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**Bodies That Work:  
African American Women's Corporeal Activism  
in Progressive America**

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This dissertation spotlights African American women's corporeal activism, beginning in the United States' Progressive Era (ca. the 1890s–1920s) and beyond with the reconceptualization of the black female body through foreign, or transatlantic, values. They became visible and viable as labors, consumers, tax-payers, and even business owners for the first time in American history. Black women thus incorporated themselves materially into a body politic, a medieval metaphor of a nation as a human body, from which they had been excluded for two and a half centuries. America as a human body is a significant concept considering the centuries-old history of African American women, the non-white female body, which had been made invisible through Western politics, and thus deemed nonexistent as a participant in the nation's body politic. Each chapter of this study examines a different part of the female body—hair, womb, vocal cords, and torso—all of which were denigrated and exploited until the end of slavery and which continued to be devalued by white patriarchy in decades to follow. The redefined female body during the Progressive Era altered the meaning of life, modifying stereotypes of black womanhood and granting black women social and economic agency, a corporeal revision that undergirds and promotes continued reconstruction of the African American female body in the twenty-first century.

## Introduction

The year 1895 marks one beginning of the black body's importance in the American body politic. In 1895, Booker T. Washington, an African American leader and educator who succeeded Fredrick Douglass as a prominent orator in the nation, delivered a well-known speech entitled the Atlanta Compromise. Scholars usually focus on Washington's accommodationist approach to black identity, but this dissertation underscores his bodily rhetoric—a rhetoric that resonates with John Winthrop's metaphor of colonial America as a Christian body. Winthrop was a white English lawyer, a leader in the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the seventeenth century. Although they differed in time, place, race, and profession, both Washington and Winthrop used the term *body politic*, a medieval, political metaphor of a state, society, or church as a biological, usually human, body, comparing America to the material human body that needs coordination and collaboration. Washington likened the different races to fingers and the nation as whole to a hand, while Winthrop spoke of the nation as an entire human body commanded by Christian love. Washington's speech thus demanded their share of the nation's wealth and power.

This dissertation focuses on African American women's demand for their share during the Progressive Era, the era when they began to incorporate themselves into the larger American body as its members. They endeavored to intervene in sexually and racially prejudiced systems of thought with their professional enterprise, daring to enter vocations other than traditional physical labor such as domestic servants and laundry workers and breaking through barriers of race and gender with unconventional ways of using their bodies. Work requiring intelligence, ingenuity, and expertise destabilized a social hierarchy that typically kept black women at the bottom.

African American women laborers began to use their bodies in a new way. They were bodies that *worked*, meaning laboring, functioning, and achieving in collective empowerment—black female bodies that helped overcome racial, ethnic, class, and gender divides and negotiate with the ideas and values of political, financial, and intellectual leadership, thereby dispelling ingrained stereotypes of womanhood associated with slavery. For these reasons, this study recognizes the female body as the key to changing black identity and experience during the Progressive Era and beyond.

This dissertation focuses on four socially inspired women who used their physical bodies in their professions: Sarah Breedlove, widely known as Madam C. J. Walker (1867–1919), the first African American millionaire and entrepreneur within the hair care industry; Emma Azalia Hackley (1867–1922), an opera singer and vocal teacher who trained in Paris and London; Meta Warrick Fuller (1877–1968), one of the earliest American female sculptors of any race; and Josephine Baker (1906–1975), an American-born international dancer, singer, and performer who relocated to France. They entered professions atypical for African American women. Confronting firmly established racial and gender prejudice through their work, they pioneered black women’s body-oriented activism and created new cultural values that inspired women of color to redefine the nation’s concept of black womanhood.

This dissertation seeks to reshape the traditional definition of Progressive black womanhood and contributes to both feminism and body studies, a new interdisciplinary field of increasing interest among current social scientists, historians, philosophers, and anthropologists, a field pursuing the relationship between power and the human, often female, body.

## **Chapter 1: The Grassroots Network of Black Women: Madam C. J. Walker's Hair Care Empire**

Chapter 1 of the dissertation centers on the transformative work of Sarah Breedlove, better known as Madam C. J. Walker, in the black women's hair industry. Walker disseminated a formula of success, herein termed *the grammar of African American beauty culture*, through her two As of hair care: "advertisement" and "(sales) agents." *Grammar* in this dissertation refers to ideas, customs, rules of conduct, and socio-political beliefs that link daily, perhaps trivial, concerns about one's physical appearance with collective awareness, thereby directing one's self-esteem into social, economic, and political agency. The grammar granted women social mobility, keeping them connected and inspired.

For African Americans, hair has cultural and even sociopolitical associations. Hair was stigmatized during the era of American slavery, and in the Progressive Era, wrapped hair carried echoes of slavery, as was the case with Aunt Jemima, the famous pancake-mix character. Her headscarf was considered by many a sign of poverty and subordination. Walker's hair care system allowed black women to uncover their hair by providing an effective method to address problems such as baldness or scalp disease. Walker capitalized on the African legacy of hair care and legitimized her business as an inheritance from her African ancestors. For progressive African Americans, well-groomed hair was thought to be an indicator of their willingness to overcome racial tensions in a society with more and more importance placed on appearance. Instead of mimicking white fads, however, Walker first emphasized the growth of hair and then sought styles and care appropriate for ethnic hair, thereby enhancing women's physical and mental health and giving them a sense of self-worth to overcome daily difficulties in a racially and sexually segregated society.

As mentioned, Walker took advantage of advertising and agents, the text and the practice of her grammar, as two measures of disseminating her revolutionary enterprise. Advertising enlightened and inspired African American women to escape degradation and poverty by providing images of hope and success. One of Madam C. J. Walker Manufacturing Company's early advertisements shows a sun-like logo in the Atlantic with well-dressed black men and women reaching out for it. This advertisement reveals Walker's transatlantic, and racially tolerant, vision in her business goals.

In addition to advertisements, Walker's contracted agents helped Walker disseminate her hair care grammar. They put Walker's business visions into practice. A network of more than 20,000 agents was sustained by several traveling company representatives. Like Walker, they not only recruited new agents through personal contact and public demonstration of hair care skills but also listened to agents' demands and complaints about the company and regularly reported them to headquarters. Walker herself functioned as a means of publicity, providing a role model of social mobility from rags to riches. Agents were also attracted by Walker's business philosophies, such as humanitarianism, individualism, and egalitarianism. Walker encouraged her agents to work for the good of humanity, pursue autonomy as a business owner, and battle the inequality and injustice that still tormented their race. One of Walker's agents boasted of her many achievements, such as buying a home, sending children to school, and improving the quality of life. Through the lucrative business, Walker's agents gained strength against social injustice and racial violence. In a national convention, for instance, Walker's agents sent a telegram to U.S. president Woodrow Wilson stating, "We, the representatives of the National Convention of The Madam C. J. Walker Agents, respectfully urge that you as President of the United States use your great influence, that Congress enact the necessary laws to prevent a recurrence of such

disgraceful affairs [as the East St. Louis Race Riot].” Because of Walker’s philosophy, the agents identified their hair care business with national politics. Walker herself made bold political moves in her later years, which made her one of the “dangerous elements” by the U.S. intelligence service.

As one of earliest female African American entrepreneurs who worked for the revision of black womanhood through hair care, Walker held more practical visions and methods than other cultural and political leaders on how African American women could elevate themselves to a higher plane. Walker’s willingness and her agents’ willingness to be involved in the nation’s politics changed African American women’s public image and altered their aspirations for professional, social, and political success. With her grammar of hair care, she revived and revised African hair culture and provided a better future for black identity and experience by enhancing the black women’s mind-body interaction.

## **Chapter 2: Vocal Cords against Black Codes: Socio-Musical Activism of Emma Azalia Hackley**

Chapter 2 focuses on Emma Azalia Hackley’s musical mobilization through her vocal cords. Hackley is known to modern scholars as the author of a book on manners for young girls, *The Colored Girls Beautiful*, published in 1915. However, this dissertation argues that she was a social reformer, using her vocal cords to advance African American causes. Well-known among her contemporaries as the “vocal teacher of ten thousand,” Hackley traveled throughout the country, taught ordinary people how to sing, and prepared them for the stage at community concerts. Her musical mobilization ultimately battled against the Black Codes, the racist Jim Crow laws of the twentieth century.

Hackley used spirituals, the invention of African slaves sung on American plantations, because they were their music, a genre exclusively of their own. During the era of American slavery, singing was a disguised form of speaking. Prohibited from speaking to each other in the fields, African slaves created a coded language which is part of what would later be called Ebonics, and improvised songs to vent their emotions by amalgamating their African tongues with their enslavers' European languages. They even communicated by singing with secret messages. Since the act of singing disarmed slave owners, slaves pretended to be unintelligent and obedient servants, but beneath the haunting melodies, slaves conceived of complex plans to outwit their owners. Singing was part of their survival for two and a half centuries.

Hackley retrieved the tradition of singing spirituals for social causes. In the early twentieth century, these songs that expressed slaves' joy, wisdom, hardship, and pain were gradually being lost because of former slaves' reluctance to sing melodies and lyrics associated with slavery. To promote spirituals on stage, Hackley first dispelled the stigma of the genre and then trained young voices to sing the folk songs in a sophisticated way, thus liberating people from the memories of slavery.

Hackley used spirituals to foster self-esteem, solidarity, and motivation for social advancement among African Americans in Progressive America. Hackley trusted the power of singing, and her musical activism served race politics in several ways. First, she suggested that well-performed musical presentations were evidence of African Americans' excellence. Because music is a discipline that requires multiple brain functions, such as perception, action, cognition, emotion, learning, and memory, she thought that black musical talent could refute the theory of racial hierarchy; therefore, she demanded mental acuity from young musicians. Her command of French, Italian, and German was proof of her own intelligence. She also promoted collective singing to

enhance solidarity, communal healing, and the emotional well-being of people. Music, she believed, could deliver people from drugs abuse and violent crimes. Moreover, she expected black musical talent to advertise or showcase the race. Apart from the backing of any organization, she established music scholarships to send young black musicians to Europe. Her intention was to serve their racial identity and progress: “This race of seven millions [sic] can be advertised for good through Mr. (Clarence Cameron) White’s success, as it could not be advertised in any other way.” White was one of the scholarship recipients she sent to Europe and became a distinguished violinist and composer in the mid-twentieth century. The music scholarships, her version of W. E. B Du Bois’s Talented Tenth, soon failed from lack of funding, but she inspired future African American musical geniuses, such as Marian Anderson and Roland Hayes, to pursue fame in decades to follow. What is more, Hackley’s musical community events soothed racial tensions. One newspaper article in 1918 reported the success of a pageant that Hackley organized in Atlanta, Georgia: “Spontaneous applause from the 3,000 who filled the left side of the auditorium and the fair-sized white audience that sat on the right was the tribute accorded. . . . The fair will long be remembered by both colored and white attendants.” Apolitical music thus served, at least in a communal level, for disarming hostility between races.

Hackley addressed race issues through music and challenged the Black Codes—laws designed to restrict the freedom of former slaves and their descendants and to maintain white supremacy. She opened African American’s once-silenced vocal cords to reverberate the sound of freedom in beautiful harmonies. Hackley’s musical mobilization was an effective way of protesting racism because, as occurred in slavery, singing is a seemingly apolitical action that makes lasting impressions and influences the minds of both singers and listeners. Her standards for cultivating and sharing black

vocal cords soon permeated the music world with jazz, gospel, blues, and R&B, distinctively black sounds from the black body.

### **Chapter 3: Mutilated Womb, Denied Motherhood: *Mary Turner* and Meta Warrick Fuller's Sculptural Protest**

Chapter three analyzes African American sculptor Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller and her redefinition of the black woman's womb in her sculpture, *In Memory of Mary Turner: A Silent Protest Against Mob Violence* (1919; hereafter *Mary Turner*). Fuller created the statue in 1919, stirred by the lynching of a nineteen-year-old African American woman named Mary Turner, whose fetus was murdered after being taken out of her mutilated womb. *Mary Turner* has been interpreted by art critics as symbolic of divine motherhood; however, this dissertation argues that it serves as an icon of doomed motherhood because the act reminds us of slavery where the mother and child were forced to have the same status and destiny.

Fuller's *Mary Turner* embodies her resistance to a racial atmosphere that allowed people to mutilate black women's reproductive organs. Granting Turner's wish to be a mother, Fuller associated the brutality with the white patriarchal monopoly on black women's reproductive organs—the very organ slave traders and owners exploited for more than two and a half centuries. The medieval slave law, *partus sequitur ventrem*, which decrees that the child of a slave mother is automatically a slave, turned slavery into the problem of the captive female body. Importantly, the white mob applied the rule to the lynching of Mary Turner; in the crime, they paired the fates of the mother and child, erasing fatherhood. Some slave mothers, such as Sojourner Truth, Harriet Jacobs, and Frederick Douglass's mother, resisted the patriarchal law by using an appropriate means. Fuller's *Mary Turner* is another icon of resilience motherhood,

materializing Turner's courageous protest against injustice not only for her husband but also but for her child.

In an age of extolling motherhood, the lynching of Mary Turner was symbolic of preferential glorification of motherhood depending on one's race. Although motherhood in the early twentieth century was considered a sacred mission and given federal protection, non-white mothers were excluded from such privileges. U.S. officials engaged in a heated debate over the high mortality rates of babies in America compared to those in European countries, and they lamented the deterioration of national economic and military strengths. In 1921, three years after the lynching of Mary Turner, the Sheppard-Towners Maternity and Infancy Act passed, but the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, which would have made participation in a lynch mob a federal crime, failed to pass the Senate. Eugenics also influenced the discriminatory protection of motherhood. Scholars and experts were accomplices in introducing this pseudoscience, which would survive another half-century in American legislation.

*Mary Turner* is a maternal protest against white people's intervention in black women's reproductive rights. It was also one of a series of Fuller's works based on motherhood. The sculptor and mother of three children devoted her time and energy to reconstructing the black body during the 1910s. Frustrated by racism, she wrote to her friend: "It is not impossible to preach a sermon in a block of granite or a cauldron of bronze, . . . [but] it remains with me to interpret it." *Mary Turner* vicariously speaks of African American mothers' rage against crimes on human flesh.

Fuller's artistic protest against lynching is seemingly contrastive to Ida B. Wells's anti-lynching campaign, which was more aggressive and confrontational than Fuller's. Wells and Fuller differed in their means of fighting but were both targets of criticism for their activism. While Wells verbally attacked a fabricated myth of the

black rapists causing the lynching, Fuller materially crystalized its consequence on a black female body. Fuller's creation was exceptional in terms of antilynching since female victims only accounted for two percent of all blacks lynched, which itself demonstrated the intrinsic taboo of lynching women. While choosing different approaches to the issue of racism, both Fuller and Wells demanded respect for black lives and legal justice in a civilized nation. Fuller suggested murdering a life within the womb could cause genocide, a disgrace to humanity.

Although the existence of the sculpture was well known to Fuller's friends and art students, she prevented the inflammatory work from being displayed in public places. It stayed in her studio for several decades until she dedicated *Mary Turner* to a local museum in her testamentary letter a few years before her death. Possibly, Fuller delayed exhibition of her statue for private and public reasons. Fuller learned symbolism from the French master, Auguste Rodin. This style of artistry relied on the sculptor's emotional interpretation, thus prolonging its creation as the artist explored his or her perceptions and feelings. Furthermore, a hostile racial atmosphere surrounded Fuller, the number of lynchings peaking in 1919 in what became known as the red summer. One newspaper article describes the racial atmosphere of the time: "She [Fuller] has a flair for symbolic sculpture, delicately conceived. With so many Negroes acquiring wealth among us, it might seem that such a sculptor would find [an] opportunity to do some big things for public places in the United States—if our W[hite]. K[night]. lynchers and Ku Kluxers would allow them to stand." A maternal body as a motif can be viewed as problematic even during peaceful times. Thus Fuller's statue may have been provocative for some apart from the racial tension.

*Mary Turner* is an anti-racist work that advocated for female autonomy over her own body. It also echoed Wells's and other African American women's anti-lynching

crusade and Margret Sanger's campaign for birth control and women's reproductive rights in Progressive America.

#### **Chapter 4: Performing Savagery and Civility: The Subversive Nudity of Josephine Baker**

Chapter four features the nude torso of Josephine Baker that transformed negative associations with the black female body and offered a counter-narrative to American racism. This dissertation focuses on Baker's nudity in the first decade she had spent in Paris (from the mid-1920s to mid-1930s) because it is the apex of her career and she identified herself to be the icon of the 1920s. The period of success and fame began on October 2, 1925, when she danced "entirely nude except for a pink flamingo feather between her limbs." Her nudity triggered her life-long metamorphoses of identities, incorporated her into the French elite, thus flying in the face of American racism.

Critics and scholars have suggested various interpretations of her nudity, such as "the embodiment of humanism," "the surface of Baker's [modern] art," or "the personification of unbridled sexuality." Instead, this dissertation argues that her nudity is her performance costume, an apolitical, transparent disguise, which freed her from American racism and political controversies because Baker took it as her normality as she later said to the press about her nudity: "I wasn't really naked. . . I simply didn't have any clothes on." In this quote, she sounds as if she felt natural and secured, wrapped by some invisible clothes and well prepared for showing her nude body without scruple.

Nudity has often been linked to the status of a slave since American slavery began by kidnapping and importing "naked African savages." Baker's self-chosen nudity is an antithesis to a slave's forced nudity. Importantly, she rewrote its meaning by reversing her fate. Her nineteen years in the United States were a microcosm of

American quasi-slavery. She shared much in common with a typical slave girl in antebellum America. First, she had an unknown father and fabricated stories of a white father, ranging from “a white boy (buckra) who went to school with Mama” to “a Spanish dancer,” “a Jewish tailor,” or “a Creole from New Orleans.” Moreover, because of dire poverty, at the age of eight, she was sent as “a maid-of-all-work” to live with white families, where she met with violence from a cruel “mistress” and sexual harassment from a licentious “master.” As slaves were thought to steal food from the kitchen of the “Big House,” Baker and her sisters scavenged for tidbits in white people’s garbage. Being a favorite grandchild, she gathered the family’s slave memories from her grandmother, a former slave. Finally, at age twelve, she witnessed the East St. Louis race riot, one of the bloodiest incidents in history. By the time she left America for France, she became familiar with the experiences of slaves brought from Africa, which she would soon represent on Parisian stages.

On the opposite side of the Atlantic, her invisible clothes representing slavery were replaced by a new French identity. Baker’s nudity gave her a voice and social power since nudity in France carried different connotations than in Puritanical America. While American Puritan ethics devalued and censored female nudity on stage, French people adored it as natural and primitive passion, in opposition to the over-civilization that led to World War I. She wore nudity like one of her stage costumes, decorating her body with ornaments. In the nude, she could be anything she desired, from a wild, primitive savage to an exotic, sophisticated feline. Her transformative nudity embodied what her audience wished her to be.

In the early twentieth century, France witnessed both colonial expansion outside and the rise of anti-colonialism inside. The politicians, scholars and religious leaders of the time believed that colonialism was their divine duty. However, in the period after

World War I, the traumatic pain of war and the fear of emerging fascism gave rise to anti-imperialist and anti-colonial sentiments among French people. The *Exposition Coloniale Internationale* (the 1931 International Colonial Exposition, ECI), at which Baker was nominated “Queen of the Colonies,” for example, met with severe criticism from the left. In collaboration with the communists, surrealists published “two tracts condemning the ECI,” which attacked “the hypocrisy of the exhibition” and denounced French imperialism on account of its massacres, cultural destruction, forced religious conversion, and labor exploitation.

In interwar France, her nudity capitalized on French colonialism. Baker was fully aware of her role on stage because she asked the same question whenever introduced to a playwright: “With all your African colonies, why are there so few Negro actors on the French stage?” It is her “covered” nudity that allowed her beyond boundaries hampering foreign performers in France. Her semi-nude performances juxtapose Africa and Europe and express both the positive and the negative sides of colonialism. Her exotic nude body is neutral, denying any definition, either pro-colonial or anti-colonial. It could signify both indigenous people’s acceptance and denial of French colonialism.

With her elusive nude body, Baker transcended the controversy over colonialism, manipulating her two opposite images, i.e., onstage primitiveness and semi-nudity, and offstage sophistication and civility. Her real life and stage were seamless, as she later said to a reporter, “My whole life has been my art and the theater and I really think the contact is necessary to stay fresh.” She consciously balanced two images in her life, savagery and civility, as in her words: “Since I personified the savage on the stage, I tried to be as civilized as possible in daily life.” In the nude, Baker could become anybody, from nobody to somebody. This manipulation of two extreme images allowed her to blur her attitude toward French politics, break through the racial barrier, and enter the French elite

society. Her elusive and contradictory character—wild and sophisticated, funny and beautiful, childish and mature—added mystery and charisma to Baker. Her nudity had subversive power since she soon entered into the French elite by marriage to a wealthy Frenchman.

While Americans had an aversion to black people as “a Menace to American Civilization,” French people welcomed Baker’s semi-nude wild performances. Her adopted country nurtured and adored Baker who had been a victim of racism for the first nineteen years of her life. Her move to France allowed her to redefine black female nudity. What is more, Baker destabilized American racial hierarchy through her nudity, which brought her more income than an average American white male. Her nude body dispelled American trauma about female nudity, emasculated American racism and French colonialism, and symbolized both establishment ideals and subversive power. Her nude dancing body thus laid the foundation for a newly defined, resilient black womanhood to emerge in decades to follow.

## **Conclusion**

The process of redefining the African American female body is not yet complete. In 2014, Beyoncé, African American singer and actress, appeared in skimpy clothes on the cover of *Time* magazine, provoking heated debate among African American feminists on whether she represented enslaved womanhood. In a panel discussion titled “Are You Still a Slave: Liberating the Black Female Body,” African American historian and feminist critic bell hooks publicly attacked the singer, calling her “a terrorist” because of her enormous influence over African American girls. She accused Beyoncé of her collaboration with white appropriators in disseminating a regressive and pernicious body image to young girls who might follow suit. Hooks

equates the exposed female body with submission. Retrieving, redefining, and loving one's body is significant, hooks says, because it changes the way one acts and views society. Clearly, African American women are still actively involved in eliminating negative associations with the black female body.

The women explored in this dissertation rejected silent acquiescence to the status quo ante and ventured into new fields from which they had previously been excluded because of their race and gender. They made a cultural contribution through their bodies in entrepreneurship, singing, sculpture, and the performing arts. They prevented their bodies from being gendered, racialized, and materialized by white Americans, and they earned their living, entered mainstream economics, as a member of the body politic. As a result of using their bodies in different ways from previous generations, they gained autonomy in the broader American society and became role models for fellow African American women. They were only a few of many professional women engaged in unconventional physical work, which includes small-business owners, skilled workers, performers, athletes, and so forth. They labored to reverse the common assumption that black women were unable to become economically and socially independent, respectable citizens, and tax-payers. Their agency was an upward spiral that was both intentional and unintentional, and in the process, they turned their bodies into entities whose race and gender diminished in importance so that they could freely enter the body politic.

Economic reasons were powerful motivators of these women's social, political, and transformative work. Financial stability altered women's appearance, deeds, demeanors, visions, and goals, helping them rise from lives of suppression and submission. Enduring capitalist and material trials, their work created value because neither labor nor money has color or gender, and only the quality and marketability of a

product, service, work, or performance—instead of the background of its producers, creators, or providers—determine its worth in a capitalist economy. These African American women succeeded because their bodily jobs were creative and parallel to white economic activities. They appealed to multiple races, symbolizing integration in their mobilization. Their efforts to knit their physical bodies into the body politic was disseminated by media and shared among women throughout the U.S. By transforming the body, or parts of it, into powerful imagery, the African American women in this dissertation, Walker, Hackley, Fuller, and Baker, turned love for the body into concrete action and change.

Extensive travel helped them bring about social and political change. With geographical moves, they absorbed liberal, or foreign, values. All women went across the U.S. borders, and three reached the opposite side of the Atlantic. They were particularly intrigued by France. After World War I, dozens of African American favored Paris, where they “shared a common feeling of liberation from the harsh limitations of life in the United States.” Not only black ex-soldiers, but also musicians, artists, scholars, writers, businesspeople, athletes, adventurers, and tourists became its residents. Paris captivated them because they felt evaluated according to talent, aspiration, and humanity alone.

The body has often been ignored in social and political discourse, even though it is the body that internalizes, reflects, and forms life itself. When each part of the female body is defined by heterosexual gazes and patriarchal frameworks, it is often assessed frivolously in the name of beauty, as parts of the body, like the face in beauty contests, the breasts of movie stars, and the torso of skinny supermodels. Greater focus on a body part can lead to new insight of African American women’s social activism because only women can question an uncomfortable definition of each part of the female body—

gendered, racialized, and classed body—and retrieve its ownership from the male domain. Women’s self-definition of their own body parts would lead to a sense of self-efficacy and prevent men from reducing women to a part of the body—each part consisting of an individual body, which comprises a larger body politic.