was a disproportionate amount of Blacks nurses that died while being used as nurses. This led to an uproar from Black nurses who wanted their voices to be heard in order to push that Black Nurse Matter (Hart 2021). Their mission was to educate people about the racist past and present of the healthcare system, to hold their peers accountable by talking about the prejudice in the nursing practice, and to create more opportunities for Black nurses to reach their potential(Hart 2021). Black nurses were not only helping during the pandemic, but since they were feeling discriminated against they began to organize to fight for what was right. This is a feat that seems heavy to bare being that while they are dying to help people stay safe during a pandemic, they are also fighting to combat discrimination. This is a situation where the society should be backing them because they are helping the society so it is fair o think they would not have to fight a fight of discrimination alone.

Secondly, during the pandemic Black women were losing jobs at a high rate. This is another problem that Black women had to endure with little to no help. Despite the fact that Black women helped this country in many ways, during the pandemic, Black women saw a disproportionate amount of job losses. Authors, Michelle Holder, Janelle Jones and Thomas Masterson addressed this problem by analyzing the portion of Black women who lost their jobs from February to April 2020. The authors showed how the pandemic was negatively affecting

Black women in the labor force. Specifically in healthcare and social services, an industry that employed 10 million Black women into the US labor force, there was a 17.4 percent decrease in jobs from February to April (Holder, Jones, and Masterson 2021). This meant that 122,000 Black women who were childcare workers lost their jobs and there was also a large number of Black women who were home health aides that lost their jobs as well (Holder, Jones, and Masterson 2021). Healthcare and social service jobs are jobs that help the American society run efficiently because these jobs are responsible for the health of American citizens. So there should be even more incentive for the American society to fight for Black women to get their jobs back because the work they are doing in these industries help the function of America and keep American citizens alive and on their pursuit to happiness. To add on, there was a decline in Black women's employment hotels and restaurants (Holder, Jones, and Masterson 2021). 121,000 Black women who were cashiers lost their jobs and 137,000 Black women who were waitresses lost their job (Holder, Jones, and Masterson 2021). All in all, Black women were in need of help during the pandemic and there was not enough aid being given to them during the pandemic when they needed help. This is shocking being that the jobs that Black women were jobs helping the American society. There should have been a sense of urgency to help Black women who were losing their jobs because there are many instances when Black women rise to the occasion to help the country function well.

Black women were not only losing their jobs during the pandemic but their health and wellbeing was also highly affected during the pandemic. To begin, Black women prior to the pandemic were already experiencing higher rates of "preterm birth and maternal morbidity and mortality than White women." (Gur, R. E., White, L. K., Waller, R., Barzilay, R., Moore, T. M., Kornfield, S., Njoroge, W. F. ., Duncan, A. F., Chaiyachati, B. H., Parish-Morris, J., Maayan, L.,

Himes, M. M., Laney, N., Simonette, K., Riis, V., & Elovitz, M. A.) Prior to the pandemic, Black women were struggling and experiencing devastating losses and there weren't many coming to bat for them. The healthcare system had abandoned Black women and left them to fend for themselves before the pandemic. Black women needed research specifically catered to the complications they go through while trying to have babies and the pandemic added to the struggles that Black women were going through trying to have children. Even while seeing that Black women need help and are negatively impacted by the healthcare, the health system continues to disproportionately impact Black women with the policies changing and the constant discrimination they have to endure from the health system (Lemke, M. K., & Brown, K. K, 2020). With these experiences that Black women are faced with, it makes it harder for them to trust the healthcare system. As the pandemic started, the struggles that Black women have gone through with the healthcare system worsened. Since Black women were losing jobs at a high rate, they began to lose their healthcare insurance (Lemke, M. K., & Brown, K. K, 2020). During a time where health insurance would be needed the most Black women were losing theirs. As stated in this paper, Black women have always helped America and those in need when they were struggling. The pandemic has become a time where Black women were among the people struggling the most and not only did they lose their jobs, they also lost security in the healthcare system. This insecurity and lack of help from the healthcare system during the pandemic has added to the struggle Black women are faced with because the healthcare system. They were led astray and this is the issue I want to pay attention to the most. How can a group of people so influential and selfless be left to fend for themselves by the same country they have tried to help advance?

Black Women Deserve More :

All in all, I chose to speak on this topic because I am tired of Black women getting the short end of the stick from a country they always try to help. This paper opened my eyes to the wonderful things Black women do for this country and the horrible things this country gives them in return. The events that are spoken about in this paper aren't even half of the stories that show what Black women have had to endure in this country and yet Black women still come to the service of this country. What bothered me while doing the research on Black nurses is why did Black nurses want to help a country that did not care about them? It saddened me reading that Black nurses again and again had to beg for acceptance in a profession that later in life needs them. This fact is why I can't allow myself to see white women as oppressed people. A true oppressed group does not want to see oppression done to other groups. Black women in general exemplify this. No matter what they fight for those in need. During a time when America turned their backs on Black nurses they still did everything possible to help out in some way. If that doesn't speak on how wonderful Black women are I do not know what will because they continuously give back to a country that doesn't put any effort into caring about them. Another instance that shows Black women's wonderfulness is how although Black men do not blindly fight for what Black women need, Black women blindly protest and fight for whatever Black women need. Black men say that they feel like they are discriminated against by the police and Black women are the first to stand up and rally for them. Yet when Breonna Taylor was wrongly killed by the police the uproar and protest were not led by men. Nor did Black men continue to fight for Breonna Taylor's justice the same way Black women fought for the justice of George Floyd. Black men should be ashamed of themselves to ever publicly disagree with the plight of Black women because Black women are Black men's biggest ally, when in history Black men

tend to be some of Black women's biggest oppressors. I know I began this by speaking on why Black nurses would fight for a country that does not care about them but this is deeper than that. Black women tend to fight for groups of people who don't do the same for them and this is the reason I write this paper. I don't care about an A. I want to in any way possible bring light to the fact that Black women need our collective help to be pushed into the dead center of our society. They are the ones who need our complete focus because when time comes and we need them to focus on us or help us they do it time and time again.

This is why this paper was written to not only try to help shine light on Black women's greatness, but to also think sociologically about the ways their treatment in America has continued to oppress them. With the use of Kimberle Crenshaw's theory, I have concluded that Black women's plight in America is a layered type of oppression due to their race, gender, and class. These layers of oppression continuously add to the suppression of their voices. That is why Patricia Hill Collins's theory of Black Feminist Thought is so important because Collins suggest putting Black women into the center of change so that they can be heard for once and they can also help silenced marginalized groups as well. By speaking on Adah Belle Thoms journey, I pulled from Dorothy Smith theory on A Woman's Standpoint. Dorothy expressed that having women's experiences told in sociology could push sociology forward because it shows a more inclusive look on the world around people. By talking about Adah Belle Thoms's journey, it sheds light on similar experiences that all Black women are faced with when trying to help this country. Thoms's story exemplifies Dorothy Smith's theory of A Woman Standpoint. Then, I begin to speak on the Black women's vital role in social movements and how they pushed the Black agenda forward just as much as the Black men. Their roles were important to speak about because it led me to question why were Black women also excluded from certain movements in

American history if they were so influential in other social movements. The answer I found was that Black women were valued as high as they should have been with all they have done. Black women were still seen as less than because of their gender, race and class (intersectionality).

This analysis on the exclusion Black women were faced with would be followed by me explaining how Covid 19 has exacerbated the mistreatment of Black women and has hit them the hardest. The suffering Black women went through during Covid made it even more clear that Black women deserve more recognition for all they have done in this country and how this country needs to help them more.

This is where I point to sacrifice. White women, LGBTQ, and Black men especially need to sacrifice their wants for the better good of Black women. I am generalizing when I say this but also saying my honest opinion, when you see a group of any kind of oppressed people you will find a Black woman there ready to fight for battles that will not directly benefit them. Does this not show the sacrifice they use in order for others to be treated well. This is the same sacrifice we need to behave with. Black women should, whenever they want, be the focal point of discussion. It is not hard to dim your light for the betterment of others and I have seen Black women do it over and over so I vow to do it too because this will spread how important they are to our society and advocate for them to be given better treatment.

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