

**RESISTANCE EDUCATION:
AFRICAN/BLACK WOMEN
SHELTER WORKERS' PERSPECTIVES**

by

Roberta Krysten Lynn Timothy

**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Adult Education and Counselling Psychology
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto**

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Doctor of Philosophy, 2007

Roberta Krysten Lynn Timothy

**Department of Adult Education and Counselling Psychology
University of Toronto**

Abstract

The silencing and exclusion of differently located African/Black women shelter workers' voices and experiences in the woman abuse community in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, was the catalyst for this research. This dissertation examines the lived and worked experiences, and resistance of African/Black women shelter workers. It focuses on 18 differently located African/Black women who worked in shelters in Toronto between 1995 and 2005 during governmental cuts and organizational restructuring processes. This study re-centers and re-historicizes these often-missing stories of African/Black women, their indigenous feminist knowledges, and their activism.

The purpose of this study was to examine intersectional violence and resistance in woman abuse shelters. African/Black feminist, anti-colonial theorization and praxis are critical for resistance against intersectional forms of violence including racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, ableism, ageism, and other interlocking oppressions. "Resistance Education", a qualitative methodology developed and utilized in this study, provided an integrated, feminist/womanist, anti-colonial, anti-racist, analysis and praxis. The seven features of this methodological approach challenge traditional notions of Eurocentric "objective" research by re-centering the standpoint of African/Black women's voices, as well as the voices of other oppressed groups, in both research and education. This methodology, incorporating art-based

strategies of resistance and activism, formulates and utilizes a method called “Creative Resistance”.

Collective witnessing, consciousness raising/sharing, and collective action provided individual and collective locations, identities, and agency, which supported revolutionary social change and transnational feminist actions. The “Identity Trichotomy” discussed in this study reveals the complexities of essentialized derogatory sameness, heterogeneous identities, and collective resistance.

This research study contributes to feminist historical analysis of the larger violence against women communities as it provides the missing voices and stories of African/ Black women shelter workers. It also adds innovation to qualitative methodology by providing another approach to doing feminist, anti-colonial, anti-racist, art-based research and resistance. This dissertation in itself is an act of resistance and revolutionary agency.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all African/Black women and their allies who resist intersectional violence individually and collectively – historically (before), presently (now), and in the future (after). And to my first encounter with a transnational identified woman living in Resistance, whose love, intellect, and courage inspires me and transpires me each day to continue to act, grow, learn, change, feel, and most importantly resist; Joan Greene, affectionately known to me as – Mommy.

Chapter One:

Introduction

Revolutionary
Emanicipatory, Engaging
Struggle, Strengths, Strong
Intellectual, Information, Inevitable
Strategize, Solidarity, Sincerity
Therapeutic, Teaching, Timing, Tensions, Truths vs. Wrongs
Ancestral
Never ending
Consciousness Raising, Cultural, Creative
Essential, Effective, Everlasting, Expressive¹

(Personal journal, September 1, 2004)

Background

In early 2000, after a difficult shift working at yet another shelter and experiencing once again the disillusionment of feminist politics and being silenced because I am an African woman in a White supremacist world, an idea for my dissertation took shape. I felt there was a need to historicize African/Black women's experiences working in shelters, and to trace their resistance to and activism against intersectional violence. As a segment of the population of oppressed peoples whose voices are either missing entirely from, or have faint existence within their larger societal contexts, African/Black women have a wealth of experience organizing revolutionary actions against White supremacy in the context of White feminist organizations. With this African/Black feminist precedence, I found myself passionately thinking about formulating an educational revolutionary project that recorded the doing and making of resistance. The

¹ RESISTANCE is an acrostic poem that uses the first letter in a line to create word associations, phrases, and/or messages.

complexities of this task in a local and global environment characterized by capitalist systems built on the backs and labour of Black, poor, and other Indigenous women, seemed tremendous. To gain some practical perspective on this idea, I spoke informally to friends, colleagues, and family members while simultaneously thinking about how women's acts of resistance—those occurring on a daily basis, both inside and outside of our work and activist environments—represented the real, lived violence experienced on a daily basis by those working in shelters and living in colonial Canada. What emerged were endless discussions, prolific notes, and eventually this document.

I Am Identity

Wrapped in a warm blanket
 I am adorned with Grandma's homemade coconut oil.
 Twisted is my hair in braids done tightly by my mother.
 Secured in brown wood beads
 Given to me by my Aunty.
 I am named after my
 Father's mother
 Ruchina is my Kikuyu name
 I am from the womb of red soils
 And the land of smiling suns and tall palm trees.
 I am the earth's sweat
 And the rain's dance.
 I breathe.
 I feel.
 I cry.
 I resist.
 I am an African woman.²

(Personal journal, January 8, 2002)

My interest in this research stemmed from my early introduction into feminist, anti-colonial, and anti-racist work. Being born in and living in a racist working class neighbourhood

² First written in 1999, I expanded this poem in 2002. It represents the part of my social location that refers to images of my family and struggles within my African and Caribbean identity.

in Scarborough called “Galloway,” with its extreme complexities of anti-Black racist slurs, dog attacks, poverty, African/Black pride and identity formation, humour, violence, and resistance, shaped who I am today. As a child, my interests and involvements were in African-Caribbean theatre and political and social activism. My activism was local and global, and involved me in protests, boycotts, and other forms of activism such as anti-apartheid, anti-violence against women, pro-choice, Lesbian and Gay rights, and Black anti-police brutality campaigns. As a child, I still remember seeing Angela Davis; going to Namibia’s freedom celebration in the middle of the night. I also remember the fear of being chased by police at age 13 because I pointed with my hands way up in the air and shouted “don’t shoot”, which was popular after so many young Black men in my community had been gunned down. I remember marching in my first pro-choice rally, and the screaming faces of the “pro-lifers” shouting obscenities as I wondered what “democracy” really meant as I, still a child, was walking in a fearful but proud stance. I also remember the overwhelming pride I felt when my mother, who left school at age nine in Trinidad due to family financial strains, graduated thirty-six years later from York University while raising her four children. I remember the endless crying of joy and pain when Nelson Mandela was released from prison and when Winnie Mandela, such a strong and courageous woman, was ridiculed and blamed when their marriage broke up shortly after his release. These childhood recollections, a token few plucked from memory, and so much more of my political, economic and social life experiences, are the influences I, personally, bring to this study.

My family has always been part of transnational movements stemming from the historical displacement of peoples, languages, lands, and cultures. These movements are responses to the holocausts of Indigenous African people’s enslavement and genocide of First Nations peoples.

My grandmother was raised in Grenada. She migrated to Trinidad in her twenties. My grandfather emigrated from Dominica to work in the oil field in Trinidad.

I grew up with a mother who came from an extremely poor neighbourhood in Trinidad, but one with richly characterized values; she immigrated to Canada as a domestic worker at the age of twenty-one. My mother did not last long as a domestic due to her dynamic quest for respect and equity, and her determination that she would devote her life to educating herself and her children instead of “working and cleaning up for White folks”. My mother was, and still is, my world. She has taught me love for Africanness/Blackness, and to have pride in my features, peoples, missing and known heritages and histories. And, most importantly, she has taught me to survive and eventually thrive on little to nothing in the way of material possessions. From my mother I have learned to have humility in the face of adversity, and by her actions, I have learned compassion, reasoning, and innovation. All of these teachings have influenced my research interest, and have led to the writing of this dissertation.

Through tears, laughter, pain, hope, and revolutionary fervour, I have written this thesis to bring awareness to, and discussion and debate about, the experiences and resistance of differently located African/Black women working in the woman abuse shelter community in Toronto. Moreover, my personal political experiences within the woman abuse shelter community in Toronto locate me directly in this research.

Growing Up in the Woman Abuse Shelter Community

From an early age, my historical, political, and social locations have deeply influenced my anti-colonial ideology and African feminist art-based praxis. This praxis deeply influenced my involvement in the woman abuse community. I witnessed the aftermath of violence on

women and children survivors staying at shelters, and the transitioning of the shelter movement in Toronto. Shelters transitioned from more grassroots spaces to social service organizations.

My mother started to work part-time as a relief worker³ at the North York Women's Shelter in 1985, and became a full-time counsellor⁴ at the Emily Stowe Shelter for Women in 1986. I was 9 years old when I started going to shelters and sleeping at them overnight with my mother. In the grassroots days of shelters, both women staying and working in shelters intermingled with each other. It was common for children of workers to stay at the shelter on shifts with their mothers including overnights. Many women working relief in shelters were mothers who were often single and responsible for childcare with little funds or support. This drastically changed as shelters incorporated into mainstream society led by governments' agendas and not necessarily women's.

Being the youngest of four, these times at my mother's workplace were also an opportunity to be "alone" with her, or at least without my siblings. At the shelter, women and children would engage me in many conversations while I waited in the kitchen as my mother did another intake in the office. Through the stories that were so freely shared, I learned about violence committed against women and children. I also learned that the violence I experienced living in my racist neighbourhood was interconnected with other women and children's stories of pain, survival, and resistance. It was at these times that I also learned a lot about feminism, consciousness, and resistance, all of which have helped to shape the woman I am today.

³ A relief staff or counsellor/advocate is a part-time frontline worker in shelters that replaces full-time workers, shifts. They cover full-time staff sick and holiday shifts as well as court support for residents and any other duties in the house. Relief workers' hours are varied and they are an important part of the shift work in shelters.

⁴ Full-time counsellors/advocates duties include resident intakes, advocacy, accompaniments, counselling, and everyday functioning of the immediate shelter needs.

Working in the Woman Abuse Shelter Community

I have worked in shelters for over 16 years, and over this time, I have had several key experiences, which have shaped and informed my praxis. Volunteering at Emily Stowe Shelter for Women at age 17 was the result of my early introduction and interest in the woman abuse shelter community. Co-facilitating a group for women in the residence with my mother, contributing to the annual newsletters, and participating in fundraisers at the age of 10, were all aspects of my early work in shelters. I wrote poetry, short stories, and school essays on the prevention of violence against women, all of which echoed lines of struggle and resistance. At eighteen, I became a Relief Children's Advocate worker, facilitating groups for the children staying in the shelter. Because of my passion for the arts and theatre, I utilized many creative ideas within these groups. I worked at Emily Stowe Shelter for eight years while pursuing my undergraduate and graduate degrees in Political Science. Simultaneously, I began to work at three additional shelters in the Toronto area as a Counsellor, Children's Advocate worker, and as a Relief Youth worker.

In 1996, at age twenty-three, I became a full-time, one-year contract Collective Member at a shelter in the downtown area. I was the last contract person hired who had access to the decision-making processes in the Collective. After my contract ended, contract positions no longer included membership within the Collective. This experience was a turning point in my life. I experienced and witnessed how decisions were made and how opposing members of the Collective, who did not agree with the majority's decisions, were treated. During my year on the Collective, I repeatedly advocated for anti-racism and anti-oppression training for the staff and residents. In my more than twelve years working at the shelter, there had not been any anti-oppression training. Following this contract, I decided to do strictly relief work, as I did not see a

place for myself in organizations that were not practicing their mission statements and policies of feminist principles and anti-oppression.

Over the last sixteen years, I have organized in my capacity as a relief worker, and group facilitator, many anti-oppression inspired expressive art groups with women and children at various shelters and women-centred organizations. Expressive art groups are groups that use various creative strategies including poetry, visual arts, murals, movement, song, musical instruments, and stories to facilitate change, “healing,” and communication. In 1996, a colleague and I started a business called “The Continuing Healing Series,” which was devoted to doing expressive arts groups for women and children survivors of violence. The focus was on art as resistance: art was used as a tool for healing and emancipation against oppression. Women painted, played, and drummed, some for the first time in their lives. Since then, I have continued to facilitate groups with women and children survivors of violence.

My work in the woman abuse community was ongoing during the Ontario government’s economic restructuring process, which intensified in 1995, and continues to this day. As a result, I experienced directly how government cuts to social services and social reform policy impacted the woman abuse shelter community. Initiating and supporting acts of resistance became even more important as the adversities women faced grew with the increasing and relentless cuts to funding.

Resistance in the Woman Abuse Shelter Community

The Last Vigil

Once again
The candles.
Lights.
It’s hot.
Red and orange flames

Intertwine with the
 Pain and anguish felt
 As another woman is murdered.
 Tears again
 Swell up in our
 Swollen eyes
 Suffocating our breath
 And rendering us.
 Thoughts and feelings
 Of overwhelming powerlessness.
 Our hearts again twist
 And break
 With the injustice of it all
 For no matter what is done
 Another woman has been taken from us.
 But we are warriors.
 Our strength well known
 Our memories filled
 With past atrocities
 Our visions clear
 Our persistence evident.
 For our bleeding souls
 And bruised spirits
 Will heal.
 They will heal because
 We are determined.
 Determined that
 These candles that we light
 This pain that we feel
 These tears that we shed
 Will not be in vain.
 Our fight has just begun
 And today will be our last vigil.

(Personal journal, April 6, 1994)

I wrote this poem after a woman graduate student living in my residence was murdered by her partner. I had attended countless numbers of candlelight vigils for murdered women, but could not bear to attend this one. As an act of resistance, I wrote this poem and swore I would never again go to another woman's vigil. I have read this poem in many forums organized to educate women about woman abuse and the need for continued resistance against violence.

Over the last twenty-two years, I have used the arts as tools for communication, understanding, knowledge production, healing, consciousness-raising, and collective action. Through a process that I call “Creative Resistance,” I have used poetry, visual arts, theatre, music, mural making, and many other artistic mediums, to raise consciousness for feminist, anti-colonial activism, education, and resistance. Furthermore, I have used the expressive arts to provide spaces in which resistance is accessible. It is accessible because a poem can be created with a group at any moment. I often incorporate a segment in my workshops called “One Minute of Resistance,” where participants create collective action as they write a poem relating to an issue against which they are mounting resistance. The main point of this exercise is to demonstrate that it takes less than a minute for a collective voice to resist injustice, and that this resistance can be produced through creative processes.

Purpose of This Research

The purpose of this research is to look at intersectional oppressions, and to track women’s resistance, through creative processes within the woman abuse shelter community in Toronto. A goal of this research is to add to women’s responses and resistance, locally and transnationally by providing the often-missing voices of African/Black women. In this research, I look at the collective and hidden stories of resistance in a movement. This research develops and utilizes an integrated, feminist/womanist, anti-colonial, anti-racist, art-based research methodology to collect, give evidence, understand, resist, and provide analysis on African/Black women’s experiences working in shelters.

The silencing and exclusion of African/Black women’s experiences working in the woman abuse shelter community mirrors the lack of representation of these same women in the history books of “traditional” White feminist movements. Similar to the early descriptions of the

feminist movements in North America, African/Black women participated in, and in many cases developed, strategies used by White feminists, but were never given due recognition or included in the historical recording of these same movements. In fact, it is still the case that in many areas of Women's Studies, and for instance, the experiences and histories of African/Black women and Women of Colour are taught and/or learned as an add-on in some feminist circles.⁵

It is my hope that this dissertation reveals the often-missing stories of differently located African/Black women working in shelters, and that it actively contributes to African/Black women scholarship. Through the development and practice of an anti-colonial, art-based methodological framework, this research utilizes and creates anti-colonial, art-based forms of social change and revolutionary agency. By providing a record of the missing voices of African/Black women who work in shelters in Toronto, this research adds to feminist historical analysis of the woman abuse shelter community. By tracking the processes of Resistance Education and Creative Resistance, this research expands on the utilization of qualitative research methods, and adds to social change methodological approaches in Adult Education, Women's Studies, Political Science, African/Black/Caribbean Studies, Sociology and Equity Studies, and Anti-Colonial and Anti-Racism education. The methodological approach in this study consist of seven major features that were developed and utilized to reveal women's experiences and resistance working in woman abuse shelters.

Moreover, the research methodology developed throughout this project was used as a tool for resistance by creating collective consciousness, witnessing, and action amongst a group of African/Black women who recorded their experiences of oppression and resistance through artistic expression, and action. Because collective actions of resistance by African/Black women support the de-colonization processes and anti-violence praxis, both in Canada and

⁵ See Bannerji (1995) and hooks (2000).

transnationally, by giving once-silenced women voice and agency, this research also adds to anti-colonial and transnational feminist movements.

The theoretical framework I have employed in this study comes from an understanding of colonialism's interconnectedness with other intersectional forms of violence. And it also stems from the counter-hegemonic theorization and praxis of African/Black feminisms, which integrate anti-colonial, anti-racist, art-based approaches. Furthermore, the theoretical foundation for this research assumes an African/Black feminist standpoint as not only critical for this study, but also as essential for revolutionary social change and agency. The use of intersectional analysis allows for the understanding of the interconnectedness of women's multiple identities, their resistance, and their experiences of interlocking oppressions such as racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, classism, and other forms of violence. Moreover, by incorporating a more "holistic" approach that takes into consideration multiple factors, an intersectional analysis provides the means through which differently located African/Black women's experiences, and the strategies of resistance they developed working in shelters can be explored.

Organization of the Dissertation by Chapter

Chapter Two

This chapter focuses on the political economy of the woman abuse shelter community in Toronto, providing an understanding of the political, social, and economic context of the shelter movement. It outlines shelter admissions, associations and affiliates, anti-oppression policies and women-centered philosophies, the impact of the Ontario government's organizational restructuring in shelters, and women's responses and resistance. Chapter Two concludes with a critical review of the missing voices of both African/Black women and Women of Colour in the literature on shelters.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three highlights and justifies the theoretical elaborations used in this research. The context of colonialism, colonial histories, their impact, and the creation of colonized subjects are examined. Anti-colonial and alternative approaches such as anti-racism, anti-colonial feminisms, and African/Black feminisms are discussed and critiqued. This chapter also presents the transnational context, and offers a glimpse into the nature of African/Black women's art-based resistance.

Chapter Four

Chapter Four introduces the integrated methodological approach for this research and reviews the objectives and rationale for the methodology employed. The applicability of feminist participatory research, anti-oppression inquiry, expressive art therapy, art-based inquiry and their critiques, all of which inform this study, are examined. The concept of Resistance Education is explained, and the study design is presented.

Chapter Five

Chapter Five introduces the locations of participants in the research. Through “*Who am I?*” exercises, and synopses supported by the integrated methodological approach discussed in Chapter Four, participants depict and describe themselves in relation to intersectional factors such as race, gender, class, disability, age, and sexual orientation. Women's diverse locations, both in and outside of shelters are represented by Creative Resistance processes.

Chapter Six

Chapter Six examines women's identities, and their lived experiences of intersectional violence. This chapter highlights how women identify themselves, and the importance of

African/Black identity for women in this research. Specifically, African ancestry and African/Black Diaspora, notions of Africanness and Blackness, relationships between mothers, grandmothers, elders, sisters and indigenous knowledges, spiritualities, Women of Colour identity, and notions of “the box” are themes that are presented. In addition, women define and discuss colonialism, feminism, anti-Black racism, and heterosexism in the context of their lived experiences of intersectional violence.

Chapter Seven

Chapter Seven explores women’s experiences working in shelters. “A good day, a bad day, and a normal day” exercises are used to illustrate women’s daily working environment. This chapter reviews women’s reflections on the organizational structures of shelters (collective and hierarchical), and the impact of anti-oppression policies and procedures. It also reveals the participants’ experiences of intersectional violence working in shelters, alliances, relationships among and between African/Black women, and participants’ experiences of government cuts and organizational restructuring.

Chapter Eight

Chapter Eight portrays women’s resistance in this research. This chapter begins with a discussion of barriers to resistance, women’s coping strategies, their art processes (including women’s ideas and histories of art use), and their views on equitable workplaces. The chapter examines women’s anti-oppression praxis and explores the various ways women resist, particularly focusing on education, identity, Creative Resistance, and future strategies for collective resistance. Women also reveal their feelings after participating in this research, and they discuss dissemination strategies.

Chapter Nine

Chapter Nine provides a summary of the major themes identified in the research, the significance of my research, the political and revolutionary implications and future recommendations, limitations of the study, and my reflections on the research process. The epilogue presents a profile of the participants one year after the completion of this study.

Working Definitions⁶

Ableism

The violent beliefs and practices sanctioned by state institutions that purport “ability” as “normal” and “universal”, and “disability” as “deviance” and a “burden” to society. It also denotes ableist behaviours and actions.

African/Black Women

African/Black women is a term that I use to reflect the diversity of differently located women of African ancestry. The terms African women and Black women are used interchangeably and together in this study to denote any woman of African descent, including Black women from the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, Asia, and North America (I am not referring here to non-Black women who were born in Africa).

African Black Feminist Thought

African/Black feminist thought is a particular theorization, which positions Black women’s experiences as both critical standpoints and knowledge from which to engage in creating theory and praxis about our lives.

⁶ These working definitions of terms and commentary are used for this project. By no means are they claiming to be the definitive definitions of these terms.

African Diaspora

African Diaspora is being used to mean regions and communities outside of Africa where people of African ancestry live and have made their “homelands” due to African enslavement, land occupation, genocide, familial loss, environmental degradation, identity and language robbery, and migration as a result of differently- located violent colonization processes. Diaspora is also a place where indigenous African traditions, at one time secret, were maintained, shared, and taught to other generations. Throughout this dissertation, African and Black Diaspora are used interchangeably.

Ageism

The violent beliefs and practices sanctioned by state institutions that purport violence against peoples based on their age.

Anti-Black Racism

Racism directed specifically towards African/Black people based on the promulgation of colonial violence and sanctioned by racial stereotypes that create particular unjust relationships between the Black community and White supremacist states, structures, and practices.

Anti-Colonial Theory

Anti-colonial theory is a body of knowledge consisting of liberatory ideologies and praxis that support decolonization processes around the world.

Anti-Oppression Methodology

Anti-oppression methodology incorporates political ideologies and theories that critique the marginalization and exclusion in research, particularly the objectification or exclusion of

peoples based on intersectional factors such as race, gender, age, class, sexual orientation, and disability.

Apolitical

Apolitical refers to the false claim that one's actions and praxis are "objective" and non-political. Every action and non-action supports some bias, alliance, or political agenda.

Art-Based Inquiry

Art-based inquiry is being used to mean the use of the arts and/or art materials, including visual images, poetry, storytelling, dance, theatre, photography, and all forms of artistic expression, as methods to collect and/or analyze data for research purposes.

Canada

Canada is being used in this dissertation with the notion that it is a White settler colony constructed and maintained on the violations of Indigenous First Nations and African peoples. The story of Canada is often upheld by nation-building rhetoric. The original name of this region is "Turtle Island", given by the Indigenous Aboriginal, and First Nation populations of this region.

Colonialism

Colonialism can be defined as a continued experience of forced subjugation, isolation, violence, and spiritual and cultural appropriation, by one group of people over another group from a different geographical region. Colonialism can occur on indigenous land as well as outside indigenous geographical territories and is practiced through ideological, structural, physical, economical, political, spiritual, and cultural methods, all of which are sanctioned by violence.

Creative Resistance

Creative Resistance is the use of creative expression, using music, theatre, song, movement, poetry, painting and other artistic mediums as tools to educate, mobilize, protest, resist, and dismantle systems of domination.

Decolonization

Decolonization is a process in which colonized and “former” colonized peoples try to emancipate themselves, including their social, political, economical, spiritual, and cultural practices and structures, from the learnings and teachings forced upon them by their various colonizers. Decolonization can often mean a redeveloping of peoples’ identities by reclaiming indigenous knowledges that were stolen, banned, and/or demonized.

Differently Located

This means coming from diverse locations based on geographical regions, and political, social, economical, and spiritual dimensions. These dimensions create intersectional factors.

Discursive Framework

The integrated, African/Black feminist, anti-colonial, anti-racist, art-based theoretical framework used in this research. Additionally, integrated framework is used interchangeably with discursive framework throughout this dissertation.

Expressive Arts

Expressive arts are used interchangeably with the arts to mean writing, poetry, visual arts, and all other forms of creative expression. The expressive arts in this study are being used as a politicized method supported by an integrated, theoretical framework.

The Arts

The arts are interchangeably used as “art” and “arts” throughout this dissertation. In addition, art-making, art-based, artistic processes, and other similar phrases in the text are used.

Government/State Restructuring

The process of government and state cuts in social service spending, education, and health services while promoting big business, international competition, and globalization.

Hetero-Normative

The assumption of heterosexuality as normal and universal, usually justified through patriarchal ideologies and practices.

Heterosexism

The violent beliefs and practices sanctioned by state institutions that purport heterosexual identity as “normal” and “central” to the everyday functioning of society. This is done with the direct exclusion and silencing of diverse sexual identities such as Two-spirited, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgendered, Transsexual, Queer, and Questioning peoples.

Indigenous Knowledges

In this dissertation, indigenous knowledges mean the teachings, learnings, wisdoms, education, know-how, practices, and cultures of indigenous epistemologies throughout histories that have been shared, understood, expanded, respected, challenged, and passed on to other generations through oral, written, and spiritual traditions, the arts, rights of passage, and other ceremonies, as ways of life for Indigenous-based peoples. Indigenous knowledges, in this dissertation, also mean coming from non-patriarchal, non-hetero-normative, non-Eurocentric, anti-racist, feminist lens.

Intersectional Factors

These are factors that interconnect with each other such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, immigration status, language, and education affiliations.

Intersectional Violence

The interconnectedness of experiences of violence due to colonialism, racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, and other forms of oppression sanctioned by state ideologies and practices. In addition, interconnected oppression, intersectional oppression, and systems of interlocking dominance are interchangeably used throughout this dissertation to mean intersectional violence.

Locally and Globally

Locally and globally are used together and separately. Locally refers to connections within Canada, the social, political, and economic context in communities, in rural and urban areas, in provinces, and territories. Globally refers to community connections and contexts between Canada, other countries, and regions internationally.

Non-Eurocentric

Non-Eurocentric means coming from different peoples' realities and experiences, which do not include positivist notions of "neutrality" (White male-dominated discourse) as the primary measure of tradition and knowledge. Non-Eurocentric usually refers to ideologies, experiences, research, and praxis that come from peoples who have been notoriously oppressed and excluded by systems of dominance. An anti-colonial and anti-oppression approach is usually taken.

Oppression

The belief and practice sanctioned by state institutions that creates marginalization and subjugation of certain groups of people based on violence.

Racism

Racism involves discrimination due to one's racial heritage, and operates in a systematic, hegemonic way. "Race" is a construction that has been utilized through racist notions of biological determinism and supported by so-called "scientific inquiry" to justify, violate, and colonize groups of people. Racism is a cultural and structural socialization and practice sanctioned by White supremacy that hinders the growth of other groups of peoples economically, socially, politically, and culturally.

Resistance

Resistance denotes the struggle to survive, exist, and eradicate ideologies and practices of colonialism, racism, classism, sexism, and all other forms of intersectional oppression in African/Black women's lives.

Resistance Education

Resistance Education is the methodology developed and employed in this research by incorporating an integrated theoretical framework and method. It is used for research and praxis, inside and outside of Academia, to create critical methods and practices that support both broad revolutionary social change and, in particular, African/Black women's resistance against colonialism and other oppressions. Creative Resistance is one actualization of Resistance Education.

Self-Dialogue

Self-dialogue is a creative process that involves individual reflection from both the researcher and participants during the process of a study, project, and/or action.

Sexism

Sexism is more than exploitation by withholding economic power, primarily by men from women. Women are often violated by individuals and systems in society, usually by their male partners in the private sphere, and by men in general in the public sphere. This is based on patriarchal, socialized gender roles and biological determinism. Sexism is a form of violence.

Standpoint

By standpoint, I mean a position and viewpoint based on an individual, or collective group, lived and/or worked experiences and knowledges. My standpoint is an African/Black feminist standpoint.

Transnationally

Transnationally is used throughout this thesis to indicate global connections, including neo-liberal economic restructuring, and representations and alliances among certain groups of women based on shared commonalties. Additionally, transnationally is used to mean international, global, and worldwide.

Unearned Privilege

“Unearned privilege” is a counterresponse to the concept of “White privilege” or “coming from privilege”. “White privilege” also assumes that White people who have it should be “proud” and honoured. Privilege should be something that is worked for and earned through fair means, not by profiting through colonialism, genocide, and other oppressions. Taking from

others, stealing resources, killing people, and destroying cultures should not be honoured. Using this term also dichotomizes groups between those who have “privilege” (White women and men) and those who do not (Black people, Aboriginal peoples and People of Colour). Moreover, the term has been co-opted from “progressive circles” that used it in the struggle to acknowledge White people’s accountability and to create and expand anti-racist education discourse. In Academia, it is often being used as coercive language to silence and prove that one is not racist.

Violence

Violence in this research is any abuse of power (public, private, and/or structural) that inflicts harm to African/Black women individually or collectively, physically, sexually, emotionally, politically, socially, financially, legally, culturally, spiritually, and/or psychologically. Violence includes the exercise of power to oppress and discriminate against African/Black women individually, collectively, and/or institutionally, based on intersectional multiple identities and oppressions that can include race (racism), gender (sexism), class (classism), sexual orientation (homophobia and heterosexism), age (ageism), and disability (ableism). Intersectional multiple identities and oppressions also include immigration status, war, prison incarcerations, language and cultural appropriations, poverty, educational attainment, legal systems, work environments, reproductive capabilities, health, disease control, and political governance, be it capitalist or socialist. Violence, in relation to experiences and conditions of forced colonialism within the continents of Africa, North, South and Central America, Europe, and transnationally, also includes resource acquisitions, structural adjustment programs, media, social reforms (local and global), and mass genocide (historically and in the present).

White Supremacy

White supremacy is the ideology and praxis that Whiteness is equated with dominance and power over “everything,” and is the measure by which “everything else” is assessed and validated. It describes the unearned privileges that White people gain from the exploitation of African/Black people and People of Colour.

Women Abuse Shelter Community

Woman abuse shelter community refers to the communities of shelters where abused women and children reside as a result of leaving their homes due to woman abuse. This definition has been expanded to include all acts of violence against women, systemically and institutionally sanctioned by sexist and patriarchal structures of domination in society (ruling powers). Therefore, the terms “woman abuse” and “violence against women”, as well as “abused women” and “survivors of violence”, will be used interchangeably throughout this dissertation. In addition, the terms “shelter,” “shelters,” “woman abuse shelters,” “woman abuse shelter community,” or “violence against women shelters,” are used throughout this research to refer to shelters for abused women.

Women of Colour

Women of Colour is used to describe women from various cross-cultural backgrounds who are not of European descent. I, as an African woman, do not consider myself to be a Woman of Colour. However, there are African/Black women who refer to themselves as Women of Colour (Timothy, 1998). I believe that the concept of Women of Colour denies many women’s representation of their own identities. In addition, the concept of Women of Colour serves the dichotomization of women’s identities into categories such as “White women,” the “Others,” and “us” versus “them.” Nevertheless, in this dissertation, because of the limitation in terminology

and the fact that some women use this term, I have also used the term Women of Colour. My preference is to use terminology that women use to represent themselves, rather than terminology that suggests that everything is compared to White male subjectivity. However, since the ruling powers are dominated by White subjectivity and “knowledge,” this language can also be thought of as a political representation, giving proof and context to the reality that White supremacy dominates (see Bannerji, 2000a).

Chapter Two:
Background: The Political Economy
of Woman Abuse Shelters in Toronto

Woman abuse is the misuse of power by a husband, ex-husband, intimate partner, or ex-partner (male or female) against a woman, resulting in a loss of dignity, control and safety, as well as a feeling of powerlessness and entrapment experienced by the woman who is the direct victim of ongoing or repeated physical, psychological, economic, sexual, verbal, and/or spiritual abuse. Woman abuse also includes persisting threat or forcing women to witness violence against their children, other relatives, friends, pets, and/or cherished possessions by their husbands, ex-husbands, intimate partners or ex-partners. Woman abuse is integrally linked to the social/economic/political structures, values and policies that create and perpetuate inequality. (Denham & Gillespie, 1999, p. 4)

Introduction

This chapter provides background information on the political economy of woman abuse shelters in Toronto. This is needed to understand the context in which differently located African/Black women⁷ in this research work in shelters.

First, a brief history of shelters in Toronto is illustrated to outline the social historical and political context. Second, some current statistics and information about shelter associations and affiliations, and examples of an anti-oppression policy in one shelter, and women-centered philosophies are briefly examined to further illustrate the overall background of the shelter community. Third, an analysis of major government policy changes and their impact on shelters

⁷ The African and Caribbean Council on HIV/AIDS in Ontario (ACCHO), which consist of various community organizations, also utilizes this term through out their literature. Moreover, African/Black women is being used as a political term suggesting my preferred choice of identity. In addition, African women is being used to represent the existence of traditional indigenous African women's knowledges and the struggles against colonialism within the African continent and within the African/Black Diaspora. The denial of African heritage of so many Black women who were taken against their will, repeatedly violated, and sold into slavery in foreign lands and/or colonized and nationalized into specific regions in the African continent have led to the loss of traditional indigenous African women's knowledges. This denial can be internal and external and it tries to divide survivors of colonialism between those who stayed in the colonial continent of Africa and those who were stolen from Africa and brought to colonial countries around the world, separated from sisters, mothers, grandmothers that were left behind in the continent. African/Black women are a diverse group of women who are connected by both shared and differential histories. Despite their varied cultural and geographical experiences, African/Black women can also be defined as a collective group of women resisting colonial based violence. Furthermore, participants discuss the importance of identity in Chapter Five.

is presented to understand the background for this study. In particular, government cuts to social services, social policy reform, their impacts, and women's responses and resistance (locally and globally) are outlined. Additionally, the chapter examines the restructuring of woman abuse shelters, and the contexts, impacts and women's responses to this restructuring. Finally, a critical review of literature on African/Black women and Women of Colour shelter workers' experiences is discussed. This chapter concludes by establishing the rationale for this research, which is that African/Black women's voices, experiences, and activism are needed to combat the silencing in the shelter community, and to promote anti-colonial, anti-violence revolutionary social change. The significance of this chapter is that it provides information about women shelters in Toronto, why they were created, who created them, and why I am interested in focusing my thesis on African/Black women's experiences and resistance in shelters.

A Brief History

The history of shelter movements in North America came out of grassroots movements of differently located women. The research for my thesis is grounded in a critical discursive framework that stems from feminist, anti-colonial, anti-racist theory and praxis, particularly African/Black feminist thought.⁸ It is therefore critical to examine the experiences of these women in the shelter movement through the lenses of multiple theoretical frameworks. This framework is useful because it establishes some of the past social and political contexts of shelters in a colonial context, all of which inform this research. Moreover, the historical relationship between African women in nation-building and the maintenance of the Canadian state, reflects a distinct relationship with institutions, communities, and shelters, which influences women's experiences in both the public and private spheres.

⁸ This notion is further explored in Chapter Three.

“During the 24 hours, for 365 days, as for the past 23 years, we have provided services” (Executive Director’s Report, Anduhyaun INC. Annual Report 1995-1996).⁹ This quote is taken from Anduhyaun shelters annual report for 1995-1996, and it describes the twenty-three years of commitment and service delivery of this organization, a shelter started by and for Aboriginal women. On Anduhyaun’s website, the shelter is said to be the second in North America. The importance of first locating Aboriginal¹⁰ and First Nations peoples in the shelter movements in North America in the context of Canada,¹¹ a White colonized state, is significant, because it challenges the historical and contemporary silencing of the voices of Indigenous peoples of Americas by re-centering them in history.

Aboriginal shelters were started to support and provide “safe spaces” for Aboriginal and First Nations women fleeing their abusive partners. The shelters and subsequent services came out of the need to provide supports for Indigenous families to combat not only violence in their homes by male partners, but also institutionalized violence perpetrated by the colonial state.¹² Hence, indigenous-led shelters came out of the need to resist White supremacy, which is perpetuated by White women in their roles in mainstream shelter movements and the anti-violence community.¹³ It also came out of the need to provide services from indigenous-identified lenses.

⁹ All annual reports of shelters have been taken from public records available through the Ministry of Community Services.

¹⁰ In this dissertation Aboriginal peoples, First Nations peoples, Indigenous peoples of the Americas are interchangeably used to represent the diverse nations and tribes of the original inhabitants of the Americas.

¹¹ It is important to highlight here that Aboriginal/ First Nation peoples are living in Canada, a White colonized settler state construction and within other parts of the America’s (see Churchill, 1993; LaRocque, 1996; Bannerji 2000b; Sunseri, 2000; Turpel-Lafond, 1997).

¹² I argue here that the institutionalized state violence perpetuated by Canadian governments historically and presently impacts and dictates every aspect of First Nation people’s experiences, even within the shelter movement.

¹³ See Patricia Monture-Okane’s (1992) intersectional analysis on racism, colonialism, classism, and sexism in the women’s movement.

African/Black Women and Women of Colour

The history of African/Black women and Women of Colour in the shelter movement is not well documented.¹⁴ Even though it is well-known that mainstream White feminist movements used strategies from Black civil rights and Pan-Africanist movements,¹⁵ where African/Black women played significant roles, the absence of the voices of these same women in the history of the shelter movement in Canada reflects the continuation of an anti-Black racist agenda. Moreover, racism in shelters reflects the historical and present day colonial lived experiences of African/Black women, Aboriginal women and Women of Colour in Canada. As a result of colonial and racial violence, a lack of cultural sensitivity, an increase in the racialized population in Toronto, and anti-violence advocacy and activism from racially diverse communities, Shirley Samaroo House,¹⁶ a shelter for immigrant and refugee women, was funded¹⁷ in 1988.

The mission statement of the Shirley Samaroo House declared that it “recognize[d] the oppression of women based on gender, race, and class.” It addressed “the special needs of immigrant women because of the difficulties in confronting the barriers imposed by race, class position, language and the pressure to assimilate into mainstream society” (Shirley Samaroo House, 1988, p. 4, as cited in Agnew, 1998, p. 232). Unfortunately, this shelter was closed in 1994.¹⁸ The fact that a shelter of this kind has not reopened since its closure 11 years ago could

¹⁴ I have yet to see any article written about African/Black women’s involvement in the shelter movement prior to the early 1980s in Canada; in fact, in most literature, we are barely mentioned or absent entirely.

¹⁵ Of course there are numerous other social movements such as the Red Indian movement, Anti-war movements that have also used strategies from the Black Power, Civil Rights, and Pan Africanist movements.

¹⁶ Shirley Samaroo was a South Asian woman from Trinidad killed by her partner. The shelter came about after a Black woman was killed by her partner, and after African/Black women and Women of Colour advocated for immigrant and refugee women’s need for a distinct shelter.

¹⁷ Most shelters are funded by the government and/or community agencies such as the United Way, and by private donations.

¹⁸ I know many women who worked at Shirley Samaroo House, and I visited the house as a child and youth on several occasions. Informally, there were said to be internal conflicts among staff (inherent in most if not all shelters), lack of sufficient funds, and stress due to external and internal White supremacy.

be a demonstration of the colonial processes that deny access, render invisible, and continue silencing Indigenous, immigrant and refugee women, specifically African/Black women,¹⁹ Aboriginal women, and Women of Colour.

On record as the first shelters in North America are Interval House²⁰ in Toronto and Transition House in Vancouver, both of which opened in 1973. Interval House states: “Canada’s first shelter for abused women and their children was willed into being three decades ago by pioneers with a fire in their bellies and determination in their hearts”²¹ (Interval House, Annual Report, 2003, p. 1). The shelter was started by a group of predominantly White middle class women who met at Women's Place on Dupont Street and collectively negotiated a shelter service to provide safety for women and children fleeing violent partners (Morrow, personal communication, 2004). This same group of women has also been documented as supporting the beginnings of the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre (TRCC) and other essential anti-violence services in Toronto and throughout Canada (Morrow, 2004).²² Forty-four per cent of the 230 shelters existing in 1987 were dedicated to woman abuse survivors and their children; this was a steady increase from 71 shelters in Canada in 1979 (Macleod, 1987). The increase in shelters through the early 1970s was directly related to the advocacy and resistance of differently located women. In addition, the increase of reports of woman abuse and the pressuring “need” for shelters were also factors. It is important to note that in my search for documentation in this area, it was evident that the voices of African/Black women and Women of Colour were missing. The

¹⁹ Needless to say all peoples who are not Indigenous Peoples to the Americas or Turtle Island are immigrants. However, it is important to note that for many African descendants living in Turtle Island and the Americas, enslavement and genocide by colonial violence dictated their forced migration to the Americas more than 500 years ago, and more recently, globalization and civil strife has also forced many peoples of African ancestry to migrate.

²⁰ Interval House 30th Anniversary celebration in 2003 opened the ceremony referring to itself as the first shelter in North America. OAIH also recognized Interval House as the first shelter for abused women and children (Morrow, personal communication, March 11, 2004).

²¹ The reference to pioneers by Interval House is quite symbolic especially in the context of colonial occupation.

²² For more information on TRCC, see McLean (2003).

following section provides additional background information on shelters as it examines the admissions, associations, anti-oppression policies in one shelter, and women-centered philosophies in order to give more insight into the context of the shelter community.

Shelter Admissions

Shelters exist due to the violence perpetrated towards women and children primarily by men and sanctioned by patriarchal government structures. Shelters try to provide alternatives, advocacy, support, and to create safe environments for women and children. They also provide emergency shelter, housing referral, in-house short-term counselling, women's groups, and programs for children who have witnessed violence at home. Different shelters provide these services in a variety of ways depending on their history, organizational style, and availability of resources.

There are over 400 shelters in Ontario and over 500 in Canada for women survivors of violence and their children. A federal government survey on family violence in 2001–2002 entitled “Transition Home Survey”²³ found that, out of the 482 shelters²⁴ in Canada that responded to the survey, there were 101, 248 women and dependent children admitted from April 1, 2001 to March 31, 2002 (Statistics Canada, National Fact Sheet, 2003). During a one-month period from April 1, 2002 to March 31, 2002, the survey revealed that Ontario admitted 34,588 women and children into woman abuse shelters (Statistics Canada, Ontario Fact Sheet, 2003). There were 10,000 more women and children admitted in shelters than had been recorded

²³ The Transition Home Survey collects data over a 12-month period of residential facilities for abused women and children. The survey was developed under the federal government's Family Violence Initiative.

²⁴ 524 shelters in Canada were sent the questionnaire and 92% responded (Statistics Canada, 2003).

four years earlier.²⁵ Interval House reported that in 2000–2001, they admitted approximately 160 women and children²⁶ (Interval House, 2004).

The Transitional Home Survey stated the following reasons why women sought shelters in Ontario:

69% (1,019) of women residing in shelters on April 15, 2002, were victims of abuse and the remainders were admitted for reasons other than abuse, such as housing problems. Of those admitted for abuse, 81% were fleeing psychological abuse, 75% physical abuse, 50% threats, 40% financial abuse, 35% harassment, and 25% sexual abuse. 54% of women with parental responsibilities who were admitted for abuse indicated that they were also protecting their children from witnessing abuse of their mother, 37% from psychological abuse, 21% from physical abuse, 19% from threats and 10% from neglect. (Statistics Canada, 2003)

These statistics represent only one day of responses to the question of why women and children came to the shelters. Forty-eight per cent of the women at Interval House shelter in 2000–2001 stated that their partner had threatened to kill them (Interval House, 2002). Statistics indicate that at least one woman a day is killed in Canada, and one in four women and girls will experience violence in their lives (Statistics Canada, 2003). In the following section, shelter associations and affiliations are explained.

Shelter Associations and Affiliates

There are seven shelter associations in various provinces in Canada. As of 2004, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) had over 73 shelters²⁷ as members of its organization. OAITH was founded in April 1973 to support and provide advocacy for women and children survivors of women abuse (Morrow, 2004). OAITH is a group that lobbies the local and national governments of Canada to make changes in laws and services

²⁵ In the Transitional Home Survey taken four years earlier (1997–1998), 90,792 women and dependant children were admitted to shelters (Statistics Canada, 1999).

²⁶ The average woman and child stayed approximately seven weeks (Interval House, n.d.).

²⁷ This represents the number of shelters who are members of OAITH as of March 2004 (Morrow, personal communication, 2004).

in order to eradicate violence against women and children. OAITH has specific principles and goals for members (shelters) to abide by. The following outlines the Philosophy of Principles of OAITH:

OAITH is an organization that advocates for systemic change in order to end violence against women and their children. OAITH is committed to gender equality within an anti-racist/anti-oppressive framework of practice. We believe that OAITH members must integrate an understanding of the oppressive historical, social and political issues that impact on abused women and their children's lives. First Nation Members are guided by traditional ways and incorporate the teachings and spirituality in the operation of their agencies. OAITH recognizes and supports this inherent right. OAITH endeavours to challenge the systemic infrastructures that create any and all barriers to equality. (OAITH, 2001, p. 5)

Four of the OAITH goals²⁸ related to its membership are relevant for this research:

1. The provision of safe and secure shelter to abused women and their children fleeing an abusive home environment.
2. The service provided by each shelter recognizes the strength of every woman and offers a supportive, non-judgmental environment for women to make informed choices.
3. Shelter services will reflect the specific and diverse needs of women and will include counselling, information and referrals to community resources as women explore their choices, options, and alternatives.
4. The shelter services use the principles of an anti-racist/anti-oppressive integrated framework. (OAITH, 2001, p. 6)

OAITH outlines a very concise philosophy of principles and goals of membership. On paper, membership in OAITH does suggest that shelters that join the association believe and try to adhere to an anti-oppression framework in order to support and advocate for all women and

²⁸ OAITH outlines eight goals of its membership.

children survivors of violence, and to support all service providers who advocate for women and children.

The principles and goals already discussed are encouraging. However, OAITH is not a legal body nor is its membership obligated or liable to enforce or oversee that these principles and goals are being followed. It is not known how many of the shelters that are members of OAITH actually practice this collective, anti-oppression-inspired framework.²⁹ In addition, OAITH's mention of First Nation members' inherent rights could lead the reader to assume that shelter associations, and hence shelters, recognize the colonial legacies of the Canadian state.

Many other agencies in Toronto advocate and support women and children survivors of violence. Some of these agencies are the Assaulted Women's Help Line, Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC), Education Wife Assault, Woman Abuse Council, December 6 Fund, Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, Toronto Rape Crisis Center/Multicultural Women Against Rape, most community health centers, and a variety of women centers.³⁰ Although these agencies are not shelters, they continue to support both women and children survivors of violence in various ways, such as education, external counselling and referrals.

It is important to now look at anti-oppression policies, since diversity and equity are often mentioned in the mission statements, protocols, and employment policies of agencies, particularly shelters that provide services to woman abuse survivors. In the following section, an example of an anti-oppression policy of a shelter is outlined.

²⁹ Participants in this research discussed safety, diversity and anti-racist and anti-oppression practices at their work in shelters.

³⁰ These are some examples of agencies and centres that provide advocacy for women survivors of abuse with emotional, financial, medical, and legal support. More information about them can be found at www.211toronto.ca otherwise known in the community as the "Blue Book".

Anti-Oppression Policies in Shelters

This section is provided to give additional background information on a comprehensive anti-oppression policy in a shelter.

The ideologies, discourses and organizational frameworks of operations of agencies are evident in their policies, and so examination of these policies may provide clues to their flaws or their discriminatory tendencies. The policy I selected is from a shelter that had recently gone through major changes and restructuring, and was one in which the Executive Director allowed access to documents. This was a shelter I was quite familiar with, since I had worked there as a consultant/facilitator who provided in-house programming for women and children for a short contractual period of time.³¹ This shelter, which opened in 1973, deals with women and children surviving homelessness and woman abuse. I chose this shelter for its original structural model; it had been a collective,³² although, in its restructuring, it became a hierarchy. The shelter is unionized, and asserts women-centered philosophies in their policies.

An Example

Nellie's has an Employment Equity Policy, Anti-racism and Anti-oppression Policy, and an Anti-racism and Anti-oppression Implementation Plan.³³ The employment equity policy consists of a one-page document, outlining the policy and procedures. Nellie's commitment to recruit, hire, and maintain a staff of women who represent the diversity of Toronto, women who have historically and who continually face discrimination barriers in employment, is highlighted in their policy (Nellie's, 1998, p. 1). Women who face barriers are referred to in the policy as

³¹ I felt that my bias, which existed throughout this research process, was minimized by selecting a shelter in which I had not been employed as a relief or full-time worker, and using this shelter's policy with which I was not familiar. However, this same shelter had been publicly known for its conflicts during the restructuring process.

³² For further information on feminist collectives in Canada see Ristock (1989).

³³ I received copies of Nellie's policies from the Executive Director (Cowan, personal communication, July 14, 2003).

First Nation women, Women of Colour, women with disabilities, and bisexual and lesbian women (Nellie's, 1998, p. 11). The policy also states that accommodations are made to make the work environment accessible for all its employees. Nellie's procedures documents outline that the strategy for the recruitment of staff incorporates a variety of outreach activities to various cross-cultural, disability, and bi-sexual/lesbian agencies in order to select staff who are reflective of the communities they serve (p. 1). The procedures also state that all staff receive anti-oppression training and that the implementation of the employment equity policy must be reviewed annually (see Appendix A for Nellie's employment equity policy, Anti-racism, and Anti-oppression policies).

Nellie's Anti-racism and Anti-oppression policy consists of a statement of principles that outlines the agency's commitment to the eradication of racism and oppression, internally and externally, affirming that:

Nellie's is an anti-racist organization that questions and rejects the status quo, challenges existing power relations and believes that racism can and should be eradicated.

Nellie's will take a pro-active organizational stance in the struggle against racism and will reflect this commitment both internally and externally.

Nellie's will ensure that all Board members, staff, volunteers, students and clients adhere to these principles and policy. Nellie's programs and services will be delivered within an anti-racist, anti-oppressive framework.

Nellie's will ensure that diversity is reflected in the Board, staff, volunteers, students and clients and actively seek to eliminate barriers to participation.
(Nellie's, 1998, p. 1)

Nellie's clearly outlines an anti-oppression stance through their Anti-racism and Anti-oppression policy in which they formulate working definitions of discrimination and racism. The document also outlines the rights of the individual to file a complaint through the Ontario Human Rights Commission as well as the step-by-step procedure to be followed (pp. 2–3). The Anti-

racism and Anti-oppression Implementation Plan includes both the Employment Equity Policy and the Anti-racism and Anti-oppression Policy. The Implementation Plan is a ten-page comprehensive document consisting of five areas: Accountability, Implementation Cycle, Resources, Annual Plan, and Evaluation for Nellie's (pp. 5–9). Accountability for all staff, including Board members and volunteers, to an anti-racist, anti-oppression theory and praxis is one highlight of the Implementation Plan (p. 4). Another highlight is the implementation of an Anti-racism and Anti-oppression Committee (p. 5).

Nellie's policies are quite specific as they relate anti-oppression policies to the recruitment of staff that have experienced barriers due to discrimination. Nellie's policies also use the words Anti-oppression and Anti-racism, which further politicize its agenda. An explanation for Nellie's detailed anti-oppression stance in their policies could be due to the history of the former collective dismantlement, which occurred due to allegations of racism and homophobia between Black and White staff (Agnew, 1998).³⁴

Women-centered philosophies are essential to most feminist paradigms, as they purport to replace and fight against unequal male-centred ideologies and praxis, replacing them with inclusive, equitable "women-friendly" environments. Shelters for survivors of woman abuse have challenged the mainstream patriarchal philosophy, choosing in principle to adopt equity and anti-oppression policies as well as women-centred models. The women-centred model is defined differently depending on the individual and/or organization. A woman-centred approach comes from feminist theory and praxis where women are the focal points for theorizing and researching about women's issues and experiences. OAITH uses women-centred philosophies in its Standard

³⁴ The particular dynamics of the early 90s Nellie's conflict stemmed from past allegations of racism. June Callwood, a prominent white feminist resigned from Nellie's Board of Directors after these accusations of racism. See Sadiq (1992); Srivastava (2005); and Wade (1992).

and Ethics manual. It is defined in the glossary section as “flowing from the self-identified needs of women who use shelter/ agency services” (OAITH, 2001, p. 22).

Nellie’s uses “woman-centred” in its Anti-racism and Anti-oppression Implementation Plan, stating that: “Our goal is to ensure that our organization operates within an integrated anti-racism, anti-oppression, feminist/woman centred framework” (Nellie’s, 1998, p. 1). In Chapters Seven and Eight of this dissertation, I explore African/Black women's experiences of anti-oppression policies, procedures and practices, their own philosophies and praxis, and their notions of indigenous feminist knowledges in relation to women’s work in shelters.

The following section explores the key themes and issues addressed in the literature found on the government’s economic and organizational restructuring processes of shelters in Ontario. In addition, the impact on woman abuse shelters and women’s activist responses are examined.

State, Restructuring, and Woman Abuse Shelter Responses

Violence against women is a complex form of oppression. It touches every aspect of life for women and their children. Government cuts to women’s shelters, while they highlight the impact of social programs reduction on abused women, are only one part of a web of cuts to the supports women need to escape danger. To be free, survivors of violence – both women and child witnesses – literally need a safety net of programs and policies protecting their right to safety and equality. (OAITH, 1998, p. 29)

Economic restructuring in the form of governmental cuts to social services and social policy reform has impacted women, children, and the shelter community in Ontario. The impact of cuts and social policy reform, as well as overall effects of the organizational restructuring in woman abuse shelters in Ontario and women’s responses is reviewed through African/Black feminist lenses, to provide background information to understand the social, political, and economical environment in which shelters in Ontario have been operating. This section also

examines African/Black women's, Aboriginal women, and Women of Colour's responses to government cuts. A critical review of literature on the Ontario government's economic restructuring sheds light on this work.

The Context

In 1995, the conservative government of Ontario, led by Mike Harris, was voted into power, heavily endorsed by big business and neo-liberal agendas. Harris used what he referred to as *The Common Sense Revolution*³⁵ to set the stage for the Canadian economy (Clarke, 1997, p. 35). Under the guise of cutting the Canadian deficit, government spending on social programs (health, education, and social services)³⁶ was cut, while big businesses were given incentives to invest in what seemed like a borderless state (Clarke, 1997, p. 35). Harris's key platform was to promote and support transnational corporations' "free" access and investment in Canada. This was actualized by reforms to social policies and governmental institutions such as the Workers' Compensation Board, eliminating environmental protection, and creating easy U.S. access to the Canadian health system (Clarke, 1997, p. 35). Through global agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), General Agreement of Trades and Tariffs (GATT), and global agencies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Canada's government participated in transnational corporatization. For example, over 80,000 profitable corporations in Canada ended up paying no income taxes at all in 1995 due to numerous loopholes and write-offs handed to them by the

³⁵ The Common Sense Revolution refers to Mike Harris's election platform of 1994 that argued that less government spending, greater tax cuts, and increase in business incentives would lead to economic growth in Ontario, with more jobs, and a lower debt (see Clarke, 1997). However, the downsizing of the welfare state in Canada started in the early 1980s during Brian Mulroney's tenure as Prime Minister.

³⁶ See McAdie (1998), Maher and Riutort (1998).

Harris and Mulroney government (Clarke, 1997, p. 78). The following statistics illustrate some of the government cuts in 1995:

Cuts of 800 million in education; 1.3 billion in hospital spending; 1.4 billion in transfers payments to municipalities; 21.6% reduction in social assistance recipients' allowances; the elimination of grants for new child care centres and funding of second stage housing for women survivors of violence. (Ontario Women's Declaration, 1995, p. 2)

Cuts to social assistance and other social services mirrored the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) of the South³⁷ and North³⁸ that forced countries to decrease their spending on social services and open their borders for foreign trade or take-over.³⁹ Both SAPs and cuts to social services impacted women and children survivors, especially African/Black women, Aboriginal women, and Women of Colour, who were further ignored, used, and violated by capitalist economic development.

O'Neill (1998) critically examines how the global restructuring of the world's wealth and resources, the false pretense of deficitism,⁴⁰ and structural adjustment programs that impact women, contribute to the local cuts in social services, health, and education in Ontario. O'Neill argues that Canada, like other nations, is competing for global economic trade by dismantling social service programs through government cuts in spending. In a one-year period, Canada has moved from eighth place to fourth place according to the World Economic Forum publication entitled "The 1997 Global Competitiveness Report" (O'Neill, 1998, p. 4). O'Neill continues in the article arguing that Ontario, like New Zealand, Britain, and the United States before, is

³⁷ South here means the geographical regions of Africa, South East Asia, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. See Lele (1991) and El-Nakkash (2000).

³⁸ North here means the countries of Canada, the United States, and other Western nations. See Elson & Pearson (1997) and Gabriel (1999).

³⁹ It is ironic having a discussion here on the threat of foreign trade and take-over in a colonized state where foreign trade has constituted wealth for a few and foreign take over is part of the historical and present day landscape of "Canada".

⁴⁰ See Cameron & Finn (1998) and Yalnizyan (1998).

feeling the effects of globalization through structural adjustment programs (p. 6). Structural adjustment programs around the world, including those instituted in Canada, use women as cheap labour while cutting services to childcare, health care, education, and women's services, especially anti-violence services including shelters (O'Neill, 1998, p. 7).

Galabuzi (2004) discusses the social exclusion of racialized⁴¹ groups and recent immigrants to Canada, and the impact of this on their health. He addresses how dimensions of social exclusion lead to racialization of poverty and economic exclusion in the labour market. He also discusses how racialized neighbourhood selection leads to exclusionary access to health care and mental and physical health problems (pp. 244–246).⁴² Galabuzi writes:

It is now generally agreed that racism is a primary source of stress and hypertension in racialized group communities. Everyday forms of racism, often compounded by sexism and xenophobia, and the related conditions of underemployment, non-recognition of prior accreditation, low standard housing, residence in low income neighbourhoods with significant social deficits, violence against women [including colonial violence] and other forms of domestic and neighbourhood violence, and targeted policing and disproportionate criminalization and incarceration define an existence of those on the margins of society, an existence of social exclusion from the full participation in the social, economic, cultural, and political affairs of Canada. They are also important socio-economic and psycho-social determinants of health. (p. 247)

Hence, economic restructuring in the form of governmental cuts in social spending and social policy reforms needs to be looked at in the context of intersectional violence in Canadian society.

⁴¹ The term racialized groups is used in this thesis to represent how the project of creating “race” has been constructed to formulate categories in which African/Black people, Aboriginal people, and People of Colour have been labelled and located. My critique of the term racialized/racialization is that it assumes that White identity is not based on constructions of race and that solely Euro-culture consists of distinct peoples from different regions of the world. This dichotomy between racialized peoples which includes all people who are not White again purports whiteness as diverse and non-racialized, omitting the history of Eurocentric racialization processes.

⁴² This is significant in a climate of state cuts to public health funding and increasing dependency on private health care.

Racism has contributed to social policy reforms in the Canadian economy since 1990.

Thobani (1998) asserts that immigration policy in Canada is evaluated based on racist implications of social policies and programs (p. 23). Thobani affirms:

It is evident that immigration policy is evaluated by many Canadians in relation to its implications for Canadian social policies and programs. The attitudes expressed are often blatantly racist. Immigrants are often portrayed as a drain on the Canadian economy and on social programs. The truth, however, is quite the opposite. Research has shown that after 10 or more years in the country, immigrants have incomes greater than the average Canadian and contribute more in taxes than they receive in social services. (p. 23) ⁴³

The increase for income needed to sponsor a family member ⁴⁴ indicates the racial, gender, and class implications of immigration policies in Canada (p. 24). Thobani argues that one example of the global effects of racism and classism, is that the Canadian state denies entry access to people from the “developing world” and their families. This denial is implemented through an increase in the amount of money demanded of those who wish to immigrate. She gives an example of British Columbia’s elite new immigration policy, which grants immigrants landed status if they pay a \$350,000 investment to the province (p. 24).

Women’s rights are being eroded in Canada due to cuts and social policy reforms such as the attack on employment equity, especially on Women of Colour, Aboriginal women, and poor women.⁴⁵ I would also add that intersectional factors and oppressions such as sexual orientation (heterosexism), age (ageism), and disability (ableism) combined with factors such as racism,

⁴³ All “Canadians” who are not of Aboriginal/First Nations descent or who were brought to this land by forced enslavement, are in fact immigrants. However, People of Colour are more often given “immigrant status” even if they were born in Canada (see Ng, 1981; Timothy, 1998). Despite being born in Turtle Island (Canada), I am frequently asked what country I’m from and referred to as an “immigrant woman” by White mainstream society.

⁴⁴ Thobani writes, “Previously a family of four needed an income of \$34,000 to sponsor a relative. Effective March 1996, this figure rose to \$41,000, at the same time as family incomes for all Canadians are declining due to economic circumstances. Such policies are clearly discriminatory” (1998, p. 24).

⁴⁵ For further readings, see Anderson (1998) and Flynn (1998).

classism, and sexism, have a more violent impact on African/Black women, Aboriginal women, and Women of Colour.

Thobani insists that what she called “blame-the victim” behaviour, created by current policy reforms, is harming progressive women movements. Thobani argues that the media is attacking the women’s movement by portraying women as victims to undermine the enormous change and empowerment that the women’s movement elicits in society (1998, p. 26).

Thobani emphasizes:

Government cutbacks are another form of attack, which has affected our ability to mobilize. One tactic intended to undermine our credibility and public image is to focus on organizations that get government funding and to make headlines out of how much the executive coordinator earns. The headlines in the papers shout out: “Do you know that this organization pays this kind of money to its staff?” The implication is that we are using taxpayer’s money and that nothing valuable is being done with it other than to promote “special interests”.⁴⁶ (1998, p. 26)

Thobani discusses the importance, especially in times of cuts and social policy reform, of inclusion within the women’s movement (1998, p. 27). Clarke, O’Neill, Thobani, and Galabuzi are significant for this research because they provide some background information about the context in which governmental economic restructuring is occurring in Ontario, in Canada, and globally. The following section examines the impact of government cuts on women and shelters; specifically cuts in welfare and services for woman abuse survivors, and the relationship of the cuts to the increase in poverty.

⁴⁶ I agree with Thobani that the media is used to portray the feminist, anti-violence women’s community in a negative way and/or as victims. However, I would also argue that Thobani’s concern is often an excuse for not discussing the problems within the women’s community, particularly in woman abuse shelters for fear that any dissention or critique could mean that you are supporting the government’s agenda. In addition, I argue in the subsequent restructuring section of this chapter that the differences among staff’s salary, which could be related to racism, colonialism, and other interlocking oppressions, is important to examine. Moreover, there is a dilemma about talking about problems within the women’s community in an environment of government cuts to our funding and programs. However, I again argue that if we do not discuss issues such as racism and colonialism within the women’s community the fall out will be a more divided, weakened, and less effective community battling government cuts and reforms. Ultimately, an anti-colonial feminist stance is a way to address the cuts as this purports the illegality and misogyny of the Canadian state as directly responsible for the continuation of violence on differently located women and children’s lives.

Government cuts impact on women and shelters.

The government cuts have immensely impacted the lives of women and children survivors of violence. Moreover, cuts to daycare, housing subsidy, education, and health care⁴⁷ have had devastating impacts on women and children's lives. I concentrate on three areas that are impacted by economic restructuring on women and children's lives: the cuts in welfare, cuts in services for woman abuse survivors, and the increase in poverty rates. The relevance of this section with respect to the research is that my findings need to be examined taking into consideration the political economy in which women and children live in shelters, and where African/Black women counsellors work.

Welfare cuts.

[A]s soon as welfare cuts were announced, women began to tell shelters they couldn't leave because they couldn't support their children. Some women already in shelters returned home. Some who had already become independent returned to the violence. Some named Mike Harris directly as the root of their predicament. (Education Wife Assault, 2001, p. 1)

Ontario's government have continued to cut vital services that directly impact abused women and children.⁴⁸ Many women staying at shelters depend on welfare for daily personal needs, and rent to sustain future safe housing for themselves and their children. Due to the decreasing amounts of affordable housing, which makes it much harder to leave an abusive partner and find safe and stable housing, women and children often go to shelters. There has been a 22% percent reduction in social assistance allowance in Ontario (Welfare Watch Toronto, 2000). Many individuals on social assistance are sole-parent families, mainly woman-led, who are trying to establish a safe environment for themselves and their children after fleeing a violent

⁴⁷See Bacque (1998), Maher & Rioutort (1998), and McAdie (1998).

⁴⁸ More recently, in October 2006, the Conservative Harper government cut additional funding to women's services 12 years after Harris's initial cuts (see National Association of Women and the Law, December 10, 2006).

relationship. Directly effected by lower welfare allowances, abused women's incomes become less, and their ability to be financially stable is challenged.⁴⁹ Feminist advocates, activists, and researchers have written about the direct correlation between government cuts in social services and women staying and/or returning to abusive partners (OAITH, 1998). The cuts in social services have impacted the woman abuse shelter community as more women are either leaving the shelter and returning home, or not accessing shelters in the first place. The result is re-victimization and threat of further violence and even death.⁵⁰ Women's basic needs are effected as women become trapped in abusive relationships due to financial inaccessibility after government cuts in social assistance, day care subsidy, affordable housing, and services for woman abuse survivors.

In addition, as a result of the conservative policy reform, women are no longer allowed to receive welfare while they go to college or university (OAITH, 1998, p. 32). Women are thus often limited to employment training programs that when completed often lead to service or factory jobs, which can put them at risk of being laid off and earning lower incomes. The government again is indicating that post-secondary education is only for those who have money (p. 32). For survivors of violence, who in many cases have been denied access to education, the denial of welfare to students makes staying in school extremely difficult (p. 33). Welfare workers often tell survivors of violence to find part-time jobs to support their income; however, if their income increases even slightly they can be immediately cut off assistance (p. 33).

⁴⁹ "One hundred percent of the shelters that responded said that cuts to social assistance had a severe impact on survivors of abuse" (OAITH, 1998, p. 33).

⁵⁰ For every man murdered in partner homicides, 3.4 women are murdered (Locke, 2000). "Four out of every five Canadian victims of spousal homicide in 1998 were female" (Juristat Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics as cited in Ontario Women's Directorate, 2002).

Workfare policies⁵¹ also impact woman abuse survivors, because they are expected to be working or in school full time in order to get benefits after leaving the shelter. Within a context of racism and colonialism, the impact of welfare cuts on African/Black women, Aboriginal/First Nations women and Women of Colour survivors of violence has not been addressed adequately.⁵² The government cuts to direct services for assaulted women is another assault on woman abuse survivors' basic needs, and constitutes a second theme used to provide background information on the context for this research.

Cuts in services for woman abuse survivors.

Deterioration of direct services for abused women started with David Tsubouchi, Minister of Community and Social Services (MCSS), in July 1995, with cuts to program funding for first stage emergency woman abuse shelters (Education Wife Assault, 2001). The impact of the cuts on woman abuse survivors and the anti-violence women's community in Ontario has been devastating. Tsubouchi continued to eliminate more programs in October 1995. The following were some of the cuts:

Elimination of all counselling and support programs in second stage shelters (where abused women live temporarily for up to a year)

Elimination of all anti-violence education and prevention funding within MCSS

Elimination of some counselling funding in community agencies including culturally specific social services

Elimination of all funding for the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) for coordination work among member shelters around the province. (Education Wife Assault, 2001, pp.1–2)

Additionally, this elimination of programs included women's, children's, and youth groups, as well as funding for food and basic necessities, school and community liaisons, and

⁵¹ Workfare is a government policy that demands that people work for their social assistance monies. For elaborations on resistance to workfare see ACTEW (1998) and Agnew (1998).

⁵² See Agnew (1998), p. 89 and pp. 245–246.

educational programs in first and second stage emergency woman abuse shelters (Education Wife Assault, 2001, p. 2). Counsellors and advocates were also impacted by the cuts. As the resources became less, the frustration increased, as shelter workers looked for ways to advocate for abused women and their children in such dire conditions (p. 2). OAITH (1998) examines the following direct services for woman abuse survivors that were cut: Emergency women's shelters,⁵³ second stage women's shelters,⁵⁴ crisis lines,⁵⁵ community counselling,⁵⁶ child protection,⁵⁷ culturally specific services⁵⁸, and community advocacy.⁵⁹ The government of Ontario has cut the funding for all these services. The impact of these cuts on abused women is overwhelming, as these direct services are essential for supporting and advocating for women and children survivors of violence. Fewer services means less ability to support women and children who are fleeing abusive homes. OAITH also explores the impact on abused women and children of cuts to legal aid, criminal and family courts, social assistance, housing, child care, language interpretation services, and cuts in services for people with disabilities.

Since cuts to the Ontario Legal Aid Plan came into effect, many abused women have been denied legal aid or legal representation for family law matters in Ontario. Again 100 percent of shelters responding to us reported women having problems either with accessing legal aid itself, or with finding a lawyer who would accept a legal aid certificate. This, in spite of Legal Aid Plan eligibility guidelines designating "spouse or child at risk" (Law Society of Upper Canada) as a priority for assistance. (p. 34)

⁵³ Emergency women's shelters are shelters that provide frontline crisis advocacy to women surviving violence (p. 29).

⁵⁴ Second stage women's shelters are shelters that provide temporary housing for three months to a year for women survivors of violence (p. 29).

⁵⁵ Crisis lines are 24-hour phone lines that provide advocacy and crisis counselling to women fleeing abuse (p. 29).

⁵⁶ Community counselling is counselling and support groups for women and children experiencing and witnessing violence. Programs are usually funded by social service agencies such as Catholic Children's Aid Society (p. 29).

⁵⁷ Child protection comprises services provided to children who have experienced and/or witnessed woman abuse and/or experienced childhood sexual violence (p. 29).

⁵⁸ Culturally specific services are services that provide advocacy and counselling for women survivors of violence from culturally specific groups such as Aboriginal/First Nation women, Jewish and Francophone women (p. 29).

⁵⁹ Community advocacy provides services such as housing support, legal clinics, food banks, all often essential services for women and children leaving violent relationships (p. 29).

OAITH addresses the cuts in anti-racism and anti-discrimination work, education and training, and pay equity and employment equity, as further marginalizing women and children survivors of woman abuse (1998, p. 32).

Severe cuts and changes have been made to programs and policies that specifically work to end racism, create or ensure the rights of First Nations and Aboriginal Peoples, and assist persons with disabilities. This area includes anti-racism education, advocacy, and legal protection for disenfranchised communities. (Ontario Social Safety Network, as cited in OAITH, p. 32)

The consequences of cuts to anti-racism and anti-discriminatory programs and policies for African/Black women, Aboriginal/First Nations women, and Women of Colour survivors of violence and counsellors in shelters in an already racist, sexist, classist, heterosexist, and colonial society can only be disastrous. In Chapter Seven, participants in this research discuss the relationship between anti-oppression policies within shelters, restructuring, and shelters' practices in regards to African/Black women's experiences working in shelters in Toronto. It has been argued that women who speak little English, have never worked outside their homes in Canada, and are fleeing abusive relationships, have experienced increased hardships since the cuts in 1995 (see METRAC, 1998).

According to Robertson (1998), working in woman abuse shelters in Toronto has changed due to governmental cuts. Robertson argues, like other advocates and activist in the women's community that the government cuts in funding for programs for survivors of abuse indicate their lack of commitment to anti-violence initiatives in Canada.

Robertson proves her argument by indicating that prevention-oriented programs such as public education, Wife Assault Month, and second stage housing received substantial cuts in funding (1998, p. 108). Women who are leaving abusive relationships require various support systems, which complement the work of shelters (p. 108). Cuts in social assistance and the freeze

on public housing and other essential services have a huge impact on women, adding to their already-existing experiences of oppression, and making it extremely difficult for them to survive after leaving violent situations (p. 108).

In an environment of decreased resources, frontline shelter workers and advocates working in shelters spend more time dealing with issues resulting from the government cuts than they do counselling women on the emotional impacts of woman abuse on their lives (1998, p. 109). Robertson admits that counselling anxious women about housing budgeting and survival in a time of rationed services and support may be detrimental to the healing process of woman abuse survivors (p. 109). On the other hand, if women cannot sustain their families financially by providing food, housing, and other essential requirements, then their healing process is also jeopardised by this instability (p. 109). The political advocacy work shelters did in the past has also decreased due to large amounts of time now spent on securing financial funding for shelters (p. 109). Government cuts to shelters' funding forces them to fundraise in the community. In Ernestine's Women's Shelter, Annual Report 1997/1998 the co-chairs of the Board of Directors wrote:

In spite of ongoing cuts and major changes in funding we have been able to commit to Quality basic services. We expect 1% surplus for year-end 97/98 which is requested to be allocated towards a new roof and painting of the house. None of this would be made possible without our generous and committed donors A SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL WHO HAD MADE A CONTRIBUTION! Congratulations! (Ernestine's Women's Shelter, Report from the Chair in Annual Report 1997/98, p.2)

Community fundraising can be a helpful mechanism to offset government cuts; however, Robertson cautions that political views and advocacy are at risk. For example, Interval House shelter generated 51% of their revenue in 2003 from private donations (Interval House, 2003, p. 16). Robertson maintains that, because of shelters' increasing dependency on donors, "many

organizations fear that if they are too political, too outspoken, or even too 'feminist', their funding will be threatened" (1998, p. 109). Hence, many shelters are unable to spend time on public education and other political advocacies to support violence prevention in society (p. 109).

Robertson reminds women's advocates that, "[w]hile shelters are becoming increasingly wary of being political, we must not ignore that being political and fighting for social change is part of our heritage as women in the anti-violence movement" (p. 112).

Robertson argues that the McGuire Report⁶⁰ was an example of the government's problematic relationship with woman abuse shelters in Ontario. The report received enormous opposition from the anti-violence women's community because it did not provide adequate solutions about supporting woman abuse survivors and their children in an environment of social policy reform and cuts in funding. The resistance from the women's community helped to stop the report from being implemented. Instead, the government gave 5.5 million dollars, half of the amount of funds cut from violence against women initiatives, to set up six new domestic violence courts (1998, p. 110). The funds mainly went to institutionally-run services, while excluding woman abuse shelters.⁶¹

Robertson highlights that the government's focus on short-term crisis intervention for violence against women, emphasized by incorporating woman abuse into the larger context of victim's services, does not address the long-term needs of survivors of woman abuse (1998, p.

⁶⁰ The McGuire report was a government report that came out in December 1996 recommending that shelters become 24-48 hr temporary housing facilities (Robertson, 1998, p. 110). The report argued that the main purpose of shelters should be for women to obtain restraining orders (p. 110).

⁶¹ Robertson states, "Much of the funding is committed to institutionally-based services such as hospitals, courts, schools, and Children's Aid Societies, rather than to women-run organizations such as shelters and women's centres" (p. 110).

111).⁶² Robertson emphasizes the importance of protecting the integrity of shelters, even in struggling times, from increasing government demands for accountability. Robertson contests:

Since the government emphasizes accountability, services will need to prove their effectiveness like never before. Coordination of services is also emphasized. Shelters will probably be expected to coordinate and/or harmonize with other more mainstream community services, which may not share the feminist or grassroots orientation of shelters. It will be a struggle to protect the philosophies and practices, which have distinguished the work of shelters. We must be cautious that we do not slip into the business mentality of fiscal imperatives, which currently pervades both society and government. (1998, p. 111)⁶³

Robertson outlines some examples of strategies for dealing with the change in shelters. She gives examples such as working from solutions, being visible, seeking alternative supports (i.e., OAITH), and applying direct pressure to Members of the Provincial Parliament (MPPs).

Increase in poverty rates.

Women and children make up the majority of Canada's poor, and the poverty rate is increasing. Statistics show that 45.4% of women raising families by themselves are poor (National Anti-Poverty Organization, 2003). In 1995, poor single mothers' annual income was \$8,851, which was below the poverty line (National Council of Welfare, 1997).

There are multiple factors that increase women's chances of experiencing poverty, and these suggest that a more wide-ranging approach is needed. Townson (2000) describes the components of a more wide-ranging approach as follows:

A more comprehensive approach to dealing with poverty would look at how women's financial security may be undermined because they must combine paid work, with unpaid family responsibilities [dealing with an abusive partner and/or having to leave your home and belongings due to an abusive partner, and moving into a shelter to provide safety for themselves and their children], how lack of quality affordable child care limits the ability of women to earn wages [often

⁶² Many survivors of woman abuse do not go through the criminal justice system so the effectiveness of domestic violence courts needs to be addressed (p. 110).

⁶³ I noticed the move to business-oriented functioning at my former workplace when we were asked to fill out forms for accountability purposes, including all the activities that we did on shift. In a crisis environment like the shelter, it is very difficult to get time to fill out this form and to quantify your work.

forced to work part-time at minimum wage jobs] and support their families; and how government policies – such as the Ontario government’s decision to slash social assistance rates, or the federal government’s recent changes in the unemployment insurance program – have an adverse impact on women, denying them income support when they are most in need [when fleeing from abusive relationships]. (Townson, p. 2)

There have not been improvements in the rate of women’s poverty since the Royal Commission on the Status of Women report over 30 years ago (Townson, n.d., p. 1). The feminization of poverty⁶⁴ in Canada continues, as 19% of adult women live in poverty. Government policies and cuts in social assistance are factors that contribute to women’s poverty (Townson, p. 8).

Flynn (1998) echoes some of my own concerns in the following quote:

Poor [B]lack women have been, and continue to be, marginalized by the feminist and labour movements. Organizations need to reach women who are illiterate and poor, and women who have no concept of what feminism is. An organization such as the National Action Committee on the status of Women (NAC) needs to take the feminist agenda into the homes of [B]lack women who do not have the time to attend meetings. Strong alliances and coalitions are counterproductive if they refuse to acknowledge how racism and poverty co-exist for non-White women. Moreover, they will fail if they continue to privilege the interests and needs of middle-class white women to the detriment of non-white women. (p. 145)

In a recent report, the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 2003) states their concern that Canada is not following its obligations under the anti-discrimination treaty. Canada submitted the fifth periodic report in 2003; it covered the period from March 1994 to March 1998. The report praises Canada for its adoption of the Agenda for Gender Equality (2000), new Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, and new parental benefits (extended weeks) under Employment insurance. The report acknowledges Canada’s opening of 50 new shelters through the Shelter Enhancement Programme as part of the

⁶⁴ The feminization of poverty is the condition in which women and children are living below the poverty line due to factors such as sexism, classism, racism, and other intersectional violence (see Armstrong, 1994, 1996; Brenner, 2000; United Nations, 2000).

\$1.9 million per year funding granted to the Family Violence Initiative. The committee also acknowledges that between 1996 and 2000, Canada had decreased its poverty rates from 58.7% to 47.6 per cent (CEDAW, 2003).

However, the committee addresses concerns about Canada's impoverished women, relating it to factors that impact women's economic status such as age, race, ethnicity, immigration status, and Aboriginal heritage. An increase in poverty rates since the government cuts in social services is also discussed in the report. The committee also had concerns with the 1995 government decision to reduce the conditions for transfer payments from federal and provincial governments, and cautioned Canada's budgetary adjustments for worsening the plight of "marginalized women" due to cuts in services (CEDAW). The report also states concern with systemic discrimination relating to Aboriginal women and support systems for survivors of woman abuse (called domestic violence in the report) (CEDAW). In 1995, 37% of Women of Colour (visible minority women is used in the report) and 43% of Aboriginal Women lived on a low income (CEDAW). Twenty recommendations for Canada to improve the conditions for women, including more funding for woman abuse shelters, expanding affordable childcare, and eliminating systemic practices of discrimination for Aboriginal women, are outlined in the report (CEDAW).

Not surprisingly, the report does not openly discuss colonialism and racism and their impact on women's lives in Canadian society. This is significant, especially since Canada is a colonial state, and as such has policies that impact certain women based on these historical and current criteria. Looking at how African/Black women, Aboriginal women/First Nations women, and Women of Colour are impacted more severely can further the analysis, since racism, its legacies, and the continuation of colonialism discriminate against certain women, denying them

access to already scarce resources based on racial oppression. Impacts of cuts on African/Black women, Aboriginal women, and Women of Colour survivors of abuse increase in relation to intersectional factors such as ability, age, sexual orientation, language affiliation, literacy level, immigration status, war trauma, and repeated experiences of other forms of violence, including childhood incest and political torture.

The literature reviewed discusses the themes, challenges, and changes in the shelter movement in Ontario based on government cuts to direct services for woman abuse survivors. However how these changes impact women in a racist, classist, heterosexist, and colonial Canadian society is rarely examined. The failure to address the impacts on African/Black women and other “marginalized women” is a symptom of the trend and/or continuation of the mainstream women’s anti-violence community to exclude certain women’s experiences.⁶⁵ I argue that when engaging in emancipatory and supportive roles in a diverse cross-cultural environment like Toronto, we have a responsibility to meet the needs of the differently located women we are servicing, and to understand the contexts in which they live in. Once again, I argue here that African/Black women, Aboriginal women, Women of Colour survivors of woman abuse, and workers in shelters, are impacted even more by cuts to direct services, because they are already living in a context of limited access to resources and discrimination based on racism, sexism, classism, colonialism, and other intersectional oppressions in Canada and globally.

There has not been a report that focuses on how the cuts affect African/Black women living and working in shelters. This may indicate the exclusion, silencing, and ahistorical representation of African/Black women’s voices in the woman abuse shelter community. It is

⁶⁵ This can be seen in the subsequent section as limited resources were found on African/Black women’s experiences working in the women abuse shelter community.

clear that the cuts have impacted women. It is also clear that Women of Colour experience more systemic barriers that intensify the impacts of government cuts on their lives. More information regarding the impact of cuts on African/Black women working in the shelter community is presented in subsequent chapters of this dissertation. Moreover, an analysis that looks at how globalization, capitalism, and cuts to government spending benefited from colonialism, racism, classism, heterosexism, and other oppressions is needed. In fact, there is very little literature on how cuts in government spending and social reform policy in Ontario are influenced by intersectional violence. The importance of researching African/Black women working in shelters during governmental restructuring has now been established. This research provides answers to the often-missing experiences of African/Black women in the literature on governmental restructuring.

Khosla (2003) indicates how racism and discrimination are major contributors to the economic and social conditions of Women of Colour. She makes a direct transnational link to economic restructuring and globalization and their impacts on women, People of Colour, immigrants, refugees, youth, and seniors in Toronto and globally (p. 3). Khosla indicates a direct relationship between the over 10 years of cuts in equity programs, and ineffective “diversity” initiatives to Women of Colour and other marginalized groups, experiences of poverty in Toronto (p. 4). The report calls for immediate implementation of eight initiatives for change in public policies and programs in Toronto.

The initiatives outlined by Khosla exemplify women’s responses and women’s resistance to the conditions of economic restructuring in the form of government cuts and social policy reform in Toronto. Resistance comes in many forms. Women continue to mobilize both locally and transnationally against the economic decisions that perpetuate violence against women by

restricting women's access to shelters and other safe environments. Responses to the cuts and strategies for change are significant; they indicate that women are standing up individually and collectively against the devastating impacts of government restructuring.

In the following section, this dissertation reports on women's responses and resistance to government cuts.

Women's Responses and Resistance

Resistance to violence against women, as well as resistance to globalization through government cuts and big business initiatives, takes place both locally and globally. Historically, there are women who have organized and fought for the elimination of violence against women and other sexist and racist ideological practices that promoted and supported capitalist global relations. Today, technologies such as the Internet enable some women to communicate, organize, and support each other to resist global capitalism, its violence and its negative impacts on their lives. There are thousands of documented activist initiatives on the World Wide Web (Web) of differently located women's responses and resistance against government cuts in Canada and other countries.⁶⁶ Due to the volume of activism against restructuring, all examples cannot be examined in this dissertation. However, in this section I do briefly focus on activism against restructuring by some women in Ontario. These acts of resistance are only a microcosm of the responses and resistance to violence against women and economic restructuring globally.

On December 6, 1995, the anniversary of the Montreal Massacre,⁶⁷ the Ontario Women's Declaration was presented to the Ontario government outlining the direct results of the impacts

⁶⁶See (United Nations, 2004). Nevertheless, it is important to note that many women of African and Aboriginal ancestry locally and globally do not necessarily have the financial means for computers and Internet-based resistance due to the impact of living in impoverished conditions resulting from colonial relations.

⁶⁷The Montreal Massacre occurred on December 6, 1989, in Montreal, Quebec. Fourteen women students were murdered at their university solely on the basis of their female gender. December 6th is marked every year across Canada to remind people of the horrendous act and to advocate for the eradication of violence against women

of the cuts in social spending on women's lives in Canada. Over 130 women and organizations supported the Declaration (Ontario Women's Declaration, 1995, p. 4). Outlined in the Declaration was a list of the inequalities and injustices against women implemented by the government of Ontario. The participants stated that they were dedicated to resisting acts of violence against women in their communities. The Declaration outlined human rights that are “guaranteed” by the Canadian Charter and International law, and the Canadian government’s violations of these same rights. They argued that the cutting of services for women survivors of violence was in violation of Article 4 set out in CEDAW, which guaranteed the establishment of specialized services for abused women. The government has not officially responded to the Ontario Women's Declaration. Their lack of response indicated the ideology and practice of the state and global economy, in which investment in global capital is of utmost importance and takes precedence over the welfare and safety of women and children (see Appendix B for The Ontario Women’s Declaration).

In October 2000, women collectively mobilized in 163 countries and territories at the World March of Women (March), showing the power of transnational resistance towards ending poverty and all forms of violence directed at women and children (World March of Women, 2003). In other words, the action of women globally who are strategizing and publicly rejecting the conditions of poverty and violence from government cuts and policies, under which so many of us live, are challenging and saying “No” to systems of power. Results of these collaborative

(Denham & Gillespie, 1998, p. 15). However, thousands of Aboriginal/First Nation’s women have been murdered in Canada (currently, see the Pickton criminal case in Vancouver in 2007) and yet a memorial to them has not been established. In addition, in relation to shelters, many African/Black women and Women of Colour have been murdered in Toronto by their ex-partners and little is done by the shelter community to memorialize them. Recently, on December 26, 2005, the local gun violence in Toronto killed Jane Creba, a 15-year-old young White woman. Immediately a mock memorial was held for her, and she was featured excessively on local media. As a result, most people in Toronto know Jane Creba’s name. A few months later Chantal Dunn, a 19-year-old young Black woman was killed by gun violence—most people do not know her name. Chantal was briefly spoken about in the media who connected her murder with “a drug related” partner. This was later found not to be true. The impact of colonization and White supremacy on who gets remembered is well founded.

actions of resistance have been several policy formulations, meetings, and strategies for change, and include individual, collective, local and global feminist actions. I attended the 2000 World March of Women⁶⁸ in Ottawa as part of an action of resistance.⁶⁹ Over 50,000 differently located women marched, demanding an end to violence against women and poverty. A comprehensive list of 68 proposals called “It’s Time for Change” was presented to the government. The report outlined:

legislative and policy reform ranging from the protection of women’s special, economic and cultural rights, women’s rights, to human rights of immigrant women, Aboriginal women, and Lesbians, and the support of human rights of women around the world and the encouragement of women’s active citizenship. (Canadian Women’s March Committee, 2000)

The significance here is that the March in 2000, said to be the largest mobilization of women in Canadian history, represented numerous women’s struggles and resistance against violence against women in Ontario and globally. In most cases, women who came to the March had been already engaged in individual or collective activism against various forms of injustice and violence. Hence, this March represented a microcosm of women already engaged in broader resistance movements.

It has been already established earlier on in this research how racialized women’s voices are often silenced within the women’s movements. Some women did not or could not come to the March due to intersectional oppressions, and the safety and risk associated with protesting. Based on histories and present-day experiences with police and the mainstream women’s movement, potential dangers exist for racialized women that often exclude and deny access to

⁶⁸ “The CWMC [Canadian Women’s March Committee], a coalition of 24 national women’s organizations, has worked in tandem with over 5300 organizations in 159 countries on this campaign against women’s poverty and violence against women” (Canadian Women’s March Committee, press release, 2000).

⁶⁹ I had been marching for years in anti-violence movements and was getting sceptical about the effectiveness of it. I did feel solidarity as this action was being done simultaneously with women around the world. However, I could not help but to think about the irony of marching in the capital city, Ottawa—one of the present day headquarters of colonial operations in the North.

public displays of dissent due to police brutality and racism.⁷⁰ Moreover, White feminist domination in organizing “National Protests,” and attempts to form alliances with Women of Colour, often prevent access by marginalized groups to representation and participation due to the power imbalances ingrained in many of these relationships. Nevertheless, many racialized women did attend the March. My point is that racialized women’s resistance often occurs on a daily basis and cannot be, or is not, always quantified in one action.

Significantly, Terri Brown, the First Aboriginal women president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), presented to the United Nations a list of demands on behalf of the World March of Women (Brown, 2000).⁷¹ Fay Blaney brings voice to Aboriginal women’s resistance and anti-violence work in her writings about The Aboriginal Women’s Action Network (AWAN) in coalition with other Aboriginal women in anti-violence agencies in Vancouver. Blaney discusses a participatory action research project “on the issue of violence against Aboriginal women, as it relates to new restorative justice initiatives or alternative measure policies.” The “primary objective” of the project “is to ensure that Aboriginal women’s voices become an integral part in policies and program development” (Blaney, 2000).

Another response to economic restructuring is the World Social Forum (WSF, 2004). WSF started in 2001, and was held in Porto Allegre, Brazil. Creating alternative forms of social and economic justice through anti-globalization mechanisms is the main focus of this forum:

The World Social Forum (WSF) was created to provide an open platform to discuss strategies of resistance to the model for globalisation formulated at the annual World Economic Forum at Davos by large multinational corporations,

⁷⁰ An example of police brutality is the arrest on June 15, 2000 of Magaly San Martin, a community worker and Doctoral student at OISE/UT at Queen’s Park during an OCAP (Ontario Coalition Against Poverty) demonstration against the Tory governments cuts to social programs (Brock, 2000). Another example, is the deportation of Wendy Maxwell (aka Nzinga), an African woman, community activist from Costa Rica who was arrested at an International Women’s Day Rally in 2005 (OCAP 2006). Consequently, community activism in support of Magaly and Nzinga were widespread.

⁷¹ See full speech of Terri Brown’s presentation to the United Nation’s Deputy (October 17, 2000).

national governments, IMF, the World Bank and the WTO, which are the foot soldiers of these corporations.

Firmly committed to the belief that Another World Is Possible the WSF is an open space for discussing alternatives to the dominant neo-liberal processes, for exchanging experiences and for strengthening alliances among mass organisations, peoples' movements and civil society organisations. (WSF, 2004)

In 2003, there were over 100,000 delegates from different countries attending the WSF, and over 75,000 in January 2004 in Mumbai, India.⁷² Feminists continue to write, protest, and resist against government cuts and their impact on women abuse survivors. Acts of resistance waged through journals, newsletters, songs, and protests allow the formulation of collective consciousness, and contribute to transnational feminist movements' focus on eradicating violence against women and children.

Janet Conway, an activist and educator, writes extensively on formulating anti-globalization and anti-war social movements in Canada and globally. She particularly responds to the Ontario government's conservative restructuring and cuts to social services throughout the 1990s and again in 2007. She also looks at how identity, cultures, limited resources, and coalition dynamics play their parts in community based coalition movements.⁷³

The arguments presented here about transnational feminist movements as anti-colonial, anti-racist movements around the world indicate the existence of individual and collective actions and strategies that challenge government-sanctioned violence against women. Any women who resist against violence sanctioned by the government and society are participating consciously or unconsciously in a struggle to eradicate all violence against women and children. I argue that only through an integrated feminist, anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-oppression praxis can transnational feminist movements successfully operate. This research adds to the continued

⁷² In January 2007, the seventh WSF was held in Nairobi, Kenya.

⁷³ See Conway's (2004) *Identity, Place, Knowledge: Social Movements Contesting Globalization*.

resistance because it includes, formulates, and practices integrated, feminist, anti-colonial, anti-racist, art-based methods of resistance, while simultaneously recording African/Black women's experiences. Another important contextual factor to consider in regard to the experiences of African/Black women working in the woman abuse shelter community is the operational restructuring of shelters that happened at the same time that government economic restructuring was occurring. In the following section, organizational restructuring processes in shelters are described.

Organizational Restructuring in the Woman Abuse Shelter Community

This section outlines the organizational restructuring and its impacts on women shelter workers. The purpose of this section is to examine shelters restructuring processes to illustrate the environment and conditions in which African/Black women work in.

As the early 1990s ushered in an era of fiscal cutbacks and the non-profit and social service sectors braced for the worst. Interval House's Collective and Board decided the organization had to evolve if it was going to continue to thrive. Alternate funding sources needed to be tapped. The initial organization needed to be strengthened. New partnerships needed to be forged. Interval House had to evolve from delivering crisis intervention to providing a continuum of services, designed to lead women on a solid path to independence. (Interval House, 2003)

Following strides made by the feminist movement in the interval between 1960s-70s, a backlash against feminism was surfacing by the mid 1980s when feminists had made some improvements in advocating for some women. The political system and the media claimed that women were now "equal to men" and that feminism was deceiving women. As a result, feminism was yet again criticized and deemed as "men hating" (MacIvor, 2003). This backlash

continues today, and supports the misogynist writings of Donna Laframboise of the National Post (1998, November 14) and R.E.A.L. women.⁷⁴ MacIvor writes:

For the “new right,” the only way to save the traditional family unit is to shift the provision of social welfare services away from the state and back to family, while simultaneously putting women back into the home to do this unpaid work. (p. 146)

Perhaps the backlash against feminism that continues today is an informal reason for the silencing of the organizational restructuring processes in the abused women shelter community. Women are being routinely violated in their homes and workplaces, and their voices are still being marginalized by patriarchal government policies and practices. In this climate, the silencing in the woman abuse shelter community is assumed understandable. The notion of restructuring has been prevalent since the early 1990s, and seems to be consistent with the broader backlash against feminism, which has come about through economic restructuring by the government of Ontario. The nature of restructuring in the shelters in Ontario is the organizational shift from collectively run shelters⁷⁵ to hierarchically run models.⁷⁶ In Chapter Seven, the participants in this research shed some light on this phenomenon.

Due to organizational restructuring processes, by the mid-1990s, women-centered ideology in shelters was being replaced by hierarchical and patriarchal ideologies and operations. After the continuance of the government’s capitalist agenda, shelters that had been collectively run by feminists and womanists (Walker, 1982a, 1982b; Taylor, 1998)⁷⁷ involved in community

⁷⁴ R.E.A.L. (Realistic, Equal, Active for Life) women, established in 1984 by a “pro-family” group “...was intended to be an anti-feminist counterweight to the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC)” (MacIvor, 2003, p. 146).

⁷⁵ Feminists’ collectives consist of groups of 8-12 women who manage and make decisions in the shelter, ideally through consensus or majority rule.

⁷⁶ Hierarchical models operate using a “top to bottom” model and usually have an Executive Director and other managerial positions. However, Collectives can also be run using internal hierarchical models.

⁷⁷ Womanist is a term coined by Alice Walker (1982a) developed and used mainly by African/Black women and Women of Colour to describe their view and praxis of women-centeredness. Womanist was also used to distinguish

activism were being replaced by structures with Executive Directors, Managers, and Program Managers. There are only two Collectives left in the woman abuse shelter community in Toronto.⁷⁸ Accordingly, due to governmental cuts in social spending, shelters found themselves scrambling for financial stability. Shelters became further dichotomized between shelters that had a lot of support and resources, and those that had little support and resources. Consequently, shelters that were established in poorer neighbourhoods, those dedicated to immigrant women and Women of Colour, received even fewer resources. For instance, Shirley Samaroo, a shelter established in 1988, was opened specifically for Women of Colour and immigrant women (Agnew, 1998, p. 100). This shelter was closed in 1994 and reopened as Yorktown shelter. Redwood, a shelter located in the Parkdale community, which opened in 1991 to provide services for immigrant and refugee women, did not receive full funding until 2000. Women in Transition (WIT), a shelter with a site for women with mental health issues and another one for abused women, closed down in 2002. Also, North York Women's Shelter restructured and changed from a collective to hierarchal model. In 2003, the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) reopened a new shelter for abused women and children called Arise in the former site of one of the WIT houses. Since then, Stop 86, a shelter for young women between the ages of 16–25, has closed and relocated to the YWCA's Woodlawn residence.

Some of the oldest shelters such as Interval House, Emily Stowe, Ernestine's Women's Shelter, North York Women's Shelter, and YWCA Women's Shelter, experienced some difficulties, but remained open due to fundraising initiatives and supportive community networking. For instance, Interval House and Emily Stowe have fundraised, built, and/or secured

Black women and Women of Colour from White feminism that did not support them or include Black women in their fight for equality (see John, 2003, pp. 58-61).

⁷⁸Ernestine and Interval House are the only two collectives left in the woman abuse shelter community in Toronto (Cowan, personal communication, 2003).

property to accommodate larger shelters.⁷⁹ Interval House, in 2003, the year marking its 30th anniversary, launched what they called “a major Capital Campaign” to raise funds for a new shelter, which opened in the fall of 2004 (Interval House, 2003, p. 1). Emily Stowe Shelter for Women shared in their 2002/2003 Annual Report:

Last year, we told you of our plans to build a new shelter on the existing shelter site. It is with great pleasure that I am able to tell you that at 5:00 p.m. today we put in our first shovel and broke ground. I hope some of you were able to attend our Ground Breaking ceremony, and I would like to thank all those who attended this milestone with us. This is a very proud moment for the Staff, Board of Directors, Volunteers, our valued Funders, our consultants and especially the women and children who come to Emily Stowe. (Emily Stowe Shelter, Annual Report, 2002/2003)

In 2000, Interval House introduced the Building Economic Self-Sufficiency (B.E.S.S.) program to prepare women who have left the shelter for employment (Interval House, 2003, p. 3).⁸⁰

Interestingly, though annual reports for shelters are supposed to be available to the public, obtaining specific information pertaining to programs on violence against women and children through the Ministry of Community and Social Services/Ministry of Children and Youth Services has been difficult. In April 2004, I requested copies of 10 Toronto shelters’ 1994–2004 annual reports.⁸¹ An example of how some shelters discussed their organizational restructuring processes is the following:

⁷⁹ In 2005, both shelters moved into larger residences.

⁸⁰ All information described above is either information taken from shelters’ public information such as annual reports, flyers, websites, and/or common knowledge within the shelter community. I have worked in the community for years and as such have also witnessed the closing and reopening of many shelters in Toronto during the recent years of organizational restructuring. Hence, my standpoint acts also as evidence and analysis. In addition, all of the information revealed is public knowledge and hence pseudonyms were not used.

⁸¹ In July 2004, I received a letter from the Ministry Community and Social Services/Ministry of Children and Youth Services stating that I needed to pay \$438.20 for the copies of the annual reports from shelters. I wrote a letter to the Ministry requesting a fee waiver on the grounds that I am a student. I have received annual reports for some shelters in Toronto from the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the fee was waived. However, I did not receive reports from many shelters, especially during the years in which restructuring took place, with the exception of Emily Stowe Shelter for Women. Perhaps this is coincidence or perhaps the silencing in the shelter community extends into the documentation of organizational changes (see Appendix C).

In December the staff of the shelter was advised that this restructuring would be taking place over the next 6 months and were given notice of termination of their current employment contracts. Staff were also advised that new job descriptions were being developed along with a review of personnel policies. Staff were invited to apply for the newly posted positions in April 1999. (Emily Stowe Shelter for Women, President's Report in Annual Report 1998/1999, p. 7)

Restructuring in the woman abuse shelter community has been a silent process.

Collectives are being replaced quietly with Executive Directors; as this is happening; full-time staff, relief staff, and part-time workers are being removed quietly from decision-making processes that impact their work. Silencing of the organizational restructuring processes in shelters mirrors the silencing of the cuts in social spending for anti-violence initiatives. Similar to the government cuts in social spending, the organizational restructuring processes in shelters are also having negative impacts on women. In the following section the impact of restructuring on shelter workers is revealed.

Impact: Shelter Workers

The Emily Stowe Shelter encourages the empowerment of women who work at and live in the shelter so that these women may challenge the structures that continue to oppress all women. (Emily Stowe Shelter for Women, Philosophy in Annual Report 1998/1999)

Restructuring processes have varied from shelter to shelter. In an environment of patriarchal hierarchies sanctioned by government cuts to social services, and poorly functioning Collectives, tensions intensified between Collective members and their organizations around issues relating to race, class, and sexuality. In many cases, full-time collective staff and relief staff have been asked to reapply for their jobs as the shelter transitions from a collectively-run organization to a hierarchical structure. For example, Nellie's let go its entire collective staff by restructuring in 1998. This was after a history of racial conflict from 1992 with board members,

and among and between staff at Nellie's (Agnew, 1998, p. 232).⁸² Similarly, Emily Stowe Shelter, now called "Dr. Roz Healing Place," asked all their staff to reapply for their jobs in 1998, as the Collective was restructured into a hierarchical model that included an Executive Director (Emily Stowe Shelter for Women, President's Report in Annual Report 1998/1999, p. 7).⁸³ Shelter workers, all with over 10 years of work experience in the shelters, were replaced. Some of the women replaced in shelters were older women, who often had little formal education and/or had been educated at an older age. Many replaced shelter workers were African/Black women and Women of Colour.⁸⁴ These women had children, had dedicated many years of their lives to the woman abuse community, usually without any recognition for it. The stories these women tell are quite different from the accounts given in Annual reports of shelters about their restructuring processes.

Some shelters have externally restructured, and others have reorganized within the agency. For instance, Emily Stowe Shelter states in their Executive Director's report:

Due to restructuring in the past year, we have had to create some new positions. These new positions include: Executive Director, Administrative Assistant/House Manager, Program Manager, and the BOW [The Building Opportunities for Women program] project coordinator. The other positions in the shelter include: Counsellors, Child Advocate Workers, Volunteer Coordinator, Ex-Resident Coordinator. We have also developed and expanded a number of services. (Emily Stowe Shelter for Women, Executive Director Report, Annual Report 1998/1999)

⁸² The media documented some of the racial tensions at Nellie's. However, there were also other complexities including homophobia, and classism during a largely messy restructuring process sanctioned in part by the Tory government's cuts.

⁸³ Based on a number of factors, most staff at Emily Stowe and other shelters where organizational restructuring occurred did not reapply for their jobs. I worked at Emily Stowe Shelter and resigned a few months before all full-time staff were asked to reapply for their jobs. Most women did not reapply (including my mother) and were left unemployed and/or scrambling for jobs.

⁸⁴ All former full-time White workers either returned to work at the shelter for a brief while and/or found managerial positions in other organizations. Moreover, White women shelter workers do get restructured and/or fired but the impact differs compared to Black women and Women of Colour based on their social locations and power within shelter organizations.

In contrast, Interval House is a Collective that has taken up a business-oriented hierarchical structure.⁸⁵ Over the years, the Collective has restructured the operations, the hiring/firing policies, and the managerial positions within the shelter. Full-time Collective members have been given managerial titles such as Manager of Children Services, Human Resource Manager, and Manager of Finances.⁸⁶ In 2002, relief workers were asked to sign contracts stating that they agreed to be fired at any time without cause as a requirement to keep their jobs.⁸⁷ More recently, in January of 2004, Interval House started hiring new full-time staff who, due to the restructuring processes, do not have the opportunity to become Collective members or to participate in decision making at the same level as Collective managers.⁸⁸

Even more recently, in fall 2005, 90% of the relief workers at Interval House were let go due to organizational restructuring; some were paid, based on hours recently worked, while others were not given anything.⁸⁹ Also, a collective member who had been working at Interval House for over 20 years was fired, thus reducing the total number of Collective members once again. The forces that have pushed for this type of restructuring are analyzed in Chapter Seven, where women discuss their own experiences of organizational restructuring.⁹⁰ Collectively, there

⁸⁵ Interval House states in its philosophy that it has a non-hierarchical model; however, data suggests that this is not the case.

⁸⁶ I recently in 2006 asked for a letter stating that I worked at Interval House. The Human Resource Manager who is a Collective member signed it using a managerial title (Personal communication, 2004).

⁸⁷ Many of my colleagues who were counsellors signed these contracts in order to maintain their work shifts even though they did not agree with them; they did this because of their financial obligations. I received a copy of the agreement from a colleague who worked at Interval House.

⁸⁸ In 2004, there were three full-time Counsellors and two Children's Advocate Workers who had been hired at Interval House. They were not a part of the Collective and did not have the same decision-making powers as Collective members. Two full-time Collective members left the organization in less than a year and they have not been replaced. This suggests that access to decision making is being left in fewer and fewer hands.

⁸⁹ On December 13, 2005, I received a call from my employers at Interval House regarding some receipts I had requested earlier. There was no mention of my emails inquiring about my position. When I asked about the restructuring and my job, I was told that I had not worked for them for one year, and as a result I had made myself inactive for employment; furthermore, I was told that legally the organization [feminist – my emphasis] does not have to send me a letter. I had worked there for over 12 years. All that history was deleted, and this was the first time I was hearing about this new policy.

⁹⁰ Again, pseudonyms are given to all shelters where women participants worked; however, the shelters where I worked are revealed as part of the evidence my standpoint provides. This also supports the theoretical and

has not been a feminist voice of action questioning or condemning the way in which organizational restructuring is occurring in the woman abuse shelter community.

Organizational restructuring in shelters has also impacted the relationship between full-time and relief staff. Relief staffs' relationship with the full-time worker had been a supportive one, as relief covered and replaced full-time workers' shifts. In some cases this has changed dramatically with the restructuring process. For instance, night shifts, which had been the responsibility of full-time workers, have now been relegated to relief staff only⁹¹ in some shelters. Relief staff, many of whom are African/Black women and Women of Colour, despite doing most of the frontline work, are denied access to decision-making processes that affect them.⁹² Often, decisions are made, and relief staff are only later informed⁹³ about what their new duties are. In many cases, relief staff are not given any medical benefits, even though in some cases they work more than 40-hour weeks.⁹⁴ As a result of restructuring issues of class inequalities were emphasized more as clear distinctions between salaries among relief workers, full-time staff, and executive directors in shelters existed.⁹⁵

methodological framework for this research, which is to stop the silencing of African/Black women's voices and experiences in the shelter community.

⁹¹In the mid-1990s, many full-time shelter workers in several shelters in Toronto stopped working overnight shifts. Relief staff then became the only staff that would work overnights. This is based on my experiences working at shelters and informal conversations with other shelter workers in Toronto.

⁹²Based on my experiences, the majority of women working in shelters who do not have access to decision-making have been predominantly those in positions such as Housekeepers and Cooks. They are most often African/Black women and Women of Colour, specifically Black and/or Spanish speaking. Other positions that have limited access to decision-making processes are the Relief Children's Advocate Workers, Relief Counsellors, and where there is an Executive Director, then the full-time staff.

⁹³ In my experiences, this is done usually by a memo taped to the desk, and more recently by group e-mail.

⁹⁴I have not received any medical benefits in any of my relief positions despite having worked over 40-hour weeks at various shelters. The data asserts that African/Black women are predominantly in positions such as Relief worker (Housekeepers, Cooks, and Cleaners) suggesting that the woman abuse community reflects occupational segregation based on race. Furthermore, research participants in subsequent chapters discuss hierarchies of oppression based on race more fully.

⁹⁵ I asked the Ministry of Community and Social Services for a salary range for shelter staff for 2003–2004. According to the Ministry, Executive Directors salaries range between \$51,572–\$78,446; Counsellors range between \$32,613–\$44,815; and Relief Counsellors range between \$12,999–\$45,451 (see Appendix D for complete salary ranges). An Executive Director at a shelter in Toronto estimated the average wage of Executive Directors between \$50,000+–\$100,000+ a year plus benefits. She estimated the average full-time staff salary between \$38,000–\$60,000

Presently, there is no collective voice speaking for the relief workers within the woman abuse shelter community. In addition, full-time workers in hierarchically run shelters have also experienced drastic changes and have been told, in the case of one shelter in North York, that they are not able to sleep or lie down during overnight shifts; as a result, the couch—a “convenience”—which had always been a part of working in shelters, was taken away.⁹⁶

Another feature of the restructuring process has been the lack of solidarity between different shelters and workers due to limited government-tied aid (resource restraints), which has caused the shelter community to remain silent in regards to the restructuring process, opting to be very self-protective of their own shelters and their own jobs. For instance, since the Emily Stowe Shelter restructuring in 1998, two other shelters were restructured and now have Executive Directors. Conversely, there have been some responses from women working in the woman abuse shelter community to these restructuring processes.

Shelter Workers' Responses to Organizational Restructuring

Unionists have a saying that “the best union organizer is a bad boss.” People who work in women's shelters don't, I think, expect to get rich doing it, and even though their job is to deal with victims of injustice, they sometimes take it on themselves to help fund their employer through their own (low) wages. However, they don't tolerate favouritism or corruption in the workplace – that, I think, is what often sends them looking for a union. Of course, a good manager in an easy situation may be a bad manager in a difficult situation. Cuts probably create the conditions for unionization, without directly causing it. (Personal Communication, August 13, 2004, from Randy, Robinson, Communications Officer for OPSEU)

plus benefits and the relief staff salary between \$12– \$20 an hour with no benefits (Cowan, personal communication, 2004). My hourly wage as a Relief Children's Advocate Worker and Relief Counsellor in several shelters has been between \$12 and \$20.

⁹⁶ This information was obtained through preliminary interviews with women.

A major response to the organizational restructuring in shelters is unionization.⁹⁷ Many shelter workers are becoming unionized to protect their jobs, especially within non-Collective organizations.⁹⁸ Out of the 160 organizations receiving transfer payments from the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's services, 10 women organizations were organized by OPSEU and all joined unions in the last decade except for one organization (OPSEU, 2004). The organizations are not all woman abuse shelters, but all the agencies work with survivors of woman abuse in some capacity. The following shelters and agencies in Ontario joined OPSEU:

⁹⁷ As a relief worker at Emily Stowe shelter in Scarborough, I signed my first union card in the parking lot of a convenient store. My mother a full-time Collective member initiated the unionization process at the shelter as an immediate response to organizational restructuring.

⁹⁸ I spoke to a communication representative of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), as I wanted to see if there was a correlation between governments' economic restructuring, organizational restructuring of shelters, and unionization in Ontario.

Table 1***Woman Abuse Shelters Which Are Members of OPSEU***

Certification date	Employer name	Unit type	Regional office
1981-Oct-08	Centre for Spanish-Speaking Peoples	FT/PT	Toronto
1994-Feb-25	Women's Shelter of Georgina Inc.	FT/PT	Orillia
1994-Jul-22	Homeward Family Shelter (Juliette's place)	FT	Toronto
1996-Feb-14	Sedna Women's Shelter (Denise House)	FT/PT	Oshawa
1997-Oct-22	Interim Place	FT/PT	Toronto
1997-Dec-08	Thunder Bay Emergency Shelter	FT/PT	Thunder Bay
2001-Jun-08	Oshawa Durham Rape Crisis Centre	FT/PT	Oshawa
2002-Jun-21	North York Women's Shelter	FT/PT	Toronto
2002-Aug-13	The Assaulted Women's Helpline	FT/PT	Toronto
2003-Dec-10	The Salvation Army Evangeline Residence	FT/PT	Toronto

All but one shelter was unionized between 1994 and 2003. This chart gives evidence that there is a relation between economic restructuring, organizational restructuring of shelters, and unionization.

In June 1999, Yorktown's shelter frontline staff went on strike to protest against safety conditions in the shelter (CUPE, 1999, p. 1). Management insisted that having one person on staff overnight was not a safety risk; however, the staff that actually worked the overnight shifts disagreed (p. 1). A rally was held on July 15, 1999, to support the workers; CUPE published

news releases of the rally in support of the workers. The strike lasted three months (CUPE, 2002).⁹⁹

In 2004, 38 counsellors (frontline staff) were locked out by the management at Yellow Brick House, a shelter for abused woman and children in Aurora, Ontario. The Executive Director stated that the frontline workers needed to have a Social Work degree and speak a language other than English in order to support the growing immigrant population (Kalinowski, 2004). According to information published in regard to this situation, the management at Yellow Brick House wanted to terminate nine shelter workers in order to hire new frontline workers that met their requirements. The union (CUPE) was involved and the workers had been advocating for their jobs (CUPE, n.d.).¹⁰⁰

This research continues to seek and record the missing links, break the silence, and in addition, analyze the restructuring processes of shelters by exploring African/Black women's experiences (the participants of this research project) within the shelter community in Toronto. This research is intended to facilitate responses and resistance to the silencing in the woman abuse shelter community in Toronto. The local political, social, and economic contexts in which the woman abuse shelter community in Toronto functions has been established. This is significant, as it outlines the context required to understand the political economy in which the experiences of the participants in this study are developed. In the following sections, I explore how the experiences of African/Black women, Aboriginal Women, and Women of Colour

⁹⁹ See Haynes (2007) for information on unionization and abused women's shelters.

¹⁰⁰ I have recently (August 2004) assisted 9 African/Black women and Women of Colour in writing a letter outlining racism, poor managerial skills, and bad working conditions at a recently restructured shelter (2002) in Toronto. They took the letter to their union representative and sent a copy to their Executive Director. The Executive Director was fired and an union investigation began. Four participants in this study work at that particular shelter, and while participating in this research experienced repeated episodes of violence and unrest at their workplace.

working in the woman abuse shelter community are silenced and excluded from the woman abuse literature.

***Critical Review on the Experiences of African/Black Women
and Women of Colour Working in Shelters***

In 1989 when I came to the shelter, staff people (*sic*) wouldn't identify racism, and even few women of colour would take the initiative to name it. Sometimes it would be so obvious that the issue we were talking about was racism yet nobody would name it. It was such a hot issue, the minute that somebody mentioned the "R" word everybody would be silent. (Agnew, 1998, p. 235)

Few results were found in the search for resources and literature on the experiences of African/Black women and Women of Colour working in shelters in Toronto. However, a few sources were found that highlighted themes of exclusion and silence. Jill Vickers, in her article "Thinking About Violence," examines the early issues in Canadian Women's studies. She examines the differences between one brief article featured in 1983 on racialized and poor women, to the 1991 issue of *Canadian Women Studies* in which racialized women and disabled women were discussed in several articles (Vickers, p. 234). Recently, in a 2006 issue of *Canadian Women's Studies*, editors and articles from African/Black women, Women of Colour, and Aboriginal women are prominently featured (see Nwosu, 2006; Hyman & Mason, 2006; Latchford, 2006; Sajnani & Nadeau, 2006).

In particular, the recent issue highlights some articles on shelters workers experiences.¹⁰¹ Additionally, two books reviewed had chapters that specifically looked at some issues faced by Black women and/or Women of Colour, and Aboriginal women working in the woman abuse shelter community in Canada. The book *Listening to the Thunder: Advocates Talk About the*

¹⁰¹ See Latchford (2006) article, "Gimme Shelter in 2006: A Personal Account and Political Account of the Women's Shelter Movement", for a reflection on one woman's story working in shelters as a Black-bi-racial lesbian woman in Toronto.

Battered Women's Movement (1996), features a collection of articles written on various issues relating to advocates who worked in the woman abuse shelter community throughout Canada. In this book, there are several articles on issues pertaining to the experiences of African/Black women, Aboriginal/First Nation women, and Women of Colour working in the woman abuse community. In the article, "Uprooted and Abused," shelter workers talk about the importance of respecting women's religious freedoms as they work with Muslim women (Timmins, 1995, p. 43). In a post September 11, 2001 (9/11) period, the experiences of Muslim women¹⁰² are important especially in an environment of increasing Islamophobia.

In "Being Many," Ninu Kang talks about her experiences as a Woman of Colour working in agencies that support immigrant communities in Vancouver.¹⁰³ Kang talks about some of her experiences of exclusion and racism working in violence against women's communities (Timmins, 1995, p. 83). In the article, "Wanted: Women of Colour Encouraged to Apply," Sonya Boyce discusses the challenges of diversifying women's organizations. Boyce looks at how feminist organizations hire Non-White women (her words) in order to diversify their agency without adequately addressing the issues of discrimination and other forms of oppression. Boyce argues that racism is often the result (Timmins, 1995, p. 235). In "White Racism: Power + Prejudice = Racism," a Woman of Colour (called Amrit in the text) writes about her experience of racism working in the woman abuse community. She reveals the racism she experienced while working with the White women survivors of abuse. Her mainly White co-workers at the shelter (Timmins, 1995, p. 77) perpetuated the racism that she experienced. The experiences of exclusion and silencing were often echoed in the stories of these women.

¹⁰² Muslim women here include all women who practice Islam including women of African/Black descent, a group that is often missed when referring to Muslims in the anti-imperialist, anti-Islamophobia discourse.

¹⁰³ Also see, *No where to Turn? Responding to Partner Violence Against Immigrant and Visible Minority women: Voices of Frontline workers* (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2004).

In Search of a Safe Place, Abused Women and Culturally Sensitive Services by Vijay Agnew (1998), includes sections on women working in the shelters, echoing stories of exclusion and silencing. Agnew examines the mission statements of several shelters in the Toronto area that recognized the integrated multiple oppressions of women based on race, class, and gender. Agnew discusses the publicized conflict between Black staff members and middle class White Board members at Nellie's in the late 1990s (p. 232). A brief section highlights the experiences of racism of non-White residents in woman abuse shelters, and another section examines how two women working in shelters experienced racism (pp. 215–235). Through one Black woman's experiences, Agnew further discusses how racially diversifying the staff at Emily Stowe Shelter was reviewed, as was the need for representation for clients who come to shelters (p. 233). Another shelter worker interviewed in Agnew's book speaks about the practice of systemic racism in shelters. She states that there is a double standard in White women's feminism:

[I]n the shelter movement you have White women in positions of power making decisions and not wanting to share that power, but they are feminists and they believe that oppression is wrong, yet when it comes to their own organization they want to hold onto that power and they don't want to share it, that is a contradiction. (Agnew, 1998, p. 234)

A woman counsellor of South Asian descent speaks of the racism she experienced¹⁰⁴ from the White residents at Shirley Samaroo House, and the dedication of this shelter to address racist violence:

White women [residents in the shelters] were racist towards me because of my [South Asian dress]. But it's not just the dress – its how they think about people who dress like that...[In addition], I was the counsellor and she the client. I had to incorporate [anti-racism education] in my counselling. There were times when we also had to deal with racism from White women against women of other cultures. It was problematic – because we are a crisis shelter dealing with violence [against women]. [We know that] a woman is in pain when she leaves her home, [but] we had to start a process of [anti-racist] education for her, what are we going to do in

¹⁰⁴ Also see experiences of South Asian women in a Canadian shelter (Preyra, 1988).

terms of the empowerment of the other women that are experiencing racism? We had to grapple with and come to terms with the fact that, yes a [white woman] is in crisis, but that doesn't give her the right to oppress other people because of her crisis. We had to support her, at the same time saying to her, "No – it's not okay to be racist". It was a very, very hard thing to do. (Agnew, p. 137)

This quote exemplifies the constraints of trying to establish anti-racist practices in a racist colonial environment where funding is dependent on colonial "tied aid" relations. Experiences of the avoidance and silencing of the word and issues of racism within shelters are further discussed by the participants in Agnew's study (p. 234). Agnew affirms that anti-oppression policies and mandatory workshops for all staff are said to have helped, but not eradicated, the problem of racism in shelters (p. 235). Agnew's two interviews with African/Black women workers in shelters in Toronto are very valuable, and give two individual profiles of some of the experiences of Black women working in the shelter community. Agnew and the other authors reviewed give evidence that African/Black women and Women of Colour experience racism and other forms of oppression within the shelters. However, there still is limited literature on shelter workers with the majority of the literature reviewed predominantly discussing White women's experiences (see Leblanc, 1998). Further research and theorization on the experiences of African/Black women working in the woman abuse shelter community in Toronto are needed to record the collective histories of African/Black women's experiences, and to examine collectively the actions of resistance against White supremacy and racism, as well as other forms of interlocking oppressions within these same environments.

Summary

This chapter examined the political economy in which shelters function, providing background information needed to understand the contexts of the shelter community in Toronto.

First, I briefly examined the history of woman abuse shelters in Toronto giving evidence of the social and historical background. Second, I outlined some current statistics and information in relation to shelter associations and affiliations. Additionally, an example of a comprehensive anti-oppression policy in one shelter and women-centered philosophies in other shelters were briefly examined, providing evidence of how effective procedures and praxis in shelter communities are needed; this is expanded in Chapters Seven and Eight. Third, I described government cuts to social services, social policy reform, their impact, and women's responses and resistance locally and globally. Also discussed were the organizational restructuring processes of woman abuse shelters, and their impacts and women's responses. Finally, I critically reviewed the literature on African/Black women and Women of Colour shelter workers experiences and found that there was little documentation. I concluded by supporting the rationale for this research as the experiences and resistance of African/Black women utilizing an integrated feminist, anti-colonial, anti-racist, art-based methodology is needed in an environment where African/Black women's voices and experiences working in shelters are often silenced.

Chapter Three presents the theoretical elaborations that inform this research.

Chapter Three:

Theoretical Elaborations

Introduction

The colonial world is a world cut in two. The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations. In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens, the spokesman of the settler and his rule of oppression...the agents of government speak the language of pure force. The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of the peace; yet he is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the native.¹⁰⁵ (Frantz Fanon, 1966)

As Smith (1999) affirms, colonialism is one expression of imperialism, adding that both terms are deeply interconnected. She expands her analysis of imperialism, establishing that it has been used in four different ways that denote the complexity of its layers: as economic expansion, as the subjugation of others, as an idea or a spirit with many forms of realization, and as a discursive field of knowledge (pp. 21–22). The imperialist view from the centre of Europe resulted in the creation of the notion of the West and the Rest: that is, the creation of the “others” (p. 23).

This chapter examines the theoretical underpinnings of my research, and discusses how these speak to the voice and experiences of the participants in this study. I situate my theoretical framework discussion in relation to colonialism and its histories, pedagogies, theories, and critiques. African/Black feminism as a pillar of anti-colonial theory is very central in the discussion of this study of oppression and resistance. First, I outline the justifications of my discursive approach for this study, which are supported by the subsequent sections. Second, I establish why art-based resistance, anti-colonial and African/Black feminists’ theory and praxis

¹⁰⁵ For further elaborations on colonialism see Amadiume (1987), Churchill (1993), Diop (1991), Dubois (1965), Fanon (2000), John (2003) Loomba (1998), Nkrumah (2000), Sunseri (2000), Trinh (1989).

are needed to understand the locations, identities, experiences, and resistance of African/Black women shelter workers in Toronto. And I argue that this understanding is required for the continued production of counter-hegemonic knowledges, theorization, and activism that serve as strategies for eradicating the intersectional forms of violence sanctioned by colonial states in Canada and globally. Thirdly, I briefly examine what colonialism is, look at colonial histories and their impacts, and discuss the creation of colonial subjects, all of which characterize the colonial contexts in which African/Black women live and work, both locally and globally. In this section, I also discuss why this research requires an integrated anti-colonial framework and praxis that addresses the colonial legacies which both impact African/Black women shelter workers' experiences, and explain and ignite their resistance. This theoretical framework is important, given that African/Black women shelter workers exist in a context that continues to be marked by violent colonial relations.

Next, I examine a variety of anti-colonial pedagogies, including anti-colonial theories, decolonization, anti-racism, anti-colonial feminisms, and their critiques. Anti-colonialism acts as an umbrella practice, connecting resistance to intersectional oppressions. I also discuss African/Black feminisms as tools of anti-colonialism that can support African/Black women's resistance. Specifically, I discuss the concepts and elaborations of African/Black feminisms and their relationship with anti-colonial theory and praxis. In this section, I explore essentialized colonial identity constructions of African/Black women in Canada, and investigate how African/Black women resist these fixed notions by utilizing anti-colonial, African/Black feminist theories and practices.

Finally, I discuss transnational elaborations that depict African/Black women's art-based resistance as an illustration of the important historical and present-day use of Creative Resistance against colonial violence in African/Black communities.

Justification of My Theoretical Framework

I chose to use a critical discursive approach as the theoretical framework for my research for four main reasons. First, using my integrated framework of African/Black women's knowledges—knowledges that are often silenced or appropriated by state-sanctioned (the ruling power's) dominance and intersectional oppression--as the primary theoretical lens for the project, is a political decision and action. Hence, I resist the use of 'traditional' White male-dominated knowledge used extensively in Academia by premising my standpoint in anti-colonial and African/Black feminist notions. In addition, the use of art and Creative Resistance as theoretical elaborations of revolutionary change challenges research and methodologies that privilege Eurocentric knowledge to the exclusion of all others. This practice is essential for decolonizing dominant theories and methodologies.

Second, my integrated framework combines theory with action, a methodological practice that is essential for both understanding and practicing resistance. Thus, this research is about both theory and praxis. Hence, African/Black women's praxis of resistance in their daily lived and work experiences creates knowledges and theory critical to this research. Also, actively creating resistance with African/Black women requires an integrated framework, since colonialism and other imperialist sanctioned violence impact theorization and praxis.

Thirdly, I am an African woman researching African/Black women's experiences working in the shelters. My integrated framework gives the background needed to provide the

analytical tools required to understand the context of the lives of the participants and researcher in this study.

Finally, this research adds to and expands African/Black feminist anti-colonial thought. As African women, we are surviving colonialism, and our resistance is grounded in the connections we forge based on our shared and heterogeneous identities. African/Black feminist, anti-colonial, art-based thought, incorporates African and Black women's theories, knowledges, and experiences, both locally and globally, creating a fluid transnational identity.¹⁰⁶

My Critical Discursive Framework

For this study, I utilized an integrated, anti-colonial, art-based theoretical framework, which I defined as follows: An integrated, anti-colonial, art-based theoretical framework utilizes theories developed through African/Black feminist (women-centred) lenses that look critically at race (racism), colonial histories (colonialism), and other forms of oppression (classism, sexism, ableism, ageism, heterosexism). These elaborations of theory and praxis are also formed to support the eradication of these same oppressions (violence), and as such, support notions of resistance against them.

African/Black Feminist Anti-Colonial Art-Based Thought

African/Black feminist, anti-colonial, art-based thought is taken from an integrated anti-colonial, transnational feminism, critical race feminism, Marxist feminism, identity politics,

¹⁰⁶From my extensive travels, I have experienced the transnational (international) impact that colonialism has had on my life and on the lives of other African/Black women. I have experienced racism and colonialism each time I have travelled inside and outside of Canada. There is no separation of identity and nationalism when confronted by racist, sexist, colonial assumptions, and actions. Hence, no matter where I am from, I am Ghanaian, I am Jamaican, and I am Brazilian. I am still African and treated with disdain by the colonialist, the White supremacist, and those who internalized White supremacy. This also includes elite African/Black people and People of Colour. I am not saying here that we as African/Black women are homogeneous. We are very diverse peoples who come from differently located communities and who have different experiences based on intersectional factors. Even though the experiences of racism and colonialism may be different, we collectively experience oppression based on a racialized (racist) identity that has been created and maintained by a colonial, White supremacist society. As African women, we also are transnationally struggling against and resisting multiple forms of oppression.

Creative Resistance, lesbian and queer theory, and other emancipatory theoretical elaborations.¹⁰⁷ African/Black feminist, anti-colonial, art-based thought records, examines, strategizes, and changes ideologies and structures, individually, collectively, and transnationally. By relating to African/Black women's histories of violence and present day experiences, in the context of colonial oppressive societies,¹⁰⁸ African/Black feminist, anti-colonial, art-based thought fosters resistance, as well as creating and sustaining indigenous African women knowledges.

The significance of this integrated theoretical framework for this research is that it provides both the lens needed to understand African/Black women's locations, identities, and experiences working in shelters, and the apparatus to simultaneously engage in resistance. Hence, the integrated framework documents counter-hegemonic knowledges, theorization, and activism from the voices and actions of women working in shelters. This produces revolutionary change that challenges intersectional forms of violence established through colonial oppression both locally and globally. In the following section, I characterize the colonial contexts by examining the nature of colonialism, colonial histories, the impacts of colonialism, and the creation of colonial subjects.

What is Colonialism?

The themes of control, conquest, exclusion, exploitation of mind, and the role of religion are highlighted in this section because they speak to the reality of colonization. In her conceptualization of colonialism's control, Loomba (1998) asserts that colonialism is:

¹⁰⁷ See critical race feminism (Wing, 1997), identity politics (hooks, 1989; Combahee River Collective, 1978), Creative Resistance (Timothy, 2002), and lesbian and queer theory (Wekker, 1997).

¹⁰⁸ This is only one elaboration of African/Black feminist anti-colonial thought and it has been developed after reviewing many notions of African feminist thought and anti-colonialism. This elaboration is significant as it adds context and supports the methodological notions within this research. See other elaborations (Collins, 2000; Wane, Delivsky, & Lawson, 2002).

the conquest and control of other people's land and goods...it is not merely the expansion of various European powers into Asia, Africa or the Americas from the 16th century onwards but rather a recurrent and widespread feature of human history. (p. 2)

In her elaboration, Loomba goes on to differentiate between earlier "pre-capitalist" colonialisms such as the Aztecs, Ottoman Empire and the Moors, and the modern colonialism that was established alongside capitalism in Western Europe (pp. 2-3). The latter form of colonization is characterized not only by the extraction of peoples, goods, and wealth from countries conquered, but also by the restructuring of their lives, drawing them into a complex relationship and establishing what Loomba calls "a flow of human and natural resources between colonized and colonial countries" (p. 3).

Elaborating on colonialism's methods and impact, Loomba asserts that:

Colonialism reshaped existing structures of knowledge. No branch of learning was left untouched by the colonial experience. The process was somewhat like the functioning of ideology itself, simultaneously a misrepresentation of reality and its reordering. A crucial aspect of this process was the gathering and ordering of information about the lands and peoples visited by, and later subject to, the colonial powers. Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century European ventures to Asia, America and Africa were not encounters between Europeans and non-Europeans but writings of this period do mark a new way in thinking about, indeed producing, these two categories of people as binary opposites.... The definition of civilization and barbarism rests on the production of an irreconcilable difference between "black" and "white", self and other. (p. 57)

Examining colonialist dynamics and tactics, Adams (1999) echoes Loomba as he disputes the validity of the British Royal Proclamation of 1763, stating that constitutional colonialism is characterized by plunder and conquer, as Aborigines were denied franchises in the discussions of the Canadian constitution. Adams reaffirms Loomba's words, and further demonstrates how the Canadian Constitution, as a document, was made by imperial conquerors to govern individuals, all to the colonizers' advantage. This resulted in the exclusion of the masses from this decision-making process, which included the recognition of private property. This exclusion

ensured that the masses would not gain power or interfere with the elites' property. Adams argues that constitutional colonialism's main tactics have been the use of treaties (like the Charlottetown Accord 1992),¹⁰⁹ the control of knowledge, and the creation of derogatory dichotomized images of the colonized.

Looking at the dynamics of knowledge and colonialism, Smith (1999) examines Western knowledge and science as developed through the colonization of Indigenous peoples, which then was used to continue colonialism. Smith's contestation of colonization echoes Loomba's observations. In the modernist project, the "discoveries" where all parts of indigenous knowledges, and their utilization was nothing but colonial exploitation. These knowledges were taken and developed, and universal ideas about the nature of "knowledge" were established.

Fanon (1990) writes about the colonization of the mind and how it worked to create the colonized subject. Thiong'o (1986) continues this discussion, highlighting how language or lack of indigenous languages is used to support colonialism, specifically relating it to the African/Black colonial experience. According to Thiong'o, through imperialism, languages are withheld or banned, therefore strengthening colonial rule. By discrediting the mother tongue and punishing those who speak it, and by encouraging and claiming the colonial European and or Arabic-based languages as superior, the imperial powers mentally subjugated the colonized. These processes are conducted and sanctioned by the educational system, as children—once in school—are conditioned to abandon the traditional African languages of their communities. Thiong'o describes how, through these processes, children who spoke their mother tongues were forced in school to read European literature, which was often about the inferiority of Blackness. Thiong'o states that the impacts of these processes are such that the children ended up thinking

¹⁰⁹ The Charlottetown Accord of 1992 consisted of a series of meetings with representatives of First Nation Peoples, the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to discuss constitutional reforms in "Canada".

in different languages than their own, therefore becoming “outsiders”. Contemporary notions of colonial education can be seen in the examples of African/Black communities’ struggles for Black focus schools in Toronto.¹¹⁰ Various members of the diverse African/Black community are fighting for an educational system conducive to learning for their African/Black children: an environment where children of African descent can establish a sense of self, community, and knowledges in “safe” spaces. The debates around Black focus schools in Toronto that have circulated in the mainstream media critique this system as separatist. This critique, however, is grounded in a colonial discursive framework. The discussion, instead, should circulate around how best to provide education to Black children on our terms: diverse, complex, and different as they maybe.

Working in an anti-racist environment in a colonial society takes planning and organizing, but most importantly, it takes resources, collective vision, and the recognition of the importance of establishing and keeping the diverse knowledges of African/Black peoples and communities, both traditional and contemporary. More importantly, Black focus schools are another act of resistance against the imperial education system, which has been built on Eurocentric views that support the formations of racialized superiority based on appropriated knowledge systems of Indigenous peoples for the construction and justification of European knowledge systems. Black children are not doing well in the educational systems in the Americas due to racism, classism, and other intersectional factors.¹¹¹ The construction of educational systems developed on the amnesic memories of history and knowledge are plagued with violence. The result is that our children are seen as what Thiong’o calls outsiders in the

¹¹⁰ For more discussions on Black focus schools in Toronto see Dei (2005) and Sium (2005).

¹¹¹ See elaborations on Black children in the educational systems in Canada Dei (1996) and Dei & Calliste (2000).

educational systems, and as a result are often seen as outsiders in our communities, locally and globally, if “education” is not “successfully” attained.

Additionally, Said (1993) argues that imperialism created the colonized as the “other,” a “darker” version of the colonizer. Smith (1999) looks at how indigenous communities look at “research” as a very distrustful and dirty word for indigenous communities, because research and/or knowledge from Europeans has led to imperialism, violence, and death for Indigenous peoples and their way of life. Adams (1999) adds to this elaboration, affirming that colonialism is the most important element in the dehumanization of Aboriginal peoples, to which I would add African peoples throughout the Americas.

Religion has been a specific tool used to colonize peoples. Christianity and Islam are two of the biggest religions that have been vehicles of colonialism. Christianity regularly demonized indigenous spiritualities and cultures, deeming them backwards and evil while purporting Euro-American religions as pure and civilized. Cesaire (2000) discusses the connections of religions to colonialism, stating that:

the chief culprit in this domain is Christian pedantry, which laid down the dishonest equations *Christianity* = civilization, *paganism* = savagery, from which there could not but ensue abominable colonialist and racist consequences, whose victims were to be Indians, the yellow peoples and the Negroes. (p. 222)

Christianity and Islam were used to colonize African and other Indigenous peoples through direct force. Through the process of spiritual appropriation, destruction, and the mechanisms of rape, both figurative and literal, religion was used to colonize the minds, spirits, and bodies of African peoples. Many African and Aboriginal-based spiritualities, and languages connected to nature and mother earth, were banned by colonialism (Thiong'o, 1986). The demonization of Orishas, Voodon, Santeria, and many other African-based spiritualities/cosmological systems correlate with the historical attempts to destroy and banish African-based knowledges and

religions. Strategically, colonized religions were brought to African peoples in order to ideologically change their identities, beliefs systems, and practices, and to forcibly incorporate what we now know as dominant hegemonic paradigms, which sanction the inequalities and disparities between “us” and “them,” and validate notions of ‘superiority’ and ‘inferiority’ sanctioned by an apparently benevolent White male God. Through missionaries (European and African), and through the establishments of Christian churches, European colonizers forcibly implanted “their world views” on African peoples. Christianity evoked redemption from evil parables, fire-burning hell and beliefs in monotheism, altering indigenous African spiritualities (Tishken, 2002).

Tishken elaborates:

One of the most important changes occurred in African notions of evil. For most Africans it was very difficult to accept the idea that human beings were born with original sin and needed redemption for it. For Africans, religion sanctioned and celebrated the gift of this life, it did not rescue it in the next life.... Endorsing the notion of original sin was a considerable realignment of the African worldview and gave religion a more “other-worldly perspective”. (p. 170)

Christianity also took from African religions. For instance, the ideas of possessions by the Holy Spirit have direct links to indigenous African religions (Tishken, 2002, p. 172). In addition, the social construction of the category of man and woman through religious division of labour further interrupted African knowledges and religions, as African women were deemed as witches through anti-witchcraft campaigns, and African men were constructed as chiefs solely to benefit colonial “male deals”.¹¹² The following section portrays colonial histories, their impacts, and the creation of colonial subjects.¹¹³

¹¹² For more analysis on the notion of “male deals” (see Turner, 1994; Brownhill, 2006).

¹¹³ Colonial and colonized subjects are being interchangeably used throughout this dissertation.

Colonial Histories, Their Impacts, and the Creation of Colonized Subjects

Imperialism that Indigenous people are dealing with today emerges from the period of European history called the enlightenment period where knowledge, history and culture were formulated not only from liberalism, and economic capitalism but through colonial lenses. (Smith, 1999)

Imperialist histories, their impacts, and the creation of colonized subjects are all elements of colonization. The winners, the colonizers, have always written the history. Therefore, the colonizers' history depicts winning great battles, settling on "new discovered lands," acquiring capital gain (including resources), having heroes, memories, ancient languages, inventions, scientific discovery, knowledge production, and culture (see Memmi, 1969; Loomba, 1998). The colonizers' history includes narratives about civilizing the "uncivilized", religious conversion, granting of independence, development, administering structural adjustment and aid programs, welfare, as well as pathologizing the "colonized". The colonizers' history is written about in endless books, listened to on radios, in speeches, watched in movies, theatre productions, and television. It is viewed in museums and galleries, talked about in almost every newscast, sung, danced, and drawn, as images of the colonized culture perpetuates overpowering reminders of victory and triumph. History often reflects what the colonizer's constructed as memories of the "Other," articulating stories about land victories instead of talking about land robbery; narrating slavery as solely economical instead of racist and demonic; and spreading discourses of cultureless, colonized peoples instead of peoples whose cultures and traditions were stolen, taken away, and/or exploited.

As a country with a history of colonial conquest, Canada is no different from other colonizing countries. It, too, reflects "amnesiac" historical and present-day recollections of its genocidal and violent nation-state building processes, which continue to exist today. In fact, the faces of colonial Canada's occupiers are presented as authentic, rational, even patriotic, while

their deadly deeds have gone missing in narratives of Canadianness. Because the continued existence of Aboriginal peoples poses a direct threat to Canadian nationalism and cultural identity, they are rendered invisible in official narratives of the nation. Canada also attempts to erase its colonial histories of slavery; its horrific violence is denied, belittled, and or summarized as African/Black naturalized labour.¹¹⁴ In a climate where Canada is another state player of global colonial and imperial deals, the impacts of colonial violence on African/Black and Aboriginal peoples' lives are widespread, and they are connected to intricate geographical relations of state and internationalized dominance.

Many authors have written about the impacts of colonization. There are several different accounts of how colonization has been carried out differently from region to region and/or by cultural group. Ultimately, however, any violence and genocide that has occurred due to colonization has impacted everyone's life, although differently. The colonizer and the colonized, an unequal dichotomy, are both impacted by colonization. Cesaire (2000) reiterates this when he contests:

Colonization, I repeat, dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it, that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal, accustoms himself to treating himself like an animal, and tends objectively to transform himself into an animal. (p. 20)

Between colonizer and colonized there is room only for forced labor, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops, contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self-complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses. No human contact, but relations of domination and submission which turn the colonizing man into a class room monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, a slave driver, and the indigenous man into an instrument of production. (p. 21)

¹¹⁴ Several authors (see Cooper, 2006, 1991; Derreck, 2003; Ellis, 2005; Bethune, 2006; and Elgersmen, 1999) elaborate on the history of Black enslavement in Canada.

Recent examples of the impact of colonialism can be seen in the cases of Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Congo, and New Orleans.¹¹⁵ An examination of gangs and cross-cultural disconnections, especially among colonized peoples within the African and Aboriginal communities, indicates the intensity of the dismantlement of self and community through learned colonial tactics. Furthermore, the policing of the “colonial subject” by the “colonizer” continues today through oppressive government practices, including militarization, violence against women and children, international and domestic foreign structures like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the war against drugs, prisons, and domestic and foreign invasions, to name only a few examples.

Different colonized peoples have different historical contexts in which they experienced colonialism. For the colonized, each individual and collective experience and memory of colonization involves torture, pain, survival, and resistance. The racialization of colonialism has intensified the experiences of violence, which differed depending on intersectional factors such as race. Hence, African and Aboriginal peoples globally are living in places where they are still subjected to the rules and confinement set by colonial legacies and presented by imperial practices on their indigenous lands, or on lands they were forcibly taken to.¹¹⁶

The creation of colonized subjects was an important process for justifying the taking of property and resources from one group of people by another, as was the dehumanizing treatment of these same peoples. The colonized subject was daily ridiculed for “his traditional”, “backward” ways, and taught to strive for ways that mimicked the colonizers (Memmi, 1969). Many forms of violence—racism, patriarchy, religion, language, enslavement, de-culturalization,

¹¹⁵ It is important here to note that elites locally and globally benefit from the instability and chaos of working class peoples during civil wars, and in natural disasters as familiar colonial practices are often utilized. See Spike Lee’s & Sam Pollard’s (2006) “When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts” and “I Won’t Drown On That Levee and You A’int Gonna Break My Back” directed by The Corrections Documentary Project, (2006).

¹¹⁶ Examples are in the Americas, First Nation peoples, and African descendants from the African Diaspora.

identity theft, capitalism, governance, development, democracy, militarization, criminalization, and false amnesia—helped to create the colonized subject.

The impact of colonialism on women is based on intersectional factors such as gender, race, and class. Many accounts written by anti-colonial theorists of the impact of colonialism mainly features male subjectivity or female passivity, which often negated and rendered invisible the existence of women's real experiences. Sexual-based violence is most always the experience of colonized women (Davis, 1983; Mama, 1997). These experiences of sexual violence, coupled with experiences of physical, emotional, and financial violence (division of labour), are critical to the subjugation of colonized women, and to the creation of viable resources (labour).¹¹⁷ Mama (1997) writes:

Rape appears to have been a frequent accompaniment to military conquests, and was a favored means of ensuring the defeat and pacification of entire nations. Unfortunately, the historical record has been very scant on this subject. Even so, the limited evidence that is available suggests that sexual violence was an integral part of colonization. (p. 51)¹¹⁸

The oral traditions of many indigenous African and Aboriginal cultures retold traditional and modern histories of pre-colonial and colonial periods that have been left out and omitted from the history books (Amadiume, 1997). Feminist, anti-colonial theory and praxis has added to the often-missing voices of women. Anti-colonial theory and praxis acts as a critique by challenging the missing or false histories and contemporary accounts that do not include, or appropriate, colonized peoples stories, experiences, knowledges, and cultures.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, anti-colonial theory and praxis critiqued and challenged Eurocentric knowledges and world views by presenting the “missing” and/or demonized indigenous knowledges as legitimate. Because

¹¹⁷ More about the impact of colonialism on African/Black women is discussed in the section on feminist anti-colonialist approaches.

¹¹⁸ Rape of women and children as a tool for war continues to be utilized today as it has been proven an effective praxis of colonial and imperialist domination.

¹¹⁹ See Saadawi (2004).

African/Black women are differently located in this research, I briefly characterized colonialism and colonial histories, and outlined the methods through which colonial subjects were constructed. This helps to acknowledge the diversity of colonial experiences. This context is needed to understand how the local and global context, where African/Black women live and work, is marked by continued colonial subjugation, and to demonstrate how African/Black women shelter workers in Toronto are impacted by colonial entrapments and exist, too, in these “lock down”¹²⁰ environments. The following section examines the anti-colonial theorization and praxis, and the complexities elicited as responses to colonialism. These lenses are critical for my theoretical framework, and for understanding African/Black women’s experiences and resistance in this research.

Anti-Colonialism as Decolonization

Decolonization is a group of processes in which colonized and ‘former’ colonized peoples try to emancipate themselves, their social, political, economical, spiritual, and cultural practices and structures from the learnings and teachings forced upon them by their various colonizers. Decolonization can often mean a redeveloping of people’s identities by reclaiming indigenous knowledges that were stolen, banned, and/or demonized (Wane, 2002a).

Samia Nehch echoes:

Decolonization...continues to be an act of confrontation with a hegemonic system of thought; it is hence a process of considerable historical and cultural liberation. As such, decolonization becomes the contestation of all dominant forms and structures, whether they are linguistic, discursive, or ideological. Moreover, decolonization comes to be understood as an act of exorcism for both the colonized and the colonizer. For both parties it must be a process of liberation: from dependency, in the case of the colonized, and from imperialist, racist perceptions, representations, and institutions which, unfortunately, remain with us to this very day, in the case of the colonizer. Decolonization can only be complete

¹²⁰ The notion of lock down means systemic restrictions usually referring to the global industrialized prison complex (see Sudbury, 2005).

when it is understood as a complex process that involves both the colonizer and the colonized. (Nehrez, as cited in hooks, 1992, p. 1)

Decolonization is an act of confrontation that challenges hegemonic systems of thought that present Eurocentric values as dominant and unchanging. Anti-colonial movements that have clear manifestations of decolonization ideologies and practices --such as the Mau Mau in Kenya, the Maroons in Jamaica, the Underground Railroad in Canada and America, and many other movements throughout the Caribbean and Latin America, including Rastafarianism, Pan-Africanism, Black Power, Movimiento Zapatista, and Anti-Apartheid movements-- locally and globally, have challenged dominant hegemonies' inevitableness by direct confrontation.

Muthoni reaffirms:

Mau Mau was a revolt by African peasants against the economic, political, and cultural conditions in which they lived...People resisted the economic and political institutions placed over them by attacking and destroying the most immediate manifestations of those institutions, for example, colonial farms and police stations. (Muthoni, 1985, p. 5)

Decolonization becomes contestation through direct dismissal of dominant paradigms and structures, often through the use of indigenous knowledges¹²¹ and massive community organizing. The writings of Ngugi Thiong'o in Kikuyu, Honour Ford Smith in Patois, Ama Ata Aidoo's writings, Cheikh Diop, Oyeronke Oyewumi, Dionne Brand, Audre Lorde, Nadine Gordimer's, Claudette Williams, Ifi Amadiume, Charlette Bruner's, Assata Shakur, and many other writers and orators, known and unknown, have promoted decolonization processes. Through language, writings, and other actions, they and so many unnamed African peoples have contested colonialism's inevitability by challenging its unilateral existence through the retelling narratives of histories, memories experiences, and knowledges.

¹²¹ For more elaborations on indigenous knowledges from a global context, (see Dei, Hall, & Rosenberg, 2000).

Decolonization is an act of exorcism. It is the literal, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual cleansing that takes place as peoples who are colonized cleanse themselves, deconstruct, debunk, and unlearn the internalized lessons of colonialism. Bob Marley articulated this cleansing in his song entitled, *Redemption Song* (1980):

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery
None but ourselves can free our minds
Have no fear for atomic energy
Cause none of them can stop the time
How long shall they kill our prophets?
While we stand aside and look
Some say it's just a part of it
We've got to fulfill the book.

Amadiume (1997) reiterates the importance of decolonizing history in order to transform African peoples and our communities from imperialist violence. Malidoma Some (n.d.), an elder of the Dagara tribe of West Africa and extensive scholar and survivor of colonial religious institutions, articulates the importance of healing from colonial violence. Malidoma affirms:

With colonial violence and so on and so forth. It may then feel very uncomfortable having to relate to figures in that manner. Yet, what we must understand is that being alive at this time makes us the prime healers of the very ancestors who were remembered in this time. Unless we're able to reconcile with them we can be of no use to ourselves as well as to them, because our relationships start in a dysfunctional compost. It is that dysfunctionality that those of us who are alive are therefore able and qualified to fix. (p. 3)

Hence, my theoretical framework for this research supports the retelling of African/Black women's experiences and resistance. This in itself was considered by many participants to be an act of healing from colonial wounds.

The process of decolonization has occurred in many regions over the last 100 years. Most African and Caribbean nations were granted "independence" from their colonizers during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1847, Liberia was one of the earliest African nations to become

independent. Namibia, in 1990, is one of the most recent African nations to be “given” independence. In the Caribbean, Haiti became the first free Black republic in 1804. India gained independence in 1947, and most Latin American countries gained independence in the 19th century.

Canada, the United States of America, Australia, Brazil, and New Zealand are nations still ruled by White settler colonizers, despite being “independent countries”; they are ruled by governments that are ideologically and structurally impacted by hundreds of years of brutal imperial rule. These nations still have direct ties to their former colonial powers through economic, political, social, cultural, and religious structures.

Dependency, continued domination, and subordination by colonial powers in independent countries from Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America, mark the design of imperialism to insidiously control nations with internal and external powers hidden in the guise of decolonization. After World War Two, colonial powers needed to expand their economic industry, which had been impacted from spending on wars, to deal with the postwar recovery and development crisis. Strategically, former colonies were forced to abandon ideas of African enterprises, as independence was granted on one-sided economic promises actualized by continued appropriation of labour, land, and resources from African countries (Nwokeji, 2002).

Independence was being “granted” to these countries after years of exploitation of peoples, land, cultures, and resources. In many cases, such as Africa and the Americas in pre-independence periods, millions of people were murdered through genocidal government-sanctioned policies and actions from European- and Arab-based colonizers (Amadiume, 1997). It could be argued that “post-independence” continues to be genocidal through its hegemonic structures and practices. The HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Americas in

relation to African/Black peoples can be seen as genocidal, as the spread of this disease has increased immensely,¹²² while the richest countries sit by and watch. In a global context of colonial powers and control, the discourse on the unavailability of anti-viral medication and the stigma of HIV in heterogeneous African/Black communities can be directly related to institutional and globally sanctioned genocide.

Nkrumah (1976), a pan-Africanist, Ghanaian leader, discusses the notion of international control, colonialism, and perceived independence:

In order to halt foreign interferences in the affairs of developing countries it is necessary to study, understand, expose and actively combat neo-colonialism in whatever guise it may appear. For the methods of neo-colonialism are subtle and varied. They operate not only in the economic field, but also in the political, religious, ideological and cultural spheres. Faced with militant peoples of the ex-colonial territories in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America, imperialism simply switches tactics. Without a qualm it dispenses with its flags, and even with certain of its more hated expatriate officials. This means, so it claims, that it is “giving” independence to its former subjects, to be followed by “aid” for their development. Under cover of such phrases, however, it devises innumerable ways to accomplish objectives formerly achieved by naked colonialism. It is this sum total of these modern attempts to perpetuate colonialism while at the same time talking about “freedom”, which has come to be known as neo-colonialism. (p. 239)

Neo-colonialism is used here to describe the foreign involvement in independence as a strategy tied aid process, which allows muted forms of nationalistic furor on particularly colonialist terms. Developing alternative strategies for dealing with this circular colonial entrapment are critical for the emancipation of former colonial subjects. The dismantling of what Nkrumah calls neo-colonialism must include a redefining of decolonization, reparations, and the formation of African Collectives that are not purely based on economic capitalist decisions.

Decolonization has to dismantle systems of colonialism by making the structures that have held colonial powers obsolete. The ideologies of anti-colonial theory need to incorporate

¹²² For examples of African/Black peoples and HIV (see UNAIDS, 2006; AIDS 2006; James, 2006).

indigenous African knowledges. Specifically African/Black feminisms can unmask patriarchy and its male deals, which often make nationalism a deal between male colonizers and male expatriates, and/or elites of the colonized. Debates on reparations have to find innovative strategies, focusing on consciousness of our diverse African identities and collective political movements. A re-examination of the capitalist and socialist systems of governance in relation to African peoples, particularly African women and children, clearly indicts these systems, embedded on the backs, labour, and violence against African peoples and other exploited peoples. These systems will not gracefully stop their domination, even when states are often asked to be accountable. “Unaccountability” is often the main function of colonial rule, and now nationalist governance. Policies are implemented on paper, but how can they be actualized when governance is maintained by false pretences in a global environment where racist, sexist, classist, ableist, and heterosexist paradigms dictate institutional norms, structures, and relations? Through the re-examining of decolonizing strategies, organized confrontations, contestations, and exorcisms need to be continued, reworked, reviewed, dismantled, expanded, changed, and practiced in flexible grassroots practices; they need to avoid institutional takeovers which mimic historical and present-day colonial relations that are based on tied aid, yet appear in the guise of nationalism.

In the following section, I discuss conceptual notions connecting anti-colonial thought and praxis with anti-racism and anti-colonial feminism. Both are necessary for understanding African/Black women participants in this research, and the need for an integrated framework.

Anti-Colonialism and Alternative Approaches

First, this section establishes a concept of anti-colonialism by using various theorists and by looking at alternatives proposed by different anti-colonial approaches. The importance of

anti-racism theory and praxis for anti-colonial thought is then illustrated. This section ends with critiques of anti-colonial thought and the important contexts in which anti-colonial feminisms exist.

Anti-colonialism has many elaborations and definitions. The “anti” in front of the word colonialism alludes to the nature of the struggles and resistance that ensued. Anti-colonial thought consists of reclaiming of histories, memories, cultures, spiritualities, knowledges, and educations, through politicization of ideological and revolutionary actions that challenge colonialism’s historical and contemporary violence transnationally. Anti-colonialism is a body of theory and praxis that, by its mere existence, is the antithesis of colonialism’s perceived inevitability. Anti-colonialism is a critical pedagogy that not only challenges and tells the stories of the “Others” who are trying to survive against colonialism, but it creates alternatives to systems of exploitation and degradation as dialogues and actions of resistance are continually conceptualized and practiced. The conceptualization of difference as political and epistemological rather than multicultural and tolerable is one important aspect of anti-colonial thought.

Mohanty (1989/1990) asserts that the institutionalization of multiculturalism is strategically linked to the race industry, which she deems responsible for the “management, commodification, and domestication of race” (p. 186). This industry has led to different forms of “diversity management” (in reference to People of Colour) as though if not managed “they” would be out of control. The result of this strategy is characterized, according to Mohanty, by the rise of “diversity consultants” that created the “professionalization of prejudice reduction,” where culture is seen as supreme commodity and diversity as an addition.

Different elaborations on anti-colonial theories and praxis have also proposed alternatives of resistance to colonialism and imperialism. There are authors that concentrate on telling the various histories and contemporary experiences of colonization, pointing out the devastating impacts of colonialism on the colonized subject. Other authors examine the impact of colonization, and then propose solutions oriented toward “rewriting the script”. There are those who write about anti-colonialism as engaging in revolutionary war. Fanon (2000) looks at anti-colonialism as the optimal mode of decolonizing the mind of the colonized subject. He believes that this can be done through knowledge of self, history, and ancestry. Fanon argues that it is important to decolonize the mind by looking at the impact of colonization on colonized subjects. Thiong’o (1986) believes that thinking, acting, writing, and reclaiming indigenous language is a way of decolonizing the mind and re-establishing the Africanness of African peoples. He suggests that anti-colonial theories and practices have to engage both a physically and intellectually revolutionary war, which can be done through decolonizing using indigenous languages. Thiong’o writes novels in his native language, Kikuyu, as an act of resistance. Thiong’o integrates his indigenous arts components of writing novels and plays into his theatre for development work,¹²³ practicing African art-based decolonizing education. In 1977 he was arrested and jailed for his involvement in a communal based theatre group. His play entitled: “Ngaahika Ndeenda (I Will Marry When I Want)” (1977), which examined the political and social conditions and government corruption in neo-colonial Kenya, was the catalyst for his arrest. Thiong’o writes:

GICAAMBA:
 Our nation took the wrong turn
 When some of us forgot these vows.
 They forgot all about the people’s movement.
 And they took over the programme of the homeguards,

¹²³ For more writing on theatre for development (see Kavanagh, 1990).

They said that a vulture eats alone
 That no bird of prey preys for another.
 They turned into sucking, grabbing, and taking away.
 That group is now ready to sell the whole county to foreigners.
 Go to any business premise;
 Go to any industry;
 Go to any company;
 Even if you find an African behind the counter,
 Smoking a pipe over a protruding belly,
 Know that he is only a overseer, a well-fed watchdog,
 Ensuring the smooth passage of people's wealth
 To Europe and other foreign countries.
 (excerpt from Thiong'o & Mirii, 1982, p. 113)

Thiong'o left Kenya in 1982 and lived in a self-imposed exile in London and in New York during President Daniel Arap Moi's dictatorship from 1982-2002 (Jaggi, 2006). Thiong'o returned briefly in 2004 to launch his first volume of his novel, *Murogi wa Kagogo* (Wizard of the Crow) and was physically attacked and his female partner, Njeeri was brutally raped (Jaggi, 2006). Thiong'o's writings are examples of the power of art-based resistance, and illustrate ways in which the politicized arts can facilitate indigenous knowledge production, education, and social change.

Smith (1999) asserts that the fourth notion of imperialism is from the colonized experience, or from those trying to write about or understand it (pp. 22–23). Smith talks about reclaiming, restoring, and rewriting through research. She asserts that anti-colonial writing is political (p.23). Said (1993) looks at culture as the critical intersection that indicates the impact of colonialism and the practices of resistance; his writings act as cultural critiques. Adams' (1999) anti-colonial theory and praxis are done by constantly challenging colonialism.

The concept of “Post colonialism”¹²⁴ describes the notion that colonialism has ended with the “collapse” of colonial rule, which was characterized by the development of new independent nations mainly during the 1960s and 1970s. Post-colonialism posits the re-emergence of a “different” type of colonialism characterized by globalization, ghettoization, world poverty, and environmental destruction. Similar to neo-colonialism, post-colonialism assumes that decolonization through independent governance in former colonized nations was in the process of actualization. In “the Empire Writes Back,” Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989) write:

The semantic basis of the term “post-colonial” might seem to suggest a concern only with the national culture after the departure of the imperial power. It has occasionally been employed in some earlier work in the area to distinguish between the periods before and after independence (“colonial period” and “post colonial period”). . . . We use the term “post-colonial”, however, to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression The USA should also be placed in this category. Perhaps because of its current position of power, and the neo-colonizing role it has played, its post-colonial nature has not been generally recognized. (p. 2)

McClintock (1993) argues that the term “post-colonialism” exemplifies a perception of linear historical progress. For a theory that is supposed to challenge western historicism, she adds, the term leads to the simplified view of the binary of power-colonizer/colonized. She argues that the use of “post-colonialism” allows colonialism to center on European time, and creates a marker in history for all cultures. McClintock further states that the term tends to be used to denote singularity not multiplicity, thus creating this universal other that depicts all colonized peoples and regions into a single category. This is similar to the use of the term “women” that has sometimes been challenged in feminist discourse. Post-colonialism assumes a somewhat “leftist” but liberal view of history and contemporary experiences of “formerly

¹²⁴ I engage in this discussion of post-colonialism not as a literature review, but to emphasize the different and often conflictual notions in anti-colonial discourse.

colonized” peoples and nations. It denotes that structural adjustment programs and other international development schemes are examples of the continuation of colonial legacies. However, the notion of “post” interrupts the relationship between the present day realities and historical legacies of colonialism’s insidious behaviour. Hence, the mere fact that countries like Canada, America, New Zealand, Brazil, and Australia, to name only a few, are still governed by colonial nations, debunks the notion that colonialism has passed or postdates a particular period. To go one-step further, African and Aboriginal peoples are still experiencing colonization in the Caribbean, the Americas, Europe, and the continent of Africa, due to the racialized, circular process of colonialism.

In spite of the problems with the concept of “post-colonialism”, it can be argued that many activists who use that term participate in and add to anti-colonial theory and praxis. Consequently, even though the term post-colonial can be problematic and critiqued, it should not be overlooked (Seshadri-Crooks, 2000).

In addition, anti-colonial thought has used many methods to resist colonial notions and actions, especially through the arts, literature, dance, music, and poetry, as oral traditions are large parts of African and Aboriginal indigenous traditions. As a result, anti-colonial ideologies and actions are not always written down, but rather are told through countless stories, songs, memories, and fables of resistance.¹²⁵ The next section examines how anti-racism is connected to anti-colonial thought.

Anti-racism.

Anti-racist theorization and praxis are important elements for anti-colonial thought. Dei (1996), an anti-racist scholar, defines anti-racism as follows:

¹²⁵ See Diop (1991), Dubois (1965), Likimani (1985), Oyewumi (1997) and Amadiume (1987) for further elaborations.

Anti-racism is a critical discourse of race and racism in society and of the continuing racializing of social groups for differential and unequal treatment. Anti-racism explicitly names the issues of race and social difference as issues of power and equity rather than as matters of cultural and ethnic variety. (Dei, p. 25)

Racialization occurs through historical and contemporary processes of categorization and dichotomies of “superior race” (White) vs. “inferior race” (Black and Others). These dichotomies created archetypes of the “dominant” and the “less fortunate,” creating “colonized” and “colonizer” identities that resulted in the formulation and maintenance of colonies and ideologies. Loomba (1998) notes:

It is interesting to note that Spanish colonialist increasingly applied the term “cannibal” and attributed the practice of cannibalism to those natives within the Caribbean and Mexico who were resistant to colonial rule, and among whom no cannibalism had in fact been witnessed. The idea of anthropology was directly applied to justify brutal colonialist practices. (pp. 58–59)

Racism has been a tool of colonialism, used to justify and presuppose notions of inferiority. Loomba (1998) asserts that “race explained not simply people’s skin colour, but also their civilization and cultural attributes. Nature thus “explained” and linked black skin, a small brain and savagery” (p. 63). Through colonial governance, globalization, capitalism, development, and democracy, and the “independency” of former colonies, racism is used to underdevelop and de-legitimize people based on conceptualizations of race, language preferences, and collective likeness to the colonizers (Fanon, 2004). The “divide-and-conquer” philosophy that existed between different and similarly colonized peoples is an example of how racism has created a hierarchy of oppression based on race. African women are more than often at the “bottom” of this hierarchy as racism, sexism, classism, and other types of violence (state and familial) often result from colonial-based deals.

Hierarchy of oppression can be defined as racial divisions based on colonial relations that categorize racial superiority. African/Black women and Aboriginal women are usually on the

bottom of racial hierarchies, and hence have less access to power. The positionality of those situated in top and middle levels of the hierarchy are based on the exercise of racist violence towards those at the bottom.

Some anti-colonial theorists demand that identity based on racial similarities is crucial for the decolonization process (Amadiume, 1997). The result is an anti-colonial, anti racist praxis that is integrated with identity politics. Identity politics have been used as a revolutionary tool to collectively mobilize groups of peoples based on shared locations. Peoples of African descent and Aboriginal descent historically have and presently formed collective memories and actions based on racial identity, such as the Combahee Collective and the National Aboriginal Women's Association (NAWA). There have been many critiques of identity politics as inclusive, non-differential, and essentialist. Identity politics is a differential political philosophy and praxis, which has many multifaceted fractions, shapes, and forms based on anti-racist praxis. Not all anti-colonial thought concentrates on anti-racist theory and praxis as part of their critical pedagogy. However, I argue that anti-racism needs to be at the forefront of anti-colonial action to support the continuation of decolonization paradigms based on racial violence transnationally. It is important to examine critiques of anti-colonial thought.

Critiques of anti-colonial thought.

Like any critical pedagogy, critiques of anti-colonial thought do and should exist. Authors within and outside of the field have analyzed anti-colonial thought. Activists employing anti-colonial theory and praxis have fought hard to exist, and their views and actions have changed and established new nations and put pressure on imperial powers in various global contexts. Racism has played a role in demonizing the anti-colonial activist as not law abiding, militant, radical, and a danger to society. These characteristics of the anti-colonial activist are all

true, especially in cases of illegitimate colonial governments where falsified histories and memories are cloaked in philosophies of pseudo-freedom and democracy. The notions and praxis of anti-colonialism by their nature are resistant; anti-colonial notions and praxis are in direct opposition to imperial governance's political, economical, and cultural actions (Parry, 1994).

There are, however, critical lenses that are important to mention for the expansion and continuation of anti-colonial theory and praxis. Gilroy (2005) and Scott (2004) write about the disillusionment in the concrete praxis of anti-colonialism, and the need for rethinking it. Their shared point of view is based on looking at the history of what they refer to as "the failure of the decolonization process of the south," and the "americocentricity" of anti-colonial discourse. Their conceptualizations ask us to question Americanization and challenge nationalistic "anti-" and "de-" colonization processes by revisiting historical and present day problems in these movements. Lazarus (1990) talks about the rhetoric in anti-colonialism:

The general rhetoric of anticolonialism was reductive. It implied that there was only one struggle to be waged, and it was a negative one: a struggle against colonialism, not a struggle for anything specific...The register of anticolonialism actively sought abstraction, desiring above all to remain free of ideological factionalism. To it, there was only today and tomorrow, bondage, and freedom. It never paused long enough to give its ideal of "freedom" content. Specifically, it implicitly rationalized, exposed the movement to the risk of division. Typically, therefore, the radical anticolonial writers tended to romanticize the resistance movement and to underestimate -- even theoretically to suppress -- the dimensions within it. Their heavy emphasis on fraternalism blinded them to the fact that within the movement there were groups and individuals working with quite different, and often incompatible, aspirations for the future. (p. 5)

Lazarus fails to examine the impact that anti-colonialism has had in interrupting systems of colonial rule. Struggles against colonialisms' negativity that are assumed in this quote are premature. Looking at anti-colonialisms as "not a struggle for anything specific" is quite postmodern, and does not see the struggle for emancipatory empowerment of colonized peoples as complex relations of unique decolonization processes. The planned revolts, confrontations,

and contestations for “freedom” and decolonization, continue to be waged, but they have been infiltrated by manipulative imperialist powers, resulting in increased patriarchy, civil war, and globalization. The suggested “romanticization” of resistance movements noted by Lazarus should not be merely blamed on individuals and groups working for egotistical, opportunist notions, but rather looked at in the “romantic” lenses of colonial hegemonic investments and legacies that consistently try to co-opt anti-colonial movements.

Anti-colonialism has also been experienced as religion based, heterosexist, misogynist, ableist violence, as the learnings from the “master’s house” are co-opted and justified through any means necessary for independence and freedom. This independence and freedom, in the majority of cases, refers to the emancipation of men who often continued to participate in and perpetrate violence against women and children.

As a result, feminist theorists have also critically looked at anti-colonial thought and its exclusion of different women’s experiences, histories, and politicization. Anti-colonial feminist thinkers incorporated analyses on sexism, racism, patriarchy, anti-colonial nationalism, notions of “universal” White feminism, queer and African/Black women, and Women of Colour’s resistance from the experiences of surviving in the West and the South. In the following section, anti-colonial feminism is explained, and its importance for my theoretical approach is revealed.

Anti-colonial feminisms.

The contexts in which anti-colonial feminism exists come out of histories of unrealized promises, sexism, patriarchy, exclusion, and violence, and misogyny, notions of universal feminism, racism, heterosexism, and resistance. The colonized woman is not looked at through the same lens as the women who colonize. The colonized woman’s history and presence is one of physical, sexual, and emotional exploitation by colonial demands. The enslavement of African

women was an experience of forced brutality, confinement, and rape; rape that produced children who grew up to be resources for the colonizer. African women were continuously used and abused in an imperial system that was built and continually rebuilt on the backs of African women transnationally (Mama, 1997).

The entire family structure of African peoples is one that has been ideologically and systematically impacted by colonial violence. Global decolonizing processes have been made up of women, especially Women of Colour, who have fought, died, and struggled against the perils of imperialism (Lazreg, 1994; Shohat, 1994; Guerrero, 1997; Mama, 1994). Women have educated themselves, organized, and resisted in both pre- and post-independence periods, in former colonies, and in White settler colonies. These women were and are still being promised a shared role in the revolutionary process of decolonization. More often than not, as many post-independence examples illustrate, women who fought amongst men were re-colonized through patriarchal, sexist state power, usually sanctioned by violence (Mama, 1997; Bannerji, 2000b; Mohanty, 1997). The revolution stopped once independence was granted by former colonies, and women were again subjugated to the ideologies and praxis that were previously condoned by colonialism, now called “nationalism,” and sanctioned by anti-colonial rhetoric.

Likewise, African women, Aboriginal women, and Women of Colour experienced countless numbers of racist and classist, colonial-sanctioned acts of violence from within White feminists’ circles. It is ironic that in the name of feminism, based on theories and movements in principle developed from the experiences of exclusion and oppression of women, violence can be perpetuated against other women. The alliances between women that were promised by the mainstream feminist movements of the 1970s have not yet included our voices. White feminism has shown in endless examples that their feminism included Eurocentric principles that benefited

them (Shohat, 1997; Mohanty, 1997). This accounts for the emergence of multiracial alliances and White anti-racist feminists.¹²⁶

Lazreg (1994) discusses the decolonization process in Algeria examining how notions of universal feminism and anti-colonial nationalism did not include Algerian women. The experiences of Black women, Aboriginal women, and Women of Colour working in woman-centered agencies and universities prove the adverse relationship with White feminists (Agnew, 1998; Timmins, 1995; James, 1993).

Many African/Black women, Aboriginal women, and Women of Colour have been participating in an anti-colonial feminist praxis for over 500 years. Even though there are women who might not always use the word “feminist” to describe their anti-colonial resistance, they existed (Collins, 2000; Wane, 2004). In fact, the term anti-colonialism is not always used to describe the daily existence of trying to survive colonialism’s perils, but rather, as oral traditions suggests, it describes the power that lays in the message, and the passing on of history, knowledges, and collective memories from one generation to another, which is of utmost importance. More recently, the passing of knowledges has continued as anti-colonial feminism has begun to be theorized.

The consequences of African/Black women’s, Aboriginal women’s, and Women of Colour’s experiences of violence and exclusion, or lack of power within, anti-colonial movements and White feminist movements have, to some extent, resulted in the existence of anti-colonial feminism based on varied experiences of these same excluded women’s indigenous feminist knowledges and resistance. Moreover, African/Black women throughout the Black power movements and Pan-African movements, in particular, have participated in every aspect

¹²⁶ For examples of multiracial alliances relating to anti-violence (see Thompson, 2003; METRAC, 2006; INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2006).

of anti-colonial resistance. Their experiences of sexism and patriarchal decisions based on gendered divisions of value by “their brothers in the struggle” have created the demand for an anti-colonial feminism (Combahee River Collective, 1978; McFadden, 2000). Understanding anti-colonial thought, its critiques, and anti-colonial feminisms responses are critical. The next section looks at African/Black feminisms and their connection to anti-colonial feminisms. First, conceptualizations of African/Black feminisms are discussed.

African/Black Feminism/Anti-Colonial Feminism

What are African/Black Feminisms?

Definitions of what African/Black feminisms are or are not vary dependent on the social locations of the women to which the definitions refer. African/Black feminisms consist of relationships between theory and praxis of resistance based on differently located African/Black women’s lived experiences, histories, knowledges, culture, identities, theorization, and political action. African/Black feminist elaborations come out of historical and contemporary experiences of indigenous African women’s knowledges, colonial legacies, oppression, violence, and resistance against imperialist domination. African/Black feminisms predate colonialism. The critique of many African/Black scholars in relation to feminism needs to be re-examined without focusing on only the experiences of White supremacy within a co-opted feminist movement. I argue that African/Black women’s feminism predated mainstream White feminisms, whose historical memory gathered information pertaining to a post-industrialization era of change and struggles for White middle class female emancipation. Hence, African/Black feminisms must re-examine the dismissal of notions of feminism as a “White woman’s concept”. These notions must be re-evaluated to show the falsified memories positioning the creation of African/Black feminisms as resulting from their Eurocentric exclusion in the feminist movements of the 1970s.

In many traditional African cultures, women were active participants, advocating and demanding change in their communities (Amadiume, 1997).

Numerous debates focus on whether patriarchy did or did not exist in Africa before colonization. Nevertheless, African/Black feminisms for the last 500 years must also be looked at in the context of colonialism and the struggle to maintain and re-establish indigenous African women's knowledges.¹²⁷

The terms African feminisms and Black feminisms are used together and interchangeably through out this thesis. African women and Black women, as discussed earlier on, are all people of African descent (ancestry) who originated in the region now called Africa. Colonization used tools of enslavement, racism, capitalism, patriarchy, sexism, and other interlocking oppressions to destabilize, immobilize, pathologize, and continuously rob thousands of African-based civilizations. This resulted in forced confinement, migration, and immigration of large populations of peoples of African descent around the world. African/Black women live in practically every region of the world based on histories and present day experiences relating to colonial relationships. For instance, Brazil has one of the biggest African populations outside of the continent of Africa.¹²⁸

Unfortunately, millions of examples exist that connect the explanations of how and why colonialism and its violence permeate every aspect of African people's lives. The connection here is that the experiences of African women are direct experiences of the violence of colonialism in direct relation to patriarchy, racism, sexism, and classism. What is certain is that the sexual violence perpetrated against Black women through enslavement, and through

¹²⁷ For several elaborations on indigenous feminist knowledges (see numerous articles in *Gender, Race, Ethnicity: Black and Indigenous Women Speak Out*, Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health, Network 2003). Also (see Wane, 2000; Elabor-Idemudia, 2000; Ouelette, 2002).

¹²⁸ See Runoko (1988) on the Global African presence. He historicizes the influence of Africa globally while examining African classical civilizations in order to reunite a Pan-Africanist worldview.

domestic and state-based violence, has been sanctioned by nations christened by colonialism. The impact of colonization on Black women's lives is very critical to understanding African/Black feminisms. For instance, Black women are often portrayed around the world as poor, illiterate, oversexed or sexually violated, aggressive, and unimportant.¹²⁹ Anti-colonial African/Black feminist lenses continue to dismantle international oppressive ideologies often backed by "unexplained" statistics that exist to pathologize, villainize, delegitimize, and silence the voices and experiences of African women. Dialogues on African/Black feminisms' relationship to anti-colonialism need to be critically examined in order to continue creating change, developing strategies, breaking apart oppression, and building alliances to defuse colonialism's violence.

Another form of colonial violence that impacted African/Black women is the loss of languages, resulting in loss of communications, and the assimilation into colonial cultures and segregated nationalist African-based identities. Furthermore, African/Black feminisms challenge the colonial occupation of languages, and hence African identities and cultures, by providing spaces where African women's knowledges and experiences can be reformulated and shared in both de-colonial and indigenous languages, cultures, and practices. African/Black feminisms can act as resistance, creating transnational connections between and among African women, dismantling the master's house with both his own tools (Audre Lorde, 1984), and with varied African feminist wisdoms. African feminisms consist of multiple oral and written legacies originating in indigenous knowledges and colonial histories. The learning and praxis of African feminisms can directly dismantle the divide-and-conquer mechanisms that separated African peoples through language bondage and isolation. The learning of indigenous African languages and the de-colonizing of colonial languages through African/Black feminist lenses can rework

¹²⁹ See Patricia Hill Collins (2004).

and create spaces for revolutionary movements. The following section addresses the question of whether African/Black feminisms are always anti-colonial. I assert that the African/Black feminisms employed in my theoretical approach are intrinsically anti-colonial and therefore directly linked to this research.

Is African/Black feminism anti-colonial?

There are several debates about whether African feminisms are anti-colonial or not. Some scholars argue that Black feminisms by nature are anti-colonial because all Black women are impacted by colonialism, and in some way, their mere existence or survival helps to fight against colonialism (Mama, 1997; Amadiume, 1997). Most proponents of this position mention and connect colonialism and/or anti-colonialism in their writings while giving examples of how African women resisted (see Wane, 2004; John, 2003). Anti-colonialism is seen as the umbrella under which African/Black feminisms exist. Collins (2000) looks at the significance of Black feminist thought, differentiating it from Black women's standpoint, arguing that Black women's standpoint, which also generated or gave knowledge, is constituted by knowledges that are taken for granted and shared by members of a given group. Black feminist thought is the extension of Black women's standpoint; it is specialized knowledge expressed by Black women's standpoint to create re-articulations of consciousness and learning that is generated by the experiences of being a Black woman in a colonized position. She further asserts that the re-articulation of Black women's standpoint into Black feminist thought is one way in which the validation of Black women's experiences can be expressed.

However, would Black women like the Secretary of State of America, Condoleezza Rice, be considered an African/Black feminist? Alternatively, more importantly, could she be an anti-colonial African/Black feminist? Rice is a Black woman who has "broken barriers" by being the

first Black woman in an inclusively White male government (White settler colony). Could she be looked at as a Black feminist? Definitions of Black feminism vary, and Rice¹³⁰ and others like her have “overcome” many obstacles and barriers to be “granted” a high position in the American government. Her support of an imperialist, illegal government (the USA’s), which is responsible for the brutalization of so many African peoples around the world, especially women, could also be seen as colonial and violent.¹³¹

Rice’s tokenism could be argued to be a result of her internalization of colonialism and White supremacy, or an example of how colonialism uses and abuses its subjects. The attachment to false nationalism in this example (Americanization), similar to Gilroy’s critique of anti-colonization movements in America, depicts assumed inevitableness that all Black women are feminist, and that all Black feminism equals anti-colonialism. In the context of Canada, is Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, recently (2005) appointed Governor of Canada and the first woman of African ancestry to be chosen for this position, an African/Black feminist? There is great support for Michaëlle Jean from African/Black communities, and great pride at her achievements working within Canadian society. However, the Governor General of Canada has limited political power to influence decision making, implement policies, and to effect overall change within the parliament and government structures in Canada. Does Michaëlle Jean’s appointment as Governor General of Canada challenge the exclusion of Black

¹³⁰ For further elaborations on Condoleezza Rice see Davies (2006) article, “*Codi-fi-cation*: transnationalism, Diaspora and the limits of domestic racial or feminist discourses”. Davies asserts: “It is interesting to note as well that one can also place Condoleezza Rice among a group of black women who have risen to various positions in state power, between 2005 and 2006, that includes Ellen Sirleaf Johnson, the new president of Liberia, Portia Simpson Miller, Prime Minister of Jamaica, but also, Michaelle Jean, recently appointed Governor General of Canada [Timothy, in press]. Earlier Valerie Amos in London became Baroness Amos, appointed by the Blair government to a ceremonial position and title in the House of Lords”.

¹³¹ I argue that Africans living in America such as Collins and many other theorists like her often present arguments that are rather narrow in scope, and need to be critically challenged and revamped to create the interconnectedness to other women of African ancestry globally. This is needed to establish stronger transnational connections among African/Black feminists, and it is critical for continued revolutionary social and political change.

women in the Canadian government, or is she simply a token of the Canadian government's multicultural rhetoric? Can illegitimate governments, in this case Canada, through anti-colonial lenses, support legitimate, anti-racist, feminist, and anti-oppression inclusionary practices? These are individual examples of two African/Black women whose identities are positioned as selling points to support, legitimize, and represent a government's broader rhetorical agenda that asserts that access, equality and opportunity in Canada and America are not dependent on race, gender, class, and/or identity. In reality, we must ask, how have colonial relations constructed African/Black women's identity? In addition, how have differently located African/Black women resisted through anti-colonial African/Black feminisms? In the next section, I examine African/Black identity in Canada and connect it with the importance of diverse elaborations of African/Black feminisms.

On African/Black identity in Canada.

African/Black communities in Canada are heterogeneous. They are made up of various African peoples who speak different languages, come from different classes, have diverse sexual orientations, and have different political, social, historical, economical, spiritual, and cultural affiliations. There are African/Black people who have lived in Canada for many generations, and others who have recently immigrated.¹³²

African/Black identity in a racist, patriarchal, classist, heterosexist, ageist, and ableist society like Canada is quite complex. Canada, a White settler colonial country, indoctrinated, developed, and sustained on colonial legacies, has created a struggle for identity within African/Black communities. The racialized notions of "Blackness" constructed on colonial

¹³² See Walcott (2003), *Black Like Who?* for additional elaborations on Black identity in Canada and for diverse notions of Blackness.

ideologies of “inferiority” and “savageness”¹³³ created racist, homogenous perceptions and images of African/Black identity that continue today. Through racist images like the 1994 Royal Ontario Museum display of the “savage” African; the staging of “Showboat” in Toronto’s theatre community, the media’s creation and coverage of “Black on Black Crime,” including recent gun violence in Toronto; the unexplained, ahistorical “cultural” and “tribal” genocide in nations such as Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Congo; the descriptions of the oversexed and/or ignorant African/Black HIV victim; the impoverished African nation saved by international development agencies such as CIDA and World Vision; the silencing of African Muslim communities after September 11th and its impact on African/Black communities locally and globally; and the continuous struggle to justify the need for Black focus schools in Toronto in an age when African students are still disproportionately dropping out or failing within the educational system, are only some examples that depict the contemporary colonial experiences of African/Black peoples within colonial Canada. These examples indicate the influence of colonial constructed identities, practice that impact, and prescribe homogenous conceptualizations of African/Black identity locally and globally. These examples have also had collective responses of resistance from within African/Black communities challenging the racist-constructed stereotypes of African identity.

The perceived homogeneity of African/Black identity has been used by colonial systems of power, including the Canadian government, its media, and its educational systems, in conjunction with international bodies, to sustain the perceptions of African/Black communities as “inferior”, “criminal”, and “needy”, silencing and excluding our diverse voices and experiences. But more importantly, it has been used to systematically dominate, control, and dichotomize African/Black people through power politics based on colonial violence that creates

¹³³ See Loomba (1998) and Fanon (1990).

the divides between “them” (African peoples with little power) and “us” (the rest of the world, usually referring to White society which has a lot of power).

The experiences of being African women in Canada are quite complex based on intersectional factors. These factors intensify the violence perpetrated by the government and its policies that deem African/Black women an oxymoron—simultaneously irrelevant yet necessary to sustain the capitalist colonial systems and practices.¹³⁴ To reiterate, African/Black women living in Canada come from different backgrounds and experiences, and respond differently to societal inequalities. Hence, there are many different types of African/Black feminisms based on our diverse multiple locations. African/Black feminisms in the context of Canada are unique. The diversity among African women living in Canada is a meeting of difference and sameness. Unlike our African-American sisters, the majority of African/Black women in Canada have come from recent immigration processes over the last 50 years.¹³⁵

It is important to discuss diversity within African/Black feminist approaches because the homogenousness of African/Black identity results from both racialization by colonial powers and from the need to form collective alliances for survival and resistance based on shared experiences of domination between heterogeneous African-identified women (Timothy, 1998; Wane, 2004; Massaquoi, 2004).

The former notion of homogeneity depicted by colonial lenses promotes stereotypes, and racist ideologies and practices, which are reflected throughout structural, social, religious, political, economical, and cultural relations. Black feminisms should challenge racist notions of a monolithic African woman identity by theorizing about the multifaceted identities of Black women’s experiences, cultures, heritage, knowledge, and politicization. Black women feminists

¹³⁴ As one example, see Flynn’s (1998) article on the impact of the cuts on single Black women in Toronto.

¹³⁵ However, it is important to note that people of African descent have been living in Turtle Island for hundreds of years also (see Walcott, 2003; Yee, 1994; Troper, 1972; Cooper, 1991, 2006).

are kaleidoscopes of difference. There are African women feminists who identify as liberal, socialist, post-modern, radical, and anti-colonial, and those that do not. Some Black women feminists identify with particular parts of their social locations, such as Black lesbian feminist, disabled feminist, and working class. African women, whose social and political identities have been influenced and dictated by Eurocentric values and non-representative notions of universal homogeneity are constantly resisting against racist constructions of our identities in numerous ways.

Moreover, the presumed homogeneity of African identity and by default African/Black feminisms, are also derived from the collective experiences of oppression and violence among African/Black women and African peoples despite heterogeneous social locations. Hence, an important task of African feminisms is to build alliances among different Black women based on shared experiences of oppression and resistance, while sharing diverse indigenous African women's knowledges. Black feminists are constantly negotiating between an "Identity Trichotomy": on one hand, resisting against socially constructed identities and sameness paradigms of *all* Black women, based on racist and sexist, colonial constructions (first tenet), and on the other hand, struggling to dictate diverse identities and differences based on cultural, political, economical, and regional pluralities and histories (second tenet). Simultaneously, we are also resisting by establishing collective alliances and movements based on shared experiences of colonial oppression, identity, knowledges, and resistance (third tenet).

Many contradictions exist in this trichotomy, and diverse African feminist approaches attempt to dialectically examine these contradictions. Some argue that Black feminisms are examples of essentialized identity politics that do not lead to real collectivism, but rather further divide-and-rule. Others blame the divide-and-rule strategies sanctioned by the colonial

experience as a major factor in destroying alliances among African peoples and women. A critical action of Black feminist theorization and praxis in a world dictated by colonial relations is to allow the existence of diverse expressions and actions of African feminist thought to be heard, debated, critiqued, approved, appreciated, shared, actualized, and politicized. This diversity is significant to my work, because differently located African/Black women working in shelters are being represented.

Diverse elaborations of African/Black feminisms.

In Canada, Black feminism has been shaped significantly by heterogeneity of Black women's historical and contextualized experiences For example, [some] feminists in the Caribbean locate their oppression within slavery, indentured labour, and colonialism (Baksh-soodeen: Mohommed). In Africa, feminism did not develop in the academic setting but in the villages where the inclusion of women was evident in the social, economical, ritual and political spheres Nevertheless, in their struggle to overcome different oppressions Black women everywhere have sought to emancipate themselves from the bonds of servitude, inequality, and racial discrimination (Wane, 2004, p. 146)

The elaborations on African/Black feminisms in this thesis are not representative of all Black women. Black women's feminisms differ from region to region, city to city, neighbourhood to neighbourhood, from family to family, and from individual to individual. African feminisms emerging from the continent have a distinct shape and formulation that come out of African women's lived experiences and resistance in their indigenous lands during pre- and post-independence and colonial periods. African feminisms in the Caribbean, Europe, and the Americas emerged from Black Diaspora experiences, direct results of confinement, enslavement, migration, and immigration in lands that were not traditionally indigenous to them. In Canada, unique African feminisms have emerged based on the history and contemporary experiences of diverse groups of Black women,¹³⁶ who often speak with caution about the

¹³⁶ See also Brand (1984), Henry (1992), Wharton-Zaretsky (1999, 2000).

enormity of the influence that African-American feminist, have had within African/Black feminist thought.

Mullings (2004) writes:

Analogous to differences between Black feminism and White feminism, there are fundamental differences between African American feminism and Caribbean Canadian feminism. African Americans of various ages and social class have been widely included in scholarly work given their historical presence in the United States. This has not been the case for the Caribbean Canadian people. (p. 136)

In America, African/Black feminisms have been dominant, and their expressions have portrayed the lives of African-American women. African-American feminisms have been critiqued for their nationalism, narrow look, and exclusion of other African feminisms. In particular, African-American feminists have been critiqued for using “Black” while referring solely to African-American experiences. The fact that many Africans around the world know about the Black activism of African-Americans can be for several reasons. African-Americans have politically participated in particular publicized resistance movements, both locally and internationally, due to specific and historical contexts in America. There are specific contexts of African-American experiences, including enslavement, lynching, Jim Crow laws, Black power movements, women’s rights movements, and the civil right movements, in a nation that is still under imperial White settler domination. The history of the use of the term of African-American is a history of resistance.

African-American feminisms, like most other African feminisms, come out of histories of resistance and histories of forced nationalism. However, the national identity of “American,” and the imperial rule and domination both of domestic and international political economy by the U.S. government’s individualistic rhetorical egocentrism, do not always allow for the development of transnational connections to other Black feminisms experienced globally.

Collins, who has been critiqued in the past for the lack of diverse African, non-American feminisms, has recently included other African representations of feminism in her writings (Collins, 2000; Sudbury, 2004).

The sameness of African/Black feminisms is the struggle continually to define our communities and ourselves as heterogeneous while collectively resisting against intersectional violence. Hence Davies (1994) in reference to Black women's writings asserts:

Black women's writing, I am proposing, should be read as a series of boundary crossings and not as a fixed, geographical, ethnically or nationally bound category of writing. In cross-cultural, transnational, translocal, diasporic perspectives, this reworking of the grounds of "Black Women's Writing" redefines identity away from exclusion and marginality. Black women's writing/existence, marginalized in the terms of majority-minority discourses, within the Euro-American male or female canon or Black male canon, as I have shown in "Writing Off Marginality, Minor and Effacement," redefines its identity as it re-connects and re-members, brings together black women dis-located by space and time.

The writings and cross-cultural genealogy and experience of many writers represent well the inanity of limiting the understanding of Black women's writing to United States experience or any one geographical location. In other words, there are Black women writers everywhere. Thus to identify Black women's writing primarily with United States writing is to identify with US hegemony. If we see Black women's subjectivity as a migratory subjectivity existing in multiple locations, then we can see how their work, their presences traverse all of the geographical/national boundaries instituted to keep our dislocations in place. This ability to locate in a variety of geographical and literary constituencies is peculiar to the migration that is fundamental to African experience as it is specific to the human experience as a whole. It is with this consciousness of expansiveness and the dialogics of movement and community that I pursue Black women's writing. (1994, p.4)

Transnational connections between African feminisms around the world has been and continues to be established to create and build alliances based on shared experiences of resistance against colonial rule. The transnational contexts and elaborations support this research as African/Black women came from different locations, but collectively participated in resistance against intersectional forms of violence.

Transnational Contexts and Elaborations

Woman, Woman

Woman
 Woman
 Woman
 Unite. (Repeat 2xs)
 Woman
 Woman
 Woman
 Must Fight. (Repeat 2xs)
 Woman A Work,
 Woman A Work,
 Woman A Work.
 Factory Work,
 Piece Work,
 Hard Labour Work,
 No Dolla Make You
 Wanna Holla Work,
 Transnational Exploitative Work,
 Rich, Corporate, Yard, Work,
 Woman A Work.
 The Uprising Begins
 As Women's Voices,
 Holla Holla And Sing
 And The Protest Begins.
 Women From The Night
 Women From The Light
 Woman, Woman Woman Unite.
 Woman, Woman
 Woman Must Fight.

From The Seas Of Africa To The Oceans Of
 The Caribbean Through The Mountains Of
 China, India, And The Middle East, The
 Rivers Of Europe To The Dancing
 Indigenous Forests Of North And South
 America And By The
 Winds Of All Other Lands.
 Woman A Shout
 Woman A Move
 Woman A Groove

Woman A Stand.

Women A Say...
 No To Poverty
 No To Violence, Isolation And Silence –
 Today!
 No To Child Labour
 No To Force Prostitution
 Trafficking, War And Slave Labour.
 No To Exploitation.
 No To Globalization.
 Yes! To Non-Sexist,
 Non-Racist,
 Non-Classist,
 Education.

Woman, Woman, Woman
 Unite. Woman Must Fight.
 Women A Resist
 Women A Insist
 Women A Persists!
 Women Fight.
 Woman, Woman
 Woman, Unite
 Woman, Woman, Women.
 (Personal journal, August 10, 2001)

Transnationalism has been elaborated in many ways. There are major components of transnationalism, neo-liberal economic restructuring through globalization processes, and processes of transnational capitalist production and accumulation.¹³⁷ A new type of globalization emerged out of the economic crisis of the mid-seventies; multinational corporations and banks became independent agents representing themselves as agents of economic development (Cox, 1996).

According to Huws (1999), globalization is a transnational process, a form of imperialism that ensures that the North controls the South. She asserts that by intensifying profit accumulation and formal and informal international decision making, by internationally unifying the elite classes, makes profit off the labour of people. This is done, she argues, to continue the over 500-year foundation of international capitalism (164). In the early 1980s, transnationalism described the expansion of multinational corporations in the international economy sanctioned by state-led agencies such as the IMF and World Bank, eventually creating transnational corporations. These corporations had limited taxes, global sovereignty, no borders, and were guided by capitalist principles of “laissez faire,” exploiting peoples, resources, and the environment.

In a world economy based on globalization and market control of capital, resources, and people, human rights have also been commodified. Financial conglomerates, multinational corporations, and transnational corporations, owned by a few international elites, control and determine the economic, social, political and cultural rights of nations and the international community. Violence against women is a direct mode of production for global capital, and the eradication of violence against women can be harmful to globalization's existence. The United

¹³⁷ Additionally, transnationalism has been used to mark the Trans-Atlantic migrations connection and disconnection of African peoples in the African continent and African Diaspora (see Gilroy, 1993; Davies, 1994; Ho, 1998; Clarke, 2004).

Nations doctrines, controlled by Western interest, are ineffective, because international capitalism tries to focus on market rights rather than human rights.

Racist and sexist ideologies foster the growth of globalization and perpetuate classism and violence against women. Globalization depends on capital accumulation gained from the commodification of goods made mainly by women. Women are routinely exploited within the sexist and racist markets of global capital. The domestication of women depends on the exploitation of women's labour, bodies, and ideologies that support and further the oppression of women. The following quote illustrates the violence against women intrinsic in transnational globalization processes:

Regardless of class, women everywhere are vulnerable to gender specific violence, which Mies and others see as formative in domesticating women. They expose the role of violence against women by individual men and by states [and international market relations] not only to secure women's oppression, but also as intrinsic to the mechanism of primitive accumulation, through direct coercion, to gain control of women's bodies, labour and productive capacities. (Omvedt, 1990, p. 164).

It could be further argued that the commodification of African women and Women of Colour, who are not seen as whole people based on sexist and racist ideologies, is intensified. As globalization increases, it is continually being supported by transnational ideologies and social structures sanctioned by sexual divisions of labour, heterosexist, classist, racist ideologies, and capitalist elite accumulation that impacts and exploits women locally and globally. Violence against women is increasing, even though many nation-states have signed doctrines that internationally commit to the elimination of such violence. Differently located women are being similarly impacted by transnational violence of neo-liberal globalization, and use transnational feminism to mount resistance.

In recent years, some feminists have reclaimed and reconstructed transnationalism as a lens through which to theorize and create praxis based on a more diverse reality of feminisms. Transnational feminism represents the different experiences, knowledges, and politicization of differently located women around the world, and their struggles for survival and resistance in different times and spaces. Transnational feminism came out of the discourses from African/Black feminism, Aboriginal feminism, anti-racist feminist, anti-colonial, Women of Colour feminism, and socialist feminism. It is a response to neo-liberal globalization, and attempts to debunk universal notions of gender-based feminisms and racism in mainstream White feminist discourse.

Transnational feminism (see Davies, 1994; Razack, 2000; Lazreg, 2001; McFadden, 2001; Grewal & Kaplan, 2002; Alexander, 2005) is the ideology and praxis of feminism that works locally and globally towards creating emancipatory notions and violent free lives for women and children around the world. It is a collective process, which occurs differently based on the context of different women's lives and experiences. I argue that a viable transnational feminism should include an integrated feminist, anti-colonial, art-based approach.

Transnational feminism asserts that the category "gender" is not the only factor that can be problematized in women's lives. Different women, based on different historical, social, and political locations, have distinct, multiple realities (Grewal & Kaplan, 2002). The transnational context of African women's lives, and subsequently African feminist theory and praxis, is important to discuss. African women are living in a world where they are continuously resisting violence at the domestic, state, and international levels. African feminisms in a transnational context indicate the differences and similarities among African women from region to region, country to country, as well as within cities, neighbourhoods, communities, and individuals, in

order to build alliances of communication, education, knowledges and resistance. The significance of women's transnational resistance in this research is that it is a feature of the critical discursive framework, and is used to bring voice to women's experiences and to create resistance. African women's contexts and methods of resistance can be different, but what is similar is that resistance is occurring transnationally, connecting Black women with each other in struggles against colonialism globally.

After presenting the transnational context and elaborations of African/Black feminisms in relation to anti-colonialism, the arts in relation to resistance—which is critical for the theoretical approach in this research—are explained briefly using transnational examples. Examining representations of resistance using the arts and creative expression transnationally by African/Black women is not only an important example of African feminist, anti-colonial theory and praxis, but is also highly significant and essential to this research. The women who participated in this research created expressive representations and acts of resistance utilizing creative and artistic methods.

A Glimpse: The Nature of African/Black Women's Creative Resistance

African colonialism was contextualized and historicized in a particular fashion, which impacted African/Black women and peoples inside and outside of the continent in unique ways. This differs from other experiences of colonialism, e.g., colonialism in India has its own unique historical and present day contexts. Africa is important in this research, because I am researching people of African descent (ancestry).

The Americas and the Caribbean are examined to illustrate resistance in the African Diaspora in both White settler countries and in newly independent regions. Moreover, countries in Latin America and South America are looked at to challenge the racist notion that Africans do

not exist in these regions, and most importantly, to illustrate and give political voice to the African women who continue to demand revolutionary change.

From a regional perspective, the known and unknown acts of resistance by African women are needed to develop collective memory and knowledges required to further build and expand coalitions against colonialism and its perils. Resistance against colonialism through the arts by African women from different social locations and with multiple identities illustrates the dialectical, historical, contemporary, and transnational approaches of African feminisms, and anti-colonial theory and praxis in several regions and countries. Transnational representations of Black women's resistance through the arts provides background for this research, framing the contextual importance of the arts and creative expression in the lives of African/Black women, often representing invisible collective actions. African/Black women's resistance using the arts supports the theoretical framework in this research, and the subsequent methodology and findings of this project, since African/Black women shelter workers used the arts to create an integrated anti-colonial, African/Black feminist, art-based framework.

The continent of Africa is the birthplace of what I call "Creative Resistance." For peoples of African ancestry, the arts have been used for passing on traditions, knowledges, celebrations, spiritualities, and anti-colonial resistance. The songs, literature, drums, and dances of Africa are only some representations of their expressions.

Examples of Creative Resistance.

Ama Ata Aidoo (1965), a Ghanaian feminist playwright, discusses colonialism and resistance in her writings.¹³⁸ In her novel, "Dilemma of a Ghost," the transnational context of African peoples living in the continent is revealed with the returning of an African-American

¹³⁸ See some of Aidoo's additional work (1980, 1994, 1997).

woman to Africa for the first time. The resistance is a “homecoming” draped in humour, with critiques of American nationalism, and struggles for identity and collective memory represented in the novel’s clever reunion of Atlantic-crossed, “once”-enslaved, African Eulalie, with her colonized but indigenously knowledgeable African grandmother “Nana.”¹³⁹

Another example of anti-colonial resistance is Miriam Makeba, whose songs and music expressed a community’s resistance to South African apartheid. At the same time, her political actions, both historical and contemporary, supported resistance and coalition building among African women and peoples. Her politicization of “Black Power” in the 1960s was a fundamental resource in the Pan-African and the Black national movements inside and outside of the continent of Africa.¹⁴⁰ African women born in the continent of Africa have resisted creatively for hundreds of years, influencing the African/Black Diaspora; some examples are Efua Sutherland (1967; 1968), Flora Nwapa (1979;1984;1986), and Buchi Emecheta (1976, 1982, 1994, 1995) among many others.¹⁴¹

Among multiple representations, these are just a few examples. The mere fact that African women are still engaged in African dance, songs, storytelling, and other arts, as well as engaged in struggles and reformulation of knowledges, anti-violence, culture, spirituality, and identity inside and outside of the continent, tells the history of resistance. Through fierce resistance and various forms of art, Africans in the African Diaspora have managed to incorporate traditional African ways in their lives. This is evident in the Americas, Europe, the Caribbean, and in most regions where Africans live. An example of the transnational context of

¹³⁹ I use this example as it highlights the importance of the notion of homecoming for Africans born in the continent and for those born in the African Diaspora. In addition, I acted as Eulalie in a staging of Aidoo’s play while an undergraduate so I am quite familiar with this reading.

¹⁴⁰ See Miriam Makeba songs and writings (1987, 1991).

¹⁴¹ See critical work about these writers in Ngambika (Davies & Graves, 1986) and also see (Umeh, 1998; Chukukere, 1995).

resistance through Creative Resistance is the passing down of stories such as *Ananse*, the spider, originally from Ghana and Nigeria to the Caribbean culture, penetrating again the perceived inevitableness of colonialism.¹⁴²

The Caribbean, a region made up of many islands, is a colonial site characterized and contested by differently located peoples, including African, Indigenous, South Asian, Asian, European, as well as Multi-Racial. Caribbean scholars often discuss the hybridity and Creolization that make up the Caribbean Diaspora (see Carby, 1999; Reddock, 2001). As this research explores the experiences and resistance of African/Black women, I am interested here in the African Diaspora in the Caribbean. African women's histories tell stories of separation from family and lands, stories of cultures borne and bred in confinement and enslavement, and stories of survival, determination, and resistance. The African Diaspora in the Caribbean is a limb from the tree of Africa, and its African women are its fruits, harvesting resistance.¹⁴³ Carnival, calypso, reggae, and meringue music are all related to Africa, existing through periods of brutal colonialism while still uniting African peoples with historical representations of resistance that relate closely to the struggle for emancipation and independence.¹⁴⁴ The creation of the steel pan, a drum made originally from oil drums, is another act of resistance. Moreover, the spiritualities of Shango, Santeria, and Voodoo, are directly related to the Yoruba Orishas traditions (Warner-Lewis, 1997; 2003; John, 2003), and Rastafarianism is related to Ethiopia and Kenya (Colman, 2005; Lee, 2003; Pollard, 2000; Turner, 1994). African spirituality is practiced through dance, music, and song. This transnational link exemplified the inevitability of resistance to colonialism's demise and the direct connections of Africans in the African Diaspora with Africans in the continent.

¹⁴² For writings on *Ananse* stories (see Ben-Abdallah, 2003; Opoku-Agyemang, 1999; Vecsey 1993).

¹⁴³ Caribbean identity is diverse (see-Bobb Smith, 2003).

¹⁴⁴ See (Davis, 1998).

“Las Krudas,” an all-African women hip hop group in Cuba, is a recent example (2005) of anti-colonial resistance. They challenged colonialism, homophobia, and other oppressions in Cuba and abroad through their revolutionary, feminist, anti-colonial lyrics.¹⁴⁵ Sistren theatre group in Jamaica is made up of Black women who performed political theatre as ways to resist against structural adjustment programs and other forms of violence in their lives (Ford Smith, 1997).

Edwidge Danticat, born in Haiti, and author of the novel entitled, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994), and *Krik Krak!* (1996), looks at the impact and resistance of Haitian women, and their relationship during brutal times of “post-independence,” which was cloaked in divisive colonial legacies between African women and peoples in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Danticat’s contemporary novels about Haiti’s imperial history, spiritualities, oral traditions, and subjugation are critical in “rewriting the script” against colonial legacies and false memories. Haiti had been portrayed as poor and desolate; absent were the explanations that revealed the deliberate “punishment” inflicted upon Haiti in the form of economic, social, political, and cultural imperial boycotts. As well, Haiti was demonized for resisting and fighting, and this critical label was a punishment for becoming the first Black “free” republic in the Western hemisphere.

These examples of Creative Resistance are all glimpses of politicized art-based expressions in music, song, and words by African women in the Caribbean. Additionally, Merle Hodge, Rosa Guy, Calypso Rose, Louise Bennett, Georgina Herrera, and Jamaica Kincaid¹⁴⁶ are other well-known African women writers, singers, and performers in the Caribbean.

The Americas has the largest population of African peoples outside of the continent of Africa. This region consists of the Americas, North, Central, and South, and is made up of a

¹⁴⁵ See Las Krudas (2007).

¹⁴⁶ For some examples of selected works (see Hodge, 1981, 1993; Guy, 1973, 1985; Kincaid, 1992).

multitude of nation-states, such as Canada, America, Mexico, Brazil, and Nicaragua, to name a few. The importance of looking at African women's resistance from this region is that many of the voices and experiences of resistance have been negated due to racist, national, colonial practices, particularly the voices and experiences of resistance of African women from Central, South, and North America, including Mexico. These negations of the politicization by African women in specific regions have continued to maintain the isolation and divide that served to prevent collective coalitions and resistance. It is thus important to highlight some examples of resistance by African women to establish transnational connections and representations.

Alzira Rufino is a Black woman writer in Brazil who founded the Collective of Black Women of Baixada Santista. She has written *Mulher Negra uma perspectiva histórica* (*Black Woman A Historical Perspective*), and is the co-author of *Mulher Negra tem história* (*Black Woman has History*). Rufino writes:

Resgate/Ransom

Sou negra ponto final
devolva-me a identidade
rasgue minha certidão
sou negra sem reticências
sem vírgulas e sem ausências

não quero mais meio termo
sou negra balacobaco
sou negra noite cansaço
sou negra ponto final

I am a black woman period
return my identity to me
tear up my birth certificate
I am a black woman without ellipses
Without commas, and anything
missing
I no longer want in-betweens
I am a black woman "cannon ball"
I am a black woman night weariness
I am a black woman period

(Rufino, 1995, p. 34)

There are many African/Black women with multiple identities, cultures, and languages, living in Canada who have continuously used creative expression to resist colonial violence. The writings, poems, spoken words, and songs of Mary Ann Shadd, Lillian Allen, Makeda Silvera, Dionne

Brand, Afua Cooper, Faith Nolan, Nourbese Phillips, and Dbi' Young¹⁴⁷ are a few examples.

Here are two samples of poetic based Creative Resistance:

What's in a name?

I always thought I was Negro
Till I was Coloured,
West Indian, till I was told
That Columbus was wrong
In thinking he was west of India –
That made me Caribbean.
And throughout the 60's, 70's and 80's,
I was sure I was Black.
Now Black is passé,
African de rigueur,
And me, a chameleon of labels. (Nourbese Phillips, 1983, p. 123)

Lament

My country is dying,
The land lies fallow.
My children are fading into forced senility,
Their minds have been scraped into empty calabash bowls.
The disease of neocolonialism has ravaged their souls,
But we could not tell until the boils came out
On their skins.
We thought the sun was the moon and so we slept,
Leaving the task to be done by our mother,
Whom Solomon caught at a lie,
to twilight men afraid of the night.
My country is dying,
Its youth is dying,
Its youth is wasting
The hunger of frustration rumbles in their bellies.
They were once young and lively and brash,
Now they are old and cannot remember why.
My country is a prison,
We have learnt that prisons do not need walls,
Only guards.
My country is steadily waning,
Since the doctor has retired from active duty of saving. (Brand, 1978, p. 32)

¹⁴⁷ For some examples of selected works (see Allen, 1986, 1999; Silvera, 1991, 2002; Brand, 1991, 1994; Cooper, 1991, 2006; Nolan, 1989; Phillip, 1988, 1991; Young, 2005).

The American traditions of African/Black women resistance is quite well documented from Sojourner Truth, Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Gloria Naylor, Ntozake Shange, Alice Walker, Angela Davis, Lauren Hill, Billy Holliday, Nina Simone, India Irie,¹⁴⁸ and many others. Here are two examples of resistance through songs:

Talking Bout a Revolution

Don't you know
They're talkin' bout a revolution
It sounds like a whisper
Don't you know
They're talkin' about a revolution
It sounds like a whisper

While they're standing in the welfare lines
Crying at the doorsteps of those armies of salvation
Wasting time in the unemployment lines
Sitting around waiting for a promotion

Poor people gonna rise up
And get their share
Poor people gonna rise up
And take what's theirs

Don't you know
You better run, run, run...
Oh I said you better
Run, run, run...

Finally the tables are starting to turn
Talkin' bout a revolution. (Tracy Chapman, 1988)

¹⁴⁸ For some examples of selected works (see Truth, 1993; Hurston, 1978a, 1978b; Morrison, 1995, 2000; Angelou, 1987, 2004; Naylor, 1986, 1992; Shange, 1982, 2003; Walker, 1982a, 1982b; Davis, 1989, 1998; Simone, 2003).

Billy Holiday sang “Strange Fruit” (written by Lewis Allan, 1939)

Southern trees bear strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze,
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

Pastoral scene of the gallant south,
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth,
Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh,
Then the sudden smell of burning flesh.

Here is fruit for the crows to pluck,
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck,
For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop,
Here is a strange and bitter crop. (See Davis, 1998)

These examples of African/Black women’s Creative Resistance directly translate into transnational representations and actions in several ways. First, similar and diverse knowledges, experiences, identities, and actions of Creative Resistance by African women in different social and political locations create shared and collective histories against colonialism. The meaning here is that resistance against intersectional violence in one geographical region intrinsically, though differently, impacts other Black women in other parts of the world. Hence, Billie Holiday’s song “Strange Fruit” is known globally, acting as a transnational symbol for resistance.¹⁴⁹

Secondly, these examples indicate the importance of the arts in theorizing about and praxis of anti-colonial activism. Hence, Creative Resistance is shown and legitimized as a revolutionary tool to promote and actualize social change. Therefore, the arts in this research are not merely “muses”; they are tools to record, initiate, and contribute to transnational actions of opposition against colonial violence.

¹⁴⁹ For further elaborations on Billy Holiday and the use of “Strange Fruit” as resistance (see Davis, 1998).

These are only glimpses of the millions of examples of resistance of African women transnationally helping to build collective memories and actions against colonial subjugation while constructing and upholding indigenous knowledges. Research needs to continue on the well-known women, but especially on the unknown African women who continue to resist colonialism by using the arts, feminism, and creative expression. My research focuses on the experiences and Creative Resistance methods and actions of relatively unknown and often silenced African/Black women. The voices of these women add to the transnational representations of African/Black resistance against colonialism, and by doing so use the arts to initiate revolutionary social change.

Summary

This chapter presented the theoretical underpinnings of my research and explained the reasons for taking up an integrated, anti-colonial, anti-racist, resistance-centred, art-based framework as seen through the lenses of African/Black feminism. In particular, this explained why a critical discursive framework is important for understanding and for providing analysis for my research on African/Black women shelter workers, specifically in relation to their locations, identities, experiences, and resistance.

First, I discussed the justifications of my theoretical approach for this study. Second, I presented my theoretical conceptualization of an integrated, anti-colonial, anti-racist, art-based framework, which I have used in this research. Third, I briefly examined colonialism and colonial histories, their impacts, and the creation of colonial subjects, illustrating the colonial contexts in which African/Black women live and work, locally and globally. Specifically, I discussed why, given that African/Black women shelter workers exist in a context marked by violent colonial relations, this research requires an integrated framework and praxis that

addresses these colonial legacies. I then examined a variety of anti-colonial pedagogies, including anti-colonial theories, decolonization, anti-racism, anti-colonial feminisms, and their critiques. I discussed African/Black feminisms as tools of anti-colonialism that can be used to support African/Black women's resistance. Here, the concepts and elaborations of African/Black feminisms and their relationship with anti-colonial theory/praxis were established. I argued that African/Black feminisms are critical for understanding and analyzing the context of African/Black women's lived and work experiences in Canada and globally. Essentialized colonial identity constructions of African/Black women in Canada, and how African/Black women resist these fixed notions (Identity Trichotomy) utilizing anti-colonial, African/Black feminist theories and practices, were depicted.

Finally, I discussed transnational elaborations, giving some examples of African/Black women's art-based resistance as illustrations of the important historical and present day use of Creative Resistance against colonial violence in African/Black communities globally. The next chapter describes the research methodology for this study.

Chapter Four:

Methodology

Methods from the margins must focus on describing reality from the perspective of those who have traditionally been excluded as producers of research.

(Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 64)

This chapter articulates the methodology and subsequent methods employed in this research. I utilized the integrated framework outlined in Chapter Three to interweave theory with methodological methods and praxis. First, the objectives of the methodological approach for this research are stated and a rationale for employing them explained. Second, the methodologies used are illustrated and their applicability for this research discussed. I highlight the contributions and limitations of certain aspects of feminist and anti-oppression methodologies, expressive arts therapies, and art-based inquiry. In particular, participatory research, anti-oppression methodologies, the expressive arts, and the work of Elliot Eisner in art-based inquiry are critically examined. Third, I explain my research methodology, the concept of Resistance Education, its relevance, and then I discuss and describe my integrated methodological approach. I conclude by outlining the study design and various methods employed in the research.

Objectives and Rationale

The objectives of the methodological approach taken up in this study are as follows:

1. To support the theoretical underpinnings and to develop a qualitative methodology that utilizes and creates methods that foster anti-colonial theorization and praxis.
2. To utilize methods that adds to revolutionary knowledge production, identity formation, agency, education, and social change.

3. To use creative methods to obtain, record, and provide analysis on African/Black women's experiences of intersectional violence and resistance both individually and collectively and to support and add to transnational movements.
4. To give voice to women who have historically been excluded and silenced based on intersectional violence and colonial relations.
5. To foster collective witnessing, consciousness, and action.

Ultimately, the rationale for this approach is to create an anti-colonial qualitative research methodology called Resistance Education. This methodology, and the subsequent methods used, assist in understanding, researching, recording, and analyzing the complexities of African/Black women's experiences of intersectional violence and resistance, working in shelters within the context of colonial relations in Toronto and globally. Moreover, the re-centering of women who have been excluded and silenced is actualized by the methodology in this research. Women actively engage in Creative Resistance and by doing so support transnational movements against colonial violence. Hence, knowledge production, agency, and activism are generated by women in this study through their engagement with the methodology.

The following sections explore the qualitative methodologies that I drew from and their applicability for my research.

Feminist Methodologies

I looked at some aspects of feminist methodology for the research method, as it has been responsible for changing and challenging much of the sexist research that has historically been conducted on women (Eichler, 1997). Feminist qualitative research consists of theories and methodologies that come from a diverse body of work. Feminist qualitative research tries to deal with the issues of exclusion, patriarchy, and oppression of women while challenging the notion

of objectivity by examining different representations of women's lived experiences. More recently, feminist methodologies have included several areas including African/Black women and Women of Colour feminisms, anti-colonial, sexual diversity, and disability issues (Olsen, 2000). My notion of feminist methodology, studies the importance of historical, social, political, spiritual, and economic relations on individual and collective groups of differently located women's lives.¹⁵⁰ Feminist methodology was used to understand how information that is not usually depicted by mainstream society (African/Black women's experiences, knowledge, and resistance) could be gathered and analyzed for scholarly use. Feminist methodology helped to focus on the power relations between women and men. It explained how patriarchy and misogyny forced women to struggle and resist against male-based oppression. Standpoint method is important for feminist methodologies as women's experiences and voices are valued and documented as knowledge (Smith, 1997, pg. 128). I draw on Black feminist standpoint theory (Collins, 1990) as it is grounded in African/Black women's lived experiences and reflect knowledge production relevant to this research. African/Black women's standpoint helps to interpret their experiences through their social and political locations, and multiple identities. Hence, African/Black women shelter workers standpoints are critical to accessing these same women's experiences and resistance. I briefly describe how feminist participatory research was applicable to my methodological approach.

Feminist Participatory Research and Participatory Action Research

Feminist participatory research and Participatory Action Research (PAR) are both processes that can encourage knowledge creation and discuss how power and unearned

¹⁵⁰ There is not one specific feminist methodological perspective. There are debates among and between different feminist discourses. In addition, marginalized feminisms are central to my methodological underpinnings, which support the theoretical framework in my research. Mainstream feminist researchers have only recently introduced marginalized feminist methodologies.

privileges are manifested in research processes. Feminist participatory research often investigates prearranged notions of goals and objectives for obtaining analysis and inviting participants to join a pre-designed project. PAR, is a social change process that involves any researcher sharing her skills, knowledge access, with a group for social change purposes (Howard & Scott-Villiers, 2000). PAR advocates and designs research in community settings that encourage full engagement of participants in the research process. As a result, activists and other social change agents incorporate participatory processes that generate direct action-oriented responses and outcomes by participants and community members. PAR has been synonymous with challenging systems of dominance as it gives voice and practices resistance against these same oppressions while creating and facilitating research.

In this research project all of the participants and I have experienced forms of interlocking oppressions and colonialism, and as a result have experienced violence, isolation, and silence by people and systems of dominance. It was crucial for the participants to generate knowledge and resistance, and for their experiences to be validated throughout a feminist PAR framework. As survivors of colonialism our experiences as African/Black women are often invalidated, pathologized, and/or ignored by Western mainstream dominant societies, which only add to the insidious impact of colonialism's silent violence.¹⁵¹ Participatory feminist processes use genuine collaboration (future strategies for change, collective consciousness, and methods of resistance) that often supports liberation movements such as feminist, anti-colonial, anti-racist movements (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000, p. 89).

¹⁵¹ The silencing of colonialism's violence is one-sided. The violence of colonialism is not silent for survivors of its horrific deeds. Those who struggle to constantly combat colonialism every day of their lives feel the scream of its impact. The violence only appears to be silent to those who support systems of dominance, benefit from, and perpetuate colonialism's deeds. Silence is needed so colonialism, racism, and other interlocking systems of violence can continue. For example, the notion that Canada is less racist than America, despite the histories of genocide, slavery, and present-day conditions of Aboriginal peoples and African peoples in Canada (see Sunseri, 2000; Cooper, 1991, 2006).

I utilized aspects of PAR, particularly for generating consciousness, strategizing for future change, and engaging in activism with participants in the study. This method influenced my research methodology as it is committed to the lived experiences of the participants while simultaneously actualizing change. I incorporated collective consciousness-raising, collective witnessing, and actualizing resistance as important parts of the methodology for this research. Anti-oppression inquiry, which often uses participatory approaches, was critical and influential for my methodology.

Anti-Oppression Inquiry

Anti-oppression¹⁵² or non-Eurocentric qualitative research is a body of work that examines how colonialism, racism, ethnocentrism, and other interlocking oppressions can be addressed within research (Bishop, 1998). Non-Eurocentric and anti-oppression research challenges forms of interlocking oppressions that have depicted individuals and groups of peoples as uncivilized, deviant, and/or abnormal in research, based on principles of biological determinism such as social Darwinism (Sandoval, 2000). Non-Eurocentric research challenges the objectification of colonized peoples as other, and the unequal power relations and socially constructed notions of knowledge (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). The integrated theorization for this research was supported by methods that have been utilized in anti-oppression research. This was done to help to ensure emancipatory and resistance-based research by looking at actual examples of how anti-oppression and non-Eurocentric research methods are utilized.

Interviews, participatory observation, and life histories are all “classical” data methods that were used to access research data and create analysis from the margins. This influenced my

¹⁵² See more examples of anti-oppression theories and non-Eurocentric research (Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Smith, 1999; Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001; Gupta, 2003; Generett & Jefferies, 2003; Mohanty, 2003; Mutua & Swadener, 2004).

methodology, subsequent methods used, and the study design for this research. Anti-oppression inquiry was applied to the methodological approach in this study by incorporating it with art-based methods. Existing theories on art-based qualitative research (Jongeward, 1997) do not always adequately explain or use anti-oppression theory and praxis. While some anti-oppression theories utilize art-based approaches, there has not been sufficient theorizing and research on the importance of the arts as tools for anti-colonial/anti-oppression, revolutionary discourse. The next section focuses on expressive arts and their role in the methodological approach taken in this research.

Expressive Arts

There is an indivisible dimension to the practice of the arts in therapy, however. When the human organism expresses itself with complete authenticity, all sensory modes are in action. To perceive with total efficacy also requires this fullness of gesture, vision, sound, and touch. In ancient times and in societies not touched by modern mechanization, this integration of the senses in artistic expression was utterly neutral. The arts were not only connected to one another but with life as a whole. A unified approach to the arts in therapy can begin to restore these forgotten balances. (McNiff, 1981, pp. viii–ix)

Expressive arts incorporate the use of fantasies, dreams, play, and the arts in creating communication processes that uncover the individual's inner experiences (Robbins, 1980, p. 15). Within expressive art therapy, the clients or participant in the healing or therapeutic process depicts the meaning of their artistic expressions. The arts have been used for centuries as expressions of individual and collective experiences, and resistance to systems of dominance. I have utilized Creative Resistance, which has been defined earlier on in this thesis, as the use of creative expression, using music, theatre, song, movement, poetry, painting and other artistic mediums as tools to educate, mobilize, protest, resist and dismantle systems of domination. I have also used the expressive art methods in my activism, my personal life, and my work with

women and children. My main critique of expressive art therapy is that it does not have an anti-colonial, anti-racist theoretical framework, and yet claims to be apolitical. However, as a political, anti-colonial activist, I have used the expressive arts to work with survivors of various individual and community experiences of trauma and colonial violence. Hence, I have “politicized” the arts in this research.

I chose to use expressive arts in my methodology as they support my theoretical framework for this research. The use of arts and creative expression, outlined in my previous chapter, to discuss, create, and foster resistance has been used historically and contemporarily by differently located African/Black women, to politicize, organize, and fight against systems of interlocking violence. Through poetry, spoken word, visual arts, mural making, and individual and group processes, the arts were used as analytical tools of expression and representation of African/Black women shelter workers experiences and resistance. Using expressive arts with my integrated theoretical framework politicized the actions of art-making, knowledge creation, and resistance in my research. The expressive arts were applicable for my methodological approach as they provided repoliticized tools to understand African/Black women working in shelters and to engage with them, allowing their often hidden experiences and voices to be re-centered in the research.

Furthermore, the expressive arts’ principles and processes of using the arts and other creative mediums as tools to critically express, learn, and communicate are quite valuable. The expressive arts elicit artistic expression as agents of change. The expressive arts were used in this research to record and provide analysis on African/Black women’s experiences within the woman abuse shelter community in Toronto and to reveal their methods of resistance in

emancipatory and creative ways. African/Black women used art in all aspects of this research, including individual interviews, focus groups, and self-dialogue.

In addition, expressive arts supported the collective witnessing and collective consciousness-raising of participants in this study. Collective witnessing and collective consciousness-raising in this research were initiated through art-based processes, which assisted the women in telling their stories, and shared experiences as differently located African/Black women working and resisting in shelters.

Burstow (2003), a feminist, activist, therapist, writer, and professor writes about the importance of collective witnessing and the use of the arts:

Given the enormous significance of group trauma, community trauma, and historical trauma, and given the disconnection from community and others that is inherent in trauma, more emphasis on community, group work, and witnessing is in order...it is important that counsellors act as a bridge into a larger frame so that more witnessing happens in the real world. Use of public art, I would add, is a particularly promising direction, for it at once facilitates witnessing; generates new meaning out of old, integrates mind, body, feeling, and spirit; and creates community. (Burstow, pp. 1311–1312)

Burstow highlights the importance of witnessing from groups who have experienced historical trauma and how the arts can be used as a public forum to integrate these two processes.

Differently located African/Black women shelter workers are survivors of historical and contemporary colonial trauma, and witnessing through the arts supported the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this research. Moreover, the witnessing of African/Black women's experiences working in shelters gave rise to consciousness raising, sharing, and ultimately collective actions.

This study was not created as therapy.¹⁵³ I was not acting as a therapist in this research, but rather as a facilitator of a process that examined the political, historical, social, emotional, spiritual, and economical dimensions of African/Black women's experiences and resistance working in the woman abuse shelter community in Toronto. However, women in the research characterized their experiences as both "healing" and "therapeutic".

Incorporating the methods of the expressive arts with qualitative research methodology forms art-based inquiry. It positions the use of arts as essential for research methodology and consequently informed this research. The following section examines art-based inquiry and its significance for my research methodology.

Art-Based Inquiry

Art-based inquiry¹⁵⁴ is the use of the arts and/or art materials, including visual images, poetry, storytelling, dance, theatre, photography, and all forms of artistic expression, as inquiry to collect and/or analyze data for research purposes (Eisner, 1997a, p. 5). Art is used to represent the research topic and to govern the inquiry process often creating an epiphany of discovery for the researcher and/or participant(s) (Barone & Eisner, 1997).¹⁵⁵

Elliot Eisner has influenced educational research with his ideas of using alternative methods (the arts) in methodological processes. He is often quoted in the literature from art-based inquiry researchers. It was important to briefly examine some of his and others' writings as this examination helped to further explain the importance of and justification for my methodology for this research.

¹⁵³ I was not employing expressive art therapy, but rather utilizing the expressive art methods.

¹⁵⁴ Art-based and art-informed research is increasingly being utilized in the Adult Education and Community Development fields. For instance, OISE/UT has incorporated the Centre for Arts-informed Research in its curriculum.

¹⁵⁵ An example of an art-based inquiry method that influenced this research was photovoice (see Wang and Burris, 1997; Dallow, 2004).

Eisner (1997b) examines the positive and challenging aspects in educational research of alternative forms of data representation. Eisner explores how educational researchers look at the relationship between the forms of understanding and the forms of representation. Eisner explores his concept of the nature of knowledge in relation to what one knows and how one learns it. Eisner argues that tools such as storytelling and film, like charts and diagrams, could be utilized to elicit understanding (p. 5). He asserts that the only difference between the tools of research is that one is selected over the other because it does the job better (p. 8).

Eisner discusses how research changed as science was proven not to be the only legitimate form of inquiry in research (Eisner, 1997b, p. 5). He discusses how research has many ways in which to collect and represent data. Stories, pictures, diagrams, maps, theatre, demonstrations, and poetry are cited as some examples (p. 5). Eisner also outlines that the legitimacy of some forms of data representation as research are still very much challenged. He cites film and fiction as examples of qualitative research (p. 5).

Alternative forms of data representation such as artistic narratives, film, dance, drama, photography, to name a few, can elicit empathetic participation allowing readers to access certain types of experiences that are portrayed (p. 8). He continues asserting that other forms of representation, such as literal ones, are not able to evoke this type of empathetic participation between readers and the research (p. 8). Hence, Eisner argues that alternative forms can benefit researchers' understanding and conceptualizing of what knowledge is and what research is. In one of Eisner's rare examples using "race" he explores how racial segregation in high school is understood with the film entitled "School Colours", a movie written and developed by Berkeley high school students and filmmakers (pp. 6–8). Eisner addresses the differences between things this film reveals and things that are concealed regarding racial segregation in school, based on

“traditional” qualitative research and its alternatives, in this case film research. Eisner lists the challenges and constraints of data representation. Eisner outlines three challenges or constraints of alternative forms of data representation (p. 9):

1. Rorschach syndrome, a peril of ambiguity as the meaning of data given has no consensus for understanding it. Hence, the data means whatever anyone wants it to mean/referential precision.
2. As researchers research we need to be critical of the methods and ourselves. Presenting context for those who may or may not know about a certain genre is essential.
3. Publishing restraints on materials that do not take on print form [i.e., dance]

This research addresses Eisner’s three challenges of alternative forms of data representation. The first constraint is addressed by incorporating African/Black feminist theorization and standpoint theory as all participants were asked individually and collectively their understanding and meanings of their own representations and experiences which were then incorporated into the study. Additionally, situating the research and analysis in an anti-colonial framework supported the analysis process and lessened the ambiguities in meanings as women in focus groups collectively generated meanings of their data representations. The second constraint was addressed by critically discussing and generating understandings on the political, social contexts of the research project. In the initial interview process participants were asked about their use of arts, and their feelings using this particular methodological approach. Participants’ questions were encouraged and dialogues were generated. Furthermore, after the research was completed participants again were asked their feedback participating in this research process.

The third constraint was addressed in the onset of the research as only art-based representations that could be transferred to print material were utilized. Hence, visual arts,

poetry, and mural making were chosen as materials that would be easily publishable in a document. Additionally, disseminating the knowledge in alternative ways was also a discussion had at the end of the research process.

Art-based inquiry's use of arts in qualitative research is significant for this study as it validated my methodological framework. Specifically, the use of visual representations, photos, poetry, and mural making in art-based inquiry gave considerable support to the same methods, which I employed in my methodological approach.¹⁵⁶ Hence, the body of literature on art-based research legitimizes the effectiveness and importance of arts in academic and community based research.

Nonetheless, art-based inquiry like expressive arts needed to be politicized. In the following section, I critically examine art-based inquiry.

My Critique of Art-Based inquiry

After extensively reviewing literature relating to art-based inquiry and art-based research,¹⁵⁷ I found that there was little representation of anti-colonial, anti-racism, and others forms of resistance methods for research.¹⁵⁸ I found that the approaches mimicked the “neutral” stance found in other qualitative research methodologies with assumptions of equality and similar human experience without taking into consideration the differences between and the interconnectedness of systems of oppression and dominance.

¹⁵⁶ I utilized these methods to record and provide analysis for participants' experiences and resistance in this study. I utilized photos to capture the participant's images.

¹⁵⁷ For further readings on art-based inquiry (see Anderson and Braud, 1998; Barone & Eisner, 1997; Eisner, 1997a, 1997b; Jongeward, 1997; Cole 2001a, 2001b).

¹⁵⁸ I extensively reviewed many art-based research methods and art-inquiry literature for this study. However, I have deliberately chosen to mention, rather than writing an extensive review, one art-based researcher (Elliot Eisner) who was most mentioned as influential in the literature. The lack of politicization, responsibility, and historical and social context in art-based research methodology encouraged me to continue on, focusing not on art-based inquiry but on the importance of using a particular grounded art form in a politicized theory and praxis – integrated, African/Black feminist, anti-colonial, art-based methodology i.e., Creative Resistance and Resistance Education.

In Eisner's and others' inquiries, art is used as an alternative method that is not apparently politicized as notions of oppression are not addressed adequately or, in many circumstances, mentioned at all. After reviewing several documents on art-based inquiry, it was clear that Elliot Eisner and other theorists, who have written extensively on alternative forms of data collection and representation, do not have an anti-oppression and anti-colonial framework. In fact, Eisner and other art-based inquiry researchers ignore and deny historical and present day experiences and representations by discounting the political and systemic oppressions experienced by particular groups of people. This, in fact is quite political as it maintains systems of power and as such condone and perpetuate continued colonialism, racism, and other forms of intersectional violence. It is important for emancipatory research to investigate how power relations, violence, and colonialism influence, interpret, and justify who and what is knowledgeable, and who and what is represented.

Art-based inquiry does not address how intersectional violence influences our relationships with knowledge formulation, our understandings, and representations within research. The nature of knowledge, how one knows and how learning takes place is often talked about within a context of distorted histories controlled by systems of dominance. Oppressions occur but are not addressed as factors that dictated understandings, representations, knowledges, and research. Rather, generalizations and assumptions are made inferring false commonalities among individuals and societies in the plight to create "respectable" art-informed research. Colonialism is hardly questioned or seen as a challenge in art-based inquiry. Ending or challenging racism is not a research goal; rather the arts are used to represent "people's" (usually meaning White people's) experiences, understandings, and knowledge. Western-based history of methodology does not include the historical, social, political, and/or economic context from

which the method described in art-inquiry arises. There is no mention of the anti-slavery movements, civil rights movements, the African/Black power movements, anti-colonial nationalist movements, the First Nations rights movements, the women's rights movements, and other important social movements that impacted the knowledge production, lived experiences, and the notions of who is allowed to do research, what research is valued, and how research is collected, analyzed, and presented. I find this to be very ironic especially since much of resistance against forms of exclusion and violence have been done through artistic mediums and representations leading me to believe that art-based inquiry often supports "traditional" Euro-centered representations known for their appropriation and/or exclusion of African and marginalized peoples. Examples of Creative Resistance that legitimized various political and social movements are well known. In fact, using art as a tool for understanding and representation not only preceded art-based research, but also taught us how the use of arts is already legitimized in various communities and settings as tools for resistance, and social change.

Highlighted in Chapter Three and reiterated here, African/Black women's Creative Resistance clearly indicates that arts have been used for anti-colonial, anti-racist, feminist purposes transnationally. However, in the literature on art-based inquiry, African/Black women's voices and experiences are ignored and not valued. The significance of my integrated methodological approach is that it emphasizes that research and knowledge formulation about African/Black women must be historically and politically grounded in our experiences and must support continued acts of resistance. Nonetheless, one of the most significant contributions of art-based inquiry to my method in this research is the use of the arts as tools for research. The expressive arts and the idea of arts as research in art-based inquiry are essential factors for my

research methodology. The importance of this is that the arts have been used in research and are deemed as valuable for inquiry; the techniques or art methods explored are not necessarily crucial. Again, the need for this research and methodology as a political vehicle for change, representation, and resistance is highlighted after reviewing the gaps in this literature. The collective witnessing through the expressive arts of African/Black women's experiences and resistance supports emancipatory and political actions.

My methodology is an example of the politicization of African/Black feminist, anti-colonial, art-based theory and methodology practiced through Creative Resistance fostering Resistance Education. I have now established the methodologies that shaped my integrated methodological approach.¹⁵⁹ In the following section, I explain my research methodology.

My Methodology: Resistance Education

As stated earlier, my research utilized several qualitative methodologies drawing from feminist participatory, anti-oppression methodologies, expressive arts, and art-based inquiry. As Kirby and McKenna asserted in *Methods from the Margins*, methodology, theory and ideology are entwined portraying how the researcher sees the world (1989, p. 63). I see the world through an integrated theoretical framework. Hence, my methodology is directly interrelated with my theoretical approach. In fact, the practice of my approach is the praxis of my critical discursive framework described in Chapter Three. The arts are not only used as a method to collect data but also as a process of Resistance Education (revolutionary social change). Furthermore, this supported the integrated framework in my research, situating and illuminating the path I have

¹⁵⁹ After looking at heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990) through African/Black feminist, anti-colonial lenses, I noted that heuristics research supported positivist subjectivity and the dominant paradigm by not questioning or addressing issues of power relations or oppression. As a result, I created a modified, integrated African/Black feminist, anti-colonial, anti-racist, art-based approach to research. At first I incorporated some heuristic methods. After reviewing what I needed and wanted from my research methodology, I subsequently abandoned heuristic methods altogether.

chosen as a political activist. Theorization and praxis are combined with the arts to formulate a concept I called “Resistance Education”. This methodology informed my research, as it created viable tools needed to access the experiences of, and resistance by, African/Black women employed in shelters in Toronto. As stated earlier, African/Black women’s experiences in shelters have been silenced due to intersectional oppressions and systems of dominance (Agnew, 1998). My methodology connected the historical, social, political, spiritual, and economical relations that dictate African/Black women’s lived experiences; it also served to explain and actualize acts of resistance.

Conducting research on the premise of African/Black feminism, anti-colonial, politicized art-based theory and practice means to do work that supports the unveiling of oppositional knowledge production that speaks to and about African/Black women’s experiences, and resistance through their own lenses. Through historical and contemporary ways, the African/Black women in this study rendered their voices voluble and their experiences, identities, and resistance important as they served to transcend colonial established rules.

The value in this research methodology is that it highlights an effective, creative way to do and record African/Black feminist, anti-colonial research in political and social systems that continuously try to subjugate and silence us. More importantly, this methodology created both theory and praxis by actively doing acts of resistance within a research process that questioned and opposed interlocking systems of oppression and dominance.

In the following section, I expand on the concept and praxis of Resistance Education.

Resistance Education

Resistance Education

Search for Knowledge

Inclusivity.

Research information

Challenge Eurocentric explanation,

Exclusivity.

Promote political awareness, Consciousness,

Change, social justice,

Academic fairness.

View the world

From different eyes

Whose history, herstories

Are old and wise.

Free yourself from the grip of

Oppressive methodology,

Resist colonial ideology

Open your mind to diverse epistemologies,

Anti-oppression psychology.

Sworn to unlearn

The problem

The isms that were born

That befoul, treat

Learning with incisions

Of Racism, Sexism, Classism,

Heterosexism, Islamophobia,

Anti-Semitism, Ableism, Ageism,

Homophobia,

And other soulless beats.

Clouding knowledge acquisitions,

Refusing good research decisions,

Infusing monoculturalistic visions

Cultural divisions, capitalist incisions.

Be part of

The solution.

End this one-sided dominated pollution.

Embrace Anti-colonial thought

Realities, research, resistance, action fought.

Critical discourse -Transformation is what is
being sought.

(Personal journal, October 16, 2002)

Resistance Education is defined as any form of education and/or psychology (teaching, learning, and research) that is shared, developed, maintained, and changed that interconnects integrated theories of oppression with art-based actions/praxis¹⁶⁰ of resistance (including African/Black women's Creative Resistance). Resistance Education challenges and deconstructs systems of historical and present day notions of knowledge, representation, power, and violence perpetuated by systems of dominance (e.g., African enslavement, colonialism, imperialism, patriarchy, racism, capitalism). Creative Resistance¹⁶¹ is both an act and a method for practicing Resistance Education. By resisting interlocking systems of oppression and dominance with

¹⁶⁰ Praxis and action for this research means incorporating African/Black feminist thought and emancipatory strategies into concrete change and resistance. This includes consciousness raising, educational growth, and other politicized actions.

¹⁶¹ Examples of African/Black women's documented Creative Resistance can be found in the theoretical elaborations in Chapter Three. In addition, examples of Creative Resistance are discussed further in the findings chapters of this research.

artistic methods and theories, Creative Resistance teaches us oppositional knowledges and strategies needed to deconstruct and debunk systems of dominance and to create revolutionary change. There are seven features of this research methodology that illustrate specific ways in which to conduct Resistance Education feminist, anti-colonial inquiry.

Resistance Education does not assume that “traditional”, mainly positivist theories, methods, and practices are essential for resistance, research and/or education. In fact, Resistance Education re-centers African/Black women and other oppressed groups’ voices, identities, and experiences as significant for research and activism thus challenging notions of intersectional violence which continuously brutalizes, excludes, and pathologizes these same groups. Collective consciousness raising, witnessing, and action are often the results of Resistance Education. Collective consciousness, witnessing, and action do not equate to homogeneity and essentialism. Heterogeneous identities within communities, specifically African/Black women, are critical for maintaining diverse knowledges and strategies to foster resistance. Therefore, collective consciousness, witnessing, and action in this methodology are formed on the notion that differently located African/Black women create knowledges and strategies to resist intersectional oppressions. I argue that the diverse acts of resistance by differently located African/Black women locally and globally constitute a transnational movement. This transnational movement of resistance by African/Black women has both historical and contemporary examples. The educational component in Resistance Education informs and connects historical examples with contemporary acts of resistance to illustrate that a transnational movement has always existed.

Resistance Education builds on practices of resistance that have historical antecedents. Undocumented acts of resistance against systems of oppression by African/Black women,

Aboriginal women, and Women of Colour have always existed. The newness of this concept of Resistance Education is that this research attempted to create a particular innovation of theory and methodology that can be used for further research and emancipatory praxis with and by African/Black women and other oppressed groups. I have used Resistance Education as a theory and methodology to create individual and collective consciousness, witnessing, and action to interrupt colonialism's perceived inevitability. Resistance Education presents oppositional knowledges, strategies, and acts of resistance that directly challenge the unrelenting predominance of colonial rule. This research allowed me to use Resistance Education to reveal the missing stories of African/Black women's experiences working in the woman abuse shelter community, and to support, learn, showcase, analyze, and create acts of resistance against systems and structures of dominance collectively. More importantly, my research allowed me to strengthen the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of Resistance Education by developing and practicing strategies that explore African/Black women's experiences and resistance in the woman abuse shelter community. My individual experiences working and resisting in shelters were transformed into a larger project, which documented diverse collective experiences of differently located African/Black women working and resisting. I participated in this study as a researcher; I also participated in this research as an African woman who has worked in the shelter community in Toronto. Moreover, I participated in this research as a survivor of colonialism and as a transnational African woman activist/artist who stands with collective acts of resistance against all forms of intersectional violence that have been and are perpetrated against African/Black women and Women of Colour globally. The methodology in this research is an example of Resistance Education. The three main purposes of this research were:

1. to develop, expand, and use an integrated methodological framework;
2. to record African/Black women's experiences and to generate resistance in the shelter community in Toronto;
3. And to create spaces for participants to discuss and share strategies of resistance.

My integrated methodological approach.

There are seven features of this methodological approach for Resistance Education, which I utilized, tested, and expanded throughout this research. The description and significance of each feature for this methodology is outlined, as well as how the features were applied for this research. A more detailed description of the application of the method for this particular research is provided in the study design. The seven features are as follows:

1. My integrated methodological approach was developed to support anti-colonial research processes. It has been used in this research with African/Black women shelter workers in Toronto. However, it can be used with various other colonized groups and marginalized communities.¹⁶² The methodological approach was applied as part of the integrated theoretical framework and is critical for the knowledge and analytical generation processes in the research. Hence, the integrated theoretical framework (anti-colonial, anti-racist, African/Black feminist, art-based) must be used to establish the purpose of the research, teaching goals and/or learning activities. The researcher must engage in emancipatory (resistance centered) research from the onset, in every aspect of the inquiry. Power relations and power imbalances must be looked at and explained in order to get participant-centered knowledge, experiences, and

¹⁶² I have used this approach with the following groups in the last several years: Black youth and Reparations, Afghan youth group, various groups on different issues with Indigenous peoples of Africa and the Americas, woman abuse survivors, in multiple conferences, and as a teaching tool to name a few.

meanings about research and/or educational areas, topics, or issues. Specifically, this must be done from the formulation of the research questions and objectives, the data collection methods, and the data analysis processes. The researcher must be aware of any power differences among participants and herself in the research process as they may come from various social locations based on gender, class, racial identity, sexual orientation, disability, and age.

This feature allows the participants to provide input and feedback regarding the research process in general and the study design in particular. The significance of this feature is that strategies to share decision-making power within the research process are examined. Recognizing that power imbalances, disempowerment, and empowerment binaries between the researcher and researched always exist, but if processed and worked on the empowering components can be enhanced. For this study, I discussed and received feedback from community members and participants about research objectives, questions for the interviews, focus group discussion topics, data collection tools, data analysis processes, and dissemination strategies for the results.

2. Locating ourselves is an important beginning in the research process. The researcher must locate herself by letting the participants know the purpose of the research, learning or teaching, and her experiences with the research area. The next part of this feature involves the participants locating themselves based on general information about who they are in relation to factors of intersectional violence/oppression such as racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and ageism. These oppressions or “isms” are defined to establish the participants’ understandings, definitions, and lived

experiences relating to the previously mentioned factors. In addition, participants must be asked about how they identify themselves and what terms they use or do not use for that purpose.

If, after locating ourselves, there are additional imbalances of power that put the researched at high risk and question the researcher's motives, thoughts, beliefs, and feelings for wanting to uncover the meanings of a specific subject area, topic, or issue, then the research itself would need to be reviewed in consultation with participants and community members. If, after this process, high risks still existed due to the excessive power inequalities between the researcher and participants, this type of research would not be emancipatory and any misunderstanding or misrepresentation could lead to increased "marginalization," therefore deeming this research unethical. The research would have to be dismantled and the researcher would have to go back to the initial question(s) and review the purpose of the inquiry. It is important here to stress the need for people from oppressed groups to do research, teaching, and learning on their own community issues (Swisher, 1998). Nevertheless, coming from similar oppressed communities does not mean that communities and individuals are homogeneous. Addressing power imbalances within particular communities among individuals does not assume sameness based on essentialism, but rather recognizes the impact of power and colonial relations in the research, teaching, and learning processes.

In this research I conducted the previously mentioned risk assessment at various stages through dialogue with participants and community members and was assured

that, yes, power imbalances existed but that processes were in place to create research that was emancipatory.

3. Definitions of key terms relating to this methodology such as feminism, anti-racism, colonialism, resistance, and the political contexts must be established. This needs to be done during the initial interviews and focus group discussions. The significance of establishing working definitions for research, learning, and/or teaching is that it attempts to create shared and different understandings about meanings and representations.

For this particular research I developed and used a working definition of violence, intersectional violence, colonialism/anti-colonialism, Resistance Education and Creative Resistance for the research area. These definitions were presented to the participants who were asked to provide their feedback. In the interviews, participants were asked to define and describe their understandings of specific terms, which influenced the working definitions. In addition, working definitions were established in the introductory chapter to provide understandings of meanings of terms used throughout this thesis.

4. This methodology challenged traditional Eurocentric research focus on the social and personal (individual), often-ahistorical contexts of African/Black women, Aboriginal women, and Women of Colour lived experiences. This is done by including the historical, spiritual, political, social, and economical contexts that created and maintained intersectional systems of oppression and dominance that impacted African/Black women's experiences locally and transnationally. Therefore, the historical, spiritual, political, economical, and social experiences of violence and

resistance in African/Black women's lives must be placed at the centre of research, framing the studies. Oppositional knowledge production and revolutionary change is a direct result from this methodology as Eurocentric research and knowledge is no longer the centre. For this particular research, African/Black women's historical and contemporary experiences of violence sanctioned by the interlocking systems of oppression and dominance in addition to resistance were discussed at the beginning and the end of the research process. Revolutionary change occurred as the voices and actions of once excluded women were re-centered and heard in this study.

5. Self-dialogues,¹⁶³ the processes whereby participants and researchers individually and collectively take time to examine the inner workings (reflective processes) of their experiences must be incorporated throughout the research. Participants and researcher/s must dialogue about the systemic contexts and political economy in which their experiences as African/Black women have transpired, relating it to the research area, participants' expectations and overall experiences within the research process itself. The importance of directly dialoguing about these areas is that it constitutes an account of the historical and present day contexts needed to understand and provide analysis on African/Black women's experiences and resistance. Interviews, focus groups, and self-dialogues may be used as data collection methods and data analysis tools. The significance of this feature for the methodology is that it also provides access to individual and collective consciousness, witnessing, and action as the researcher actively enquires about the individual and collective interpretations of participants' understandings and experiences. Journaling and other

¹⁶³ For this research, self-dialogues occurred in between the interview and focus group, and utilized the arts to foster creative reflection and resistance. Self-dialogues of individual women were then incorporated in focus groups to generate collective witnessing, consciousness-raising, and action.

expressive arts-based activities can be used to foster self-dialogues individually at home and collectively during and after interviews and focus groups.

In this research, dialoguing about oppressions, colonialism, and resistance experienced by African/Black women in Toronto and transnationally helped to explain the experiences of African/Black women working in shelters.

6. Creative Resistance needs to be defined and discussed with participants through dialogue, indicating the political and systemic contexts of the use of the arts in emancipatory research. The significance of Creative Resistance in this methodology is that it is a method and an action tool that records participants' life and work histories as well as their experiences. This adds to Resistance Education already being developed by other African/Black women and connects research to transnational feminist activist communities globally that are using feminism, anti-colonialism, and the arts to resist systems of dominance.

In this research, I discussed and inquired about the use of the arts as resistance in the interviews and focus groups. The arts (Creative Resistance) were integrated throughout the entire research. Participants in the research used various forms of the arts, such as poetry, visual expression, mural making, and journaling. I, as researcher, together with the participants engaged in the data collection and data analysis processes, which included the participants providing their own interpretations of their experiences and art representations (acts of resistance).

7. Additionally, a part of this methodology includes disseminating the findings of research in local and global forums that are accessible and inclusive of African/Black women, ensuring that factors such as ableism, heterosexism, classism, sexism, Anti-

Black racism/white supremacy, and colonialism do not prevent the knowledge sharing from happening.¹⁶⁴ Disseminating the knowledge generated by participants and the research in general through Creative Resistance is a critical process in this method as it transforms the artistic representations from individual and collective witnessing to larger collective actions. Hence, asking participants what they want to do with the results of the research is very important. Moreover, finding public places to show their acts of Creative Resistance generated by the research, teaching, and/learning is essential to Resistance Education. Sharing and developing strategies of resistance and discussing ideas and feelings of the participation within the research process are also important aspects of the methodology.

This methodology of qualitative research led to the advancement and progression of political witnessing, consciousness, and resistance, and to the understanding of different meanings, in this particular case of African/Black women's experiences, which are often ignored by the impact of interlocking systems of oppression. This methodology engaged participants in processes of emancipatory self-discovery, knowledge production, and acts of resistance. Strategies of resistance to systemic barriers and dominance within the woman abuse shelter community were established in this research. Self-exploration of the individual, the group, and societal and political contexts, through dialogues, interviews, and focus groups that integrated the arts were accomplished.

¹⁶⁴ Mojab (2000) writes: "Conferences are, for me, sites of struggle between very unequal sides. The choice of a theme for a conference, its geographic location, its participants and audiences, its language or languages, and its sponsors cannot be anything but political" (pp. 123–124).

Study Design

The methodology for this research consisting of an integrated theoretical framework and praxis described in the previous section used particular methods to recruit participants and collect data. This section describes the methods I employed to achieve the objectives of this study.

Participants

The participants in the study were African/Black women who had worked in the shelter community in Toronto. The participants were relief, part-time, full-time, and contract employees who, between 1995–2005, worked or had worked as counsellors, children’s advocate workers, or in other positions in collectively run or Executive Director run woman abuse shelters in Toronto. The time period specified (1995–2005) corresponds to the Ontario government’s drastic cuts to social services. The proposed sample size was 8 to 12 women; however the actual numbers of participants in this study was 18. Eighteen women who met the selection criteria were interviewed. In addition, two other women were interviewed to gain supplementary historical information about the shelter movement and anti-oppression training within shelters.¹⁶⁵ This sample size and composition represented a heterogeneous group of African/Black women supporting the theory and methodology, which stresses the importance of diverse representations of African women. Even though my sample of African/Black women was small and by no means represented all experiences of women who worked in the woman abuse shelter community in Toronto, these women’s experiences offered a glimpse into the lives of an important group of women and by doing so, helped to mirror other African/Black women’s experiences whose voices are still being silenced.

¹⁶⁵ However, due to the large scope of this research their interviews were not used for this thesis.

Selection Criteria

The selection criteria for the research was met by all participants as they were all African/Black women over the age of 18, who were English speaking not necessarily as a first language. Participants' ages ranged from 23 to 63 years. Participants spoke nine additional languages other than English. The participants had lived in the continent of Africa and throughout the African/Black Diaspora.¹⁶⁶ All participants had lived outside of Canada for more than 15 years and in Canada for over 10 years.

Ten participants were women born in Africa, in Ethiopia, Somalia, Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana. Eight participants were African/Black women born in the Caribbean and/or who had lived in Trinidad, Jamaica, Barbados, and St. Kitts. Out of this group of eight, two participants were born in Canada and one participant was born in England. All participants had college or university education; some obtained their education as young adults, while others obtained formal education as older women. Each participant had been employed in shelters for more than two years.

Initially, taking into consideration the historical importance of representing African/Black women from different generations and languages, I considered recruiting women born in Canada from Nova Scotia and other provinces who lived in Toronto and worked in the shelters. I also considered recruiting African/Black women from language groups such as francophone, Spanish-speaking, and Portuguese-speaking women. Moreover, I evaluated recruiting African/Black women living in other geographical regions close to Toronto such as Peel Region; however, the recruitment for these groups did not work out for two main reasons. First, two

¹⁶⁶ The African Caribbean Diaspora includes many countries such as Antigua, Aruba, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Haiti, and Trinidad. Languages spoken in the African Diaspora due to colonial reign are French, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese and English. There are many other languages mixed with indigenous African languages such as Creole, Patois, and Papiamentu.

Nova Scotian and Peel Region women whom I contacted who worked in shelters in Toronto and who had been interested were unable to participate in the research due to personal and work related reasons. Second, many African/Black women who are French-speaking do not work in the mostly English-speaking shelters in Toronto, perhaps research based in Montreal would have retrieved French-speaking African/Black women. Since this study was focusing on Toronto,¹⁶⁷ and I am not French-speaking, this may have impacted my choice of shelters.¹⁶⁸ In addition, there are not many African/Black women who speak Spanish and/or Portuguese who live in Toronto and work in shelters; this could be due to many factors including lack of opportunity to immigrate to Canada based on racist immigration policies and other intersectional factors. In over 24 years of involvement in the woman abuse shelter community, I have met only one woman who identified as a woman of African descent, born in Brazil, who is Portuguese speaking. I have never met any African-identified, Spanish-speaking women working in shelters in Toronto.¹⁶⁹

At the beginning of the interviews and focus groups, I discussed confidentiality and anonymity with all participants. Participants' names were kept confidential and pseudonyms were given.¹⁷⁰ Participants were advised of the slight risk that colleagues who chose to waive anonymity could compromise their ambiguity in the focus groups.

¹⁶⁷ Two participants spoke French but not as their mother tongue.

¹⁶⁸ However, my colonial identity which spans geographical regions of indigenous Africa, English, French, and Spanish-speaking colonies does connect me to French and Spanish-speaking African peoples as my grandfather was from Dominica and spoke French, other relatives spoke Spanish. An area for future research could be to continue research on French-speaking and other linguistic African/Black women shelter workers experiences.

¹⁶⁹ Moreover, with focuses on "Latina", "Mestizas", and "Hispanic" identity in many Spanish-speaking communities in Toronto and abroad, African/Black women are historically excluded. A critical discussion on Latina and Hispanic identity is needed.

¹⁷⁰ Pseudonyms given to women represented historical and contemporary African/Black women figures that have created revolutionary social change such as Sojourner Truth (see Appendix E). Two participants chose their own pseudonyms.

Participants were advised that art-making (Creative Resistance) was an important method being used to collect data and generate and analyze resistance. Participants had the opportunity to consent or decline to any aspect of the research process at anytime. Also, participants were assured of the voluntary nature of the process and were informed that they could decline to answer any questions, terminate their interview, and/or their participation in the research process at any time. Participants were asked to consent to the researcher's right in the future to make public the information (in whole or in part) in a thesis document, journals, websites, or presentations. The following section outlines the sample selection and recruitment process.

Sample Selection and Recruitment Strategies

The recruitment strategies undertaken included personal contacts, word-of-mouth, and flyer distribution. I recruited participants through my community and work connections utilizing snowball methods. In addition, a research information flyer (see Appendix F) was distributed to individuals, shelters, and community agencies in Toronto to seek further recruitment for this study.

I sent information flyers and informed consent letters via e-mail and fax, and delivered others in person to individuals and shelters inviting workers to participate in the study. When a number of potential participants contacted me, I informed them about the purpose of the research and assessed whether the individuals fitted into the selection criteria established. Since I had worked in several shelters in Toronto, some of the participants in the study were women with whom I had worked.

The sample selection requirements were created to ensure that the participants were the women best suited for this study. All efforts were made to ensure diverse representation of

African/Black women's identities, including dimensions such as sexual orientation, age, class, educational attainment, disability, cultural affiliation, language, and immigration histories.

Data Collection Methods

The data collection methods used for this research were critical for obtaining information and developing analysis about participants in this study. Three distinct methods were used in this research study: interviews, focus groups, and arts-based Creative Resistance. I used interviews, as they are important contributions that feminist and anti-oppression research re-articulated that bridge the gap left from "traditional" qualitative research methodology to include more inclusive interpenetrations and practices in research. The feminist researcher focuses on women's experiences and knowledge, making women's voices important aspects for research (Oakley, 1981). Hence, feminist interviews, particularly from an African/Black feminist perspective, provide environments where the voices of women who have been marginalized and or excluded based on intersectional violence had spaces where their opinions and experiences were valued. Interviews are valuable and inform this research project, as women were able to voice their experiences, knowledges, and actions about working and resisting in shelters.

Focus groups, another method used in feminist research, was a tool I adapted in order to create opportunities for sharing experiences, collective consciousness raising, witnessing, and action among participants in this research. In the 1980s, due in part to the feminist presence in the research community, focus groups re-emerged with personalized, politicized language, and feminist notions, becoming an innovative method of qualitative research (Morrison, 1998). This research expanded this idea to include African/Black women's individual voices and their collective experiences and actions. Collectivity was seen in focus groups and other collective consciousness-raising, witnessing, and action processes, as women interacted and exchanged

experiences and strategies of resistance. Focus groups were designed to encourage open-ended questions and free-flowing dialogues. In the focus groups, a small group of participants were able to concentrate in more detail on issues and themes that had emerged in the interviews. As well, these focus groups provided the opportunity to discuss and actualize strategies for resistance against experiences of interlocking oppression and violence within the shelter community.

Throughout the research process, during semi-structured interviews, self-dialogues, and focus groups, art-making was used. This feature of the method was important for data collection, analysis, and for creating acts of resistance. This research also examined whether an anti-colonial, art-based methodology could become a possible resource for African/Black women to support equity initiatives in their workplaces. The acts of Creative Resistance (through politicized art-making) among participants were very significant parts of the method in this research. African/Black's women analysis of their own art-making was critical as it supported this research study's methodology of utilizing Creative Resistance and the voicing of participants' experiences in their own words, and doing actions to foster revolutionary social change.

Additionally, there were several art-based methods used throughout this research to collect data and foster Creative Resistance. In the interviewing, focus group, and self-dialogue processes, participants engaged in visual arts, mural making, acrostics, spoken word, and journaling processes. The art-based methods all focused on bringing forth women's voices, their identities, their experiences, and their resistance individually and as a collective. Moreover, the art-based process allowed for individual and collective witnessing, conscious-raising, and action, which reflected the discursive framework outlined and used throughout this research.

Data Collection Time Line

The time span of this research was from 2001 until 2007. I began thinking about the research area while working at several shelters in Toronto. I also began to develop and expand the theoretical and methodological framework by practicing it at work and presenting globally at several conferences and community forums. The actual interviewing process began in November 2004 and ended in mid June 2005. After defending my dissertation, I plan to hold a community forum in 2007 on the findings of this research. The data collection in this research was carried out in two initial stages. The first stage was conducted in November 2004 with two African/Black women who were interested in participating in the study, but who, for various reasons, were not able to participate in the following year, during the summer of 2005. One of the women was nine-months pregnant and was about to give birth and go on a year-long pregnancy leave; the other woman was going out of the country on a six-month leave of absence. During the interview and focus group processes, these two women spoke about a conflict, which had arisen at the shelter where they both worked. This conflict was based on what the women called “the racism in the shelter” and was the underlying reason why both women would be taking their respective leaves of absence. The participation of each of these women was crucial for the design of this study as their interviews and their participation in one focus group acted as the critical pre-test for all of the later interviews and focus group processes. After the pre-test focus group, I had interviewed one of these women to get her feedback on the structure and content of the research process in order to support the design of the additional interviews and focus groups. It was the initial semi-structured interview style and focus group with these two courageous women that critically informed the entire design of this research as their participation helped to design the second stage of the research process, and as such assisted in the creation of thorough and creative data collection tools and methods.

The second stage of the research process included 18 interviews and 2 focus groups conducted between May and June 2005 (see Appendix G). Sixteen participants took part in the primary data collection in the second stage of this study. Two interviews were conducted with two other African/Black women, one of them the Executive Director of an African/Black women and Women of Colour community health centers in Toronto. The other interview was with an anti-oppression trainer, and Chair of the Social Work department at a downtown Toronto University. These interviews were done to gain information about the missing gaps in the history of African/Black women working in the woman abuse shelter community and about anti-oppression/discrimination policies and practices in shelters. While the interview questions were slightly different for each woman, all the questions were geared to elicit direct information from each on her experiences.

Interviews.

Semi-structured, individual interviews between 1 1/2 and 2 hours in length were used to gather information about each participant and her work history; the interview questions focused on the shelters they had worked at, who they delivered services to, their workplaces' anti-discrimination policies, practices, and organizational cultures. The interview was shaped around seven sections of topics. The first section was *an introduction and overview* to the research project, including a verbal reading of the project, its purpose, and my social location within it, outlining my experiences working in woman abuse shelters. This section also included a discussion on art-making (Creative Resistance) as a part of the methodology. I purposely mentioned the arts in the beginning in order to allow the women to become comfortable with this aspect of their participation; from my experience, I have seen that it can be challenging and intimidating for some participants.

The second section gathered *personal information* and it was designed to establish the participant's social locations based on intersectional factors. This section also asked the women how they had found out about this study, why they wanted to participate in it, and what their expectations were about participating in this study. This section concluded with a question that was designed to establish their self-perceived identity: How do you identify yourself? Do you use the terms "African woman" and/or "Black woman" to identify yourself? Also, women were asked if they identified themselves as a "Woman of Colour," and why they did or did not.

The third section asked women to *define particular constructed terminology*, based on their work and lived experiences. This was done to establish working definitions for this research project. It also served to inform me, as well as them, about their own understanding and experiences of intersectional violence and resistance in their workplaces and lives. The terms were "colonialism", "feminism", "racism", "classism", "sexism", "heterosexism/homophobia", "ageism", "ableism", "equity", and "resistance".

The fourth section was designed in two parts to gather their *general shelter work information*. In the first part, questions were asked to determine the length of time they had worked in shelters, the type of work they had done, their reasons for choosing shelter work, and whether the shelters in which they had worked had been run collectively or hierarchically. The second part of this section asked specific questions relating to the anti-oppression/anti-discrimination policies at the shelters in which they had worked.

The fifth section of the interviews was a discussion on *artistic representation* (art-making) prior to actual engagement with the arts in the research. Questions were asked to

generate information about their prior experiences with the arts, their feelings about using it in this research process, using it at work,¹⁷¹ and their concepts of Creative Resistance.

Additionally, three exercises using various expressive arts were used during the interviews to elicit information and generate resistance. The exercises were chosen to support an African/Black feminist, anti-colonial, art-based theorization and praxis. The exercises were the praxis of this research's theorization and methodology¹⁷² and were used as follows:

1. Exercise One: Using words and/or images, locate who you are in relation to factors such as race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, and disability.
2. Exercise Two: Using words and/or images represent working at the shelter on a good day, a bad day, and a normal day.
3. Exercise Three: Using words and/or images, describe what an equitable working environment would look and feel like.

The sixth section revisited women's shelter work experiences and perceptions *after doing politicized expressive arts* (Creative Resistance). The focus here was on women's experiences working in shelters and the impact of intersectional factors on their identities. Areas explored were individual anti-oppression philosophy, impact of economic and organizational restructuring, relationships between and among African/Black women and Women of Colour, coping strategies for dealing with discrimination, and strategies and recommendations for change within shelters.

The seventh and final section of the interview allowed participants to identify issues for follow-up discussion in the focus groups. The resistance and action-oriented design of the focus group was also discussed. Their availability for focus groups, in terms of dates and times, were

¹⁷¹ This will be looked at in more details in Chapter Eight.

¹⁷² I incorporated here a Resistance Education framework.

discussed, as well as the best times for them to be contacted. Other questions and comments about the research were also encouraged. Interviews were held at women's work places during and after work, at university clinical rooms and classrooms, and two were held at my home. At the end of each interview, I asked each participant what her feelings and thoughts were in regard to her participation in the interview and the information discussed. In some cases, where women were distressed about immediate crises at the shelters they worked in, exercises such as progressive muscle relaxation and deep breathing techniques were engaged in before the interview concluded, in order to ensure that women left feeling grounded.¹⁷³

Focus groups.

Focus groups were conducted two weeks after all interviews were completed, one in November 2004, and two in June 2005. Focus groups were used to elicit collective sharing, discussions, recommendations, acts of resistance, and to generate action-oriented strategies to support social change in the participants' lives, and in their workplaces and communities. Themes for the focus group discussions were generated from data collected in the semi-structured interviews and from the artistic representations that participants shared with each other at these meetings. In addition, the focus group discussions were examined for similar and differing themes among the participants' experiences in the research process was also reviewed. Each focus group was four hours in length. Three focus groups were conducted with a total of thirteen participants. The first was the pre-test with the two participants who were taking leaves of absence; this was held on a Saturday in November 2004, and became the model for the subsequent two other groups which were held on weekdays in June 2005, one in the afternoon

¹⁷³ Grounded here means to appear to be focused on the present, and feeling capable of re-entering the world outside of the interview and focus group processes.

and one in the evening. Six participants attended the second group, and five participants attended the third group.

The focus groups were held at an accessible space, a community health center for African/Black women and Women of Colour in downtown Toronto. The site was located close to public transportation. Although non-alcoholic beverages and a light snack were provided for the participants attending the group, women in the groups chose to bring their own cooked food to the focus groups, establishing a real “home-grown” feeling to being together, and adding comfort and “safety”¹⁷⁴ to the environment. TTC tickets were provided for transportation needs, though most women did not take them stating that, “You are a poor student who needs your money.” All interviews and focus group discussions were audio taped, transcribed, coded, and analyzed.¹⁷⁵

The design for the focus groups was informed by the direct results of the information obtained in the interviews and the objectives outlined for this study. Drawing from traditional indigenous African women’s circles, the focus groups were designed to provide circular exchanges between the participants, serving as a place to create, share, and initiate action among women. Each focus group had eight sections. Due to time constraints, semi-structured focus groups were slightly adjusted by incorporating some group exercises jointly to manage time to meet the needs of the participants and research goals. All sections of focus groups were timed to ensure the completion of the process. After each section, group discussion was generated; this was an integral part of the methodology.

¹⁷⁴ In my experiences facilitating groups for many years establishing “safety” in a group for survivors of violence is critical to gaining trust in a group setting. As African/Black women, we are surviving many forms of interlocking oppressions. Hence, the idea of “safety” is often short lived, as violence is a daily experience in most of our lives.

¹⁷⁵ NVIVO software was used to search and classify large amounts of data in this study.

The first section was the *introduction and welcome*. Women who knew each other embraced and women who did not know each other introduced themselves. Food was served and women gathered. The participants mostly came directly from work or attended the group during work hours. Confidentiality and anonymity were discussed and the group made comfort rules (see Appendix H). The journaling process and artistic representations (homework) were briefly discussed and in some cases women who did not do it asked for time during the focus groups to work on their self-dialogues.

The second section entitled *locating yourself* used artistic representations generated from journals and during the focus groups to discuss how the participants identified themselves and what their political and social locations were. Women were given cartridge paper to draw and write on, and an array of supplies such as paint, brushes, pastels, and markers. Participants discussed and explored the following questions:

1. Who are you? Based on factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, age, and disability?
2. Who are you in relation to working in the WAC (Woman Abuse Community) in Toronto?
3. Exchange representation with another person and explain who you are and who you perceive your partner to be in relation to working in WAC.

The third section formulated a list of issues women experienced working in shelters that they brainstormed together in the focus groups. This list also incorporated suggestions, which had been given in individual interviews (see Appendix I). Women were then asked to pick one or two areas from their brainstormed list and fill in an acrostic, relating it to their experiences as an African/Black women working in shelters. The brainstormed list was significant as it narrowed

the focus in terms of the women's interests and allowed them to concentrate on areas that they marked as critical to discuss with a collective group of differently located women. The list also provided a continued focus and was used to generate group discussion and art-making actions (Creative Resistance).

Participants were also asked to use words, colours, and images on a piece of paper and visually represent: What has your experience been working in woman abuse shelters as African/Black women? Chapters Seven and Eight further illustrates women's experiences using acrostics.

The fourth section focused on generating *collective experiences* of witnessing and collective-consciousness sharing and raising, and action through the development of Creative Resistance group murals. Two pieces of large canvas were provided and participants were asked to engage collectively, using the information generated so far about their experiences and resistance, with the available art materials. The questions they were asked to explore were:

1. How has racism, colonialism, and other types of violence impacted your experiences working in shelters?
2. What would an anti-colonial, anti-discriminatory work environment feel and look like?
3. What resistance means to you in relation to your experiences working in WAS? How have you resisted?

The fifth section was *collective brainstorming* of future strategies for collective resistance and change. Participants engaged in group discussions generating oppositional knowledges, which were a part of the objectives of this study. The sixth section focused on participants' feelings and ideas about having participated in this project. This was an important feature as it

was used to assess emancipatory concepts set out in the methodology. Participants were asked to reflect on the following:

1. What is your experience using the arts and creative expression in this project?
2. What is your experience participating in this project?
3. What is the usefulness of creative expression/art?
4. Could anti-colonial art-based methodology be used in your workplace?
5. What supports would be needed?
6. Could or do you see this being useful in your life?

Section seven focused on how participants wanted to *disseminate knowledge* generated from this research. The participants were asked what they wanted done with the research findings. The final section had two parts to it; the first was *one minute of resistance*—a Creative Resistance method where a group generates poetic acts of resistance by writing together, symbolizing the minimal time that it takes to collectively resist. The second part was *check out*, a concept often used in-group facilitation to allow participants to state how they are feeling as they are leaving the group. During this part, body exercises, deep breathing, and progressive muscle relaxation again were incorporated to make sure participants were grounded before leaving the group.

Arts-based Creative Resistance.

At the end of the interview, each woman was given a bag to take home with the following art materials and asked to record their personal experiences of the research process (self-dialogues):

1. A journal
2. A pencil and pen

3. Markers
4. A glue stick
5. Paint and paint brushes
6. Drawing paper

Participants were asked to choose and bring their artistic representations (Creative Resistance) to be shared and discussed collectively during the focus groups. Art-making was incorporated in this way as part of the research methodology (self-dialogues) as a way of obtaining information that may not have been expressed verbally. This feature of the research design became a foundation for the topics and issues explored in the focus groups, enabling me to ask questions and elicit discussions based on the participants' artistic representations of working in shelters. After the focus groups, many participants voluntarily gave their journals filled with expressive writings, artwork, poetry, and analysis of their work and lived experiences, to me to be used for the research. Even though having them give me their journals was not the intention of the method, participants willingly wanted to support the telling of their stories as African/Black women and saw this additional step as another way for them to contribute to the research.

In addition to interviews, focus groups, and self-dialogues; I collected shelters' policies manuals, annual reports, and newsletters. A survey was also conducted to retrieve secondary data regarding the number of African/Black women working in woman abuse shelters in Toronto (see Appendix J).¹⁷⁶

Artistic representations (acts of resistance) created by participants during the interviews and focus groups were kept during the course of the research. After the research was completed, original individual artistic representations were returned to the participants who created them via

¹⁷⁶ Only three shelters filled out the anonymous survey.

mail (Canada Post). Before this research study concluded, all artistic representations were transferred into digital copy/photo formats, which are stored in a locked cabinet in my home.

Summary

In this chapter I detailed the methodology and the methods employed in this research. First, I presented the objectives of the methodological approach and its rationale. Second, the methodologies employed and their applicability for this research were outlined. Here I focused on the contributions and limitations for this research of feminist participatory research, anti-oppression methodologies, the expressive arts, and art-based inquiry. Third, I explained the concept and relevance of Resistance Education and presented the integrated methodological approach used in this study. This chapter concluded by explaining the study design and the methods utilized.

The next four chapters of this dissertation, Chapters Five through Eight, illustrate the findings of this research. Chapter Five introduces the locations of the African/Black women participants. Chapter Six examines women's identities, and lived experiences of intersectional violence. Chapter Seven examines women's experiences working in shelters, and Chapter Eight exemplifies women's art processes and describes women's actions and resistance in the research.

Chapter Five:

Locations

Introduction

This chapter provides information revealed in the data needed to understand the experiences of African/Black women who work as counsellors in violence against women shelters in Toronto. Chapter Five is central to this research as it is the beginning of the elaborations of the findings and introduces the African/Black women participants in this study. Examining women's locations through their own standpoints is critical for understanding their agency and resistance to systems of intersectional violence. These self-locations, definitions, and perceptions are needed to understand, record, and analyze African/Black women shelter workers' experiences of intersectional violence and resistance. How women see themselves influences and explains their identities and their actions, i.e., who they are and how and why they go about doing work in shelters.

Following the theoretical and methodological framework for this research, Chapters Three and Four, I present the women's locations of themselves. This is done through an integrated, African/Black feminist, anti-colonial art-based lens. As indicated in the Methodology, the artistic representations highlighted in this chapter were done during the individual interviews and focus group processes and are divided into two sections. The first consists of women's art-based representations of their locations outside of shelters, which were created during the interview process. The second section consists of the artistic representations of their locations inside and outside of shelters, which were created and discussed, in the focus groups.

Eighteen synopses of African /Black women's locations are presented as an introduction to the participants in the research. The synopses consist of women's voices, self-perceptions of themselves, analyses from artistic representation processes (Creative Resistance), and their

responses from social location exercises. At the end of each woman's location, I provide an additional summary by incorporating personal information and general shelter work information taken from the initial interview. Specifically using the arts, women responded to the statement:

Using words and/or images, locate who you are in relation to factors such as race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, and disability.¹⁷⁷

Locating Self: Who Am I?

The following 18 synopses and artistic representations introduce and locate African/Black women in this research through their own self-perceptions of who they are.¹⁷⁸

Nefertiti described her location as:

Colourful . . . I think that different colours make a part of everything Colour also means lots of sentiments so be true to yourself Different feelings, so just feel them The sensuality of it all is really important in our relationships Nurturing is really the way to be if you want to elicit a response that's deep and true I am always inspired All the other women in this world bringing together . . . courage that we all need to go on day to day. I think . . . beautiful, people are beautiful I'm beautiful The creativity, the creative mind, the creative spirit, creative hands, the creative everything, all need to be together Lively just the fact of trying to animate in different ways The hearts . . . you have to do it all with an open heart.

¹⁷⁷ These intersectional factors were chosen to represent categories in which women are put in based on colonial constructions and relations. The newness here is that women are locating themselves through their own standpoints and experiences. In addition, these exercises are important as women's real experiences of intersectional violence and their resistance can be understood through their own locations in these categories.

¹⁷⁸ In most cases, 16 participants information was taken from women in their initial interviews during April to May 2005.

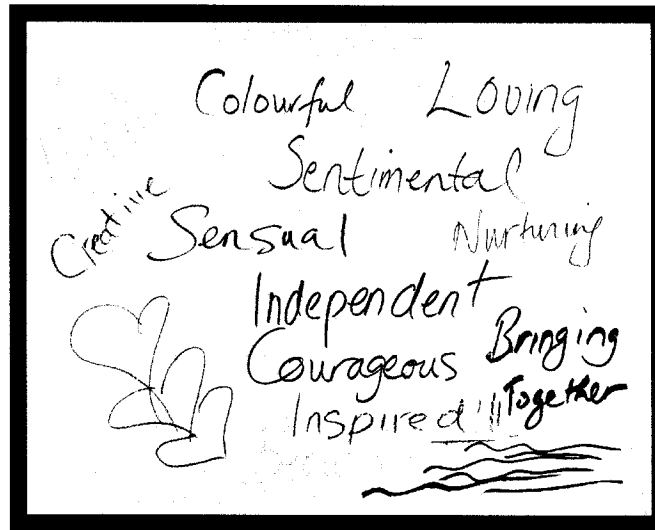


Figure 1. Who am I? Nefertiti.

Nefertiti is a 43-year-old woman, born in Ghana. She has a B.A. in French and speaks six languages: Fanti, Twi, Ga, English, French, and Spanish. She immigrated to Canada in 1985 and is a Canadian citizen. She has two daughters and a grandson. She identified as heterosexual and her class affiliation as “classless”. She has worked as a woman’s counsellor and program coordinator in four collective and hierarchically run shelters since 1993. She has also worked as an interpreter and businesswoman. In terms of her spiritual/religious beliefs she explained, “I am a spiritual person and I believe in the traditional African religion”. Currently, she is living with chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia and is on sick leave from a collectively run shelter where she worked as a relief women’s counsellor.

Harriet depicted her location as:

I put spiritual, and then I am human, because I’m a spiritual being living a human experience A teacher . . . because what’s the purpose of being here when we can’t pass things onto other people, right? Whether it’s bad or good [laughs] A thinker, meaning . . . talks about philosophy or just anything, it’s always good to think I’m a big believer in the expression of anything really I say

Mother . . . with all the attributes up top . . . these are things I pass on as a mother and last, last is a lover . . . I think all these other things are more important Being a lover is something I do well, and it's part of what makes me . . . sums everything up for me.

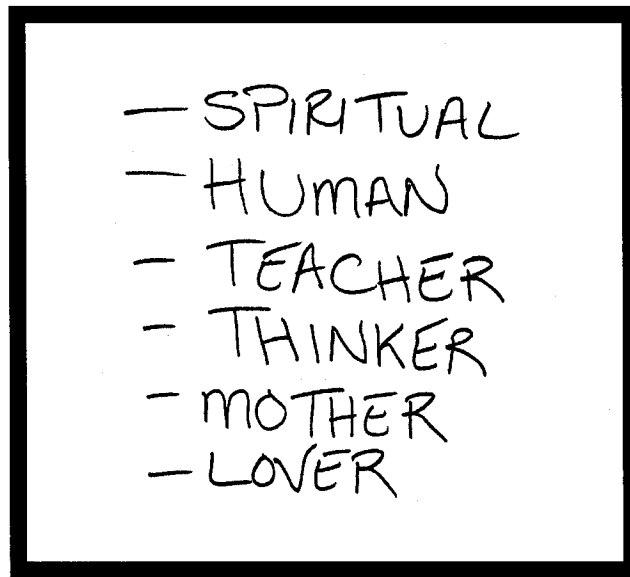


Figure 2. Who am I? Harriet.

Harriet is a 33-year-old woman born in Jamaica. She has a college degree, immigrated to Canada 29 years ago, and is a Canadian citizen. She has two children whom she recently relocated back to Jamaica to live. She is heterosexual identified and in terms of her class she said: “[I] would like to pass on that”. Harriet indicated when asked about her spiritual/religious affiliation that, “I believe in God that transcends everything else, I mean, that’s the bottom line for everybody, right?” She has worked mainly in hierarchically run youth shelters since 2001, and deals with both women and men. She participated in this study based on her experiences working with woman abuse issues as a youth worker and counsellor. Since she had also stayed at

a shelter, her experiences were both personal and professional. Currently, she is working at a youth shelter and is planning her “exodus”¹⁷⁹ home.

Calypso portrayed her location as follows:

[T]he first thing I have to put is African . . . first and foremost . . . Calypso is [a] mom . . . I am a dreamer . . . a big dreamer . . . [laughs] . . . I am . . . a wanna be artist . . . I am . . . my grandmother’s granddaughter . . . that’s my favourite . . . I am a sister . . . I do my own thing, I don’t follow . . . My name my mother and father call me pancake, a run away pancake . . . Coming from the Caribbean that is what they say . . . “Run away pancake” . . . only Caribbean people . . . wasn’t it a gingerbread boy? . . . I’m a traveler . . . in many different ways.



Figure 3. Who am I? Calypso.

Calypso is a 34-year-old woman who emigrated from Barbados 12 years ago. She speaks English and Bajan dialect and recently became a Canadian citizen. She is heterosexual-identified and describes her class as being “on the margin of poor and middle class”. She is a mother of one

¹⁷⁹ Harriet referred to “Exodus” throughout her interview and focus group participation as she is planning to go back to Jamaica.

and identified memory problems as part of what could be an undiagnosed disability. She described her spiritual/religious affiliation as, “I am not the kind [to believe in] organized religion but I believe in ancestry. I believe in African spirituality.” Calypso has worked in three hierarchically run woman abuse and homeless shelters for over 12 years as a full-time and relief children’s and youth counsellor/advocate, and women’s counsellor. Presently, she is working as a shelter outreach worker and completing her B.A.

Audre described her location as:

You get the red out here and in the blue thing in the middle and in there is a lovely little something right there It doesn’t represent nothing. I am me in the mist of somewhere, sometimes at the centre, sometimes here of others constructs which may mean nothing. I am the blue in the mist of the red.

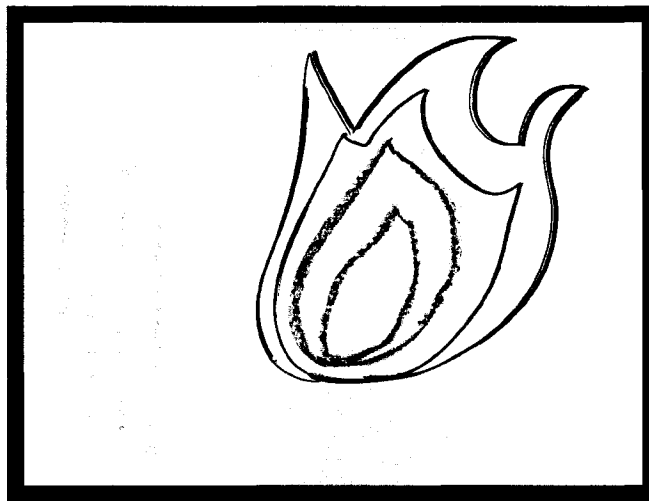


Figure 4. Who am I? Audre.

Audre is a 35-year-old woman born in Canada, but raised in Trinidad. Audre returned to Canada at age 19. She has a BA and a Masters degree. She is English speaking with a good understanding of Spanish. When asked her class affiliation, Audre stated, “I am going to pass”. She is lesbian-identified, a practicing Catholic, and has worked in three collective and

hierarchically run shelters, for almost nine years as a full-time and relief women's counsellor.

Currently, she is working in the government (victim witness assistance program) and no longer works in shelters.

Nana depicted her location as:

Those are my locks . . . I like the green . . . First I am . . . a Black woman. I am gifted. I am proud. I'm responsible. I am dependable. I am reliable. I am loving. I am kind, caring, and intelligent, and I'm all these things. They are all a part of me. They are all interrelated to who I am, as a person. I love flowers.

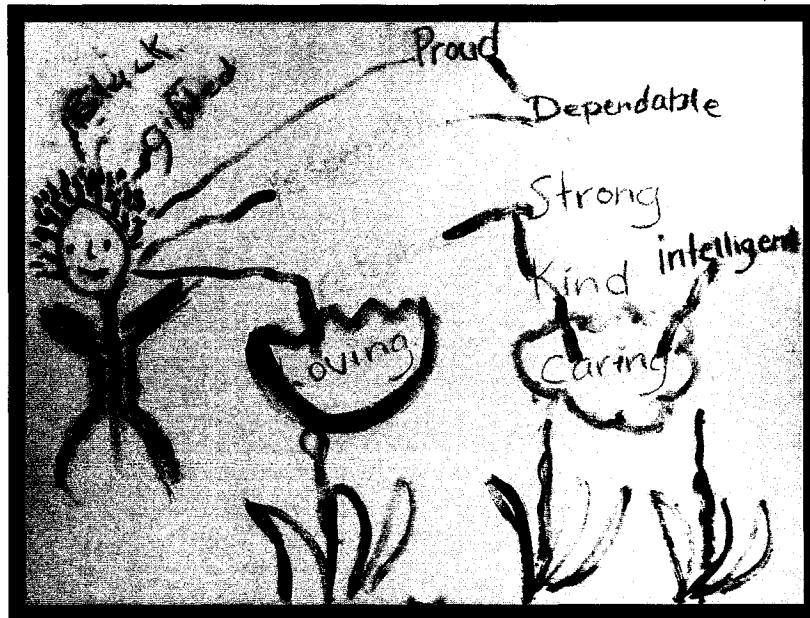


Figure 5. Who am I? Nana.

Nana is a 48-year-old woman born in St. Kitts, mother of five, grandmother of eight. She has a College degree. She is a Canadian citizen and has been living in Canada for over 31 years. Nana identified as a heterosexual woman and identified her stuttering as a disability. She stated that her class affiliation “means nothing to me but I know that I am placed in a class so I don’t really identify with it but I’m placed in the working poor class” [laughs]. Nana identified her spiritual/religious affiliation as Christian. She has worked at the same woman abuse shelter for

over 5 1/2 years. This shelter was run by a collective in the past and, at the time of this research, is currently run following a hierarchical model. Nana works as a full-time children's advocate worker and has worked as a relief women's counsellor.

Zora depicted her location as:

I am a strong woman. I'm grounded I don't have [an] identity crisis, and I know who I am. . . so I am stronger like that I am persistent, I don't give up I'm very committed at whatever I do I don't let people discourage me. I'm highly spiritual, and I'm open, and I'm very authentic My experience working in this field, and my education and everything gives me the opportunity to meet people I have a dialogue, or a good analysis I'm open to anybody I accept people When I meet people or some people they have closed off, so me, I open myself to anybody.

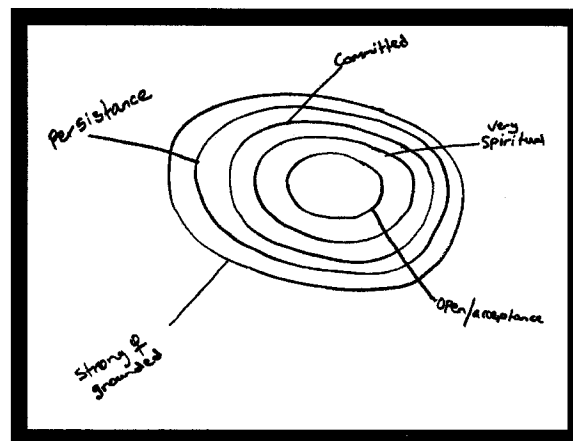


Figure 6. Who am I? Zora.

Zora is a 38- to 42-year-old woman born in Nigeria and mother of three. She has a B.A. and speaks Ebo, Yoruba, and English. She has lived in Canada for 22 years and is a Canadian citizen. Zora identified as heterosexual, middle class, and Anglican. For over 18 years, she has worked at six different shelters as both a full-time and a relief children's advocate worker, and as

a women's counsellor. She also is the founder and Executive Director of a cross-cultural, multilingual counselling agency for women in the Durham region.

Makeba expressed her location as:

That's me. This being the world and this being the continent of Africa, and I'm now in the continent of America.

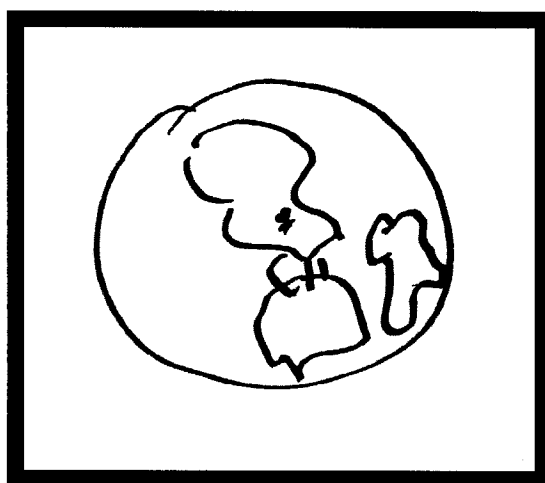


Figure 7. Who am I? Makeba.

Makeba is a “30-plus” year-old woman born in Ethiopia. She has a B.A. and speaks Amharic and English. She has lived in Canada for over 20 years and is a Canadian citizen. Makeba identified as a heterosexual, working class woman. She has worked in three shelters in the last 10 years, mostly hierarchically run. She has worked as a full-time youth and women's counsellor in a shelter for young women. Currently, she works as a mental health court support worker.

Kariabengbeng explained her illustrated location as:

At first it was supposed to be a spiritual body that floats in the world and the world is a part of what you are a part of . . . making interaction and connection . . . and I was going to put another hand . . .

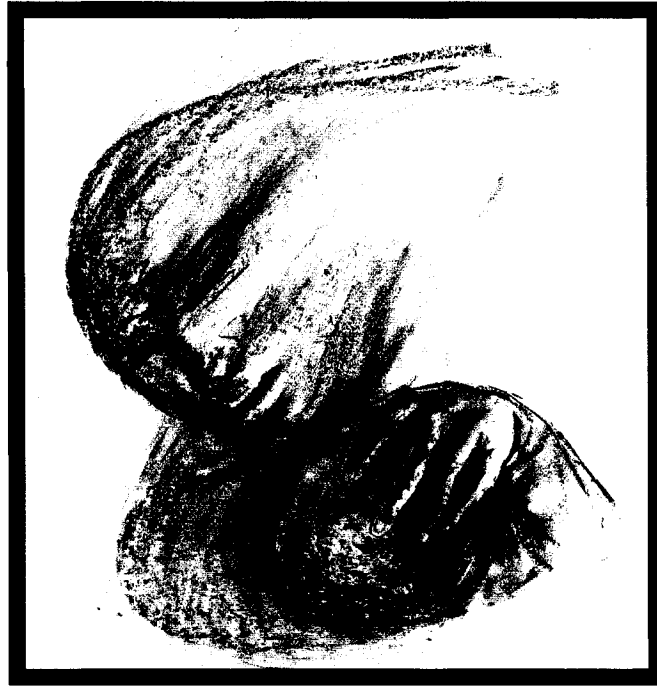


Figure 8. Who am I? Kariabengbeng.

Kariabengbeng is a 46-year-old woman, lesbian-identified, co-parent. She was born in England to parents of Jamaican descent. She speaks English and German, and has “some university”. Kariabengbeng has been living in Canada for 31 years and holds British and Canadian citizenship. She articulated her class affiliation by stating:

I’m affiliated with the working peoples in the world . . . [laughs] but because I’m in the arts I think it kind of takes you out of just being in the working class, you have some privilege.

In reference to her disability, Kariabengbeng stated that “living in Canada is a disability”. She added that her health concerns are related to “the stress that Black people go through as a health concern that nobody really talks about”. In regards to spirituality, she believes that:

I feel like I have spiritual, I have a spiritual matron and embraced my spiritual nature, the spirits of the world but affiliation to some organized spirituality I don’t have.

Kariabengbeng is a visual artist who has spent many years working in various social justice communities using the arts as resistance. She has worked for over 15 years in seven shelters as an art-facilitator and more recently as a children's advocate worker in both collective and hierarchically run shelters. Presently, she works as an art therapist at a collectively run woman abuse shelter in Toronto.

Esmeralda represented her location as:

This is supposed to be I guess my head and my brain, and sort of all the stuff that is going on with me mentally [T]his is the rest of my body I feel that sort of cognitively, mentally, I'm really above sometimes even the people that I'm sitting around, [e]specially when it comes to racism and the things that they tell me, but the rest of me, the physical me is in their eyes, still beneath them These White people that are between myself spiritually and mentally . . . emotionally even The red is symbolizing for me a point of just frustration the core of who I am. I'm a pretty happy sunny kind of person . . . but I guess in terms of the outside it's difficult so that's why I draw this.

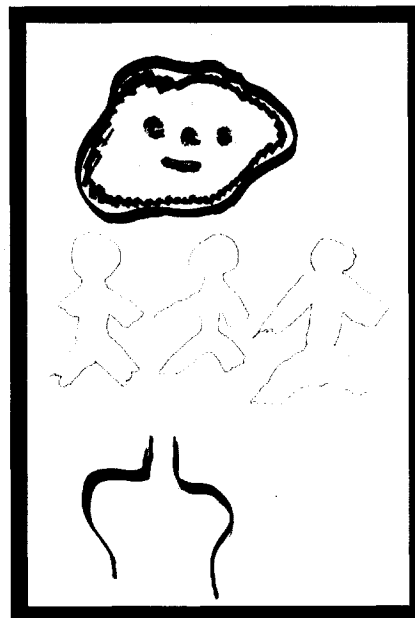


Figure 9. Who am I? Esmeralda.

Esmeralda is a 23-year-old woman born in Kenya. Her mother is Somali, and her father is Oromia. She is a third-year social work student. Esmeralda speaks English, Somali, Oromo, Kiswahili, Arabic, and French. She immigrated to Canada 22 years ago and is a Canadian citizen. She identified as straight and poor. Esmeralda's health concern is living with kidney disease. Her spiritual/religious affiliation is stated as "Muslim and influenced by the 'Rasta Jamaican Community'". Over the last five years, Esmeralda has worked with young women survivors of violence at five hierarchically run shelters in Toronto and several others in Montreal. Currently, she works as a reestablishment worker and caseworker at a shelter. Esmeralda is also the youngest participant in this research.

Portia characterized her location as follows:

That's the tree version in terms of the colours It means my emotional and my spiritual state To interpret the colours . . . it's different; it depends on the mood I am in I change quickly; don't think you can figure it out [laughs] it's not for anybody to figure out So this to me is like it creates a sense of stability, this is the yellow here . . . this brings the balance in my life, because I am an Aquarian, so . . . I'm a thinker Small little things don't count for me in life. I look at . . . the bigger pictures so this would bring me back into the world of reality as one knows it. This takes me out to different areas.

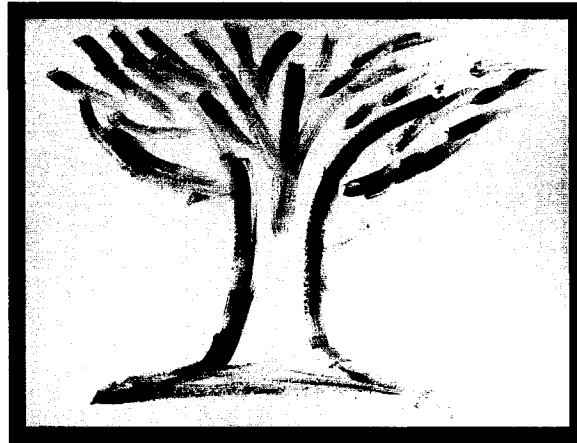


Figure 10. Who am I? Portia.

Portia is a 54-year-old woman and “other mother”¹⁸⁰ born in Jamaica. When asked about her education, she stated that, “I don’t really focus that much on academia and I kind of downplay my academia, and that is my choice because I do believe that life experiences is synonymous and is academia” Portia speaks English and Patois and identified as asexual. She described her disability as:

My disability is not something that is visual it is something that is inherent, and it depends on how you look [at and] what you term as a disability For me I have many inherent disabilities depending on the situation, depending on with whom I speak.

She described her spiritual affiliation as:

[W]hen I’m saying spiritual, I’m looking at trees, I’m looking at leaves, I’m looking at many different things from a philosophical level.

Portia has lived in Canada for over 30 years and has worked in the woman abuse shelter community for over 23 years. She has worked in five different shelters both collective and hierarchically run. Presently, Portia is working as a full-time women’s counsellor in a collective

¹⁸⁰ Other mother refers to African/Black women who are not the biological mothers of children but who act, raise, and treat children like their own.

run shelter, but she is not a collective member. She also works as a rehabilitation therapist at a brain injury clinic and as a consultant for a shelter in Pickering.

Assata emphasized her location:

This is me, big, tall, Black woman, leader I have here “I am, I am, I am a leader.” . . . I just reflect back as a child growing up I didn't . . . like to take “women's role” in anything I was doing, even when we were playing house I had to be the father [laughter] I was very much a tomboy . . . and these just take me into my journey of the ups and downs that I've had in my life.¹⁸¹

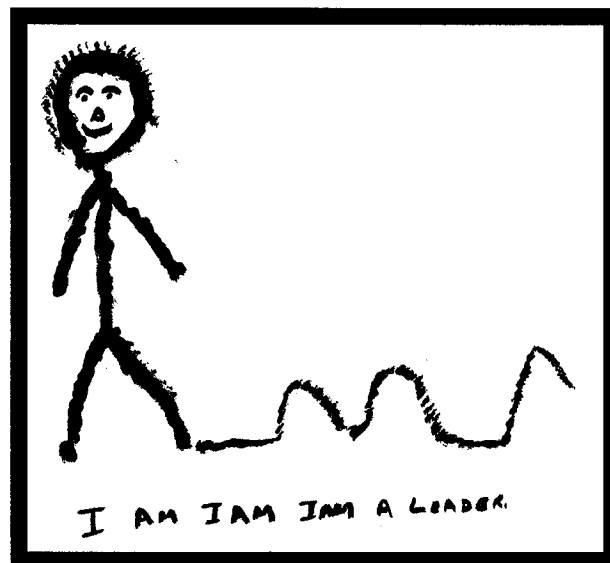


Figure 11. Who am I? Assata.

Assata is a 47-year-old woman and mother of two, born in Jamaica. She speaks English and has a college degree. Assata identified as heterosexual and has worked in the shelter community for 12 years as a full-time, relief, and contract counsellor/advocate in both collective and hierarchically run shelters. Presently, Assata is working as a full-time women's counsellor advocate in a shelter run by an Executive Director. She has taken six months leave due to her

¹⁸¹ Assata and Angela participated in the initial pre-test interviews in November 2004, which did not include active participation with the arts. As a result, their locations were taken from their focus group participation.

experiences of “violence” working at the shelter. Assata immigrated to Canada when she was 18 years old. Her youngest daughter has been sent home to Jamaica to go to high school.

Sojourner passionately described her location as:

Racism . . . racism This is what I’m thinking That’s who I am I’m Black, African, from Trinidad, living in racist Canada, 63 3/4 years . . . with ill health I am trying to stay alive . . . as long as I can but I am very tired and scared but I must hold on.

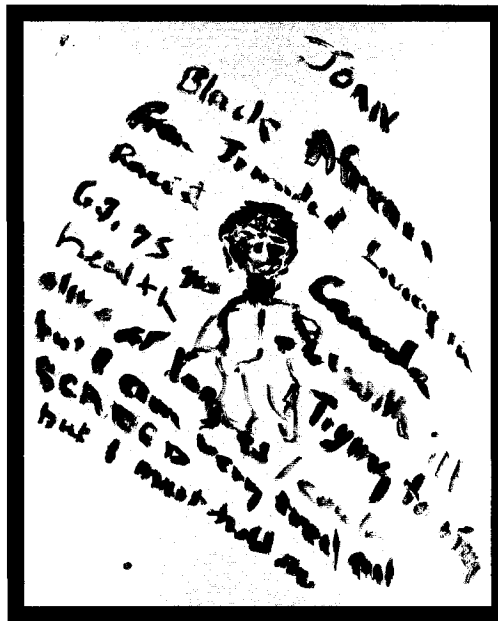


Figure 12. Who am I? Sojourner.

Sojourner is a 63 3/4 year-old-woman, heterosexual-identified mother of four and grandmother of three. She was born in Trinidad and Tobago. She speaks English and has a university degree. Sojourner immigrated to Canada under Canada’s domestic scheme in 1962. She described her class affiliation as: “I think I am just a world citizen . . . and I don’t see myself in any class I just see myself as a world citizen.” She described her disabilities as: “right now I have several disabilities, but then there’s also disability where I am seen as Black, [a]

single mother and a woman with an accent, so people look at that as a disability. I don't look at it as a disability, but it could be seen as a disability". Sojourner's health concerns are described as follows: "I have lots of health concerns I have lots of illnesses, degenerative diseases" She described her spiritual/religious affiliation as: "I am not religious, I believe in myself, and I believe in the goodness and kindness of the human being." For over 20 years, Sojourner has worked in four different shelters, collectively and hierarchically run. Presently, she is working as a relief women's counsellor at a hierarchically run shelter and providing childcare for her grandchildren.

Fannie depicted her location as:

I drew me. Sometimes I think I'm very alone in the world I do my best thinking alone, so that's why I probably look like the only person in here That's a blue sky [T]he world is still a beautiful place, but I think there's a lot of dark . . . things, not as in . . . Black people but just what happens in the world There's lot of evil in the world for some reason and a lot of hatred, and these are . . . like green spots that I would like to see in the world . . . some green spots along the way . . . some bright spots, of yellow and . . . greens and purple . . . This is for the earth [M]y dad is a farmer so I . . . very much value soil and planting and that kind of stuff I have my outstretched hands [I] always think that there's a lot that I could do . . . about changing the way the world is currently for a lot of people.



Figure 13. Who am I? Fannie.

Fannie is a 48-year-old woman and mother of two who was born in Barbados. She is English speaking and is a graduate student. Fannie immigrated to Canada 22 years ago and identified herself as middle class and grassroots. She stated that she had undiagnosed dyslexia and her spiritual/religious affiliation is “I’m a very spiritual person, versus a very religious person.” For over 15 years, Fannie has worked in the violence against woman community in five shelters as a children’s advocate worker and group leader. Presently, she is an Executive Director of a woman abuse shelter.

Buchi explained her location:

I am an African woman who still feels very African even after 14 years. I’m heterosexual, and I have great respect for African culture and I try to stay that way with my children and I don’t want to forget where I came from and why.

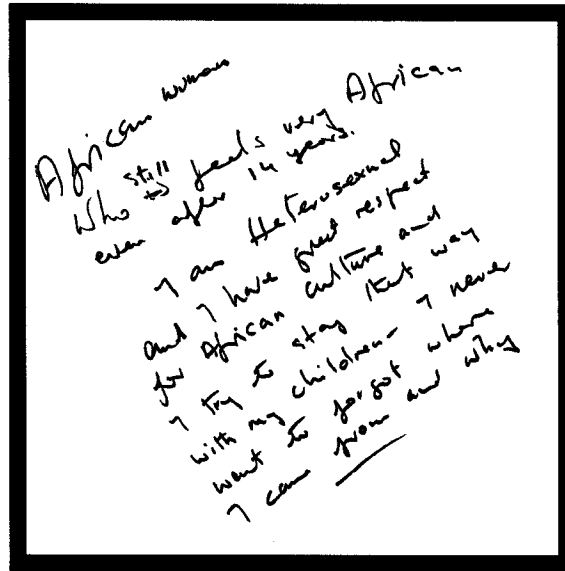


Figure 14. Who am I? Buchi.

Buchi is a 59-year-old woman and mother of three born in Somalia. She went to boarding school in England and immigrated to Canada in 1990. She speaks Somali and English and identified as Christian. Buchi described her class affiliation as “in Somalia . . . except in the last part of the last regime, there wasn’t really such a class system”. For over 13 years, she has worked in six different woman abuse shelters, both collective and hierarchically run, as a women’s counsellor. Presently, Buchi is working as an outreach worker at a shelter for homeless and abused women.

Claudia explained her illustration of her location:

I am a beautiful Black woman, that’s who I am. [laughs] That’s who I think I am . . . That’s the bright, complete sun. Never mind what other people say but this is who I am. That’s it! [W]ell [what] it represents . . . is strong and it’s bright.

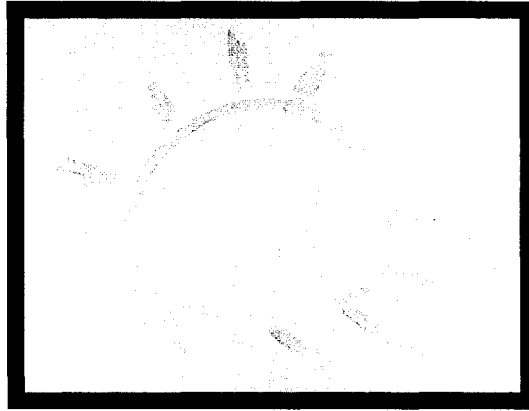


Figure 15. Who am I? Claudia.

Claudia is a woman and mother of two, and is between the ages of “35 and 40”. She was born in Ethiopia and speaks Amharic, Greek, and English. Claudia has three college degrees and identified as heterosexual and Christian. She has lived in Canada for over 16 years after emigrating from Greece where she worked as a nurse. When asked her class affiliation, Claudia answered, “[Means] nothing to me”. She has worked in one shelter with women and men for over seven years. Claudia participated in this research based on her experiences working with women and children who are fleeing violent homes. Presently, she works as a full-time worker in a hierarchically run family shelter.

Wiwa described her location:

That’s me Now I’m standing tall Not because I’m too strong, but because I need to be . . . to be able to function . . . and these are all the factors that are against me at any given point, and I know them . . . and I’ve lived them . . . and I’ve experienced them . . . and nobody can deny that reality from me Nobody can tell me it doesn’t exist . . . it’s all in your own mind or whatever, because this is my personal experience [T]his is my life . . . this is me.

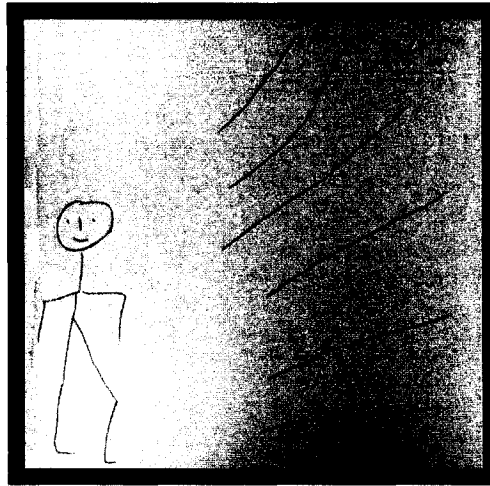


Figure 16. Who am I? Wiwa.

Wiwa is in her late 30s to early 40s and identified as an African-Muslim woman. She was born in Somalia and is a mother of one. She speaks Somali, Swahili, English, and some Italian. Wiwa has two college diplomas and some university education and has lived in Canada for 14 years. She identified as heterosexual and described her class affiliation as: “I come from the lowest”. She has been working in the woman abuse shelter community for over eight years as a relief women’s counsellor. Wiwa has worked in four shelters both collective and hierarchically run. Presently, she works for the government on a full-time basis and does relief work at a hierarchically run shelter.

Angela depicted her location as:

This is me a very brown woman, with my beautiful black hair. I tried to braid [it] because I like my hair natural and braided . . . I'm carrying my baby . . . right now and I like the colour blue. I was wearing a blue dress and I was standing near a lake . . . the shore . . . and I'm walking and letting the water wash my feet, walking bare feet . . . [A]s you can see it's a nice beautiful day . . . and I see the birds are flying . . . and the seagulls; and . . . besides the tree, it's full of nature . . .

. There at the front walking ahead of me or maybe walking behind . . . my boys are throwing the rocks That's me.



Figure 17. Who am I? Angela.

Angela is a 35-year-old woman and a mother of two. She was born in Kenya and has a college degree. She speaks Kisii, Swahili, and English and identified as heterosexual and working class. Angela has worked in the shelter community for over 10 years. She has worked in three shelters in collective and hierarchical models. Presently, Angela works full-time as a women's counsellor in a hierarchically run shelter. She is eight-and-a-half months pregnant and is dealing with a lot of stress due to the "violence" in her work environment.

Afrotrini described her location:

I'm actually feeling good these days This is me just being a big Black lesbian and a letter with T & T and Africa right there . . . and that's supposed to be joint When I did this that's what made me feel better, because people make so much fun of our hair, and it does look like whatever the . . . buckwheat or the whatever with our hair sticking out, but I think it's really sexy so I'm glad I did

that African woman love I may be a lesbian, but I love [all] African women I am a sexy older woman.

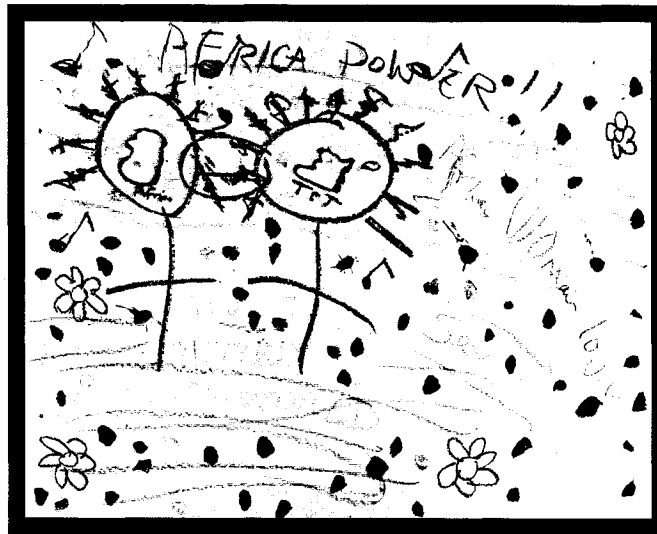


Figure 18. Who am I? Afrotrini.

Afrotrini is a 41-year-old woman who is lesbian-identified. She was born in Canada, raised in Trinidad, and returned to Canada at age 20. She has a B.A., speaks English, and reads and understands Spanish. Afrotrini described her class affiliation as, “In Trinidad upper middle class, in Canada middle class”. She has worked in the woman abuse shelter community for the last 14 years as a full-time and relief women’s counsellor, as well as a project manager in collective and hierarchically run shelters. Presently, Afrotrini works as a volunteer coordinator for a national phone line that provides supports for woman fleeing violence and hosts a local community radio show.

In the following section, women’s locations in and outside of the shelters are depicted.

Locations: Who I am and Who I am in the Shelter

It is important to begin this section by, once again, examining and expanding the social locations of African/Black women working in the shelter community to understand how their

locations shape their experiences. For this section, women collectively located themselves in focus groups as they shared who they were based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other intersectional factors, as well as who they were in relation to working in shelters. Through a Creative Resistance location exercise given for homework after the individual interview, although mostly completed in the focus groups, African/Black women were paired and then related the stories of their locations to each other. Women then retold and shared their partner's location stories within the larger group. Some women added or elaborated on points made by other women about their locations. Intersectional factors emerged as important components of women's locations that were represented through images and words often similar to the initial locations revealed during the individual interview process. Perhaps these similarities indicated women's connections and groundedness with their identities and locations. Women used images, colours, and words to depict their locations using words such as *strong, respectful, African woman, Black woman, struggle, powerful, ancestors, responsible, children, mother, grandmother, peaceful, spiritual, immigrant and survivor*. The following are some examples:

Figure 19 and Figure 20 depicted expressions of Makeba's and Calypso's dual locations of who they are in relation to intersectional factors and who they are in relation to working in shelters.

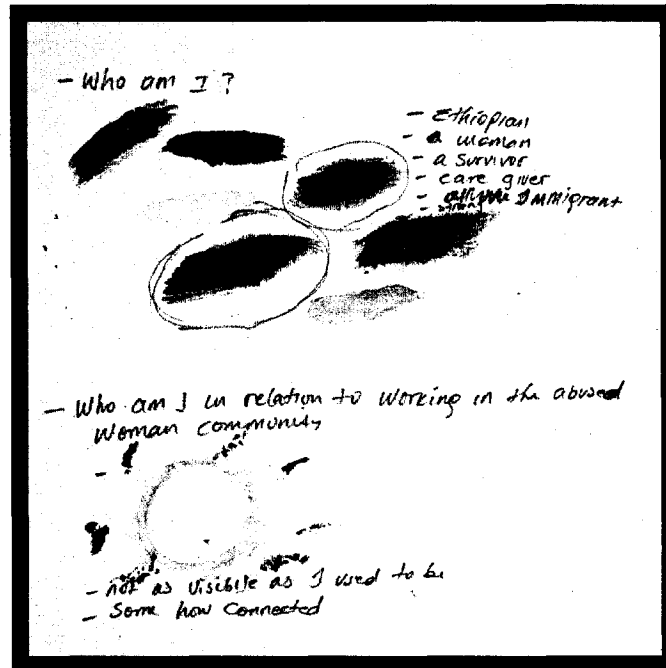


Figure 19. Makeba.

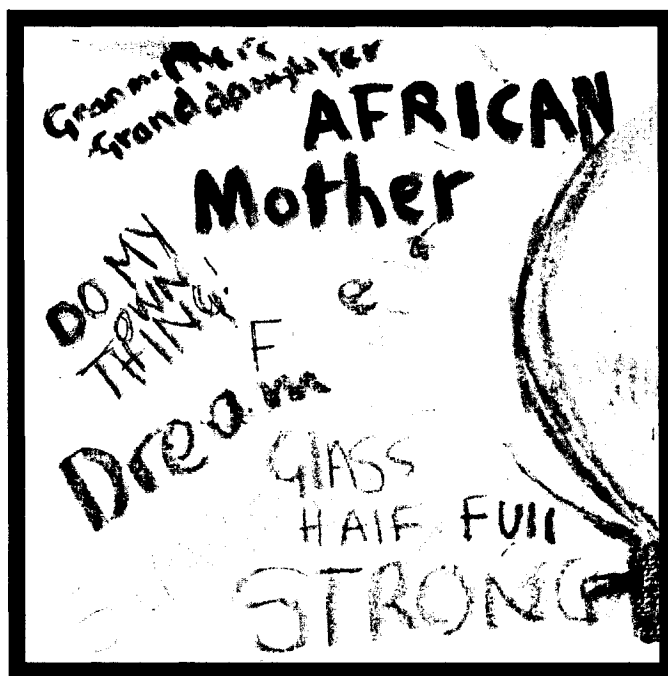


Figure 20. Calypso.

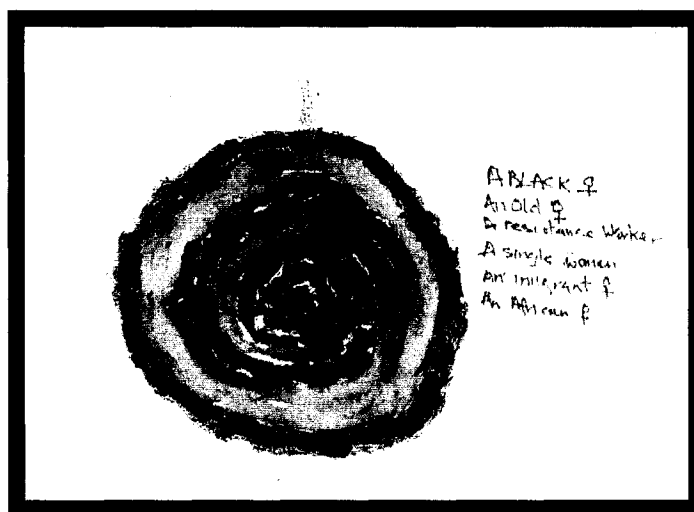


Figure 21. Sojourner.

Figure 21, drawn by Sojourner, is described by Wiwa as:

Very African [T]here's a big circle here with different colours, she's a Black woman, an old woman, a resistance worker, a single woman, and an immigrant woman.

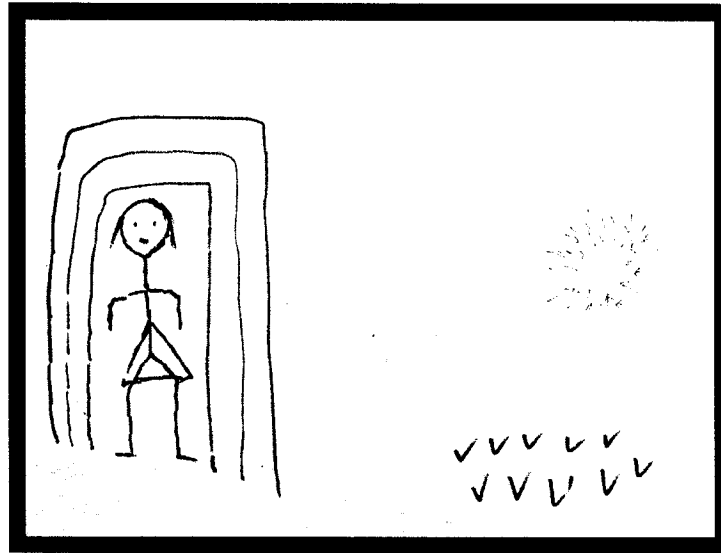


Figure 22. Wiwa.

Figure 22, drawn by Wiwa, is also described by Wiwa:

I feel like I'm in roles, you have one and then . . . the other one . . . and take one and there is the other one, the African, the Muslim, the Black slave, but then again, that's me I am tall, I see myself as tall but I am not tall [I]t's like I tend to go above it I don't let these things put me down.¹⁸²

¹⁸² Wiwa speaks here about herself as Sojourner, the oldest participant in the group was not able to remember and present all of her partner's location.

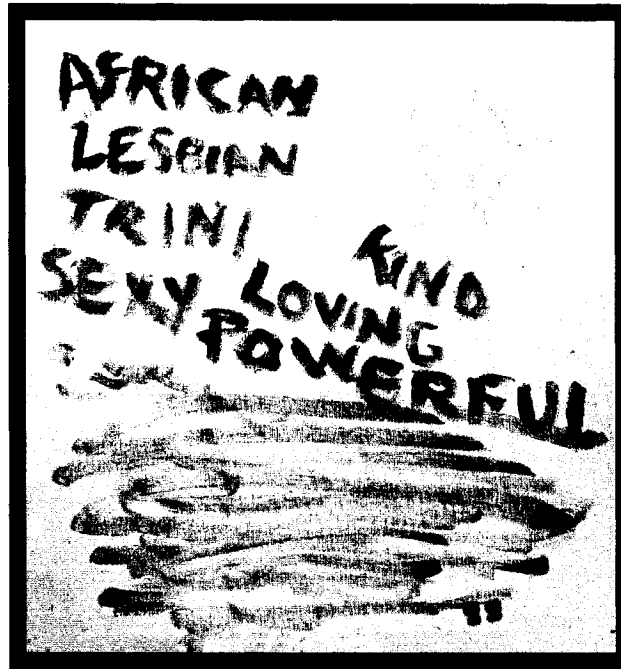


Figure 23. Afrotrini.

Figure 23, drawn by Afrotrini, is elaborated on by Nefertiti:

She's an African woman, a lesbian woman, although the title lesbian is . . . not her first choice, but at this time this is what she'll use to describe herself, and so an African lesbian Trini woman, so that's three powerful things right there, right? Three powerful things that you have to contend with and . . . having attained maturity she finds herself very sexy, and very comfortable with that, and being in her body and you know, her presence and everything, and that's a beautiful feeling to have all the time, she's kind, loving and powerful.

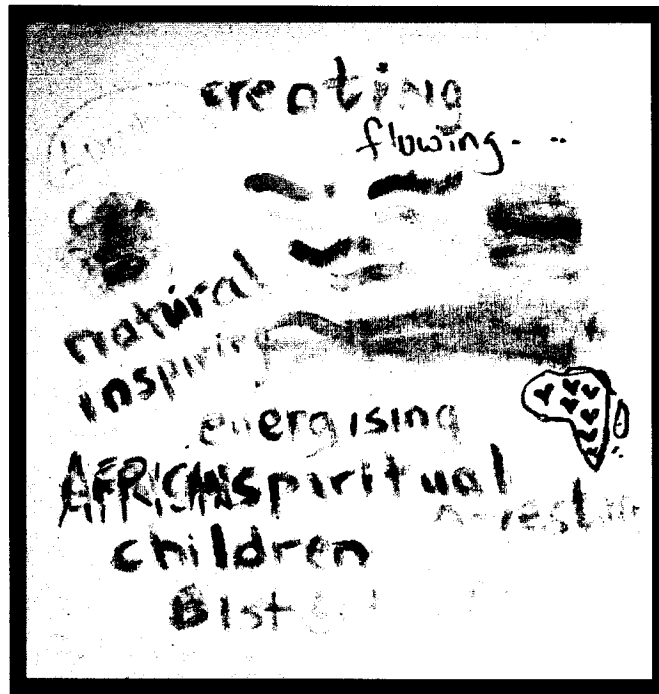


Figure 24. Nefertiti.

Figure 24, created by Nefertiti, is described by Afrotrini:

Sister [Nefertiti] is guided by her ancestors, and her people from Africa, it's what guides her daily, her spirituality and her ancestors and that includes her mom, her grandmother, people who have, women who have passed on, it's the whole reason of being here, and gives her the power . . . big part of who she is, huge, children . . . [I]t's about being responsible and accountable to her children, not only her own but all of our children, sister [Nefertiti] is always creating.

Women often located themselves on the same page, using images, colours, and words in relation to working in shelters, integrating the former locations within the latter work environment. Hence, women once again discussed countries of origin, race, and age and in some

cases sexual orientation to formulate their intersectional locations.¹⁸³ Women drew and spoke of hope, friendship, and supporting women as part of their locations at work.



Figure 25. Buchi.

Figure 25, made by Buchi, is discussed by Harriet:

She's from East Africa and the sun is out and she's enjoying herself [Buchi] adds, "I'm back home in Africa, the sun is there, the green is there, I see myself as peace. I love peace, I see myself as a peaceful person". For the work side of it, which I think most of us can relate to, there's a ball of fire here inside and the women and children and just that for [Buchi] represents the fears and the desolation I guess of the way that some of the women and children feel once they're in this situation, and she's up here, [Buchi] is here and she feels as though she represents for them hope and love and with the fire being with these women and children. Some days the moon is up here.

¹⁸³ In this location section, women's standpoints about who they are and who they are in relation to shelters are being presented. This directly relates to the methodology described earlier. As a result, I did not interpret women's locations of themselves.

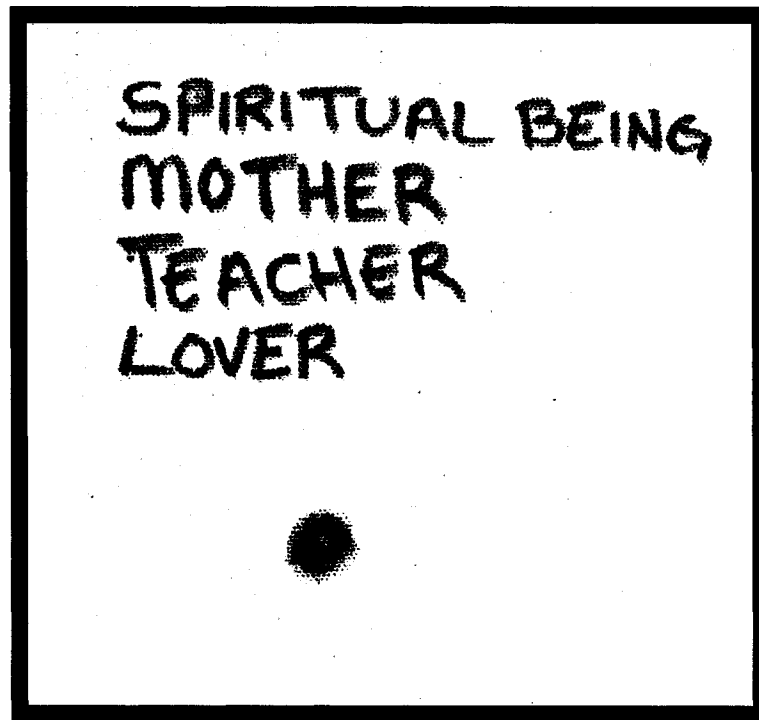


Figure 26. Harriet.

Figure 26, drawn by Harriet, is described by Buchi:

[Harriet] is a spiritual being, strongly believes that everybody is spiritual . . . and she is spiritual She did all the different colours . . . she is a mother, and since she works with youth she feels . . . she's able to take that motherhood and help . . . the children that she's working with back home [S]he does it with her own children, and she's a teacher because she believes everybody is a teacher, and all of us are teachers. Lover, she believes in not only your partner [Y]ou should be a lover of all, you should be the lover of your children.

As well, women drew and spoke of being disrespected, feelings of pain, trauma, and anger working at shelters. The retelling of women's locations created a collective witnessing of differently located African/Black women's stories. The retelling of women's locations in a larger group also gave voice to these women's perceptions of themselves and a wider audience of validation of who they were which is often silenced in their lived and work environments. This

was done in the beginning of the focus groups and helped shape the merging of collective collaborations throughout this project. Hence, the collective witnessing among women through location exercises supported the methodology and theoretical framework for this research.

Summary

This chapter revealed the locations of women participants in this study. These creative and descriptive analyses of eighteen differently located African/Black women represent the participants in this research. The diversity of these women's standpoints were highlighted as well as their similarities and connections as interpreted by their own standpoints and knowledge bases. Additionally, the richness of their experiences provided an eclectic reflection of how African/Black women working in shelters in Toronto locate themselves. Understanding women's locations of themselves is significant for providing insight in this research and supports the theoretical and methodological approach taken. Women's locations related to intersectional factors such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation are important as they will lead us to an understanding of how these same factors influenced their identities, experiences of intersectional violence working in shelters, and ultimately their agency and resistance.

In the following chapter, African/Black women's conceptualizations of their identities are furthered and their lived experiences of intersectional oppressions are revealed.

Chapter Six:
African/Black Women: Identities, and
Lived Experiences of Intersectional Oppressions

Introduction

Through the integrated framework discussed earlier, the emphasis in this chapter explores women's notions of their identities, and the participants' lived and work experiences outside of the shelter environment. This sets the groundwork for Chapters Seven and Eight which focus on the participants' shelter work experiences, women's resistance, and their responses to the process.

First, women's identities are located further in the research. Specifically, the themes of African ancestry/Diasporic connections; notions of Africanness/Blackness; relationships between mother, grandmother, other mother, elders, sisters, and indigenous feminist knowledges; spiritualities; Women of Colour identity; and notions of the "box" are all presented as factors that foster and sustain women's identity formations.

Second, women's conceptualizations and definitions of intersectional violence in their lived experiences are described.

Identities

I belong to a people, I am a nation I am not just a daggling object. I belong somewhere. I'm solid. (Angela)

African/Black women's locations are influenced by intersectional violence sanctioned by systems of state power which affect how and why African/Black women identify and locate themselves. This analysis on identity is significant as it is needed to understand women's working experiences and their resistance in shelters. Various formulations and understandings of

women's identity are looked at by examining reoccurring themes that were revealed in the interviews and focus groups. The next section discusses how women in this research identified and their connections to Africa and the African Diaspora.

How do African/Black Women Identify?

African ancestry and Diasporic connections.

The terms that we use to name ourselves (Black, African, African-American, Black British, Minority, Latina/o, West Indian, Caribbean, Hispanic, People of Color, Women of Color, Afro-Caribbean, Third World and so on) carry their strings of echoes and inscriptions. Each represents an original misnaming and the simultaneous constant striving of the dispossessed for full representation. Each therefore must be used provisionally; each must be subject to new analyses, new questions and new understandings if we are to unlock some of the narrow terms of the discourses in which we are inscribed. In other words, at each arrival at a definition, we begin a new analysis, a new departure, a new interrogation of meaning, new contradictions. (Davies, 1994, p. 5)

African/Black women identified themselves in several ways connecting their experiences directly to their African ancestry and Diasporic awareness. Women's histories, stories, memories, and knowledges shaped their perceptions of connections with Africa and the African Diaspora. For this reason, Africa was mentioned as home by both African/Black women who were born and raised there and also by women who had never physically gone to the continent. Some women expressed their longing to go back to Africa and the need to reclaim what was or what is theirs. This is movingly expressed by Assata, an African-identified woman born in the Caribbean:

When I think of exodus, I think of the Colonizers to give us back our land, our money, our gold, our gems, put back all its wealth that they stole from Africa and leave Africa with all its wealth so its people can go home. [Describing her image drawn in Figure 27] These are its people. In green going to a place of greener pastures. I have "oh Africa I am coming home. I am battered and bruised but I am coming home. We are going home sweet Mother Africa".

Africa, this place that I love so much, that I long for so much that I've always [silence] wished that I was a part of this growing up, language, people, community, and over the years my longing for this . . . have helped me to connect myself to different people, from different parts of Africa. [silence] This is my land, my, birth right, my land, my people, my chest, my gem, my gold, [emotional], my whole being is connected to this, this place. [emotional]



Figure 27. Assata.

Nana another participant echoed Assata's words as she narrated her ancestral journey:

My great-grandmother, my great-great-grandmother lived in Sierra Leone, in North Africa, we started off in North Africa on one side and settled in the West Indies, in Saint Vincent, Antigua, Barbuda, Nevis. Africans . . . and loving the culture.

Also the sense of Black Diasporic connection, but to a lesser degree, was felt and discussed by both African/Black women raised throughout Africa, England, and the Caribbean. This is captured by Angela who conversed about duality and connections among and between African/Black peoples:

My experience has been . . . two sides to it; there are always the side of, there is still people even if they were not born in the Continent but they are still Africans, they still are my sisters and my brothers and . . . they do face the same struggles as me. The one thing is that we're all Africans . . . our face, our colour, everything, our mannerisms We all have things in common. We are a people with a culture of love. We're a people who like to celebrate . . . who like to sit down Family is important to us, help one another . . . look out for one another, yes. That's sameness, that commonality.

Several women in this research illuminated the sense of grief over the loss of identity, land, culture, and family due to colonization, enslavement, forced migration, and genocide practiced in and outside of the African continent and African Diaspora. Experiences of control, slavery, and rape were all forms of violence that women highlighted. Assata discussed control, slavery, belonging, and the impact of colonization on African people, especially from the Caribbean:

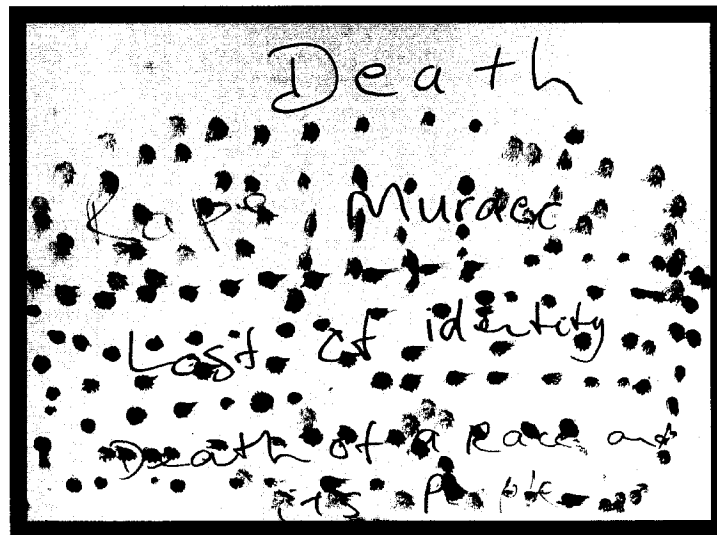


Figure 28. Assata.

Takes me back to control, slavery, rape, violence, a total disconnection of your roots, your whole being The saying goes if you don't know where you are

from then; definitely you don't know where you are going. So you come with that feeling of helplessness, that especially those of us from the Caribbean We've lost so much, everything, our names, our families, and where do we find where we belong, and where we come from to really give our children a sense of belonging.

Assata's discussion highlights the sense of loss, violence, and grief for her and other African women as a result of African enslavement. The horrendous realities of everyday genocide in places such as Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and New Orleans are summarized by Angela as she describes her image drawn as follows:

This valley too represents the genocide in Rwanda, especially, this deep one, the people in Rwanda The war was in Rwanda, and was fought by two tribes in Rwanda, but the whole world was up there watching and laughing at them down this way. A lot of people, I remember seeing on TV [crying] women and children, and older people were walking, they walked and walked far away and the media was reporting how all these people walked for days in the forest or in the dirty roads, crying. There wasn't a plane to drop them any food or anybody [crying] to help them get out, all those mothers who had their children. They could be my mother or that's my family [crying]. Then there was the pictures they showed later where bodies were floating in the lake. I don't know if you remember that . . . but that's why this valley is so deep. They tried to walk up this way to get help and nobody, helped, so they all tumbled and went down. Their lives didn't matter, that's what it means to me, it's sad [crying] Those systems are up here, and right here [referring to Canada] you're struggling and choking me; not just me, but everybody else who is like me [crying]. That's why I say, "Do you hear me?", "Do you hear me?" and I'm going to say, "Do you hear us?", "Do you hear us?", because this is more than a one-day thing, this is everyday. [crying]

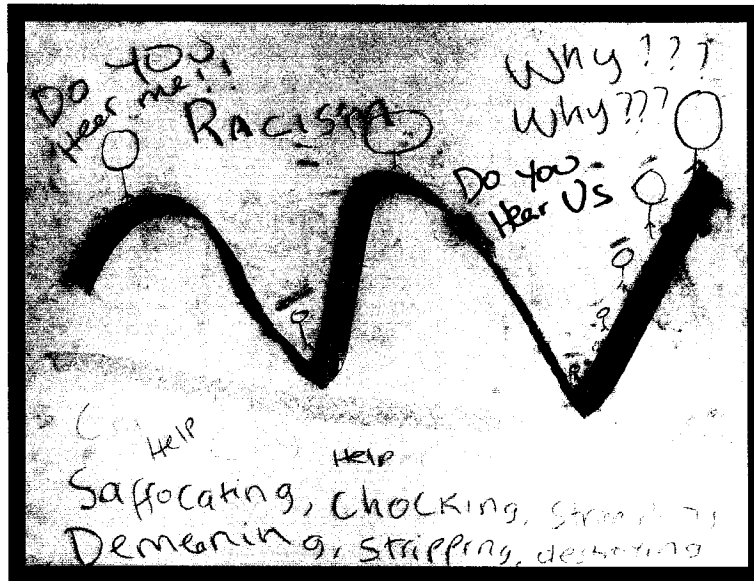


Figure 29. Angela.

From Angela's depiction, it is clear that there is a need for us to keep shouting so that we can be heard. She also alludes to having a collective voice for African peoples' often silenced existence. Differently located women in this research identified with both historical and contemporary experiences incorporating diverse African/Black cultures into their own life histories. Moreover, participants who were born in African countries, for the most part, identified with their African-Diasporic sisters. As well, women born in the Caribbean had harvested profound roots and connections to the African continent. The significance here is that women's locations reflect African/Black-centred lenses whereby differently manifested colonial encounters produced shared identities based on collective experiences of trauma and shared African/Black identity.

African/Black identity.

Because I feel I am a Black woman and it's only one ship came out of Africa so I'd got to be a Black woman. (Sojourner)

In the quote above, Sojourner communicated about her bond with other women of African descent and with Africa based on the history of enslavement. There is not one essentialized name or category that constitutes Blackness, but rather our identities are named by individual and collective conceptions that are created and maintained by differently located African/Black peoples. African/Black identity is important for this research as it indicates and acknowledges women's chosen standpoints and their local and global connections to other women who also identify in these same ways. Women working in shelters build alliances among each other and relate based on similar but differently located African/Black identities. These identities support women's survival and resistance within shelter structures as connections, bonds, and strategies are created and maintained. I asked women the following questions: How do you identify? Do you use the term or terms African woman and/or Black Woman to identify yourself? Calypso, born in Barbados, identified herself with the continent of Africa:

I just say African, and tell my child she's African. I don't even say African-Caribbean. I say African.

Nana identified herself with several regions, Africa, Canada, and the Caribbean:

Afro-Caribbean . . . Afro-Canadian . . . I use them a lot.

When asked specifically about how women identified themselves, almost all identified as either an African woman, Black woman or both.¹⁸⁴ Women also identified themselves with the country in which they were born and/or raised. Makeba identified with Ethiopia:

I identify myself as an Ethiopian. Because where I come from, it is important to identify also as an Ethiopian as opposed to a Black woman, because where we come from, we have different kinds of origins and backgrounds, and you know

¹⁸⁴ Seventeen out of 18 women identified as either African and/or Black.

you name it. So we have the history so we'd like to keep it. We would like to preserve our histories and I am proud to identify myself as an Ethiopian.

Esmeralda used several ways to identify herself, depending on the geographical or cultural group she was with:

I guess it depends on the context, and who I am with A lot of my friends are Caribbean most of the women I work with are Caribbean. I usually refer to myself as an African woman if I am with them [With] Canadian or White peoples I refer to myself as a Black woman.

Interestingly, Esmeralda did not make a distinction between Caribbean and Canadian peoples, assuming that these two categories are monocultural; by doing so she removed the complex and diverse realities of these identities.

The next section continues the exploration of women's identities by further examining the notions of Africanness and Blackness in order to elucidate women's self-identities.

Notions of Africanness and Blackness

Why Do Women Identify?

The women identified notions of Africanness and Blackness in several different ways. First, women identified and depicted Blackness as being part of a struggle that, by its mere existence, needed to be defended and protected. Often, women linked Africanness/Blackness to struggles to disqualify colonial positionalities that depicted African/Black peoples as less than, and un-intellectual. Wiwa discussed her experiences of racism's fallacy as critical reasons for strengthening her Africanness:

[Racism is] a constant struggle because . . . you're re-evaluating yourself, and if I look at it on the positive side it has allowed me and encouraged me to be who I am, that's one thing. I think it reinforces my Africanness, it reinforces where I

come from, and it reinforces who I am, and that's something that I have. It's a constant thing and it's also a learning experience. It's very educational in that you get to know what life really is in a "politically correct" world, that's never "correct".

Nana embraced her Blackness as a tool to dismantle racist stereotypical notions and practices:

If I don't take ownership of who I am, and it's almost as if I have to fight to let them know that I am, I am intelligent, that I'm caring, that I'm strong, that I'm gifted.¹⁸⁵ I have to fight, not just fight about my Blackness, but fight about [what] they assume when they see Black. "Black is not intelligent", that "it is not a smart colour at all". So it's like I always have to be proving myself, ten times more than my co-workers. It's always as if somebody is always looking over my shoulder. I have to be second-guessing myself, and the minute I second-guess myself, I know I'm in trouble.

Blackness was also looked at as qualities shared by African/Black peoples based on similar but different colonial experiences. Another way Africanness/Blackness was looked at by participants in the research was in reference to experiences of inclusion and exclusion dependent on regionally based distinctions between the continent of Africa or the Black Diaspora. Lastly, Blackness in this research was also measured by "subjective appearances" in terms of who looked "Black" or "African", who "presented" and "didn't present", who was "accepted" and "not accepted". These aspects were discussed, citing various experiences among and between peoples of African ancestries and can be linked directly with participants various colonial

¹⁸⁵ "I am intelligent", "I am gifted" are all statements found in Nana's location exercise done at the beginning of the research. The consistency of women's locations is highlighted here as well indicated by how the terms are used and articulated in order to try and resist against intersectional violence such as racism.

legacies. This was captured by Esmeralda who identified her experiences at work with African-Caribbean women when she changed her hairstyle:

Everything that happens to them [referring to African/Black people born in the Caribbean] in terms of all the slavery and you know colonialism and all this stuff, like I think that now . . . they've internalized that and now they're projecting that onto me, right They're still, I think, . . . dealing with their own things about whatever is going on and what Black is to them, right. I think that because of their misconception of being Black or what Blackness is right, because I think that there is a wide range of ways to identify what Blackness is or what that means to a person, that's why they're pushing it on to me The comments are because of my hair When I first started working in the shelter system, I had really curly dreads and then I was fine, but then when I cut off my hair and it grew like this . . . people more started noticing People always assumed I was from Trinidad; that was always the first question that I got [With] my normal hair . . . everything started becoming really different So I think when I started appearing, I guess maybe not as Caribbean . . . that's when I started noticing that I was having problems.

There are invisible divisions that have been normalized between and among some African/Black women due to colonial legacies. The measurement of what is African/Black and who is Black enough is a direct impact of the colonial "color hue" divide that premised differential treatment based on hair and skin complexion. The assumptions that colonialism and slavery only affected some African peoples, primarily those who were taken out of the continent of Africa were also present in the interviews and discussions. This represented the disconnection, destruction, and loss of families in both the continent and the African Diaspora. Yet, the exclusions highlighted above from Esmeralda are quite painful. Calypso echoed this hurt when she explained an incident in her work place where she was not referred to as African:

I had a conversation yesterday with [an African woman co-worker] at work and . . . then two sisters from the Continent, from the Cameroon She said . . . “There are three Africans here,” . . . meaning not me. I said, “Excuse me, but there are four” I was actually offended when she said that, so I just said it very clearly “It’s actually four here”. I wasn’t too happy about that . . . it’s kind of denying I mean a lot of people choose not to identify. Why I don’t know.

The notions of Africanness/Blackness as spaces of identity intrinsically link women’s locations and their identities with their experiences and resistance working in shelters. In the following section African/Black women explore their identities through the relationships with their mothers, grandmothers, other mothers, elders, sisters and indigenous feminist knowledges.

Relationships Between Mothers, Grandmothers, Other Mothers, Elders, Sisters, and Indigenous Feminist Knowledges

People are born from women We are it. I speak about the motherland, why don’t we say “fatherland”? There’s a reason. “Mother earth,” there is a reason for that. (Nefertiti)

Mothers, grandmothers, other mothers, and other “matrilineal” symbols are often talked about in stories and literature pertaining to African-based peoples, knowledges, and cultures.¹⁸⁶

African/Black women in this research described these relationships as being critical for their identity development and indigenous feminist knowledge productions. These themes are very important for this research as women in turn practice their knowledges and learnt strategies gained from these relationships at their work in shelters. Women revealed that they use their learnt indigenous feminist knowledges and praxis as tools to survive, cope, and resist

¹⁸⁶ See works from Tony Morrison, Ama Ata Aidoo, Zora Neale Hurston, Miriam Makeba, Ngugi Thiong’o, Alice Walker, Jamaica Kincaid.

intersectional violence at their workplaces. Angela discussed the importance of the legacies of African women, which were seen as critical for her identity and community building:

Traditionally, African woman was a really powerful woman, is a queen, the Mother Nature, mother earth, and . . . the caregiver of society. The person who was . . . like a source of healing, a source of energy to the whole village, to the clan. The person who . . . people looked up to, that everybody congregated around to hear what their grandmother had to say, and that is so strong in our community. Because of, again, that colonialism and the patriots that came up with colonialism, or with the emergence of the European culture, things pushed down to us. Unfortunately, that's being destroyed again, in terms of how a woman is seen.

Likewise, Nefertiti conferred the importance of women's roles in traditional African society as shaping her identity:

In the traditional African society, in Ghanaian society, women are highly revered. We had queen mothers centuries ago who lead wars and things like that for centuries and centuries, and I never felt while I was growing up in Ghana necessarily less of a person because I was a woman there. Maybe, there were other circumstances and other things that came into play, but not because I am a woman per se.

The re-historicizing and giving voice to traditional roles of African women in specific communities presented ways in which knowledge has been passed down as generations of women retell stories of traditional African women's power and respect in diverse societies. As women depicted ancient stories of African women's relatives, presumed or fictional, the formulation of distinctive identities and knowledge bases were being sustained, revised, and passed on.

Past and present indigenous feminist knowledges were consistently referred to when comparing "here" (Canada) with "there" (Africa and the African-Caribbean Diaspora) especially

in relation to how things should be done here and how things are done in other places. The disvalue, violent appropriation, and limited acknowledgement of African/Black-based knowledges by the Canadian and global arena were challenged by stories of indigenous African-based women “know how”. Additionally, the mirroring of identities and learnings of agency and resistance against interlocking forms of oppression from within and outside of differently located African/Black communities were said to be received in teachings from their mothers, sisters, and grandmothers, who by active examples impacted who these women were and how they self-identified today. Calypso affirmed her ties and gratitude when discussing her identity with feminism:

I think of women that have influenced me like my mother, my grandmother, understanding their stories and their struggles, even though it's not in [history] How I am, where I am today because of their struggles, having come from that same colonial past I think the little progress that we've made in my family, on my ancestry generation by generation and credit [is] giving . . . to the women ancestors, credit for where I am today That's where I align myself as far as my understanding of feminism, women's rights, workers' rights in relation to them, my ancestry, my history, as having survived like a history of slavery and the colonial past That's how I see myself as being in relation to my own ancestors.

The indigenous feminist knowledges passed onto women from various women-based relations resembled the “paid for” paradigm¹⁸⁷ as women from different locations continue to pass on these epistemologies. Nevertheless, by no means is this an essentialist notion of all mothers, grandmothers, other mothers, elders, and sisters being seen as responsible for giving or producing indigenous knowledges that are feminist or anti-colonial. The importance here is to

¹⁸⁷ The paid for paradigm refers to the belief and practice that generations and ancestors before us have paid the way through resistance and sacrifice for present generations, who will then pay the way for future generations and so on.

indicate that indigenous African feminisms and knowledges did exist prior to the 1970s White mainstream feminist assertions as these women's voices confirmed. Women's experiences indeed indicated that indigenous African/Black feminisms support generations of knowledge production that impact and shape African/Black women's identity formations. In fact, some women's experiences revealed challenging relationships with their matrilineal connections, as hetero-normative, class-based, and sexist notions of African/Black women's identities existed among and between African/Black women. Hence, some women also chose not to identify with their mothers. Harriet struggled with identifying with her mother as she explained the domestication of her mother and her mother's great effort to break the cycle of racialized segregated employment:

My mother was into the system When she came in the 70s she was in domestic work This [work] is [referring to her work in shelters] like the new domestic . . . for poor Black women I don't want to be like my mother She came up here did domestic work . . . she can't even . . . get a job at the hotel anymore. She used to work at Harbour Castle Hilton when she came up here She worked with an agency, cleaning old folks' bum for eight [dollars] and change I think or nine and change if she even gets that and she's like 61. There's no way in hell that I want to even reach 45 and to know that I have to do this for another 20 years.

Interestingly, Harriet discussed her plans of "Exodus" to Jamaica throughout this research and her reflection of her mother's experiences here revealed some of her reasons for the urgency she felt to leave Canada and not follow in her mother's footsteps. Conversely, many African/Black women working in shelters valued their roles as mothers, grandmothers, other mothers, elders, and sisters prescribed or ascribed by them and by society. A critical part of identity making and maintaining for these women was to pass it on to their children. Women often spoke about the

importance and challenges of passing knowledge down, particularly in relation to formulating “healthy identities” due to systems of interlocking oppressions and dominance. Calypso explained how she was in the process of trying to define her daughter’s world and support her identity establishment when she stated:

Now as a mother and having my daughter . . . I’m trying to see if I can help redefine her world so that she doesn’t have to think that she has to accept . . . sexism [and other oppressions]. That she can be a part of changing by being able to say and being whoever she is and me being part of that change . . . Hopefully with generations . . . It takes systemic changes to really attack this, but . . . hopefully, bit-by-bit, we’re working [to change this].

The relationship between women’s mothers, grandmothers, other mothers, elders, and sisters is significant for women’s identities. Indigenous feminist knowledges are the result of ways of knowing which are uniquely formulated dependent on women’s diverse locations that pass information down from grandmother to mother, mother to daughter, and to community. In some cases, women refuted parental knowledge and formulated new notions usually based on intersectional factors. Nonetheless, the significance of these relationships is that African/Black women shelter workers’ identities in this study have been impacted and greatly shaped by their mothers, grandmothers, other mothers, elders, and sisters. This shaping has created sustained, and contested women’s distinctiveness, and their knowledge foundations. In the following section, women’s identities are connected to their spiritual upbringings and belief systems.

Spiritualities.

African/Black women in this research identified themselves as being spiritual and utilized the “spiritual realm” through traditional African cosmological systems of spirituality, organized imperial introduced and induced religions, and/or personalized self-based philosophies, as

pertinent to creating and supporting their identities.¹⁸⁸ Nefertiti critically spoke about religion and her spirituality as follows:

A lot of activities go on in the name of religions that to me are not spiritual, and so I'll just use that word "religion" but for lack of another word . . . I call myself strongly spiritual and my spirituality is . . . me throughout . . . It is not separate . . . [It is] in everything that I do. I go deep down, and see whether . . . it's something that sits with my whole purpose . . . in life, and I think that each day as we walk on this journey the spirit moves us, the spirit moves us, and the spirit will continue to move us.

Fannie talked about her Christian upbringing and her thoughts on religion:

I was raised Anglican . . . and Seventh Day Adventist Pentecostal [laughs] that's my father . . . I think I'm a very spiritual person versus a very religious person.

Eight out of 18 women stated that they were religiously affiliated with Christianity (including Catholicism and Anglican) or Islam. It is important here to again, mention the historical and contemporary colonial subjugations of African identities through religion to discard and "demonize" traditional African spiritualities and cosmological systems, providing an understanding of why almost half of African/Black women identified themselves with European, and to a lesser degree Arabic-based religions. These religions included Christianity and Islam, instead of African-based spiritualities; this reflects the great complexities of African/Black identity formation. Spirituality is defined differently by different women and is deeply connected to African/Black women's identity; however, at the same time, it is connected to colonial and imperial relations and as such it can be seen as furthering the colonial empire, not challenging it. More importantly, by identifying with traditional African-based spiritualities, cosmological

¹⁸⁸ For more elaborations on Spirituality (see Alexander & Albrecht, Day & Segrest, 2003; John, 2003; West, 1999; Maracle, 1990; Wane, 2002a; Some, 1993; Mazama, 2002; Richards, 1990).

systems, and/or self-philosophies, African/Black women challenged imperial-marked inevitableness by “deviating” and resisting normalized hetero-patriarchal forms of spirituality and by doing so support indigenous feminist epistemologies. In the following section, I examine African/Black women’s identification with the conceptualization of “Women of Colour”.

“Women of Colour” identities.

Most African/Black women did not identify as Women of Colour. Women discussed the limitations of identifying themselves as Women of Colour, emphasizing the complexities of this label for African/Black women. Zora accentuated some of the limitations:

No, because Women of Colour includes everybody, South Asian, South East Asian I don’t use Woman of Colour With my agency when I want to call all the women from all over . . . I use, we use Women of Colour, but for myself I don’t say I’m a Woman of Colour [laughs] I don’t like to use that . . . I belong to a race. . . so I don’t want to say . . . I’m a Woman of Colour, I don’t use it I do hear other women, use that term “I am a Woman of Colour” I do hear some Black women use it to describe Black women, but it’s wrong You have to say Black women, or if you want to categorize it I would say, “oh, these are Black women from Jamaica, or these Black women from Trinidad, or these Black women from South Africa, or Nigeria” I never call a Black woman, [a] Woman of Colour.

On the other hand, Nana thought that Women of Colour was a good term; however she still preferred to refer to herself as a Black woman:

Women of Colour . . . it’s a good term, but when I use it encapsulates every woman and to be politically correct I think that people use it, but I would prefer to identify and talk about myself, about my race. I would prefer to talk about Black . . . because when I speak Women of Colour, people don’t know exactly what I’m talking about There’s Chinese women, there’s Latin American women, there’s South Asian women . . . everybody and it doesn’t identify exactly which

of the women is in that so-called heading that we're talking about It's a term that it's just . . . political . . . and I use it politically, but when I am talking to my friends . . . I use Black because that's who I am and that's what I'm talking about.

Zora and Nana, both differently located African/Black women born in Nigeria and St. Kitts respectively, connected their identities to belonging to the Black race, again indicating how notions of Africanness/Blackness intersect. Interestingly, belonging to a race was naturalized and not questioned. I argue that in a racist colonial world order the real daily experiences of intersectional violence on African/Black peoples, particularly those of differently located African/Black women and from our indigenous histories, demand identity bonding as a form of collective resistance. This is further analyzed in Chapter Eight. Alternatively, women communicated that when they came to Canada they had been told that they were, or were referred to as, "Women of Colour", a label that they did not necessarily choose for themselves. This is eloquently stated by Nefertiti:

Woman of Colour, no When I came here 20 years ago that was actually a shock to me because in Ghana we are all women. It doesn't even matter There were people of different colours and shades . . . so we were all women, and also women that came from anywhere else in the world, we were just women Instead of identifying by colour it was more, "oh! She is a Nigerian woman or Senegalese woman" It was kind of shocking to me to think that . . . maybe I was wrong [thinking] that in North American society would have evolved past that stage of having to . . . believe in identifying from your roots, where you come from, not necessarily the colour. Because then also it brings a lot of these things around, because they're People of Colour who may not necessarily be living in such a way that shows they . . . identify strongly with their roots.

Similarly, Calypso stated:

No, actually I really hate that term. To be honest, from the time that I immigrated to Canada and I hear the Woman of Colour business, I don't know, shoot me as a politically incorrect whatever, but I hate it because I think it puts everybody in one big pot and we're all, we're not all the same . . . Even within similar [women of] African descent . . . we're so different. So even Black women . . . that can be a 100 thousand different types of women with this one label Women of Colour . . . I despise, I can't stand it, and I don't like anybody referring to me as no Woman of Colour because to me it takes away my identity.

Therefore, the term Women of Colour for many African/Black women was another method of essentialized identity construction that was given to them once they immigrated to Canada. Also, women argued that this label assumed alliances and similarities between differently "racialized" women including African/Black women. Even so, some women did connect to the term as a way to create alliances and shared identities with other "racialized" women as stated by Kariabengbeng and Buchi:

If a group of women are working together and they need a cohesive term to describe themselves . . . [then] I'll call myself Woman of Colour especially if there are different cultural women involved in the group. (Kariabengbeng)

That is how they identify people; they feel this is for Women of Colour . . . I would probably use Black, but the Women of Colour also gives a chance to [align with] other People of Colour, so it's a way of being a group too. I like the idea, because if I say I'm just a Black woman, I'm just . . . putting myself in a little group here, rather than being part of the whole group. (Buchi)

Alliance building and group cohesion were some reasons why women utilized the label Women of Colour. Women also discussed the differences between African/Black women and the need to define themselves in their own terms, often questioning the assumed alliances among racially oppressed peoples. The significance of this is that the conceptualization of Women of

Colour has historical roots as well as different meanings and values dependent on women's locations. To fully understand this dynamic some of the participants' experiences being African/Black women working with Women of Colour in shelters and building alliances are discussed in subsequent chapters. Moreover, conceptualizations of the "box" and its relation to essentialized identity categories are explained to further indicate the complexities of identity formations for African/Black peoples, specifically women. A closer look at the "box" also helped to examine the Identity Trichotomy in relation to women working in shelters.

Notions of the "box".

A large number of women relegated their identities to what they referred to as the "box" or "boxes". The box represented restrictions based on social, political, and economical constructions of Africanness/Blackness from colonial ideologies and practices. Fannie shared an experience of the marked restrictions of being put in the box:

When they do let you in, you are supposed to stay in that box, and behave . . . as nicely as you should, and don't cause too many waves.

In other words, the box was a place that expected silence and particular behaviors often dictated by colonial agendas. It became the place where negative characterization and praxis of what "Blackness" is, as a synonym for "sameness" and "inferiority", flourished. Hence, the "box" is part of the first tenet of the Identity Trichotomy outlined in previous chapters. In other words, these "boxes" women so frequently discussed and resisted against were "boxes" intrinsically linked to their experiences of intersectional violence and colonial-sanctioned essentialist identity formations. These "boxes" were found in women's lived and work environments. Some boxes were thought to be impenetrable and as such were labeled as "made of steel" as expressed by Calypso:

You come here . . . you get used to working within a certain . . . almost like a box or something It feels like a box . . . a steel box to me.

Formal education, often thought to be penetrable in spite of the inequities in many African/Black communities, could not save or protect someone from the wrath of notions of “derogatory sameness”, depicted and upheld by the state’s essentialist, racist ideologies, and practices. Women refused to be put in “boxes” constructed by colonial practices that were often upheld by White supremacist societies and internalized colonial mentalities. This notion is articulated by Claudia:

I think that it is a broader issue. I know that you know I have been put in this box. That is the box I have to struggle to come out of What box is this? Being a Black woman, all this label of country of origin and history I am in that box, I don’t know what that box is, and I’ve been all the time measured by that So it’s a constant struggle surviving into this culture Yeah! It is by Black people, it is by White people, it is by everybody.

The notion of the box was also internalized and upheld by African/Black peoples indicating the insidiousness of colonial practices. Wiwa depicted being put in multiple boxes based on her locations:

Even when people look at you being a Muslim woman who has the scarf . . . unfortunately again that’s another box So I mean a box, which is in another box . . . , that’s my experience.... I mean one box, racism Then I’m put in another box So the other box as an individual as a Somali, as an African woman . . . coming from a place where there was no racism, totally you come in, you think you’re the queen of queens . . . and then here you [are] relegated to the box and it goes on and on, at a workplace, at every common area . . . and you can get it even from your own . . . from your own . . . from the residents So, you’re always in a box.

These notions of essentialist constructions and praxis of fixed “Blackness” and “sameness” differ from how I interpreted and practiced African/Black identity politics in this research. Moreover, identity politics is critical to the breaking down of “boxes” of “derogatory sameness” and can, in fact, purport “sameness” and “difference” in fluid changing relations necessary to resist against colonial violence. Sameness for collective resistance against intersectional violence, as in different locations of African/Black women’s identities, constitutes the second and third tenets of the African/Black women’s Identity Trichotomy. An integrated analysis of this trichotomy is critical for understanding identity as resistance; this will be elaborated further in Chapter Eight. In the following section, I explore women’s conceptualizations and their lived experiences of intersectional violence. Women were specifically asked in their interviews to respond to the following statement: Define and discuss these terms based on your . . . lived experiences: Colonialism, Feminism, Racism, Classism, Sexism, Heterosexism/ Homophobia, Ageism, and Ableism.¹⁸⁹

Conceptualizations and Lived Experiences of Intersectional Violence

When I hear the word colonialism, I see personally more than oppression. I see invasion, somebody invaded your land. I think of violation because it’s like a thief coming to your house, and taking all your precious stuff . . . that is the picture that comes to me People have no right. [Someone] who should be a guest in my home takes over my home and [now] I am the guest. (Buchi)

The discussion on the meanings and impact of colonialism on the lived experiences of African/Black women was quite intense. Women used language such as *ancestors, violence, horrific, turmoil, pain, domination, violations, genocide, took apart, subjugation, rape, force,*

¹⁸⁹ These forms of violence are being looked at singularly to highlight the characteristics of each and their impact on differently located African/Black women; however, they occur intersectionally in women's lives.

stolen, loss, slavery, generations, and surviving to define and describe their conceptualizations and experiences of colonialism. Significantly, women relayed connections to Indigenous peoples of the Americas subjugation and genocidal experiences of colonialism. This is eloquently indicated by Calypso:

I think we are all a product of having survived We're here today so we're survivors of colonial experience so I think of being in Canada I think of it in especially relations to First Nations, Aboriginal peoples . . . and to me as far as how my whole, my world view, if you want to call it on this land in "Canada". I really see the impact, the devastation that colonialism has had on the First Nations community . . . and I align myself in my way of thinking . . . or I see . . . I support their struggles you know here and as well as my own having come from a past abuse of slavery.

Historical moments in diverse spectrums of African histories were discussed, looking at the internal and external impacts of colonization on Africa and the African Diaspora, in particular in the Caribbean, North America, Britain, and Germany. "Whiteness" was often referred to and recognized as perpetrating colonial acts of violence, divide-and-conquer strategies, patriarchy, and misogyny. Simultaneously women mourned the loss and gave counter-hegemonic testimonies of the existence of "traditional" indigenous African ways of knowing and doings. Furthermore, women spoke about ingrained sexism and feminist philosophies in relation to colonialism.

African/Black women talked about Eurocentric paradigms, equating colonialism with disrespect, disruption, fragmentation, divide-and-rule, and contemporary problems in African/Black communities. Angela's analysis reflects the complexities of present day genocide in Africa and the often silenced but indispensable link to historical and contemporary colonial practices.

Colonialism still exist[s] Colonialism for me means . . . White Europeans or the Western White culture . . . to them what's acceptable, how they define what should be acceptable around the world Disrespecting what other people . . . cultures, way of life is . . . and wanting to impose . . . or always wanting to take credit that it's because of them that this society came into being or is a success of what it is today What it did is oppress Africa because when they colonized Africa . . . the structures, the social life was disrupted What was already established in those communities was taken away They eroded a lot of our culture, a lot of our beliefs . . . and created division. They're the ones who were responsible for this tribalism The tribes that sided with them or welcomed them . . . they got . . . little bit of power "We will make you the chief in the villages" and those ones who resisted, the ones who fought them were the bad guys Even these genocides that do happen in Africa . . . is the result of colonialism from a long time ago . . . because it's a history of people who have been meant to feel from a long time ago [that] "somebody gave us a little bit of power over you or somebody saw us as we're the better ones over you" and that is when historically . . . it's, entrenched itself . . . and consciousness Those divisions will continue to actually hurt us While somebody else stands on the side and laughs about it or says "Oh! Look at them, these African people . . . they can't do anything for themselves . . . without us".

Women discussed their personal dehumanizing experiences of colonial education through the church, school systems, and language-based supremacies that often depicted African/Black peoples as "uncivil", "unintelligent" and "less than". The role of the church, Eurocentric-imposed lifestyles, and education were mentioned. Nefertiti movingly explained the role of the church:

It is something I don't know when it will leave us The after effects of it are so strong so dominating that when I look at the picture of even my mother, my father, he was so into that European kind of lifestyle kind of thing, even the way he interacted with us as family members, it was so [much like] he's the head of

the household and we were just the lesser people That was brought on by the European missionaries....The domination in the church and all that you'll see the difference there. That was so different from our community, this stuff that didn't have to do with the church For me it's hard to look at these things because the reality is, I mean, colonialism came and took apart the systems and then imposed whatever on us, and totally negated what was natural to us. The effects of colonialism in our nation have pervaded our lives

Sojourner gives an example of Eurocentric imposed lifestyles:

Well, I think with colonialism what has happened is the status quo took over and does everything and expects everyone else to follow suit to do what they think is operational. For instance . . . in Canada in the morning you should have bacon and eggs for breakfast; if you are not eating bacon and eggs then there's something wrong with you. You can't eat rice or bake [a type of round bread] or dumpling or whatever because then, "why are they eating that! That's not breakfast, breakfast is bacon and eggs," and the point is that even our children who we did grow [up], we tried to teach them our way of life. They still want to . . . in the beginning, they try to do the things the colonial thing like bacon and eggs, unless they're trained different, like taken to another country and see how it's done.

Grippingly, Wiwa discussed how through colonial education African/Black peoples are portrayed in negative terms:

I think that the pains of colonialism for any African person who went through the school system . . . the colonial school system, I'm a product of it. When I say I'm a product of it, my exams used to be marked in England . . . and if you look even in with the history the way it's been portrayed, the crafty possum, the person who would eat all the bad things were the Black ones . . . the person; the saviour was the White one. Now when you look back . . . even the discoverer was the White person . . . the intelligent person was the White person. Everybody who had a

good job was a White person They had the privilege. They used to call them the expatriates . . . and the expatriates had . . . everything good.

As expounded by Nana, the outcome and impact of colonialism in Canada both historically and contemporarily is long-lasting:

Whether you're African or Caribbean it doesn't matter . . . [Black] Nova Scotian . . . Getting money to do venture things for their youth, or just money . . . it's such scrutiny, it's unbelievable It's almost to the eradication, look at our youth, they are killing each other now. "Black on Black crime" . . . this didn't just happen overnight People say it came out of the world, no it didn't It came from colonialism . . . coming forward. Now we don't need them, we do it to each other you know So it's been very violent, very policy They can use the policies to keep you like this . . . to be racist towards you, and there's no out for you, it's horrific.

During lengthy discussions with women in the interview process, themes of colonial violence emerged. Most of the participants discussed issues of violence, abuse, and loss in relation to their experiences of colonialism. When given the opportunity to discourse about women's colonial experiences, it was clearly indicated that the impact of colonialism on African/Black peoples lives, in particular women's lives, has historical connections to contemporary experiences of domination and oppression both locally and globally. In the next section, I present women's discussions and definitions of their lived experiences of feminism.

Feminism

Every woman is a feminist. (Harriet)

This view is further explained by Harriet:

Whether you want to be or not . . . that's a given as a female. You can't hide from the fact that you are a feminist, whether you want to believe it or not. You want to go to work, you want to have equal opportunities, and you're going to sit down and not do anything or are you going to fight for it? Whether or not you want that title as a feminist, you got it. [laughs]

Women discussed "traditional" hetero-normative and biologically deterministic biases that often equated lesbians, radicalism, and/or the maternal attributes as synonymous with feminism. One woman described feminism as a "hindrance to women". Feminism was also discussed in terms of personal experiences. The reasons why a woman chose to be or not to be a feminist were often based on childhood and present day lived experiences. Moreover, many women shared disappointment that anti-Black racism/White supremacy, within the mainstream White feminist movement fuelled their exclusion, which caused them not to identify as feminists. These women, the majority of the participants, went a step further classifying themselves as feminist and/or Black feminists and/or womanists, titles more suitable to their beliefs and praxis of anti-racism, resistance, and anti-oppression. Many women gave examples of their mothers and/or grandmothers being the first "feminists" in their lives even though the term may or may not have been used at that time. Once more, this indicated the connection between these relationships to women's identity formations and the existence of indigenous African feminisms.

African/Black women in this study defined feminism in several ways. Women used a variety of words and phrases to describe feminism and their lived experiences of it such as *empowerment, motherhood, false, equality, consciousness, independence, excluded, respect, indigenous, and struggle for women's rights and freedom.*

Motherhood and empowerment were discussed by Wiwa:

I think motherhood specially if you look at maternal feminism¹⁹⁰ . . . the power is in how many child she bears . . . and in how these children are brought up into society, that's what the mother takes care of, and I think that's why we have like, seven kids . . . you know, five kids . . . people think wow! . . . I had a friend of mine who had five kids and she went to work and was told, "You know you're having your fifth, oh my God! You're having a fifth!"¹⁹¹ She said you can look at it as a blessing or a burden . . . it's your choice.

Afrotrini discussed the notion of womanist¹⁹² in terms of empowerment:

African womanist . . . empowering or feminist in power, all women but with a special focus on African women. I think we are always on the sidelines or just on the backburner . . . Honouring our African loudness, proudness, assertiveness . . . honouring . . . the elimination of . . . misogyny and sexism of all women.

As well, Claudia argued the notion of feminism in a different way than other women in the research:

Feminism . . . feminism for me, I consider it trouble. I think it brought what you call it? A lot of responsibility to women and . . . society . . . I think because of that feminism ideology, women have been given more burdens. That's my feeling. I am a strong woman; I don't consider myself a feminist.

At first glance, Claudia's disdain with feminism seemed to reflect the backlash against feminism lodged by conservative groups. However, the experiences she referred to earlier on in regard to

¹⁹⁰ Maternal feminism also is similar to the notion of women as natural nurturers and hence more applicable for child rearing. This notion has been critiqued in several discourses.

¹⁹¹ Wiwa's discussion also relates to African/Black women's fight for reproductive rights against practices of state sanctioned or international development agency influenced eugenics. In other words, it is important to note the context of Black women's historical struggles to have children in lieu of forced sterilization and birth control methods based on racist, classist, and sexist practices. This differs significantly from the fight for White women's rights for reproductive choices (birth control and abortion) (see Davis, 1983).

¹⁹² Womanist was referred to by women who felt excluded by White mainstream feminism as a way to define their struggles, connectedness, and activism.

her being put in boxes in Canada, which she constantly tried to dismantle, could also explain her sentiments.

Nefertiti talked about women who did not necessarily use the term feminist but who practiced indigenous women-centered knowledges and community activism:

When I was growing up in Ghana . . . lots of women that were older than me in the community . . . laughed about being feminists Did they know they were feminists? No, probably not My grandmother . . . when my dad used to hit my mom, she always used to come to me “Why did your dad hit your mom?” If she were here she would be . . . 90 or 100 years old Even from that time she knew what was good for women in terms of encouraging them . . . nurturing each other I guess maybe it is necessary to highlight that word . . . in this community, although back home . . . from what I have seen in my community . . . that was just a way to be . . . to support women to be the best that they can be to safeguard our rights . . . enhance our capabilities, our power in various ways.

Additionally, Nana reflected on her mother’s notion of feminism and the difficulty connecting to others’ conceptions:

What I believe from growing up with my mother . . . when I look at what people want me to be a radical over here, and I saw my mother as the first feminist making strides and making movements I love that . . . she made waves; she wasn’t quiet all the time. There were times where she was [a] very loud woman . . . and had to get her point across, but it was very free. Her feminism to me was growing up free, it was free The one I look at now at times I don’t want to be a part of it If you are not in this group then I guess you are not really a feminist, so . . . it’s very . . . dissected into boxes, into parts.

The next section examines women’s experiences of anti-Black racism and White supremacy in their lives.

Anti-Black Racism and White Supremacy

Women were asked how they defined “racism”, its impact, and their experiences. Women were not asked to define anti-Black racism or White supremacy, but most identified experiences of racial oppression based on being African/Black women in relation to Whiteness and White supremacy. African/Black women defined racism and their experiences of it with words such as: *painful, developing a thick skin, domination, bigotry, hatred, bias, stereotypes, violence, struggle, systemic, and insidious*. Assata defined racism and the pain that it has caused in her life and other African/Black peoples’ lives:

To degrade, hate, exclude . . . hold a set of people from the norm of society. The right not to have, not to participate, totally exclusion from the right to society, to basic human rights, survival It’s a word that’s so huge . . . [silence] and it’s so painful . . . How it came about . . . why do we have to be the ones . . . it’s directed at Why are we seen as the underdog? . . . it’s very painful for me.

Defining the ideology and praxis of racism elicited familiar responses; depictions of stereotypes, linguistic racism, unearned White privilege and White supremacy, work prejudices, White feminist exclusion, systemic violence, feelings of exclusion and violation, and deconstructed notions of fear were all mentioned. Angela defined racist perceptions and her feeling as a result of experiencing this type of violence:

To me it’s a perceived notion of what a certain people are . . . or what they should be or what they have been perceived to be for so long That includes also [the belief that] we are lazy . . . [that we] never work hard enough Racism to me is that “those people don’t fit in” or “they are outsiders” Racism to me is that “those people scare us” or “those people are now taking over” . . . “look at them, they’re having babies and collecting welfare” Those are the definitions of racism for me A feeling of being excluded or constantly watched I’m not part of, I don’t fit in, I am not worth being, or I am a second-class citizen

All those are the things that define for me what I have lived and really experienced It's that lack of validation, a lack of acknowledgment that I am a human being with feelings . . . constantly being made to feel like I am an outsider.

Three themes emerged in women's discussions of racism and White supremacy. Racism in terms of work, particularly relating to exclusion, its impact, and resistance were themes that arose. Zora exemplified racism's exclusion with her discussion on linguistic racism.¹⁹³

As a Black woman, [as an] African woman, I experience different forms of oppression just like racism and because of my ethnicity, because of my race, and for the fact also that I speak with an accent . . . some people won't want to listen to you no matter how good you are for that fact you are not speaking in the dominant language is a problem They might not want to hire you for certain positions because they say, "Oh, we don't want somebody like that to represent us" They would prefer somebody who speaks in a dominant language.

Numerous women discussed the impact of racism on their childhoods, on their children's lives, and on their family members. Anti-Black racism and racial hierarchies of oppression were also mentioned purporting a unique experience of racial violence that expands and surpasses often-limited notions of racial construction based on solely skin colour. African/Black women's definitions, as well as their lived and work encounters of racism/White supremacy, interconnected with their definitions of colonialism and clearly indicated the parallel relations between these experiences, ideologies, and practices. Wiwa explained the subtleness of Canadian racism:

[Sighs] As an individual . . . the funny thing about Canadian racism is, it's a subtle thing that always hits you in the face no matter where, no matter when, no matter how A good example is you're in a meeting, you're talking about something and you mention something, half an hour passes, a

¹⁹³ For further discussions on linguistic racism, see Dei (2006), *Poetics of Anti-Racism*.

White person mentions the same thing in the same language and guess what? That gets noted You said it fifty times and nobody really gets [it] Even when people look at you being a Muslim woman who has the scarf . . . what people don't understand is people have their own different experiences and the scarf doesn't mean that everybody came from one pot . . . and unfortunately . . . again that's another box . . . but I think it's something that hits you in the face . . . every second, every minute.

Kariabengbeng echoed Wiwa's reflection on the subtleness of Canadian racism as she compared it to the resistance battlefields of Britain's overt racist violence:

That place just laid the foundation for the seeds of everything, because it's so extreme there When I left that country [the] last few days we were still there [in Britain], I would walk along the street saying, "now you can't get me, now you can't get me" The racism must have been so extreme, and it was! It is a war, and when I went back there as an adult I realized you watch the people coming out of the subways, and people are mostly all People of Colour, their faces are trained for battle How it is that everybody looks like that? Because Britain is a war zone, it totally is . . . and the British feel that this is their land and the rest of you better get off it In Canada you don't get that so much . . . but it's totally there, and in fact it's so much more insidious because the people who practice it really aren't called on it.

Is overt racism better or worse than experiencing it covertly? Women did not evaluate whether overt racism in countries such as Britain and America were more or less violent than covert racism in Canada. Women seemed to experience both subtle and abrupt experiences of racism within their lives. Yet, the nation-building process of Canada for First Nations peoples and enslaved Africans portrays an overtly violent occupation and incarceration process. Next, women's conceptualizations and lived experiences in relation to heterosexism and homophobia are explored.

Heterosexism/Homophobia

Lesbian-identified women's lived experiences are re-centered in this research as they are often silenced. The request for definitions of heterosexism and homophobia based on the participants' lived and work experiences elicited many responses: *difference, taboo, fear, bias, ridiculed, struggles, cultural, sexism, safety, disordered, privileges, and community*.

African/Black women who identified as lesbians and/or queer-positive described the intersectionalities of homophobic and heterosexist violence on their daily lived experiences. They often portrayed experiences of silencing and oppression from within and outside of differently located African/Black families and communities. Moreover, lesbian-identified women discussed issues of safety, parental scorn, isolation from community, and belonging. Audre reflected on her struggles to be safe in an environment where she is impacted by intersectional oppressions:

Because the bottom line is whoever they come for, they're coming for me. I think I've been always very aware of that Hopefully everybody will be struggling at some point with their own issues about racism, classism, homophobia, etc. . . . but because I happen to incorporate so many of those issues . . . in terms of who I am . . . I don't often get a break I have to be aware I'm responsible for my own safety in that matter.

Kariabengbeng reflected on the ridicule she experienced by her parents based on her sexual orientation:

Talk to my parents [laughs]. They're the old culture They have been in my house all these weeks. The first three days, my mother could call me an abomination . . . and you like me? She sees it as a joke . . . heterosexism and homophobia wrapped up together in old school and as far as that's concerned, I mean it's just non-thinking and non-thinking allowed because the status quo is that heterosexuality rules what we do here.

Afrotrini, a lesbian-identified woman deconstructed the often-problematic notion of equating racism and heterosexism/homophobia as the “same”, exemplifying the complexities of such an analysis. Afrotrini reflected on racism and heterosexism and her identity with the African/Black community:

I may not be accepted in my community because of who I am I have a show where . . . I am out. I have a show for pride day. I had a call in show Yes, I got the one call from some [woman] who was like “you make me sick, I will never listen to you again”, and I say, “Hey, I know your voice . . . were you at the lesbian party last week?” Ask me questions, as opposed to telling me that I am gross I think it’s hard sometimes, but . . . we’re living in this racist world, that’s my problem! So you could get all [vexed] and think that I am a dyke I’m not hurting nobody, right? I am one of yours When people talk about “Oh, you know racism and homophobia is all the same,” to me it isn’t at all. I don’t see it like that I see it more as you can make all your noise and shit, but I am yours, you’re mine, and I’m yours! [In reference to the African/Black community]

White male power and supremacy was also discussed in connection with women’s exclusion and Black women’s disempowerment within queer communities, questioning and deconstructing the “gains” made by the “queer community” and the suppositions of “unity” within it. Assumptions of cultural biases and religious beliefs within African/Black communities were also discussed as “culture”, “religion”, and the influence of the “West” were looked at as binary explanations for apparently “larger” accounts of homophobia in African/Black communities throughout the African Diaspora. Afrotrini discussed the denial of homophobia in Black communities:

It’s really bad in our communities or I think we want to hold on to that [idea that] it’s bad to pretend In fact, it is killing us . . . homophobia when it comes to

Black people in most cases . . . unsafe sex, no honesty There's homophobia, women are dying left right and centre [in reference to HIV/AIDS] . . . and not only because of . . . men having sex with men. It's unsafe fucking sex, no honesty and that involves a whole bunch of things . . . it's happening.

I argue that the notion that African/Black communities are more homophobic than other communities is a result of racial constructs that have created images of African/Black peoples as aggressive, violent, over-sexed and/or sexually deprived, cold, and macho. Homophobia is the real practice based on colonial patriarchal relations that tried to control sexuality by conjuring up an ideal notion of "heterosexual" as good and "homosexual" as bad in order to support sexual divisions of labour and other forms of violence needed to justify illegal nation-building and imperial occupation and expansion.¹⁹⁴ Hence, homophobia exists in every culture and state. There have been scholars who argue that homophobia is a direct result of the breakdown of traditional communities where, in many cases, lesbians, gays, bi-sexual, trans-gendered, and transsexual peoples coalesced (Feinberg, 1996; Some 1993). Others have contested notions of equality among diverse genders and sexualities in pre-colonial periods as overly romanticized. I argue that African/Black feminist, anti-colonial, anti-racist positions must be anti-heterosexist and anti-homophobic in order to create alliances and to practice viable resistance.

Additionally, some straight-identified women defined sexism as heterosexism. This misconception indicated the need for more information and education about the unearned privileges gained by encompassing a hetero-normative identity. In addition, some women argued that "what is done in someone's bedroom should be kept in one's bedroom", in other words sexuality, particularly homosexuality should not be publicized or politicized. Other heterosexual-identified women believed that homophobia and heterosexism was a division between "straight

¹⁹⁴ I am not arguing here that homophobia did not exist in pre-colonial societies.

and queer” and results depended on which view and/or side you were on. Queer-positive women spoke of personal examinations of their hetero-normative unearned privileges as catalyst for insights on challenging their own assumptions and understanding other women’s experiences of heterosexist and homophobic violence. Buchi exemplified the need for straight-identified people to deconstruct their privileges and oppressive ways:

As heterosexuals we are also this group that are oppressive . . . very oppressive in the sense that you take things for granted, I’ve learned to listen. Things that you don’t think anything of but could be very hurtful, to somebody who is gay, lesbian or bisexual or trans.

The next section explores women’s conceptualizations and lived experiences of ageism.

Ageism

Too young, no experience; too old, she doesn’t function well. (Makeba)

African/Black women defined and described lived experiences of ageism as: *too old, too young, wisdom, biases, no respect, access, and celebrate*. Women described their experiences of ageism from spectrums, young and old, giving examples of both silencing and discriminatory practices in their lived and work experiences outside of shelters. Esmeralda, the youngest woman in this research, portrayed her experiences of being young and African going for a job interview and how intersectional violence played out:

I experience that often and I think just in terms of . . . being an African woman and being very visibly young, even [looking] younger than my age, it’s hard I go to interviews and I remember one time . . . they called my name and . . . said, “Well, is your mom in the washroom?” I automatically knew I didn’t get that job I experience it often.

Similarly, Calypso discussed her experiences as a young woman and the differences between Canada and other places where she has lived:

In my work and lived experiences . . . this society is [ageist] Being somebody that looks young . . . from my experience . . . not getting the respect that you [are] due, because maybe you look a certain way [I]n a lot of cultures, people do look young It's expected that you achieve It's not uncommon for young people to do well.

Sojourner, the oldest woman in the research, described her experiences with ageism and compared it to having a disability:

I didn't have a disability at that time, but my age becomes like a disability.

As well, Zora referred to the challenges older women face in terms of employment:

I know for older women, the challenge they face, especially when they go for job interview and especially for certain jobs like secretarial or certain positions, people would like to prefer to have younger women than older women.

Accessing and getting jobs as well as disrespectful treatment were the most significant injustices discussed. Women looked at the differences between elders' treatment in Canada, which most considered to be disrespectful, and Africa and the African Diaspora, where elders were revered and celebrated. Nefertiti reiterated the difference between elder treatment in Canada and in Ghana as:

The [Canadian] culture is so into . . . you have to be young and able as soon as you pass a certain age you are disposable [They] put you away in a nursing home . . . they don't mind you anymore. There is no respect for elderly people and their wisdom. There's no encouragement to do activities, inter-aging activities. It's a great thing to have little children interact with elderly people and all that. It's a natural thing, but it can only happen in a certain context here . . . that's how

the community is back home There's generations of people that live together in the same household, and it's just a fact of life, that's how it is, and because we respect the fact that they took care of us when we were young and as they grow we take care of them, that is just the way it is.

In most incidences, women did not discuss the interconnectedness of ageism in relation to other intersectional violence. However, the centering of their personal experiences of how elders are treated in African/Black countries could suggest a direct connection with their experiences and thoughts on ageism and intersectional oppression in Canada. Sexism is examined in the next section.

Sexism

African/Black women utilized a variety of ways to define sexism and its influence on their lived experiences using terms like *division of labour, home, community, culture, breadwinners, systemic, struggle, status quo, choice, and norms*. Discussions on sexism were quite long and as a result quotes depict these rich conversations. Women talked about sexism occurring in both public and private spheres actualized by their families and at their workplaces. Additionally, women gave examples of sexism within African and African Diasporic communities from educational spheres, familial inheritance, and religious practices. Women notably struggled against reinforcing systemic stereotypes and media biases versus the retelling of their lived experiences. Sexism, racism, and classism intertwined, situating African/Black women at the “bottom” of the hierarchy. Angela addressed how sexism is played out in society as she discussed her personal experiences of familial, male biased inheritance and work segregation:

On a very personal level . . . I am not entitled to receive any property from my father My brothers will receive it. I have no inheritance . . . because I am

female Yes, that's sexism My brothers will get it . . . but I'm not entitled to the piece of land or any little money he might leave or he left But also sexism . . . for here [in Canada] knowing that I am almost at the bottom of the ladder in terms of the White male . . . who's at the top of the ladder Then maybe comes . . . the White woman . . . then comes . . . the Black men . . . and I as a Black woman, I am right at the bottom Because my experience is not theirs . . . I feel like I am placed in this position What my feelings are and what my thoughts are don't really . . . count So for me, even in terms of pay . . . always being at the bottom of the ladder.

Women described hetero-normative roles assigned to them based on gender and sex roles, sanctioned by discriminatory biases and practices. Others discussed discrimination based on their sexuality. The intersectional relations between colonization, racism, and sexism created a variety of debates. Colonialism and imperialism were stated by some as being synonymous with sexism, differentiating traditional African/Black cultures and communities from sexist, colonial practices. Did sexism originate with colonialism? Calypso addressed her childhood stereotypical notions that men are breadwinners and women are victims of abuse:

Caribbean culture is not special It's not unique in the sense that it's [not] the only culture with sexism, but I am just thinking of my own upbringing As a girl, growing up . . . it being normal that men accepted . . . that men should be breadwinners that men are allowed to speak derogatory words to women, to be abusive.

Calypso further explained her learnings about violence against women and the connection to colonial relations:

I grew up hearing, I don't think it really exists as much anymore with the younger generations For example, "if he don't beat me, he don't love me." I mean that's when I was little that's what I grew up hearing . . . "It's ok to be

abused” Also understanding . . . a lot of those things are products of colonial experience But I think as a Caribbean woman, as an African-Caribbean woman . . . certain aspects of it definitely relate [to] colonialism’s impact . . . in the breakdown of our culture, our families I am not saying it was perfect before, that there’s no sexism in the Motherland.

Calypso’s ending challenges the ahistorical notion that colonialism preceded sexism.

Colonialism intensifies sexism; however, patriarchy did exist in many parts of the world prior to colonial conquests.

Other women also linked racism and colonialism with the breakdown of African/Black families, and hence the need to sympathize with African/Black men and to question the validity of misogyny in African/Black communities. Assata looked at colonial socialization of Black men through slavery as responsible for Black men’s sexism and the need to support and maintain racial identity:

As a Black woman . . . sexism exists . . . from our men now It’s not evolved so because of our experience and because of slavery and colonization . . . I’ve always felt that as a Black woman part of my duty is also to protect my race and that also means our Black men . . . because . . . I’m not sure for me if it’s fair to . . . see them totally as sexist when they haven’t been socialized in the norm They were not free to make that choice When you look back . . . some of our history and African history . . . women was held in high regard . . . and not necessarily being sexist against

Assata’s description of the complexities of sexism in African/Black communities is testimony to the crimes of colonial rule. Did sexism exist prior to colonialism? African/Black women feminists have answered the question by focusing on the real daily experiences of sexism in

African/Black homes and within community organizing.¹⁹⁵ I argue again that an anti-colonial, anti-racist position must address issues of male violence in order to create alliances and sustainable resistance needed to dismantle imperialism. The question then is if one believes in anti-colonial theory and praxis, how does one dismantle all systems that oppress women, men, children, and our communities?

Other women acknowledged the difficulties of African/Black men in terms of racial profiling and police brutality; however, they questioned and searched for community accountability and male responsibility in relation to sexism against African/Black women. Afrotrini discussed the struggles of supporting Black men against police violence and, on the other hand, the dynamics of being exploited by these same Black men in the community:

Police are really gross to our brothers; it's disgusting. I've been stopped from the back because they thought I was a guy doing something I recognize that they get in shit a lot [However] the sexism just rears its head when you cannot recognize it . . . how women are treated among our [Brothers] – fuck the world! Here in our community . . . you don't think this is sexism? [For example,] you are making an assumption that I am going to take care of my kids; maybe I don't want to be a good parent; maybe I am not a good parent, right? We have no choice A lot of us feel it's ours to do because you know you have to survive . . . but because of sexism in our community . . . it's so serious.

The next section illustrates women's ideas and lived experiences of classism.

Classism

Classism . . . well there's a lot of classism I think classism for me is like being classified because of being an African, that's mostly my burden at this time, is being like this Africa issue is for me a heavy-duty issue. (Claudia)

¹⁹⁵ See (Combahee River Collective, 1978; James, 2003).

Discussions on definitions and lived experiences of class and classism evoked several descriptions including: *nationality, classless, pointing fingers, single parents, privilege, and social construction, not as visual, social economic system, working poor, and power*. Nana defined class and her experiences as working poor:

This is where you are, this is where you belong, and this is where you will grow up You will die within this. It's the social economical system, so if I am considered working poor, then I am considered to be a working poor till I die, never to rise above that. God forbid if I should then . . . have access If I want to find a husband, find him within this . . . these categories . . . unless I climb up that ladder . . . but the odds are really great against [me] [laughs]

African/Black women had various understandings and lived experiences with class and classism. The intersectional relationship between class/classism, racism, and colonization indicated extreme struggles. For example, women who had lived in England compared their overt experiences of classism with what was thought of as Canada's covert experiences. Kariabengbeng vividly explained her journey coming from England's rigid class system to Canada's unfamiliar class dynamics:

Coming to Canada was very . . . traumatizing because at least you knew in England what the class structure was, and here again it's all [unclear], but as far as I'm concerned there's two classes in this country . . . those who have and those who do not . . . and in between everybody is trying to have [laughs] So, I mean in England, it's much more rigid . . . the lines are much clearer. If you're a Lord and Lady with a title, it's not just something you bought, it's influence that you have Whereas here you can buy a lot of things and that's where power and class come into [place], but as far as I'm concerned it's just the way the system uses to try and keep people in certain places.

For others, recollections of classism had been introduced to them when they immigrated to Canada representing ahistorical notions of class systems globally. Women also agreed that two classes existed in Canada, which were poor/working poor and rich. Middle class was most often not referred to.¹⁹⁶ Some women did not identify with class categories, refusing to commit to systemic binaries of rich and poor; however, they did admit that social constructions of class and practices of classism impacted and influenced their daily lives, often positioning them into categories of inferiority. Sojourner elaborated on her view of being “classless” which was in contrast with how she stated she is often categorized and treated in society:

I don't feel I'm in any class. I feel I'm a human being, but automatically I know we are put into this class You're lower class, you're end of the barrel so you'll never get anywhere but when sometimes you think . . . everybody I know is doing a good job for some reasons because they were educated and maybe they could do a better job, but they're still doing a good enough job But still just by the nature of who we are you could be a doctor, you could be a lawyer, you could be a judge, you could be whoever, [but] you are, you're still considered lower class. You could live in the biggest house, have the biggest car, you're still considered lower class. It's like a religious concept . . . talking about Black people, we are lower class I don't consider myself lower class.

Sojourner emphasized the complexities of class and classism and how social constructions of African/Black peoples' identities through colonial lenses, elicit notions of inferiority and poverty. Mainstream White supremacy and its elitist constituencies establish classist relations and inferior binaries in order to supply “their markets” with cheap labour and stolen resources. Hence, the real experience of African/Black people's impoverishment exists due to colonial operations. However, this is mystified, a-historicized, and forgotten by its perpetrators, and the

¹⁹⁶ This supports many findings indicating the gaps between poor and rich.

elites from oppressed groups who often benefit from these unequal relations. In its place are images of the poor, inferior African/Black person, usually a woman with a child on welfare or in refugee camps on television; missing is the historical and contemporary realities of colonial capitalist production and cultural genocide of African/Black peoples.

Buchi identified as a refugee and as such acknowledged working class people, even though she did not connect her experiences directly with classism. However, her refugee history aligned her with the realities of working poor in Canada. Buchi articulated her view on class:

Because I am still considered as a refugee, it doesn't matter whether I got that Canadian passport or not. Just by the way I dress, I am a refugee, and I have absolutely nothing to do with any class here, and I am working with poor people, so actually only poor people The only people I am meeting and my community if I meet . . . other refugees like me, so . . . I don't have anything with class, I can imagine, because I know it is there.

Moreover, women reiterated that social mobility into differently prescribed classes was difficult, and in most instances impossible and impenetrable even for women who had pursued post-secondary education. This supported the notions of intersectional violence African/Black women are subjected to based on intersectional factors. There is a need for greater discussion of class/classism in African/Black communities and a need to deconstruct stereotypes that foster African/Black economic disparities with sociological and biological determinisms instead of systemic, state-sanctioned colonial conditions. Next, I examine women's definitions and lived experiences of ableism.

Ableism

Words used to define some of African/Black women's philosophies and their experiences of ableism were: *silenced, strive, streamlined, normal, abilities, Blackness, guilty, accessibility,*

challenging, community, and education. Calypso discussed the silencing of issues around ableism and her compliance:

Well, as far as ableism [For] most people it's not the first thing that comes to mind . . . being honest . . . until something really happens to you. . . . The societal programming and . . . having the privilege of having all your body parts, or mental [capacities] . . . or physical [capacities] . . . it's something that always seems to be outside of Whereas, say . . . racism, I can go [snaps with fingers], I get that With ability and ableism, it's . . . unfortunately because of the way the system and this society is . . . we are all taught . . . it's like . . . it's another world, and I think that we are all guilty; not all of us . . . unless you are in those shoes . . . of being ableist Systemically a lot of changes need to be made Little things are happening, but . . . a lot of work needs to be done.

Some African/Black women's definitions of ableism challenged the construction of "disability" and utilized more inclusive categorizations. Most women did not identify having a disability. However, five women identified having diabetes, fibromyalgia, stuttering, undiagnosed memory problems, and dyslexia. Women who identified as having disabilities told stories of experiences of ableist discrimination in their schools, and daily lived and work environments based on intersectionalities such as race/ethnicity, gender, class, and age. Hence, disability was also defined by systemic and societal practices as being Black, being a woman, having an accent, being older, living in Canada, and being poor, and/or a single mother. Nana articulates society's construction of ableism in terms of intersectional factors such as race and language in reference to her schooling experiences in Canada:

When I was growing up, my teacher look[ed] at me and automatically assumed that I need[ed] to go to ESL classes because he assumed that I can't speak English. That [labels] me right away because you're putting me over here

Back then when they put you in special classes . . . that's where you stay, so you're streamlined to a lesser degree of being educated in the normal system.

Nevertheless, the majority of women did not necessarily outline interconnectedness with intersectional oppressions. In many cases, women stated that ableism was more invisible than racism and hence silenced. Few women who did not identify having disabilities or undiagnosed disabilities, challenged their own ableist, unearned privileges and notions. Others held an "out of sight, out of mind, not me" attitude.¹⁹⁷ Conversely, two women critically looked at cultural practices in home countries in several African/Black communities and spoke about difficulties for people with disabilities. The commitment, care, and usually maternal obligation of the mother or sisters of the family were indicated. Wiwa critically discussed the notion of how ableism is taken up in her experience of the Somali community:

Ableism . . . that's where we fail . . . as a community. As an African, I would say because we're not very much compassionate, as far as people who are able or unable are concerned The way we take care of them, in one way, we keep them in the house, and we tend to do everything for them . . . and that is not the way it's supposed [to be] That's one thing I like about this community [referring to Canada] is that . . . you're given the supports, but . . . the . . . push to . . . and so it's something that . . . you're told . . . take care of yourself because at some point I might not be there . . . to support you My experiences as a Somali woman, and as an African woman . . . is again, at the end of the day, again, it's the mother who gets the brunt of all this and sets the protection, because if you're disabled, you can't do nothing. I'm going to do everything for you So that's where I think we haven't been able to explore. Again, it's a responsibility . . . the family has to take care of everyone.

¹⁹⁷ However, most women in this research enquired about my visual disability and congratulated me on my ability to conduct this dissertation.

Wiwa's exploration of the different treatment of accessibility and disabilities in Canada and Somalia need to be taken into a larger context. For living in a colonial White settler society like Canada and a colonized society like Somalia creates particular imperial dealings. The experiences of intersectional violence of African/Black peoples living with disabilities are not well documented. This is a direct result of the isolation and subjugation that these same groups experience in Canadian society. Hence, the universal notion that people with accessibility needs receive independence and supports in Canada is questioned even by the White mainstream disability movements. The lack of resources and minimal supports globally for African/Black peoples with disabilities is directly related to colonial and elite dealings in Western states and "former colonies". I argue again that an integrated framework is needed to create alliances and foster resistance to dismantle state-reinforced ableist practices.

This section examined African/Black women shelter workers definitions and lived experiences of intersectional violence. Beginning with colonialism, women described their multiple locations through their philosophies and lived experiences outside of shelters. The significance of these findings is that women's standpoints, in relation to their conceptualizations and lived experiences of intersectional oppressions, are revealed which are both critical for the theoretical and methodological underpinnings and findings of this research. Intersectional oppressions and women's resistance against them are critical features of this research.

Summary

This chapter sought to introduce the self-perceptions/conceptualizations, definitions, and philosophies pertaining to the lived and work experiences outside of the shelters of the African/Black women who participated in this research. These are key components to explain

and understand women's political, social locations, and their subsequent positionalities within the woman abuse shelter community in Toronto.

First, women's identities were located focusing on the themes of African ancestry/Diasporic connections; notions of Africanness/Blackness; relationships between mother, grandmother, other mother, elders, sisters, and indigenous feminist knowledges; spiritualities; Women of Colour identity; and notions of the "box", which were all discussed. I concluded by exploring and highlighting women's conceptualizations and definitions of intersectional violence in their lived experiences.

Specifically, the locating process helped to delineate how and why African/Black women located themselves within local and global environments where systems of dominance and interlocking oppressions occur as daily experiences of social, political, economical, spiritual, and structural power imbalances. Establishing African/Black women's locations within this research supports the methodology, by re-centering, resisting, historicizing, and giving agency through art-based expression (Creative Resistance) to African/Black women working in violence against women shelters. Additionally, traditional Eurocentric research was radically challenged in this study, as women's working definitions, their locations, and their identities depicted through an integrated feminist, anti-colonial, art-based research illustrated the significance of this methodology. Women's location, definitions, lived and worked experiences outside of shelters, and their identity formations in this research are now known.

Chapter Seven examines differently located African/Black women's experiences working in woman abuse shelters and how they relate to intersectional violence based on their different locations.

Chapter Seven:

Working in Shelters in Toronto

Introduction

The preceding chapter's findings presented women's locations, identities, perceptions, and lived experiences. Chapter Seven explores African/Black women's realities working in "feminist" woman abuse shelters in Toronto in relation to intersectional violence.

First, this chapter presents a description of the shelter work environments by discussing African/Black women shelter workers' art representations of what a good day, a bad day, and a normal day working in shelters looked and felt like. Second, the organizational structure and functioning of shelters are examined, focusing on African/Black women's analysis on shelters decision-making models (Collectives and hierarchical), anti-oppression philosophies, policies and procedures, and their relevancy and implementation processes. Third, women's work environments at shelters are characterized by examining in more detail the impact of intersectional violence in relation to women's work in shelters. In addition, safety, hierarchies of oppression, relationships among African/Black women and among Women of Colour are revealed. I also examine African/Black women's complex work environment and experiences by presenting an analysis on government cuts in funding, organizational restructuring in shelters, and the impacts of women's locations and identities.

It is important to continue to further look at the working environments of shelters where African/Black women worked in order to understand why and how they resist. Therefore, the working environments of women were expanded further as women were asked to describe "a good day, a bad day, and a normal day" working in woman abuse shelters. The following section highlights the voices of the women in this research as they depict and discuss their daily routines.

A Good Day, a Bad Day, a Normal Day

A good day would be when no woman gets hurt . . . The bulk of the day . . . deciding that she will not return to an abuser, and knowing I have made a change; that would be my good day . . . Normal day . . . is dealing with crisis, that's the normal . . . A bad day is when I have to discharge a woman, I feel that she is again a victim, and is on her own again after giving false hope of support and friendship. (Buchi)

Many women stated that there were no normal days in the shelter, and a blank was often left beside the “normal day” category. Others illustrated that a “normal day” was a “bad day” as the shelter was constantly a place of violence and pain as indicated by Nana:

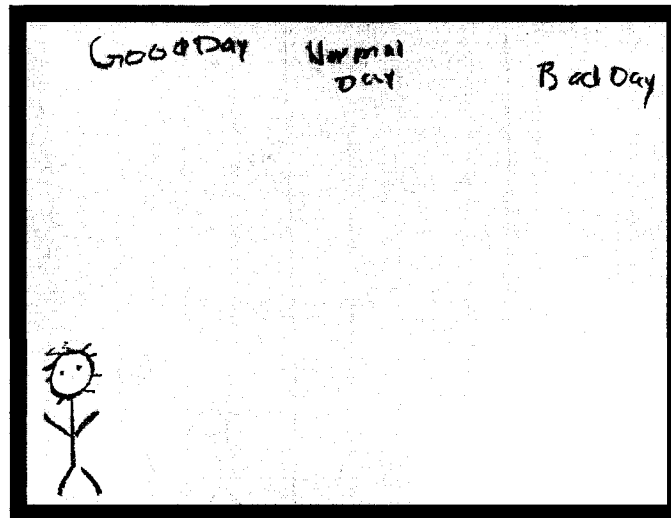


Figure 30. Nana.

[In a low voice] I haven't had any good days . . . The normal and the bad days . . . is to me the same . . . These are very rare here . . . They're basically, they are just one and the same . . . The normal day is the same as the bad day . . . For me, it's just I go in . . . and I know when I go in the door . . . I am not accepted . . . I know when I go in, I'll be ostracized . . . I'll be targeted.

Similarly, Esmeralda depicts the normal day as similar to the bad day:

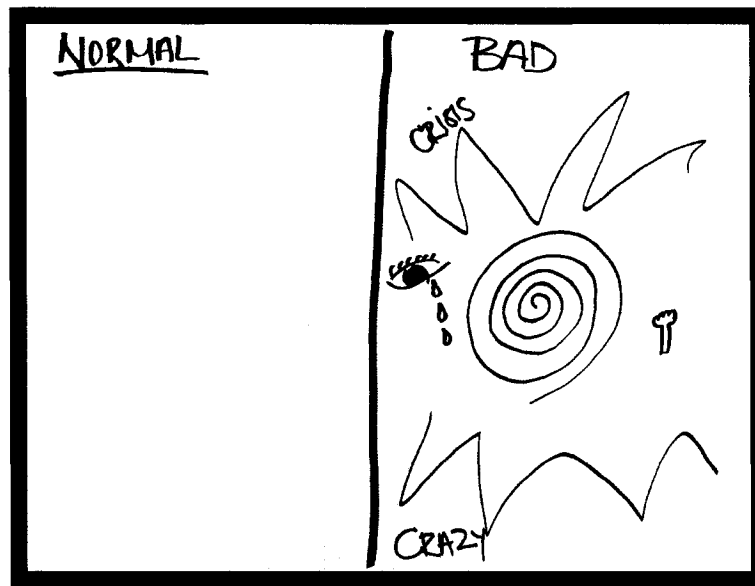


Figure 31. Esmeralda.

A normal day really is just the exact same thing as the bad day, except things don't happen on your shift I don't think there's such a thing as a normal day, even on the best day, even on Christmas day, people were in crisis, people were physically fighting [with each other] So I don't really think that a normal day is just a bad day, but just something not happening on your shift.

Based on the type of work that takes place at a shelter and the environment in a shelter, everyday was typically a "bad day". This was also articulated by Calypso (see Figure 32):

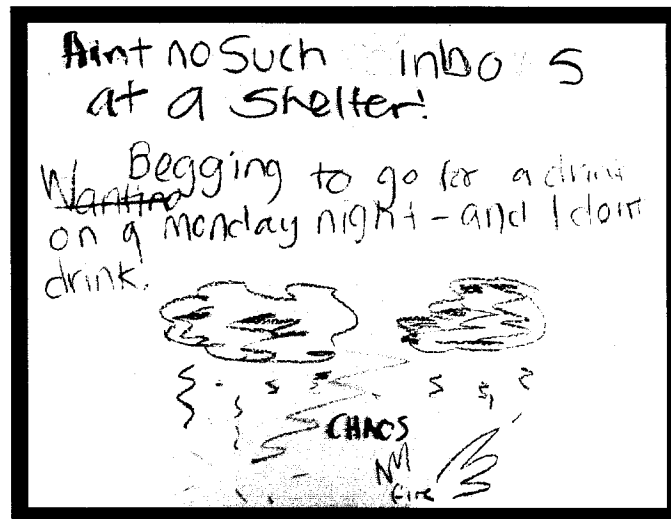


Figure 32. Calypso.

I don't think there was a good day at the shelter I think if you are in touch with the fact that this is the place where people are in pain, and at their worst point and at the lowest point, and it's all together, there's no good day in the shelter . . . and to me, I try never to loose touch with the fact that I'm dealing with people and . . . you can only take on so much, but can I say there ain't no good day at the shelter? Ain't no such thing as a good day at the shelter [writing] I'll put rainbows . . . that's the good day A bad day? I'll tell you a really bad day is . . . because every day is a bad day Some days are worse than others . . . but my most . . . my worse memory . . . of the worse day at the shelter . . . [I was] begging to go for a drink I'll never forget this, on a Monday night, and I don't drink. [laughs]

Other women depicted that a "bad day" was dependent on which co-workers or managers were on shift, as indicated by Portia (see Figure 33):

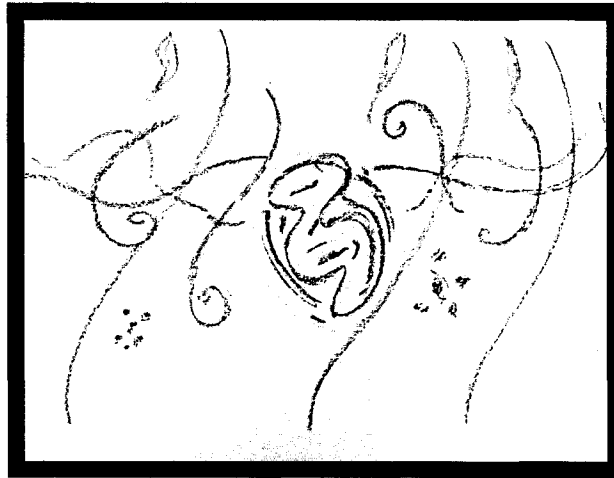


Figure 33. Portia.

I come in sometimes because it's all variables One particular day . . . this is how I'm feeling, I'm sombre, I am calm, I appear cool, and collected . . . the colour is purple By the time I have seen two or three Collective members, I'm not sombre, calm, cool, and collected. Maybe I'm slanting this way and this is the reddish mixed with this Now I decide in my mind am I going to return to the classic normalcy? Or am I going to get caught up in the abnormality as I see it in them? So then I come out with this colour, in between and I come back around normal, placid, normal state as I see it . . . By seeing their faces . . . [laughs], seeing their faces denotes . . . it depends on the face I see. If I see a face that I can connect with, it will be happy. If I see a face that is displacing her anger or hiding her anger . . . that is not relative to me and in the environment then I get this, because I pick up the vibe, very quickly Then I get like this, my equilibrium is a bit unbalanced, but it's not that unbalanced that I am not aware So then I make myself by the end of the day. I'm now leaving . . . and I have things to do, so then I try to get myself at this level.

Portia described her array of feelings and thoughts when working with colleagues which, for her, were dependent on the anger or happiness they displayed. Women stated that "a good day" was

often when little crisis occurred, when women received housing, when a baby was born, when laughter was heard. This is eloquently expressed by Afrotrini (see Figure 34):

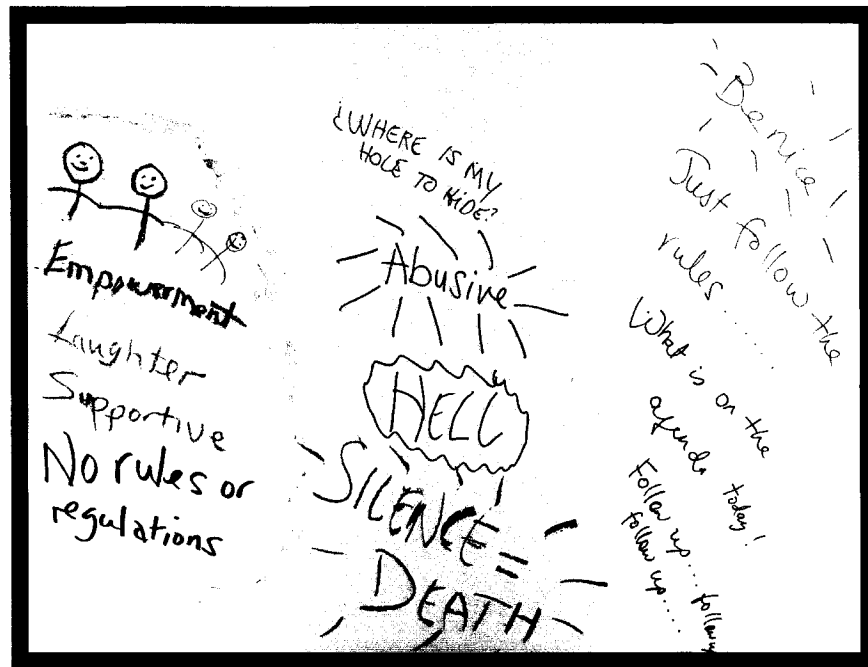


Figure 34. Afrotrini.

A good day is . . . [when] we're all smiling, empowerment; they're either empowering myself or I am empowering them. I learned so much. I've gotten so much from women who come to the shelter, and I hope that they got stuff from me I was able to actually recognize that "Oh, I actually gave this woman something", so that's a good day, laughter, laughing, making jokes, laughing all day, being really supportive Talking, having the energy to be supportive to her in the way she wants to be supported, and just no rules or regulations "It's ok if all ya don't clean . . . today . . . but guess what? We're all going to get together and eat, and we're going to clean the kitchen because we need the kitchen to be clean," but fuck the rest of the rules and it's ok. No rules . . . that's a good day!

Fannie, an Executive Director of a shelter described her good day as follows (see Figure 35):



Figure 35. Fannie.

On a good day . . . I would come in, I may not get to do all my things . . . but I might come at eight and get to leave about five so I kind of get through most of my work . . . not to say that I won't have any interruptions, but they would be kind of . . . minimal . . . that might be on a Saturday . . . If I am coming on a Saturday . . . the so-called normal day is rather kind of chaotic, that's the kind of day when you put "do not disturb" on your door, but people still come in and interrupt you So that's kind of a normal day I get through some of the things that I want to do . . . I might come at ten and say I'm going to leave at five, but when it's eight [o'clock] I might still be here . . . and there's still other things to do . . . and all these things kind of represent intrusions.

This exercise provided a glimpse into the daily working environments of differently located African/Black women. Women discussed several reoccurring themes within this research: the joy and compassion of working with woman abuse survivors, perceptions of their identities, complex relationships with staff and management, painful experiences due to the nature of the work, and experiences of intersectional violence at their workplaces. More needed

to be known about the organizational structures in shelters in relation to women's work experiences. In particular, the following two areas were looked at:

1. Women's feelings and experiences (positive and challenging aspects) working in collectively run and/or hierarchically run shelters.
2. Anti-oppression policies and procedures in shelters, their relevancy for their work, their existence and implementation process in shelters.

These areas were examined as significant indicators for understanding African/Black women's experiences working in shelters, keeping in mind their locations, and their lived and work experiences of intersectional oppressions and violence. In the following section, I present women's depictions of the organizational structures of the shelters in which they worked.

Organizational Structures of Shelters

Collective Versus Executive Director

As stated in Chapter Two in this research, there has been a rapid change in the organizational structures of shelters in the last 12 years, as once collectively run shelters are being restructured into hierarchically run models. An Executive Director, several middle managers, and frontline (counsellors and advocates) staff comprise the structural setup in the majority of today's 2007 shelters. As well, collectively run shelters, often critiqued for their internal hierarchies, are becoming increasingly less transparent and fluid as Collective members secure their jobs by reinventing themselves as managers, coordinators, and decision makers, in fixed positions which create less mobility and power for non-collective workers. African/Black women's feelings about working in collectively run and/or hierarchically run models were examined to illustrate the environments that women worked in and to examine whether their

differing experiences were dependent on the shelters' model. Women outlined both positive and challenging aspects of both models. The positive aspects of the collective model were thought to be its creativity, diverse minds, and decision-making possibilities, at least on paper. This is explained by Kariabengbeng:

I'm a lover of Collectives, because I do believe in them. I've been part of one that I felt worked, but one of the reasons why I liked [name of shelter] at first because that was the big [thing], it was a collective, it was the last collective run shelter, bla bla bla You know those were great selling features and I bought it I do believe in equality of finding ways to work together being more important than not.

Sojourner echoed the sentiments of Kariabengbeng:

What I've found with the collective is that everybody had hands-on experience. Everybody knew everything about the women. Everybody knew everything about the job. Everybody could identify with the woman who is being abused. With the EDs, [they] do not know the women, they do not know the shelter culture . . . and they ask for impossible things to happen.

The positive aspects of hierarchically run shelters were thought to be their accountability to one person, ability to get rid of "bad" workers, and overall organizing capabilities. These views were expressed by Fannie:

At the end of the day . . . the Board has this one person that they could say "it's all your fault" . . . to the Executive Director . . . and then, away you go I think the hierarchical structure does provide for . . . giving people that clear definition of who you can blame I think that is very good in hierarchical structures. I think part of the hierarchical structures is that it also kind of lends itself . . . somewhat better to the distribution of work and how that work is carried out, but there again I said . . . I am yet to know anybody in a collective who carried any of the Collective members to the Human Rights Commission.

The challenging aspects of Collectives were said to be long decision processes, lack of accountability, and cliques. Challenges in the hierarchically run shelter model were thought to be its monarchist or oligarchic structures, hiring unskilled management, and “power over” practices. According to Audre the drawbacks of both models are:

In hierarchical . . . you might get a mad woman in charge, and then there is very little control over that and you have very little power in that environment. That is very scary and dangerous The drawback with the collective is that they have these wonderful models that they can’t seem to actually make real or come alive. So they talk the talk, but they don’t walk it . . . and with a collective very often they so much follow the status quo that it’s very hard to make anything change . . . because there is nowhere to go but to the collective to get the collective to change, and that’s the problem.

Women who had more experiences working in one model tended to believe in and support the model with which they were most familiar. By far, women’s experiences of both the collectively and hierarchically run models in woman abuse shelters did not differ significantly, as the experiences of African/Black women working in Collectives and hierarchal models were strongly influenced by their locations and intersectional experiences of violence. However, most women seemed to adapt to the social and political climates that had fluctuated towards hierarchical (post-Mike Harris 1995–2002 years) models. Perhaps, the push towards more conservative, unprogressive political economies characterized by “efficient politics” and cuts in social spending, in addition to the historical relationships among African/Black women, the state, and mainstream White feminist movements, gives way to more emphasis on directive models, as reflection and action are geared to other areas. In addition, decision-making powers in a large majority of cases were not in the hands of African/Black women. Currently, fifteen out of 18

women worked in Collectives and hierarchically run shelters in relief, contract, or full-time frontline/advocacy positions.

In the following section, women's responses in relation to anti-oppression policies and procedures in their shelters are analyzed.

Anti-Oppression Policies and Procedures

Within diverse shelter systems, anti-oppression policies and procedures in woman abuse shelters have been the result of differently located feminist attempts to create “equitable” or “less oppressive” practices for residents, staff, and Board members. More cross-cultural representations of women entering the shelter systems, either for refuge and/or employment, led to more exploration of intersectional violence in shelters and other work environments, supported by social justice bodies who lobbied for government policies, and legislation on anti-discrimination. In short, oppressions experienced outside of the shelter and power inequities within our local and global communities played out inside shelters. Houses built for “homage”, “safety”, and “security” often battled with intersectional violence, Whiteness, White supremacy, and power dynamics, often making it unsafe for African/Black women and Women of Colour who lived and/or worked in them. In the majority of instances, shelters built in the early 1970s in North America were not built with African/Black women or Women of Colour in mind. In fact, many shelters outside of big cities still continue to function today through Eurocentric lenses often not equipped with diverse services and cultural accessibilities.

In Chapter Two, one shelter's anti-oppression and anti-discriminatory policies and procedures were briefly outlined, acknowledging the organizational value of such policies. Women were asked if anti-oppression policies were relevant to their day-to-day work at shelters. Unanimously, all women indicated that these policies were relevant to their daily work,

especially working in environments where intersectional violence exists. This was explicitly stated by Buchi:

I think it's very important. I think when you have those policies and they are taken seriously, and my belief on anti-oppression, anti-racism, any of the anti-stuff that harm peoples, it is not a one time education. It is a lifetime education and all of us have some form of oppression inside us that we are oppressing people, some form of prejudice We have it, whether we accept it or not It's knowing that you have it, working on it, and taking all these layers, peeling all these layers off In order to do that it means you have to have that policy there, like the Bible¹⁹⁸ . . . implemented, looked at, studied, have a committee, all the time, in the organization, and that's the only way you can reach some form of having a place that is free from oppression and racism.

Women working in shelters validated that anti-oppression policies and procedures were relevant. In addition, women were asked if they were aware of any anti-oppression policies in the shelters to verify the value of such procedures. Most women acknowledged that anti-oppression and anti-discrimination policies existed, at least on paper, in the shelters that they had worked in. This is explained by Makeba:

Yes, there's always a policy in there, but it's how we're practicing. How we interpret it into our daily working life, but there's always a policy existing.

Harriet echoed Makeba:

I think it's just like the general policy . . . which applies to the [clients] that come into . . . the [shelter]. For . . . us staff . . . zero tolerance when it comes to racism, sexism, all those isms.

¹⁹⁸ The Bible is referred to here as something solid and constant to explain the importance of anti-oppression policies and procedures, but it is ironic as the Bible has also been historically and presently used to justify mass domination, oppression, and violence. Again this statement indicates the complexities between colonial-based religion and anti-colonial praxis.

However, Nana and Nefertiti stated consecutively that they did not know of any anti-oppression policies in existence as indicated by the following:

They say they have them I have not seen them I haven't seen them.
(Nana)

[laugh] Oh God! Anti-discrimination, anti-oppression policies If they were there, I didn't know of them. No, definitely not. (Nefertiti)

Seventeen out of 18 women also indicated that these policies were more than often not implemented or only selectively. Their views are summarized by Makeba and Sojourner:

I don't think they are completely implemented Sometimes it's just like a picture in the frame on the wall, so it's . . . there. Yes . . . we have the policy, but we don't actually practice it. (Makeba)

It is only used on the residents I've never seen it used on a worker, but always on the residents. The same workers who would be racist to you would pull up any resident and tell them if they call people names or whatever they do . . . they would be penalized and removed from the shelter . . . given written warnings. But I've never seen it used on a staff The White people always find some way to explain away why it is that it's not racist If a woman is racist to a staff it gets shhhh Nothing is ever done! If a White woman [resident] is racist to a staff, nothing is ever done It is among resident to resident but never, never, never to a staff. A White woman could say or do whatever she wants to a staff, call her whatever she wants, do whatever she wants, nothing happens, at least in all the shelters I've worked They always find an excuse of why she is doing this "Well, she is upset," "well, she's this," or "she didn't mean that" I have never, never, never, never seen a White woman be penalized I don't like to use the word penalized, but reprimanded for saying something racist to a staff . . . for all my 18 years or so that I've been working in the shelters. (Sojourner)

A small percentage of women, nine out of 18, who worked in shelters that had implemented anti-oppression policies, indicated in most cases that this was done usually as training initiatives. In many cases, women stated that they did have some sort of anti-oppression training. However, the training was often critiqued for the absence of management and decision-making players who worked in the shelter, and the enormous presence of racialized women.

Makeba described who the majority of participants in anti-oppression trainings were:

It's funny though, every time I went to anti-oppression, anti-racism trainings, I found the people that would be participating would be People of Colour. So I don't know how we can address those issues unless the people in power would be part of it.

Clearly, an anti-oppression training consisting of non-White women needed to focus on the internalization of oppression and its manifestations. Nefertiti observed the differences in training between full-time and relief staff:

One thing I find about some of the shelters, they didn't encourage the training to be done for both parties [relief and full-time]. The only training that was done together, I think, was the CPR training Otherwise, there was a distinction You can't give half of the people this or one tenth of the people this and another tenth who are doing the same work don't get it I don't understand. What are you trying to do or not do, or to take away? That doesn't make sense.

Furthermore, women also stated that the implementation of policies usually occurred as a result of "racial conflict" among staff or with residents/clients. However, conflict among staff most often led to reactive anti-oppression training while conflict between shelter residents usually led to punitive responses in a minimal amount of cases. The minimal responses of shelter organizations to experiences of intersectional violence among their staff could indicate the lack

of relevancy of anti-oppression policies for management in shelters. Nevertheless, Fannie, herself an Executive Director, discussed the difficulties of implementing anti-oppression policies as follows:

The process is very difficult, and I am one of these people that believe that you can get people the world of training, if people are really not interested I think the whole desire about anti-oppression work is that people have to somehow realize that there is a need for this work, there is a need for that change, and there is a reason why there is . . . and have that kind of willingness, to want to learn . . . to participate . . . as honestly as they can and kind of see where they fit in the whole scheme of it and how they would go about changing . . . their practices Unless people are willing to do that, I find trying to implement anti-oppression policies [are quite challenging].

Anti-oppression policies in shelters are supposed to be for all women who live and work there. In some shelters, policies were implemented in relation to residents but not among staff. The relevance of anti-oppression policies and procedures for African/Black women in this study were well articulated and their under-implementation was also noted by participants. The prevalence of the under-implementation of anti-oppression policies in shelters speaks to the structures and powers that are often premised on White supremacist notions. The significance here is that it highlights the difficulties of anti-oppression initiatives in a colonial society where ingrained ideologies and practices are sanctioned by intersectional violence. Hence, how do you uphold and implement anti-oppression strategies in a society that functions and even strives on violence? Without policies, women in shelters are far less protected from intersectional violence as this is then fully sanctioned as insignificant and rendered nonexistent. Anti-oppression policies are definitely needed to ensure, at least in principle, a non-violent ideology. On an individual level, anti-oppression policies do make a difference for some residents living in

Sometimes I like working at the shelter, sometimes I hate it . . . Here all my views are virtually always questioned, and then they are implemented as someone else's views [other women say, "It's true!"]. I love helping the women; I love helping the women reach their goals . . . I use my own Black experience to help women . . . Sometimes what I feel about the abuse of racism, exhausted, about the amount of energy that I've invested calling people on discrimination . . . I have respect for the many workers and residents who have carried on the fight for equality. I have respect for those people, and I hope that someday there will be changes, but I will not hold my breath. (Sojourner)

Sojourner expressed in the focus group the complexity of her experiences working in shelters with other women and the importance of working from her Black standpoint.

Research data and limited literature revealed that African/Black women working in shelters had numerous incidences in their work environments directly relating to their social locations and the impact of intersectional violence on their lives. Giving voice to these women's experiences working in shelters constitutes an intrinsic part of historicizing African/Black women's experiences by validating the often limited research in this area. Importantly, revealing African/Black women's experiences working in shelters supports aspects of the methodology and theoretical framework of this research by accessing knowledge not often revealed and by providing examples of individual and collective witnessing which can be seen as active resistance to a culture of colonial silence. Another form of active resistance in this research was the use of acrostics.

Acrostics were created by women and discussed in focus groups. This method of word associations helped to characterize their work environments. Acrostics created by women at their homes and in groups provided opportunities for women to make sense of their often-complex work experiences. These exercises were significant as they allowed women to use the arts

(Creative Resistance) to collectively witness their shared and differentiated experiences and to raise their consciousness, thus supporting the cohesion process needed to participate in collective acts of resistance. In the focus groups, women validated other women's stories and supported each other with verbal and non-verbal cues. Women witnessed others' experiences by acknowledging that they existed and by sharing similar and different stories with the group. Figure 36 is a demonstration of women collectively having given voice to their experiences working in shelters. Women often used similar words to describe their experiences. Therefore, acrostics were used as a creative method to engage women in associating their shelter experiences with specific words, providing a way for them to organize their thoughts and feelings about working in shelters. Through a collective process of sharing, women went around the circle and realized the similar and different words they used to describe their experiences. Women usually elaborated on why they chose each word, providing access to rich thoughts and knowledge about their shelter work experiences in a relatively short period of time. The following is a collective representation of individual "Shelters" acrostics made by women:

Struggle; spurned; stung, social issues, standing up, sisters, sisterhood, slave, sharing, strength, self care, solidarity

Hell, hellish, horrific, hope, health, helpers, home, hard working, healing, hopefully

Education, exclusion, excluding, encouraging, emergency; everlasting learning, escaping, experiences have also been very empowering, endless, equity and equality, exhausted (spiritually, emotionally, mentally), economic burden, exhausting work, expression, energy flowing

Learning, lobbying, labour intensive (multitasking), lonely place, lining up, learning timeless

Teaching, taxing, tearful, territorial, times, tiring, trauma (vicarious)

Encouraging, encouraged

Re-thinking survival, rejected, rules, resistance, respect, racism, relations, revolving door, remembering, rush, rebuilding our lives

Scary, very sarcastic, strategy for change, survivors, systemic violence against women, scared, sacrifice, safety, strategies

Women's Experiences of Intersectional Violence Working in Shelters

Makeba discussed her experiences of intersectional violence while working in shelters, emphasizing racism:

Black woman, always [will] be that shelter worker, nothing less maybe less, nothing more than that. You should know your place . . . I experienced all the “isms” in the shelter because of who I am, and what I am, because of my colour. So it's that big negative aspect of it and not being able to be heard, or to be able to be seen [for] more than [the] colour . . . of your skin, and there's always a judgement.

Overlapping themes of intersectional violence became evident as a result of engaging women in detailed discussions about their shelter work experiences. The following section illustrates women's experiences both through individual and collective representations of colonialism, feminism, stereotyping, anti-Black racism, heterosexism/homophobia and sexual harassment, ageism, classism, and African/Black women's lack of safety in their shelter work environments. In addition, the next section examines the participants' relationships with other African/Black women and Women of Colour as well as their references to the existence of hierarchies of oppression in shelters. The impacts of intersectional factors and women's locations on their shelter work experiences are also examined. Additionally, the impact of government cuts on women's work experiences and organizational restructuring in shelters are debated.

Several women later on in this chapter further look at the hierarchy resulting from colonial relations.

Feminism in shelters.

Overwhelmingly, all 18 participants expressed concerns about the practice of “feminism” in shelters. Women found that their notions of feminism were not being practiced by the majority of women working there but rather used as rhetoric by White women with power and access to decision making. Women experienced feminism as racist and exclusionary to African/Black women workers and residents. Assata summarized the participants’ views:

They hide under the rhetoric of what [the] feminist movement is and do their stuff. I think that’s where they gain a lot of power over and practice it there. I think for me some of the most vicious violence against women happens in the shelters from White women to Black women and Women of Colour. The power over, the domination, I think it takes place in the shelters In terms of workers, clients, the control of who gets what, who goes where in terms of even living for the women. For the Black women, who goes to Jane and Finch? For an example, [of a] stereotype . . . most Black people do not live in Jane and Finch Who gets to go into coops? I have seen it over and over again. I think it’s a violent place, and I think some of those women sometimes are even more violent than the men who cause the women to be there or the women who cause the women to be there.

As Assata articulated, the violence experienced by African/Black women working or living in shelters is endorsed by the existence of anti-Black racism in Canadian society. The historical and contemporary colonial relations between the Canadian state and peoples of African ancestry are reflected in the documentation of present-day unequal and violent experiences of the African/Black women participating in this research.

Experiences of racism/stereotyping/anti-Black racism in shelters.

Racism in the experiences of African/Black women shelter workers often came in the forms of stereotyping, belittling work and competency, creating fabrications, and verbal abuse. The women consistently talked about being stereotyped as *aggressive, loud, different and less intelligent* by management, colleagues, and clients in shelters. Women often spoke about stereotypical notions of African/Black women's identities, which supported the intersectional violence played out in the work environment. Afrotrini asserted her experiences of anti-Black racism working in shelters:

"You are too aggressive"; "If you speak softer, she may be able to work better."
I have a strong voice Somehow I get along really well with my clients or the residents, but somehow when it comes to meetings or evaluations, somehow if I speak softer I might be able to reach them more . . . but I've been doing the work "Oh! You did not cry", that means you do not care, like if I'm in a meeting . . . and I'm saying . . . that some shit happened . . . a White woman cries to stop the process. I don't cry. Then that means [I don't care].

Dissimilarly, Calypso explained her experiences:

Because of the way I speak, I'm a little soft spoken – the opposite [occurs] [referring to Afrotrini's experiences] because I am expected to be you,¹⁹⁹ your voice, so people have an expectation from me that I'm supposed to be aggressive. I'm supposed to be all these stereotypical things.

Consistently, women tried to deconstruct these stereotypes into which they were being forced, indicating their resistance to racialized norms and practices sanctioned by society in which the shelter had an intrinsic part in upholding. Black women spoke about their own experiences, the experiences of Women of Colour, and clients' experiences in shelters. Women

¹⁹⁹ Calypso is referring to Afrotrini during the focus group, who discussed being labelled as too loud.

frequently experienced racism in their work places from their White colleagues, clients, managers, and Board members. Participants recalled painful moments such as the one expressed by Esmeralda:

Every day, just last night, I got called the “n” word and got beat with a wooden pipe so . . . it’s everyday . . . [It was] not even a resident [who hit me with the wooden pipe but], someone else who was stealing donations from where I work. So, it’s regular though, even within the shelter system. I feel that I face racism more from the people that I work with than the women that I serve.

Angela provided a rationale as to why she continued to work in such an environment where racist violence is not addressed:

We need to work there because we have families to feed. I mean . . . this is our job . . . it’s our place of work. We belong there [crying] but somebody came in and made it look like we don’t belong there and degrading us and took away our dignity. I am like really angry because it’s mostly African women that this [experiences of violence] has happened to as a group. [crying] I am upset, too, that twice we presented this issue to the Board, the shelter is a non-profit organization so it’s run overall by the Board, but the Board hasn’t stepped up to do anything about it, to have a meeting with us. To me that’s a message that it’s invalid, they’re minimizing it, and they’re not taking us seriously. That pain is just continuing then and I have come to see those women I look up to, African women [crying] . . . break down in the workplace. [crying]

The experiences of sorrow and deep pain existed in shelters as women and children survivors take refuge. However, that same place where safety and comfort are “given” to survivors is also a place that creates overwhelming violence. Even though all women in this research had acquired some form of “formal” education; women’s educational credentials were often questioned or disvalued. This indicates again that formal education, often upheld by colonial practices and

African/Black communities as ways of eradicating racism, does not necessarily protect or prevent racist violence from occurring. Angela continued to explain an incident in which her credentials were questioned by management:

[T]he client services manager . . . the same person [who] talked about my educational background . . . I had said, “Yes, I have my early childhood education diploma, and I’m currently also working on my social services counselling diploma”. I’m actually more than halfway finished it . . . I talked about my plans of wanting to get my degree and carry on . . . Right after that, we had a staff meeting, and there were minutes²⁰⁰ circulated out like any staff meeting that could be held in an organization. It wasn’t about what people had discussed individually when they met with her . . . [In the] minutes, she had written that the only person who’s not qualified to work in the agency is me. She wrote that in the minutes . . . That really hurt me a lot, and I remember sending an email . . . [and thinking] where did this come from? My experience, my qualifications, my working here, was never a subject of discussion in the staff meeting minutes. How did my name end up here? I have a copy of that . . . I still carry it with me . . . I really am not finished with it. I think I’m going to do something about it, after I have the baby.

Angela wrote an email and sent it to her colleagues, stating her educational qualifications.

Angela further described her anguish from the lack of support she received from her union representative in relation to this incident:

My union rep in the shelter, [is a] woman from the shelter, not an outside union rep . . . [She said that I] . . . broke the lines of communication . . . “There is nothing I, as a union steward, am willing to do for you to file a grievance. You have no choice. We need to meet with these people so we can get clear and you can move on”, and “I would suggest that you know, you just own up that you’ve broken the lines of communication [by emailing a response to the minutes] . . .” I

²⁰⁰ Minutes are the notes taken during meetings that are typed up and circulated to staff to amend and approve.

just felt so completely degraded . . . that whole experience. Here's a place I had given so much to. I had worked there for so long and these people, I mean, . . . she did this within, I think it was, her first month at the agency. She comes there and writes about me in the staff meeting minutes about something that was never discussed, something that was a lie, and I'm going to my union steward throughout the year for support . . . and to go to her and feel minimized and not believed What hurt the most is that [the] union rep met with management She was my union rep [crying] supposed to be on my side She with the White skin privilege and everybody else was White.

Angela's painful experiences echoed other African/Black women's experiences. This finding questions the discourse that unions in an organization help and protect *all* employees. Clearly, in a society that is constructed and functions on unequal power relations by ideologies and systems of dominance, African/Black women are not often valued or protected.

The women also identified experiences of anti-Black racism from Women of Colour colleagues at shelters. The participants were asked how their relationships with Women of Colour colleagues in shelters were. Calypso explained an incident with a Woman of Colour colleague who, after going to White management about a White resident being discharged based on her racist comments to another resident, came to her hypothesizing what would have happened differently if it had been a Black woman resident who had stated derogatory comments to another resident:

A woman was discharged . . . [and my colleagues] a Chinese woman is saying to me . . . in my Black face . . . and a Latina woman . . . they went to interrupt the meeting between the supervisor and the Executive Director, to confront her, and said to her . . . [that if the resident had been a Black woman and said that same comment she would have not been discharged]. The gist of it was the woman would not have been discharged if she was a Black woman The right to think that she can come to me and tell me that story and think that somehow that we're

going to be in some kind of agreement or alliance This woman has been in this work for 10 years . . . [and] considers[ed] that she had got it together as far as an understanding of all these oppressions and knowledge.

Nana, like Calypso, depicted a painful experience with another Women of Colour:

It was a Middle Eastern woman who identified as White I'm being ostracized, and I feel like I am being isolated. I feel like a myriad of feelings . . . and these are feelings that I never knew that I possessed . . . of rage I've never been confronted with this kind of racism where someone was fighting like that . . . taking away my responsibilities . . . just destroying my work in front of my face . . . destroying it. Just horrific. [crying]

Similarly, Afrotrini depicted her experiences and the complexities of sexual orientation and race politics:

[I was] working with South Asian women . . . [and] how another Woman of Colour may approach something . . . and the way I would . . . who's going to be heard? It's not me! And I mean I had a boss, [a South Asian woman] who the only thing that was my saving grace is that I was a lesbian. Because as far as she [was] concerned, she told me three times that if it is the last thing she does, she's going to get rid of all the Black nationalists in this organization But she could tell me . . . because you see I scored . . . cause I was like a dyke Yes, she was a lesbian also.

Experiences of anti-Black racism from Women of Colour highlights the complexities and difficulties that occurred in shelters, especially in relation to establishing alliances needed to combat White supremacy.

African/Black women discussed their experiences of racism from residents in the shelters,²⁰¹ and African/Black clients' experiences of racism in shelters. Audre explained an incident with a resident while working in shelters:

Client came in from work one day [while] I was working on the floor of the shelter I was talking to some of the other women. She [a resident] came . . . from work and she was vegan, so I said to her this is what dinner was. I opened the kitchen and said feel free to make whatever you need to . . . supplement it. The woman watch me and tell me about if I couldn't get up and cook for her.

The legacies of the Black domestic are always prevalent in shelters, and represent replicas of colonial society. Moreover, Nana explained her experiences as follows:

I would say one of my biggest problems . . . is the lack of understanding from staff and lack of educating of other women about the traditions of African women I've been at shelters where the food was mocked. Eat[ing] with your hands was being mocked, and carrying the babies on the back being mocked, and not understanding the sensitivity over certain things.

Likewise, Nefertiti discussed the lack of cultural sensitivity and support for African/Black women residents in shelters:

[W]hat happens is that if an African woman comes into the shelter . . . a lot of the time I may be asked to do the intake If I am coming [on shift]. . . , but if there's a situation where for instance the African woman has or would like to talk further . . . I am not always contacted It's as if, ok, she [the client] can express herself but only to a certain point . . . and give her some support, but not too much support.

²⁰¹ These finding echoed experiences highlighted from Agnew and other women in the critical review of literature in Chapter Two. However, Agnew's work does not focus on anti-Black racism.

These experiences of silencing of the voices of African/Black women residents and workers in shelters reflect the marginalized positionality that these same women are subjected to on a daily basis.

Nevertheless, racism is also experienced by Women of Colour working in shelters. The women spoke of coworkers and clients who had also been violated by racism at their workplaces in shelters. Assata spoke about the experiences Women of Colour had with racial violence and her alliances:

In the shelter . . . although being a relief there you weren't part so much of the politics that was there among staff. I was privy to [experiences of violence] . . . I was also close to a South Asian woman who was having tremendous problems in the Collective where she was sort of isolated, and I remember one day when I caught her crying and pulled her in a closet and started talking to her . . . and held onto her really tight and have her embrace my body. [I] remember that particular day that she wanted to commit suicide. She was leaving work and she wanted to go to the subway and do something. And I remember holding onto her so tight and just supported her; it was our secret. The next day [I] brought her a cassette about self [empowerment] building [crying]; it was something to listen to with positive reinforcement. I remember it was our secret for years. I remember last year, for the first time, when she shared it with somebody else, she said that "Assata has always been there for me secretly . . . you know she saved my life."

Assata's example indicated that alliances and support between African/Black Women and Women of Colour can and do exist. However, the secrecy of her South Asian woman colleague about Assata's support can be due to many factors, including personal protection, fear of reprisal from shelter colleagues, and/or inability to validate her relationship with a Black woman who has little power in the shelter hierarchy.

These examples indicated racist violence in shelters experienced by African/Black women and Women of Colour both as workers and clients. This violence indicated the ideological and structural underpinnings of shelters that similarly support and sustain mainstream structures of dominance and racial hierarchies of oppression. The next section explains women's experiences and participation in homophobic and heterosexist violence in their shelter work.

Experiences of heterosexism/homophobia/sexual harassment in shelters.

Hell! I'm African They just ignore me . . . because I'm African I'm a freak I'm a dyke So I just get eliminated, right? (Afrotrini)

This statement of Afrotrini's expressed her experiences of exclusion based on interconnected heterosexist and racist violence in shelters.

African/Black lesbian-identified women experienced intersectional violence in their shelter work, particularly in relation to racism and heterosexism, by both colleagues and clients. Hence, their lived experiences of hetero-normative sanctioned violence mirrored their experiences working in woman abuse shelters. Audre spoke specifically of experiences of sexual harassment and the complexities of being a Black, lesbian woman working in shelters:

It was by a resident who I think was doing her own little coming out thing and decided that what she really needed to do was to test it out on me I never told anybody in the shelter Why was I going to go there? They were not going to do anything. Then it would become an issue of being flipped around because I was out. Actually these issues of sexual assault happened a few times.

African/Black lesbian-identified women spoke about little unification among lesbians of other races. In fact, African/Black lesbian women questioned the assumption often made by the White queer community of a "unified" community and also critiqued the comparison of

homophobia and racism as being the same, which often happened when an intersectional analysis is not taken. Kariabengbeng elaborated:

You are isolated; at least I feel isolated. I am lesbian and all that, but it doesn't mean anything in that institution It doesn't mean anything at all that I have a political agenda, breaking down the system It doesn't mean anything. Because the bottom line is that it is a business; it's [about] the good of that business as opposed to the individual participants, the women who are coming there, the workers who are working and trying to be part of that growth too. It is not about any of that.

In the following section, women continued exploring their experiences in relation to ageism, particularly focusing on elders working in shelters.

Experiences of ageism and elders in shelters.

Many women expressed that the treatment of elders and/or older African/Black women workers in the shelter was very problematic. Calypso explained:

I think of the older women that I've seen in this movement and the way that . . . their health, suffers. They're burnt out, and they're stuck in this. To me it becomes a dead-end job . . . doing shit work, because . . . in the shelters system you are the jack of all trades. Where's your security? High stress. You're a counsellor You're providing food, diapers, everything. I mean to me that's not a place for older women in as far as where I come from In our society . . . I think something needs to give, something needs to change about the way we support all women, but specially when . . . they're getting older I think that the movement . . . these organizations [are] responsible for creating it. [They] should be responsible for taking care and making sure that . . . they are ok and find some kind of transitionary work or training program Give them some kind of leadership roles or give them their dues At the end of the day, we all sit back and we see, "well this one is like acting crazy, this one is" They all end up burnt out and it's really sad.

Although Calypso described the treatment of African/Black women elders in shelters, she also gives strategic ideas on alternative methods of shelter behaviour. Participants indicated that there was no social mobility, pensions, or supports for older workers in the shelter, and that this was markedly different from their older White women peers who often moved on to better positions and higher paying jobs with more decision-making capacities. In fact, women stated that there was little or no social mobility for African/Black women in shelters²⁰² and that this led to burn out and, in some cases, ineffective workers. The oldest women in this research, Sojourner, described her feelings and experiences of ill treatment as an older woman working with other colleagues:

In the workplace, I've always found ageism to be harder for me than racism . . . this may sound strange . . . or just as hard because I've always been older, and people always treat me like an old dog. What I say is not serious, it is not important . . . and this is "an old bag talking". That's how I feel and that's how they act . . . like you are not serious and I don't have to listen to you . . . I've always had to pull up people on that . . . I just say, ". . . when I come here to work you treat me like an equal worker here, and you need to respect me and give me all the information I need to know. Don't act like [I] don't need that information . . . When I am talking, you act like shut up old fool." I am not going to stand for that, but that's what I find all the time.

The seriousness of ageism is heard, as it has already been proven that racism existed in shelters and Sojourner, who earlier also talked about racism, felt that in her hierarchy of oppression, her experiences as an older African/Black woman were compounded with racism. Calypso discussed the lack of mobility and power for elder African/Black women working in shelters:

²⁰² This is supported by the less than three Executive Directors of African/Black descent in woman shelters in Ontario.

The older shelter women workers, African [women], why haven't those women over the years been trained to move up the ladder, and to become the middle management and the management of these organizations. Why are they still at the bottom of the hierarchy at the end of it . . . ? Something is very wrong with the system, but the way I see it . . . why don't we have those role models? I think the system has to be, if they haven't been there in a healthy way in the past then . . . it's not of our making Yes, we have to be responsible [too] but we are not the ones with the power in these organizations It needs to change, I'm not sure how but I think that the women shelter movement have to take responsibility for making these changes. It's there, it's a problem. It's like saying there is an elephant in the room . . . and they [respond] "No, ain't no elephant in here!"

Buchi discussed her difficulties navigating between different cultural practices of respect and being labeled as ageist in the shelter:

The older you are you deserve that respect . . . which here [in Canada] sometimes I do not see it [T]hen they would say ageism, and I say no, because I think it is a respect, so that is where I get the murky muddy waters . . . at work If I see one of the older women here I have a [much] older woman in my program. I will get her a cup of tea . . . and some people say "Why not me?" I say "No, you can do it yourself" "Oh, but that is ageism". Well, for me it is respect.

Buchi's account indicated that the definition of ageism has to be looked at from anti-colonial, culturally diverse lenses as the system notorious for intersectional violence creates even more barriers to access and services. Moreover, how do we take stances of anti-oppression praxis, when culturally diverse practices are devalued and demonized, often by colonial worldviews? At the same time, how do we avoid essentialized cultural relativistic notions that do not problematize intersectional violence against women?

Experiences of classism/ableism in shelters.

Women spoke about classism and how many African/Black women were stereotyped as poor or working poor.²⁰³ Other women spoke about being labeled as classist due to middle-class upbringing and/or racist notions of what African/Black women were supposed to be like. Portia depicted the dynamics and complexities of race and class in her shelter work:

I have been accused of being elitist at work and classist by the way I dress, by what I speak, even the tone in which I speak. I've been ostracized You have no understanding of me, and your concept of what you think I should be and where I have come from and why I am now in this country as a displaced immigrant. Then that class is everyone as to why nobody would think that one would leave their island to broaden their horizons And now I'm thinking what horizons are there quite frankly, [laughs] but what are these horizons that one is so quick to leave their country to come to? I really don't see it.

Classism was also talked in terms of low wages and being working poor as a shelter worker. Conversely, Calypso identified openly that many shelter workers seemed to perpetuate classist attitudes towards clients:

I think, generally, what I've seen is that a lot of women workers bring attitudes of classism with them to the work and in their delivery towards clients . . . and it's one of those things . . . it's so hard to put a finger on it when you're talking about class issues, of class values, because no one wants to think that they're classist This whole real taboo thing, and sometimes people are a bit, maybe as new immigrants I think a lot of people have immigrated from privilege so there's so many things that influence . . . delivery of services, but what I've seen a lot is in relation to my work experience is a lot of women who maybe in their

²⁰³ The reality is that African/Black and Indigenous peoples of the Americas have disproportionately high rates of poverty; however, this has to do with living under current colonial systems of subordination that have achieved powers based on violence and keeping colonized populations underpowered and impoverished. However, elites from oppressed groups also participate in maintaining and creating impoverished conditions locally and globally as they benefit from these unequal relationships.

countries of origin were very privileged, and even though their situations, maybe income wise has changed or their position in this society has changed because[of] their new immigrant experience . . . those values are still there and [they] impact delivery of service to the women and children that we are supposed to be seeing.

The notion of classless identities prior to their arrival to Canada is challenged by Calypso who identified former privileged women working in shelters having struggles with the assigned categories of class, which usually denote less power. At the same time, Calypso stated that these same workers are one paycheck away from being poor themselves and connects her thoughts to colonial legacies:

but again most of the women seem to be single, came from single parent households, or they may be the main breadwinner so then that throws you back in that category So I think a lot of the shelter workers are women in our community, especially where family systems have been broken down because of colonialism Then you see a lot of single parents households and so you have a lot of people who maybe on paper they should be doing well, but . . . they're just barely making it. I know, for a fact, that a lot of workers out there are living just from pay check to pay check and they're on the brink [If] anything happens to their income then they're on the client side of the service.

Limited dialogues about classism in this research by women working in shelters indicated the need for more dialogues on how classism intersects with other forms of violence impacting African/Black women's lives. Likewise, experiences of ableism were rarely mentioned or explained when inquired about. Few women spoke about ableist experiences in shelters stating that they had become more aware of concerns through educational initiatives at their shelters. Buchi explained:

I am seeing and respecting that people who have any disability are able to . . . live a full life . . . as much as they can . . . and I really appreciate that. I had a couple

of workshops, and I think there should be no discrimination at all and the more that I've had that experience with people with disabilities Now I am very focused Anywhere I go . . . a shop . . . private business . . . government offices . . . I would notice how many people are working there with a form of disability.

These experiences Buchi discussed indicated intersectional realities of violence for differently located African/Black women working in shelters. Also, the indication of Women of Colour and clients' experiences portrayed a more multifaceted view of shelter environments. The limited discussions on classism and ableism in shelters are problematic and suggested that more needs to be discussed in these areas.

Safety.

A shelter is supposed to be a "safe" haven for women fleeing abuse. Yet, as work environments, woman abuse shelters have proven to be unsafe for many African//Black women and Women of Colour working in them. There are several reasons for this. Women talked about inherent unsafe working environments in shelters in relation to their experiences of intersectional violence. Calypso spoke about the contradictions of "safety" in the anti-violence shelter community:

It's like double It multiplies because you're in an environment that is supposed to be sort of *safe*, in theory . . . but on the other hand . . . you [are] really not safe here So [that's] kind of [a] contradiction.

A number of women referred to issues of physical safety working in the shelter. Moreover, many participants talked about experiencing violence in their working environments. Afrotrini discussed another contradiction of the "safe" shelter environment:

We talk about being safe It's supposed to be a safe place . . . and I only put "safety" . . . there because I just think it's in quotes. It's like we're not safe working in it. The [residents] are not safe. They come there because they're not safe, come to a place where people could still come in . . . "Oh yeah, you mean . . . it's the shelter . . . so and so over there on . . . and then you go to the end [of the street], you mean that shelter for assaulted women?" . . . Nothing about it is safe. We all have it under the umbrella of safety, so that's my little shelter (referring to Figure 37).

Safety is questioned as the locations of many shelters are known resulting in constant concern.

Buchi reiterated her feelings of lack of safety:

This is about women taking care of women in the workplace You'll be hearing, "It is not safe for women to be out late". . . . The women [residents] that you are looking after, and the same person say[s] because they changed your schedule, the shift schedules, but it's ok to go out at 12 o'clock, after midnight, or come to work after midnight It's doubly . . . more scary when you're a Black person because . . . I feel there are really threatening, dangerous, hating people are coming out at that time in the night People . . . to take all my money and attack me. It's funny about the elderly [referring to herself] . . . you got this Black woman . . . working at 40 years old, she's still working at frontline at 50 years old, yet the Executive Director in that period . . . probably left. She's [White] . . . [and] she left and got another job.

Women's articulation of "safety" or lack thereof in shelters due to their intrinsic structures, intersectional violence, and limited access to power and decision making in relation to work (example shift scheduling), mirrors other unsafe environments in our society where African/Black women work and live, all of which are constructed by patriarchal colonial relations. Can we assume that African/Black women in Canada who work and live in a society that historically and contemporarily condones violence against them, in turn, could expect the

state to possibly advocate for safer conditions for these same women? Would this not contradict the Canadian state's imperialist agenda? How could shelters, which are primarily funded by the Canadian state, promote and actualize safety mechanisms for Black women and all women who work and live in shelters? What are other alternatives to safeguard African/Black women employed in shelters? How do hierarchies in shelters intensify African/Black women's lack of safety even more?

Hierarchies of oppression.

African/Black women argued that there were set inequities based on race in the shelter work environment. Moreover, they argued that hierarchies of oppression existed in shelters. These hierarchies defined management with power and decision making as White women, middle management as Asian or Women of Colour, and at the bottom of the frontline tier, more often than not, African/Black women. This hierarchy is talked about throughout the research process. Calypso and Afrotrini articulated the hierarchy that they see working in shelters:

In the structure of . . . woman abuse shelters . . . there's so much . . . racism. We don't want to call it, we don't want to name it . . . but if you look at that hierarchy in the hierarchical organizations, usually you find . . . the White ED on top; there will be, if you are lucky, a middle management, that one Black woman [in middle management] that is usually, if she does get the opportunity, the scapegoat for the organization . . . some other Women of Colour and then at the bottom are counsellors, the frontline workers. There's a huge percentage of those workers usually . . . from my work experience, a lot of really talented, skilled [women] in other countries . . . but in this society, the shelter movement is the place where all our intellects seem to end up. Our thinkers . . . end up here at the bottom of the pile. (Calypso)

Afrotrini replicated Calypso's analysis:

the hierarchy thing really bothers me . . . because I've been in how many shelters . . . too many, and they always looked the same The money is up there, the power is there. The violence, racism, White folks up in there It's not much, but it's kind of small, but they have plenty money and that middle one . . . really drives me nuts. Here are these African women or Women of Colour who are dying, right, in the madness that is going on, and this group of Asian folks, "I don't know what's going on, I don't know, maybe somebody fighting? But I am admin, I just do the books" Or "You mean things are happening?", or "Yeah, well no, yeah, but I leave at four", [or] "I don't remember your name" You know everything that is going on, and you're pretending that you know nothing . . . and that has so much power in it.

Are Women of Colour responsible for their silence and "out of sight, out of mind" responses in relation to African/Black women's experiences of violence and lack of power in shelters? Does the hierarchy of oppression really benefit them?

The hierarchy of oppression could also be compared to historical systems in place that perpetrated African/Black colonization and enslavement, resulting in nation-building. Whites were the owners, were in decision-making roles, and had power over other Peoples of Colour, usually South Asian and Asian who were indentured labourers. While enslaved Africans had little or no power, and Indigenous peoples of the Americas were "non-existent". Harriet relayed experiences of the hierarchy in shelters as synonymous with African enslavement:

You have your "house nigger" . . . the manager is either Asian or Black, because she's put into that position of program director, [but] she's not quite Black, and she's not quite White Then we have us, who are the "field hands" . . . [group members laugh], the cotton pickers, and then we have the house master. It's very difficult for us to . . . get together, because . . . we're going to get shot down or hunt, or beat or worse. So I mean for us to get together and say what we want, it's something that is possible, but there's just going to be another more structured

way of slavery . . . just a different form of slavery that we are going through
 There is a majority of us, but we do not have a voice. We now have the house
 nigger who's . . . in between . . . looking to get that appreciation from the master,
 but at the same time [s]he doesn't want to be like shunned by [her] people
 And we're trying to make changes, and it's going to be hard.

Interestingly, Harriet was in the process of moving back to Jamaica—perhaps the hierarchy was impossible to dismantle in a White settler colonial state.

Feelings of worthlessness and entrapment were felt by some women. These findings indicated how racism places Women of Colour, African women, Aboriginal women, and White women in divisive colonial relations to continue a division of power that ultimately supports divide-and-conquers processes and upholds White supremacy and hetero-patriarchal agendas. The impact of intersectional factors on African/Black women working in shelters is that intersectional violence is experienced on a daily basis both inside and outside of their workplaces. The impact varies for differently located women. As a result, women look to their self-perceptions of their identities as ways of dealing and resisting against intersectional violence.

All women indicated that the experience working in shelters was very challenging and negative. Some women wanted to leave the shelter as well as Canada as a result of experiencing intersectional violence. Others felt the impact, but chose to take on what they could handle and nothing more. For many women, the violence they experienced had affected their physical, mental, and emotional health.

Women discussed experiences of tentative alliances with Women of Colour and White women in relation to the hierarchies of oppression. Afrotrini shared her experiences:

I mean you ignore who I am Why am I going to take you on? My thing is that I have to work there, go to the meetings . . . and I find people who I can . . . create alliances in terms of getting what I want at work So I know . . . I have to go to [so and so] to get this, I have to go to this one to get that . . . but am I going to . . . ? No!

Consequently, it is important to look at how African/Black women can continue to build alliances with First Nations women and Women of Colour without recreating hierarchies of oppression. As some women in this research have stated and others have alluded to in previous chapters, alliances are essential among the Indigenous peoples of the Americas and Indigenous peoples of Africa as they share in genocidal histories of colonial occupation, cooptation, and nation-building projects. Moreover, forming alliances between and among African/Black women and differently racialized women is not something new. Historically and contemporarily, there have been numerous examples of alliances among groups of African/Black women and First Nations women and women who identify as Women of Colour. As well, African/Black women have participated in emancipatory movements with differently racialized women.²⁰⁴

The colonial existence of the Canadian state intrinsically ties First Nations peoples in the Americas and African peoples inside and outside of the Americas, and other Peoples of Colour, to a lesser degree, in resistance aimed at challenging White supremacy and dismantling colonial states. Different projects of decolonization and resistance against imperialist governance can serve as a meeting point for basic alliances among diverse groups of women.²⁰⁵

The hierarchy of oppression highlighted in this Chapter can only be challenged by understanding it through anti-colonial, feminist lenses, how it has come to be, and how can it be

²⁰⁴ See *Other Kinds of Dreams*, (Sudbury, 1998) for a discussion on multiracial coalitions.

²⁰⁵ Smith (2006) argues that forming alliances based on the taking apart of multiple forms of White supremacy can support the decolonization of peoples and the destruction of colonial nation-state governance.

taken apart. Dismantling this divide-and-conquer method can only happen with real dialogues and actions about the complexities and compliances between racialized communities. Concepts of shared power can be a way of negotiating power relations among different groups of women as well as between those who have power and those who don't. But who is willing to give up their power? The question is how can this be negotiated? The positioning of power between differently racialized women and communities needs to be critically discussed. For example, how do African/Black women who are not Christian, Jewish, or Muslim identified address islamophobia or anti-Semitism and/or fundamental Christianity with Non-Black women given their history of anti-Black racism and/or colonization from those same groups? How do African/Black women address the notion of being considered "Black settlers" on Indigenous peoples of Americas land by some First Nation scholars when the forced migration of these African/Black women was one of genocide, rape, and inhumane labour? Collective alliances can only happen through open discussions of often painful and traumatic experiences in hierarchal imperial states. How can "tit for tat" arguments be dealt with and moved forward towards changeable alliances? Moreover, alliances cannot be formed if the questioning of tokenism and internalized colonization is not done through multiple actions, as internalized White supremacy hinders actions needed to dismantle colonial systems, which falsely perpetuate hierarchies of oppression. These discussions need to be furthered and need to be engaged with fully among differently located women and communities who are dedicated to an integrated approach of dismantling systems of White supremacy and imperialism, individually, collectively, agreeably, arguably, but most importantly, critically.

Clearly, anti-Black racist agendas must be challenged for alliances to be forged.

However, I also examined the impact of living and working in intersectionally violent shelter environments on Black women's relationships.

Relationships among African/Black women.

Women were asked if there were many African/Black women in shelters they worked at and what their positions were. Most had worked with other African/Black women in the capacity of relief or full-time frontline staff. Numbers proved that, in most instances, African/Black women did not work in positions of management and had little access to power and decision making in shelter organizations. Many women believed that this had to do with the established hierarchy of oppression in shelters.

African/Black women's relationships were characterized in many ways. Women found it very easy to talk about the positive aspects of relationships with other African/Black women. Women spoke about forming friendships for life, sisterhood, allies, collective resistance, and endless support. Harriet discussed her relationships with Black women at work and their support:

Very good, very good, because I think . . . we just know, we commiserate in each other's ups and downs and joys and tribulations.

Buchi explained the notable difference between her connections with African/Black women in Somalia and those she met working in shelters in Canada:

When I was back home, we were different countries I was Somali, and another was Ethiopian, and another was Sudanese, and another was Nigerian, we were like from the same continent Whereas now . . . I feel proud, I feel happy to see other African people and I feel a lot closer, I feel that bond.

Does the experience of racism and intersectional violence create bonds between differently located African/Black women? What do these bonds consist of? Echoing Buchi, Nana uses a personal example to discuss the importance of African/Black collectivity:

When there's adversity, we tend to come together so good and so strong It was so good because we needed it . . . in terms of the relief Again, not all women . . . of African descent came forward Two of them didn't come on board, but the other relief who went on board . . . they became like full-timers because we telephoned each other, we talked, we met outside of the shelter We just had this camaraderie of sisterhood I think that's what helped us to survive It wasn't how smart we were, but it was how connected we were [and] able to support each other during this process It was phenomenal.

Nana illustrated how differently located African/Black women, full-time and relief workers, collectively supported each other during an adverse time. Proving again that racism and other intersectional violence create collective witnessing, consciousness-raising, and actions within the shelter. This is also an example of tenet three of the Identity Trichotomy outlined in Chapter Three.

On the contrary, it was very difficult to discuss the challenging and difficult relationships among African/Black women. Women asked to turn off the tape recorder and in some cases became very anxious and saddened. Evidently, a code of silence had been broken by revealing the challenging aspects of our relationships, especially in a racially and intersectionally violent society where alliances among African/Black women are often critical for survival.²⁰⁶ Sudbury (1998) reminds us of the importance of engaging in difficult dialogues:

²⁰⁶ This critical discussion on African/Black women's relationships with each other is not done to further colonial stereotypes that depict African/Black women as violent, aggressive and angry but rather to engage in important dialogues about the impact of internalized and epistemological oppression and how it manifests in our work and lived experiences.

The danger of writing as a member of an oppositional community, is the temptation to 'tell heroic stories' in order to counter negative stereotypes. In the context of the erasure and pathologisation of black women in Britain, constructing a counter-narrative, which highlights our strength and resilience, is a necessary task. However, the desire to portray black women in a positive light leads potentially to silencing those aspects of black women's organising which have been less than positive, or outright destructive. This idealisation ultimately is of little benefit to black women because it dulls our ability to think critically about our actions. Ultimately, the liberatory narrative becomes a tool to silence doubt and dissent, and thus prevents us from learning lessons from mistakes or turning weaknesses into strengths. (pp. 47–48)

Women spoke about verbal and, in one case, physical violence by another African/Black woman. Afrotrini reflected on her experiences of abuse when she refused to fire another African/Black woman whom she felt was being wrongly dismissed. As a result of her refusal, another Black co-worker wrote a letter to the Board accusing her of not providing adequate childcare for a women's group. During her new program management position, Afrotrini believed that she was set up as she was not sufficiently trained. She explained the violent incident that occurred at the Board meeting:

I went to this Board meeting. She came [referring to her co-worker] . . . and [made a formal] complaint, so that they could fire me, because it's within the six months [probation period] When she came . . . I had to leave . . . when they had to discuss it. She came to me and said, "You fucking Uncle Tom, you fucking this, you just make me sick . . . you make me so sick, I just want to spit on you!" and she actually spit on me.

Soon after, the shelter fired Afrotrini from her management position. Assata discussed internalized racism and both the difficulty and possibility of connecting with some African/Black women at work:

She came on shift did not even say hello. I looked at her and I thought that she felt a bit threatened with my presence being there. Sometimes a lot of Black women would feel that because of internalized racism, feeling that maybe you are there to

take over She just looked at me. . . . I felt bad and I went over and said, “Hello, how are you? and . . . I’m so and so, and I’m here for so and so” That sort of broke the ice, and over time I would talk to her and I noticed . . . she would speak We have developed a relationship . . . and become actually good friends.

Afrotrini movingly exemplifies homophobic violence among and between African/Black women while working at the shelter and her reasons for not telling her Executive Director:

Yes! Black women workers! They had me there in the room and telling me . . . “No, we are not talking about you”, but telling me how gross homosexuality is and . . . quote out the fucking Bible for me It is interesting [Years later, she talked to the Executive Director about the incident], The ED was telling me . . . “Why didn’t you [tell me]?” Look at the position I’m in What am I going to tell [the ED] . . . you’re going to fire them Right? That was horrible!

The intricacy of hetero-patriarchal violence by African/Black women co-workers and the racist implications of punishment silenced Afrotrini’s cruel experience. How do we address violence among and between African/Black women in shelters in a racist, heterosexist, colonial society?

Additionally, women spoke about other African/Black women not wanting to relate to them at work or not wanting them to “achieve”. Women discussed the lack of support between some African/Black women. Does experiencing racism guarantee that all African/Black women will or should support each other? Women talked about clients who did not acknowledge them or respect them, but instead went for validation from White workers who seemingly had more power. Sojourner communicates the de-legitimization of her knowledge and the authority of Eurocentrism:

I find it's very difficult working with the White women and some other race women . . . because I find that there is no respect. I actually had one Indian woman tell me "Don't do this for me, let [her] do it, because she is White and she will do it better". I find that when it comes to counselling or anything . . . the residents, both White and Black, sometimes think that the White people have more knowledge Racism is still internalized, so they think that the White person knows . . . and even if you tell them something, they still think the White person knows it better That's very sad because I have so much knowledge.

Women also talked about having both positive and challenging relationships with other African/Black women as characterized by Audre:

Varied, with some I had lovely relationships; with others who were doing their own thing, and I think they were more focused on getting some more of the power and the benefits of that and therefore [were] more engaged, shall we say, with the management level.

Does the hierarchy in shelters create competition among African/Black women for minimal power positions? Does this weaken African/Black women's alliances?

Women talked about tokenism and self-hatred among some African/Black women and discussed how colonialism impacted Black women's relationships in the shelters. Claudia further asserted the complexities of internalized White supremacy, and its impact of brutality and inner conflict:

Some are good and some not good Because these days I find . . . this colonization . . . I think the wisdom of the White man has done his job; now we are doing their job for them; that is it, so they don't really have to oppress me now The whole African continent, because the colonization and the White man is out there, but who has committed genocide and who's really displacing people? Our own African people. So now it became the house slave and the free

slave . . . but I feel like . . . the little person is more oppressive than, maybe more than, the top person, because they don't really have to do that job that much.

Zora also reiterated, though differently, Claudia's notions of colonialism's impact:

There are some . . . I didn't get along with There are some of them I feel they are still suffering from colonialism I don't get along with Black women who I notice have some mentality Cause it happens, and it's very disappointing to see . . . some Black women. I am a strong Black woman, an African woman When I see another Black woman, I want to identify with [her] I have had some bad experiences with Black women because there is this behaviour I see in some of them that piss me off They don't acknowledge the work that another Black woman is doing, but if it is a White woman [they do].

This section explored the complex relationships between and among African/Black women. I revealed the bonds and disconnects among African/Black women working in shelters due to internal colonial experiences and practices. The impact of intersectional violence among and between African/Black women leads to camaraderie, collective resistance, violence, and secrecy. Yet, amongst women in this research honest engagement in sometimes difficult discussions became the catalyst to renegotiate and strategize against all forms of violence in order to strengthen African/Black women's collective resistance.

How did the government cuts in shelters add to these dynamics? In Chapter Two, government cuts in funding were discussed indicating the devastating impacts on shelters. Subsequently, in order to see if there were any correlations, women were also asked how these cuts impacted their experiences in shelters. In the following section, women in this research address government cuts and organizational restructuring in shelters.

Impact of Government Cuts in Funding and Organizational Restructuring in Shelters

Women indicated mixed accounts of the impact of cuts on shelters and particularly on their experiences as African/Black women in shelters. Depending on the shelter, women spoke of shelters that had such major cuts to services that they could not give even basic items to clients. In contrast, other women depicted shelters with surpluses of cash that did not seem to be adversely impacted by cuts. Zora explained:

We saw significant changes in the way we provide services to women A lot of women's groups closed down They lost their funding . . . and then it forced more women to get into sex trade work . . . to support themselves.

Harriet discussed:

Funding definitely . . . community and social services spectrum. It's affected everything Shelters are the new group homes . . . if you're disabled, if you're blind Fifty percent of our clientele are like serious mental health . . . taking all kinds of psychotropic drugs . . . because the facilities, group homes, have been cut and closed down This is the bottom of the barrel now.

Harriet refers here to clients dealing with mental health issues, living with disabilities, and psychiatric survivors as the "bottom of the barrel." She also refers to herself and other African/Black women working in shelters throughout her interview, and focus group discussions as the "bottom of the barrel." This metaphor represents how she feels that society thinks and treats her, and others, who are not considered "normal" and are looked at as "lesser than" based on intersectional oppressions.

Within the shelter community, there are multifaceted issues of equity and there are many incidents of oppressive behaviours. For instance, psychiatric survivors, alcoholics, cutters, and other women dealing with complex issues have experienced epistemological violence from

shelter staff and residents. There is a definite relationship between cuts to services and funding and the rise in complex forms of violence within and outside of shelters. Fannie articulated her experience of government cuts as an Executive Director:

Governmental and departments attempted to bridge that gap They've done it in a way that, in my opinion, has not been very effective . . . for clients There are shelters that are now, specially the ones in the Toronto region, . . . are all now competing against themselves, because everybody has to go out and raise all this money, but you're all in one area Because the government is going to send so much money and it doesn't increase, but every year . . . the light bill goes up, and the water bill goes up, and you're still responsible for . . . paying those kinds of costs.

These women's testimonies validated the earlier literature on the impact of government cuts on shelters. Nevertheless, other women discussed that certain shelters had many financial savings usually through corporate funders and, as a result, did not feel the impact of government cuts as harshly. Nefertiti claims:

No, it wasn't an issue for them at all in terms of funding We had so many reserves . . . but the bottom line is, I think, they're more interested in showing this image to the corporate community . . . towing the line with them, and making it look more acceptable to them, as opposed to who we are working for, the women, and what is good for them. So the lines got blurred a bit.

Likewise, Kariabengbeng asserted:

It didn't seem that it hit them too harsh . . . [laughs] Whereas it seems to hit other shelters hard, but then again, if the shelters kowtow to the line . . . they're ok, cause they're not doing anything for the women . . . so . . . they're ok. I mean my theory and thinking about all of this is that once governments have their fingers in whatever you're doing, it's not doing what you think its doing . . .

unless you have more to say in how you continue . . . which you don't if your involved in funding that comes from the rich and famous.

Also, Audre stated:

what it did was give some people an out to say that this is why they can't pay you better, why they can't give you benefits, and this is why, and this is why, and this is why. I don't think that if there was more money that things would have been any less oppressive Everybody had resources Some had so much that they had no choice but to give it to the people who worked there and who were living there Others had, and just decided they could hold it.

Alternatively, other women depicted shelters with disproportionately more funds than others and described lack of solidarity and accountability of shelters to support each other. This again demonstrates the divide-and-conquer rule, which rewards the “good” shelter with funding and punishes the “bad” shelter with no funding. Interestingly, in most cases, the shelters that have closed since 1995 have been shelters primarily servicing African/Black women, Women of Colour, and immigrant women with the exception of one shelter in Parkdale.²⁰⁷ It is important to note that racism and intersectional violence existed before, during, and after the initial cuts to funding in 1995. How did organizational restructuring in this same time period impact shelters and women's experiences of intersectional violence?

Organizational Restructuring in Shelters

Women depicted difficult experiences when retelling stories of restructuring in shelters. Women experienced pay cuts, increased work, and nepotism as collectively run shelters changed to hierarchically run models. Assata explained the impact of restructuring processes:

²⁰⁷ This shelter, as revealed in Chapter Two did, however, struggle to maintain funding for several years.

Yes, there were a lot of things that were involved, the staff was cut. The staff salary was, from what I understand, \$47,000 plus benefits with the collective; it was now \$38,000 When the ED came in and it was less staff and also that in the transition we were single shifted, so you leave from double shifting more staff, a collective of 12, manager to less staff and single shifting, so it was really tough Oh, burn out, totally burn out. We were working sometimes like 80 [90, 100] hours a week . . . and getting less pay and single shifted. It was a lot of impact on us and also on the clients themselves The service delivery just wasn't there.

Did government cuts create the need for organizational restructuring in shelters? Assata addresses restructuring in shelters in relation to government cuts:

it was changing from the collective to the ED because also some of the Collective now went on disability. Also there was somewhat I understand to be lawsuits . . . some pay offs . . . so it was all of those things . . . exactly, that impacted a whole lot No, I did not think that it was directly in terms of government cuts. I think it was because the Collective members they had been working together for about 18, 19 years. I think the group was now falling apart. I think some of the group were suffering from burn out. I think you have those, the group who were the power players and those who weren't and there was always in-house fighting for power.

Angela discusses:

Honestly, when the transition did occur, because there had been so many problems, which I won't get into about the collective . . . about its break-up and then coming into a hierarchy structure. I was still . . . relief . . . holding the contract for 20, 25 hours, here and there, so I was neither in nor out I did see how the whole structure fell apart. So for me, there was . . . a little bit of hope that maybe with the transition there is going to be a point where things will get better First of all, at least I knew that there was this opening for full-time

jobs that would come up and that . . . I would get in, and as I got in, yes, at least something positive happened, like the falling of the collective structure, who held the power is gone, and having the new ED and getting in as a full-time person. I was in a position where I could make decisions that affect everybody, myself, and my co-workers, also my clients that I work with. But unfortunately, it ended . . . doing just frontline work, and we were not decision making . . . in terms of how the agency is run Instead, then the ED . . . ended up surrounding herself with also non-Women of Colour, really White women, who were . . . now, the client services manager . . . the HR manager There was no understanding of where we were coming from in terms of our work, our experience, what we brought into there. If anything, what we got was a very raw deal.

It is not clear if government cuts created the organizational restructuring processes in shelters, however, the climate in which restructuring was occurring indicated that African/Black women's experiences working in shelters were intensified, as less access to power and decision making in shelters increased as more government cuts to services were implemented.

Sojourner describes her violent experience of nepotism during restructuring at a shelter where she had worked for over 15 years.²⁰⁸ A Black woman mediator who had come into the shelter to deal with some internal conflict, and who had been therapeutically engaged with the workers, switched roles.²⁰⁹ After being hired by the Board as an ED, she fired most of the workers after knowing most of their intimate details from past "therapeutic engagements".²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Sojourner wanted her real name to be used and to name the shelter to mark hers and other's violent experiences of restructuring in shelters. This was not done due to confidentiality, however, I felt that it is important to mention. The best that I could do to support her desires was to use an anonymous quote and a pseudonym name for the Mediator/Executive Director from a publicized Annual Report from the shelter in question to compare her experiences and what was marked as the official events according to the shelter.

²⁰⁹ According to the shelter's Annual Report, after the restructuring process, "Suzanne [pseudonym used] who had done some consulting and mediation work for the shelter over the previous summer was recommended by the Collective to act as the Executive Member of the Collective. Suzanne was hired on a one-year contract to work with the Collective on issues of accountability and staff relations, as well as to communicate operational and management issues to the Board. Over the course of the next several months, it was brought to the attention [by the Mediator] of the Board that the Collective seemed unable to function in a healthy manner. The Board was concerned about the

She really wasn't an ED; she came as a mediator and then she just absorbed the place and said she's the ED. So I really never worked with her Well, you know, I felt as though I was raped or backstabbed in my back, because this woman came there as if trying to befriend me, come to my house, sat down and all that . . . and all kind of stuff with staff. She knew she was planning to take over . . . and she is a very greedy woman because . . . [she fired everyone] around Christmas time. There were 27 of us who got that letter and we had 37 children all among us and it was a sad Christmas. It was so terrible I went into a total mental state of depression She aligned herself only also with all the White women When everybody had to apply for their job, the only two people she took back there was three White [women], one Latin American woman, and two White women, who only lasted there two or three months because they, of course, don't want her [a Black woman] to be the boss over them. But she never took back any of the Black women I did not apply.

Sojourner's experience illustrates an example of compliancy and misalliance of a Black woman in order to secure a position of power in shelters. This exemplifies how some women often play out divide-and-conquer paradigms introduced and sustained by imperial relations. The silencing in the shelter community on these issues indicates the struggle of survival and job security in times of cuts and the real difficulty of trying to practice anti-oppression initiatives within a colonial context. After examining the limited likelihood of finding African/Black women in positions of power in shelters, is it a surprise that "tokenistic" behaviour would occur? How can and how do African/Black women workers in shelters organize and resist against intersectional violence from outside as well as amongst themselves?

quality of service that was being received by our clients. The Board felt that moving to a Participatory Hierarchy Structure would enable better management accountability" (taken from the shelter's Annual Report, p. 7).

²¹⁰ This woman is still an ED at a women's shelter today and recently expanded the shelter, opening up a "healing centre" for the residents.

Summary

African/Black women's experiences working in shelters are largely shaped by intersectional violence. In this chapter, women's day-to-day routines, organizational structures of shelters, specifically collective and hierarchical shelter models, anti-oppression policies, and procedures were looked at. Women's work environments and experiences were discussed, revealing that shelters are microcosms of systems of dominance which, in turn, create experiences of continued colonial violence on the work lives of African/Black women. Moreover, the lived experiences of intersectional violence discussed in Chapter Six were synonymous with experiences of African/Black women who worked in woman abuse shelters. These findings debunk and challenge the notions of shelters as "safe" havens for *all* women, implicating shelters in the continued oppression and subjugation of African/Black women. Additionally, women discussed the divide-and-conquer tactics of racialized hierarchies of oppression that position African/Black women at the bottom in servitude localities. Also, a discussion on First Nation women and Women of Colour alliances with African/Black women questioned assumed alliances among differently located racialized women while revealing others.

African/Black women's relationships among each other revealed connections of sisterhood based on shared experiences of anti-Black racism upheld by White supremacist nation-state praxis. However, women's relationships also reflected internalized colonial relations that often perpetuated violence and divisiveness among and between African/Black women and Women of Colour. Government cuts and restructuring in shelters intensified an already difficult situation giving space for more experiences of inequity and state-sanctioned violence in shelters. However, women indicated that the breakdown of Collectives, and even their burn out, was due in part to the numerous years Collective members had worked in individual shelters. Importantly,

women indicated that organizational restructuring resulted in worsening conditions for African/Black women. The findings in this section are significant and help in understanding and explaining the context in which African/Black women's agency and resistance in shelters occurs.

Chapter Eight examines women's resistance based on their experiences of intersectional violence in shelters, the importance of their identities, Creative Resistance, and other processes elicited throughout this research.

Chapter Eight:

Resistance

Introduction

Resistance, [pause] . . . I'm out, I'm out, I'm out, and I am going to take it, and yes, shit! And I am going to say that, and I am not going to back down on it! You may call me names, whatever, but I am still going to be out and . . . you have to accept me, because this is my space, I've every right to be here! (Afrotrini)

This quote connects Afrotrini's lesbian identity with her resistance as she answers the question on how she resists.

Resistance has been a key theme throughout this research process. This research reveals that African/Black women working in woman abuse shelters find different ways of resisting systems of intersectional violence. This chapter examines the methods used by African/Black women to create and practice individual and collective agency to resist interlocking systems of oppression and dominance in their lived and shelter work experiences. Creative Resistance is learned and practiced throughout this research process and is a fundamental part of the methodology and theoretical framework for this research.

First, barriers to resistance and women's coping strategies utilized to deal with intersectional violence are outlined. Second, the conceptualization of equity and resistance in relation to women's lived experiences is described. In addition, I examine the art processes, women's experiences with the arts, their feelings about using art-based methods to collect data, and women's thoughts on the use of the arts for supporting equity and fostering resistance. This section is critical as it shows women's perspectives in this research before engaging in art-making, Creative Resistance processes.

Third, women's views on what an equitable work place would look and feel like are explored through creative reflections to examine the possibilities of future changes in the shelter environment. This challenges the inevitableness of inequity and dominance sanctioned by oppressive states and organizations by visualizing and eventually actualizing equity against all forms of repression. Fourth, women's anti-oppression philosophies and praxis for their work at shelters are illustrated. Fifth, women's resistances in shelters are examined. In addition, resistance acrostics reveal ways in which African/Black women think about their resistance based on their varied experiences working in violence against women shelters. Work methods used to resist are illuminated indicating the ways in which women resist. A common theme highlighted for resisting violence in shelters revealed in the data was education. Sixth, identity as resistance is discussed. This section focused on African/Black women's identities in relation to resistance. Self-perceptions and collective perceptions, transnational identities, different locations of African/Black identities, collectivity, and resistance are presented. Seventh, examples of how Creative Resistances were actualized and future strategies for collective resistance are depicted. Finally, African/Black women shelter workers' reflections after participating in the research process, and their suggested ways of disseminating the findings of this dissertation are examined as critical aspects which support the theoretical and methodological framework. In the following section the barriers of resistance and African/Black women shelter workers' coping strategies are outlined.

Barriers of Resistance and Coping Strategies

African/Black women in this research clearly indicated numerous experiences of intersectional violence working in shelters. Barriers to resistance and coping strategies are two areas that are important to understanding the difficulties and challenges incurred when women

try to resist systems and experiences of oppression. Barriers to resistance were seen as direct results of the establishment (systems of dominance) and the refusal by the establishment to sanction or be accountable for anti-racist, anti-oppression praxis:

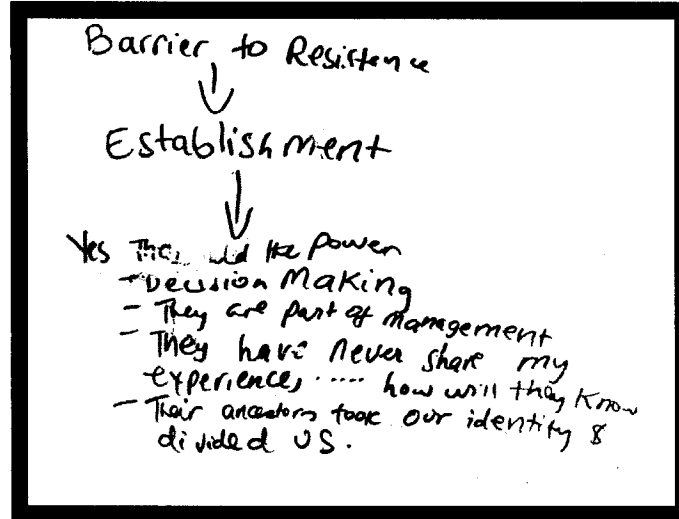


Figure 38. Angela.

According to Angela the impacts of barriers to resistance are as follows:

The establishment for me is the whole body, the work place, the people who hold the power that is the establishment. They distorted and destroyed my identity or the identity of the people around me. They are the same people who make the policies, so even if I resisted they can act like "Okay, we hear you," but they do not believe you Barriers like that. Across the Board it is not a reflection; the people who sit on this Board, who we might tell, or who we might not complain to, but demand for the change. They are eventually a reflection of the establishment. The establishment is the barrier of my resistance. Then how can I speak to them or go to them? Part of that establishment includes the management. I am talking specifically about my workplace that I am dealing with. Their ancestors taught them that they are superior, they are better; they should look at me as being less. So here I am trying to have even a conversation with a grown-up person, who has their mindset of what kind of a person I am, who has destroyed my history my culture. Who hasn't been shackled from their hands. They are the

ones who put shackles on us. Why would I expect that same person, again, to undo those shackles? They are much more interested in keeping resistance down, keeping the shackles on. They are glad or they laugh at the fact that my culture, my people are destroyed or are destroying one another . . . They continue to destroy my people. They laugh that the fact of that difference continues to divide-and-conquer us. That divide-and-conquer that they use continues to keep us down.

Assata highlights barriers to resistance as:

Refuse to conform, to the norm, to all the rhetoric, to all the beliefs . . . to all the anti-racism policies, just refuse to conform to any of those, or to use the language... or to multiculturalism and what it means, you know to minorities, just totally refuse to be advocates to any of those. [Be] totally opposed to them.

However, in this research, African/Black women repeatedly depicted and participated in revolutionary strategies, therefore continuing to resist colonial conformities by questioning and actively participating in day-to-day actions and agency processes. All women spoke about the coping strategies they used to deal with the violence experienced at shelters, which varied from healthy to unhealthy. The “unhealthy” coping strategies of participants can still be seen as resistance as they were often used to survive different forms of intersectional violence. Nefertiti describes her coping mechanisms:

My coping strategy is to talk, talk, talk to people that I know...share my views, that's my coping strategy.

Makeba affirms her coping strategies:

Always trying to have my own support system . . . which is talking to my own group of friends. We don't discuss things, issues like this, with family, because you know we always think of them and we protect them . . . So I have my own group of people that I like to discuss issues [with] and get the support and vice versa.

Nana talks about seeking counselling and confronting as her methods of coping:

First, I didn't go to work I've learned through the help of a counsellor . . . once every week, helps with coping mechanisms It could be a red zone because shelters are always a red zone, but within my red zone I can find a piece of green zone. So I do a lot of debriefing; I do a lot of self-care; I walk and eat healthy; I sleep well. I leave the work at work; I leave the mental work at work. I may take home the paper work When I leave that agency, I leave it at the door Sometimes it's hard . . . but I'm able to do it much more better than I used to before And when my time is up, my time is up I don't extend myself. [laughs]

Audre discussed her risky coping strategies in the past:

And they [my friends] also worked in the shelters, and were going through various changes, and I think that we had really horrible coping strategies. Now that I look back at it, at the time . . . seemed ok, but . . . [that's now at] the age of 35 . . . dangerous stuff that we were doing I did some more dangerous stuff than others.

Audre does not name what dangerous things she did, but her excerpt indicated that for some women their coping strategies are high risk.

Barriers to resistance and women's coping strategies are outlined to set the background necessary to understand women's conceptualizations and imaging of equity and practices of resistance. These act as direct responses to the barriers outlined earlier. Coping strategies, positive and challenging, signify that women are resisting as they try to survive and strategize against intersectional oppressions. In the following sections, equity and resistance are both conceptualized and their relationship to Creative Resistance examined. Specifically, women responded to the following questions:

1. What does equity mean in your lived and work experiences?

2. What does resistance mean in your lived and work experiences?
3. What are your feelings about using artistic representations in this research and as a resource to support equity in your workplace?
4. What are your feelings about using artistic representations to foster resistance?

Equity

Equity was defined and described by the participants, using words such as: *non-existent*, *access*, *limitations*, *fair*, and *balance*. Nana defined equity as fairness and related it to other intersectional factors:

Equity means being fair, in every aspect of who people are, whether [their age], or identifications sexually, colour, gender . . . everybody should be across the board A golden rule is to do like you do to other people Equity means being fair . . . respectful.

Nana continued critiquing the word tolerance, clearly indicating that it does not belong in her conceptualization of equity:

Not just tolerant, because I hate the word tolerance I hate it with a passion . . . because to me when they tolerate something, it is only for a moment, but truly I don't like you inside . . . right? I try my best not to use the word tolerance, but to incorporate that person to everything, given the fair treatment, equity, equality.

Correspondingly, Makeba explains why equity is important:

I don't want to be given any opportunities because of my ethnicity or where I come from . . . but, at the same time, I can understand that we have to have that equity in place for us, because of the opportunity we have been denied in the past The same goes for any other communities, not only for racial communities, but any other communities who . . . don't [get jobs] because you're

a certain group We've been labelled We've been denied of the opportunities . . . to have a fair chance and to give the other communities a fair chance and the opportunity to practice what they are capable of.

Denial and tolerance discussed by both participants reflects the refutation and intolerance of African/Black women's experiences in local imperial dealings. Equity is looked at as a way of receiving reparations for inherent inequalities that exist between the state and African/Black peoples. Can equity be experienced in a colonial state like Canada that is constructed on the notions of inequality?

The majority of women stated that they did not believe equity existed as they had not ever experienced it. Audre reflected on equity even though she described it as a word only:

Well, equity is a lovely word. Equity means recognizing the fundamentals of respect and honour for all people, but it also means acknowledging differences and allowing the differences that everybody is not the same, and that does not mean that everybody is not equal.

Similarly, Nefertiti looks at equity in terms of access and states that resistance is part of the solution:

Equity . . . ability to access different services, different things the same way like other people, and it doesn't exist. [laugh]. What can I say about equity? It doesn't exist. It doesn't exist. There is no equity. The only thing close to it is . . . people do the same job, they get paid the same, but in terms of access to services, we know there are so many layers to that If we don't know somebody, you're not going to get to it; you're not even going to know about it. So, equity does not exist. It's all part of the resistance that we have to work for.

Some women associated equity with resistance, stating that the struggle was to achieve equitable treatment. Women's discussions focused on how the lack of equity impacted their

lives. Some women stated that daily intersectional violence also impacted their confidence levels. Women argued that access and education were important, but that it did not necessarily mean protection from systemic violence. Women also worried about the impact of inequities on their children and the importance of critiquing racist “special treatment” dialogues rather than questioning the denial of “opportunities” for African/Black women.

Resistance

How I deal with . . . the multiple oppressions, how I either . . . kind of shift, and keep them at bay, squash them . . . [laughs] . . . that’s resistance for me. Basically, . . . how you fight back without getting into a physical fight. (Fannie)

In this excerpt, Fannie describes her meaning of resistance using an analogy of a non-physical fight. Women defined and described their lived experiences of resistance as: *power, struggle, mother, children, identity, rights* and *education*. Nefertiti declared her meaning of resistance and connected it to lessons learned from mothers:

Resistance means . . . claiming our power, as in everybody, having a voice, being heard, and making that practical application in life, in the circumstances, and it can take different forms and ways. I think that our mothers, they had a way of being resistant, showing their resistance, by speaking . . . and sometimes people brushed them off, but they spoke their word and we heard it. Although they may not be given too much audience, but still they won’t be quiet, they’ll say what they need to say. So, just in terms of all aspects of life, whether it is in our homes, or if we are in a relationship, if we are not in a relationship, in a relationship with our children, just to be able to speak our truths and not allow for the dominant view to overtake and speak for us.

Nearly everyone spoke of challenging intersectional oppressions in strategic ways. Women affirmed that saying, “No”, stopping the silence by voicing their diverse knowledges and

experiences were all acts of fighting against oppressive systems of dominance and, as such, were critical practices for resistance. Other women talked about finding ways to take power in all relationships, with partners and children, and within their homes. Individuals' personal actions were connected with larger and/or collective responses to intersectional violence. As well, women specifically looked at resistance as combating against local and global systems of oppression within multiple communities. Finding creative ways to resist was essential to disempowering oppressive systems of governance, but the women stressed that this needed to be done by not reproducing oppressive practices. This echoed the difficulties in many current conflicts where past-oppressed peoples become the new oppressor, highlighting the insidiousness of cyclical imperial violence. Women discussed not wanting to be assimilated or fit into stereotypical boxes, and the power of education for children, themselves, and diverse communities of African/Black peoples. Calypso articulated on the importance of resistance from her own standpoint:

resistance in this society for me, personally . . . being able to feed my kid, and send her to day care, take her to school, be able to do all those things, as a single mom, supporting, that's resistance to me. To be able to survive, to be able to not survive, but to be able to . . . sometimes I don't like the word survive . . . but to be able to educate her, to be able to do a lot [of] other things that some other people might think [are] just normal things, feed, clothe, my child, make sure she's healthy, she's in school.

For many women, resistance was merely living and figuring out how to exist in a society that, at every turn, is continually violating them. For many women in this study, giving food, knowledge of self, and the basic essentials to their children under harsh conditions and realities acted as resistance. Preserving culture was related to identity and was a strategy many referred to as key for challenging oppression. Women also challenged mainstream's negative connotations

and concepts of resistance as defiant. Esmeralda discussed the importance of education and challenging negative connotations of resistance:

education is the number one thing that comes to my mind because as People of Colour . . . when you use the word resistance, automatically there's a bunch of other things that come into their [minds] . . . person in jail and criminal justice . . . You're taken out of the mainstream and put in a negative context. But, for me, I think that resistance [is] education and empowering and working as a community.

Nana expressed how she used creative ways of staging her own resistance:

resist people who are oppressive, people who are biased . . . I have to be very creative in ways of resistance. . . Resisting to me mean[s] I don't become like them . . . If I am being oppressed, I have to fight very hard every day not to become an oppressor, because it's so easy; you know to become the oppressor . . . because being the oppressor, I don't care about anybody else. I am going to oppress everybody, too. So resistance to conform to be like the opposing [oppressor] and resistance to fight against . . . I find the conscious place, like a green space within myself, to resist. You know, a peaceful place, singing and humming, being more conscious of who I am as a woman, a Black [woman].

Equity and resistance have been conceptualized based on women's lived experiences. Before examining women's notions of art as equity and resistance the art process, and women's experiences with the arts is established.

Art Process as Resistance: Women's Experiences with the Arts

As women's locations and experiences are important for this research, the following section explores women's responses about their art processes prior to using them in this research as well as their exploration of the arts as a method to collect data. To begin this process, women responded to the following questions:

1. Do you have prior experiences with art-making, creative expression in your life, work in shelters, with abused women and/or co-workers?
2. What are your feelings about using artistic representations as a way to collect information and data in this research?

Art for me is a communicative tool that is so powerful, totally misused and underused and . . . has the power to create massive change . . . if used properly [T]hat's what I believe [O]ther people may not.
(Kariabengbeng)

During individual interviews before engaging in art-based exercises, women were asked what their experiences were with the arts and reported having a variety of previous encounters. Overwhelmingly, in most cases, women had experience with some form of the arts and/or creative expression/action. For some women their expressions of art were articulated through vibrant poetry, music, and journaling as ways to express their feelings. This was eloquently stated by Nefertiti who talked of her use of fabric and jewelry making:

I always loved fabric, any medium of creating, putting anything together on paper, on a dress form [laughs] Even for me, touching somebody's toes, feet, as I took reflexology, even that is a form of expression to me. Maybe not artistic, but it still is a form of expression to me and creative artistic expression; they are all together for me. Any other way of letting out what you are feeling . . . is good for me Making jewellery . . . helped me a lot in my state . . . [and] gives me joy and it's fun.

Correspondingly, for Calypso, her love of art was so profound she wished she could explore it on a full-time basis. Calypso, a single parent, passionately described her dream and her financial reality:

Arts . . . I love the arts . . . I love art. I wish I could just quit and do art. I wish I could afford to Nobody wants to be a poor starving artist, but I wish I could drop everything and just explore photography, painting, or writing. That's what I wish That would be my dream.

Most of the other women, however, did not respond positively about their past experiences using visual arts; in fact, when first asked if they had had experiences with the arts, many women answered "No". The arts were usually judged exclusively as visual representations such as paintings and drawings. Afrotrini described her childhood experiences of failing art in school:

When I was younger it was my teacher I used to pass every class except art. I used to fail art What I used to do was have my sister . . . draw . . . [so] at least I'd get . . . a 50. So when I look at that [She is referring to the proposed research methodology], I just feel like totally intimidated I'm not a very creative person I couldn't do the creative dance I couldn't draw. I remember never being able to draw.

Once definitions of the arts were expanded to include many facets such as storytelling, sewing, and even cooking, women tended to open up and relay creative ways in which they experienced the arts and creative expression/action. Women talked about the use of the arts in their lives as tools for communication, self-care, self-talk, education, and as political tools. Wiwa discussed art as a form of political activism and change:

I've never been an artistic person [However,] I used to go to theatre in Somalia Somalis are very poetic . . . [an] oral society They didn't like the government then, so they would create this love story, where the government was wrong, but nobody would know exactly what they were invited [to and] by the time the government got to know that all these things were really meant for them, it would be censored Theatre has been banned They always used

theatre as a ways of expressing their discontent with the . . . current regimes
It's a love story gone wrong, but if you look at the meaning inside, and you are aware of the current political situation within the country, you would know.

Women in this research had had diverse experiences using the arts or art-making, including having experienced some form of art/creative expression during workshops or educational initiatives in their work at shelters. Esmeralda made use of the arts in her workshops as a form of healing and accomplishment:

Within the work that I do . . . popular education workshops or life skills workshops. I always have an art component to it Planting flowers, for me, that's art too. Singing and cooking . . . [are] ways [for] people to express themselves. So I usually try to have a component in there My experience has been really positive Issues that women are dealing with are very hurtful . . . very serious . . . and very deep, and sometimes being able to put something out on paper just in terms of having very fast achievement is very good.

However, most women did not utilize the arts in their work at shelters. Buchi discussed her hesitance to use art in her work at shelters:

No, because it's a system, it is something that is totally foreign to me It's something I really don't even know up to now, but I've been hearing about it.

A small number of women who worked as children's and youth advocates or art therapists had direct experiences using different forms of creative expression with children and/or mothers staying in shelters. Kariabengbeng spoke profoundly about the use of arts as transformative in her work in shelters:

I think the participants that come and work in the art . . . at the shelter you can tell they are very profoundly moved, they'll come back again and again, because of it . . . and I think people know once they're given that chance that they can

make some sort of change, even if it's just a personal change Art has that capacity to allow a person, individual [and] groups of people to visualize change.

Sojourner echoed Kariabengbeng's notion that arts are powerful tools for expression:

I did craft for the women's group, bingo those kinds of crafts, and cook Yes, I cook a lot with them I do read stories, I also make up stories. I tell them stories about the West Indies We dance a lot. We do a lot of dancing in the shelter too.

These findings helped to locate women's use of the arts in their lives and shelter work experiences. Some women had previous positive experiences with artistic or creative expressions while others appreciated the arts but had not actively used them prior to this research. Creative expression/action and the arts had been used by women primarily for work with children and youth and for educational training purposes for themselves and residents of the shelters. At the end of the second set of interviews and focus groups, when women discussed their participation in this research and the use of my integrated framework, these findings about their prior experiences with the arts became significant. In the following section, women respond to the question: What are your feelings about using artistic representations as a way to collect information?

Artistic Representation as Data Collection

In the initial stages of the research, women were asked how they felt about using artistic representations and the arts to collect data in this study. Women contemplated that using the arts could possibly be a good communication tool in addition to talking and could be beneficial for expression of difficult experiences relating to shelter work. Women were curious about how art

could be used to collect data and expressed concern about how it then would be interpreted and analyzed. Makeba discussed her thoughts on using artistic representations to collect data:

It is very productive. People pay attention to not only the reading or the listening part, and it's the actual viewing, the actual touching and feeling and being part of it. I feel strongly that [it] should be a way of passing information and educating yourself at the same token.

Fannie reiterated Makeba, as she reflected on using art to collect data. However, Fannie cautioned that the interpreting of artistic representations needed to be done by the person making and/or doing the art:

I think that will be very interesting, I think that you are very gutsy because then you are going to have to . . . figure out how you blend all of them, but I think it is great That kind of expression works well for some people who may have difficulty articulating exactly what it is they feel It can be very effective . . . as long as the person . . . who's doing it knows what it is they're doing . . . and is able to interpret it; I think that it would be a very effective tool.

Harriet echoed a similar concern which was addressed by Fannie in regard to analyzing the art:

I don't know . . . for myself . . . it would be good, but . . . because it's very personal That type of expression is not just whether or not it's a two-line poetry or . . . a slab of mud or whatever it is You're opening doors for things to be analyzed [For example,] there was a group project that we had [at work] and the woman was totally off [when] analyzing me.

Harriet's past experience of doing art and being incorrectly analyzed was addressed in other interviews and revisited in the focus groups. Women were told, keeping with the theoretical and

methodological framework discussed previously, that they would analyze their own artistic representations by providing detailed descriptions and engaging in collective discussions.

Overall, based on their previous experiences, women had various feelings and comfort levels with the initial use of the arts and creative expression/action in the research. Additionally, it was important to identify women's locations within the arts prior to their doing it throughout this research; this helped in understanding and documenting their actual experiences while actively engaged in doing their art (Creative Resistance). Furthermore, examining women's experiences in the art process prior to "doing and making art" in this research reveals women's responses to the method. In the following section art as equity and resistance is discussed.

Art as Equity and Resistance

Prior to the actions of Creative Resistance in this research, women stated, in most cases, that they would not know how art could be used to foster equity. Some women said that equity did not exist so how could the arts create equity. Other women stated that they didn't know how equity could be fostered, but wanted to find out through this research process. Afrotrini stated that she was not familiar with how art could be used to foster equity at work:

I have no idea I have no idea . . . but . . . why not? Right! Because it will be nice to see . . . to get it out

Nana eloquently stated that anything to provide an outlet for expression in regards to equity would be useful:

if they could manage it . . . I think it would be good Anything that they can bring in to express specially equity, whether it's through arts, communication. I think it's really important for people to have . . . an outlet or a way of expressing equality or fairness.

Consequently, prior to engaging in art processes, the majority of women believed that the arts and creative expression/action could foster resistance by being a powerful tool to communicate and fight back with. Nana excitingly shared her thoughts on arts and resistance:

I think it would be wonderful, if we could learn how to do it, I've seen . . . art work in Native American [communities] . . . I've seen their work in terms of resistance, their pieces, even sculpture, their work, I've seen it, and even the freedom fighters in Africa, I've seen it so I know it does work . . . and I think if we could to be taught how to do it...it would be wonderful.

Kariabengbeng's further politicizes the use of the arts as a tool for resistance:

individuals being able to visualize their access to, being able to change their own personal lives, of course it has that exponential effect that when joined together, people can understand how to create resistance together, which is what's important, we have to do it on an individual level but you can't do that unless you yourself understand the power of that visual experience and translate it into a collective one, and if we can, we can use it to resist.

In the following section women's views on equity in their workplaces are presented.

Specifically, women responded to the statement: Using words and/or images, describe what an equitable working environment would look and feel like.

Views on Equitable Workplace



Figure 39. Nana.

Nana (Figure 39) portrayed her workplace in the form of a rainbow. According to her: the rainbow is supposed to be representative of all the colours of the world and it would be a place where, let's say, we had people from every nation working in the shelter, a place where all people would be accepted. It looks like a rainbow for me.

Women in this research looked at equity in their workplaces in various ways. For some women, thinking about equity in their workplace provided hope and allowed them to explore the possibilities of change.

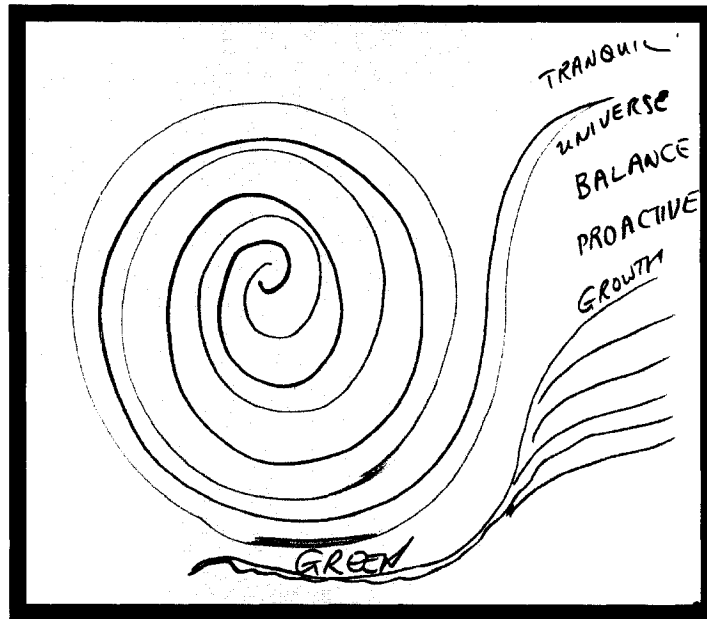


Figure 40. Nefertiti.

Nefertiti represented equity in shelters for her as spirals of optimism:

I think that circle for me is a good thing. A circle of life, circle of love, circle of laughter, circle of, you know, so many things we can do Because what it does, it leads us from one place to kind of letting it out into the universe, the tranquil universe. Balance, proactive stuff, and all the stuff is part of the green, fertile things that we plant, which grow and grow these things. So, yeah, kind of takes a while maybe to get from here to here, but it will happen. It will be in stages, and like your circle will be interwoven with mine, with another person, and we can have circle, circle, circle, circle, you know, everybody becomes part of that circle, and going out to the universe.

Nefertiti illustrated the interconnectedness of life as a circle connecting the universe to differently located peoples. For her, equity is something that is about balance and tranquility and involves laughter, love, and the environment.

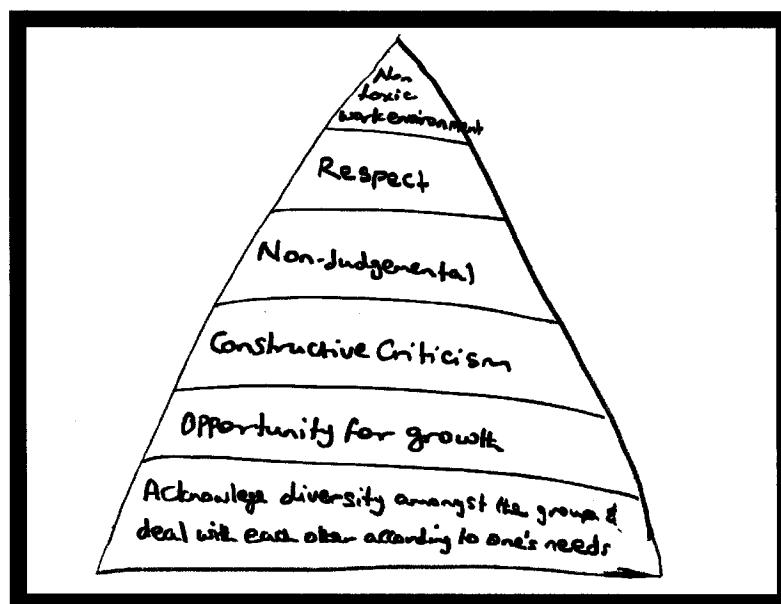


Figure 41. Zora.

Zora portrayed a non-toxic environment and a philosophy acknowledging different women's locations and needs as important for equity in shelters:

a non-toxic work environment, respecting each other, and non-judgemental, giving each other constructive criticism, giving people the opportunity to grow, and acknowledging diversity among the group, and bear with each other according to everybody's needs, because everybody has needs. The woman with children has her needs, the woman that is [a] single mother has different needs compared to a woman that have a partner, you know. So, something like that. The woman that is a . . . lesbian has her own needs, the woman with disability, the same you know, so putting that into consideration when interacting or dealing with people.

Women's representations of rainbows, circles of love, and diverse lenses to foster equity in shelters all represented elements that were missing in shelter climates exposed to intersectional violence. Hence, this process of imaging was critical for supporting and eventually fostering resistance.

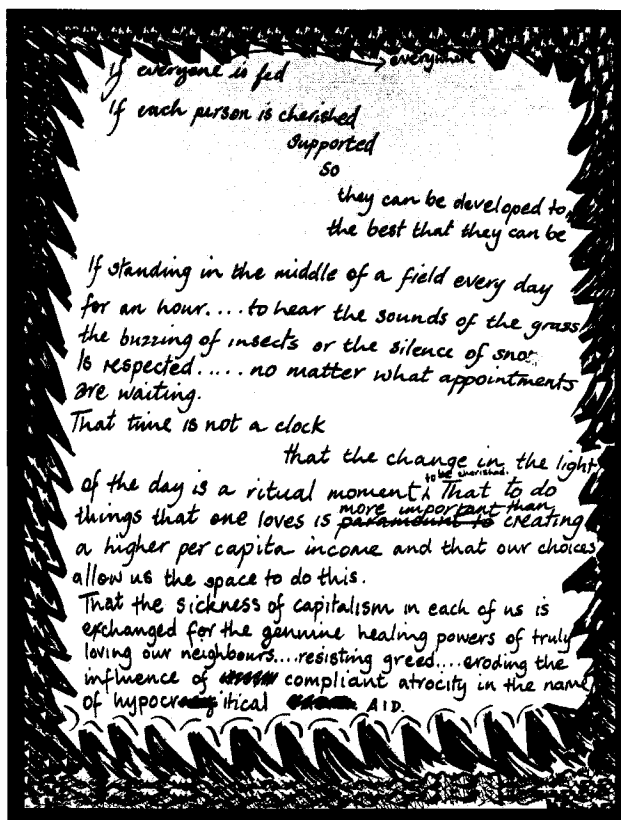


Figure 42. Kariabengbeng.

Kariabengbeng stated that equity in shelters for her needed to be inclusive and coexist with the environment:

it's everyone, meaning . . . everywhere. If each person is cherished, supported so they can develop the best that they can be, if standing in the middle of a field everyday for an hour, to hear the sound of the grass . . . and insects is respected, no matter what appointments are waiting. That time is not a clock, that's the change in the light of day is a ritual moment to be cherished. That to do things that one loves is more important than creating a high per capita income, and that our choices allow us the space to do this. That sickness of capitalism in each of us is exchanged for the genuine healing powers of truly loving our neighbours, resisting greed, eroding the influence of compliance [i.e., to share the Earth's resources with all people fairly and to be able to have your own cognizance that is not influenced on conformity], atrocity in the name of hypocritical aid.

The connection with capitalism's synonymous relationship with unequal treatment in shelters and elsewhere in society is radicalized here and its practices challenged by reinforcing creative inclusive ways that promote equity in different environments.

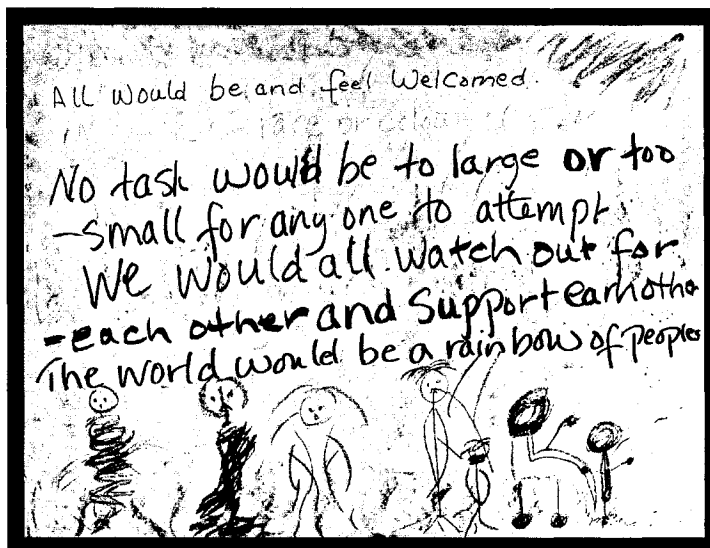


Figure 43. Fannie.

Fannie portrayed equity in shelters as inclusivity and consisting of differently located women:

we have all kinds of people . . . and good people and now fat people like me . . . skinny people . . . like you . . . [laughs] Ok, good, so we would all feel welcome. No one would talk of race or colours of skin, no one would. No task would be too large or too small for anyone to attempt. We would all watch out for each other and support each other . . . The world would be [a] rainbow of people, and here are all the people, you know. Notice they don't look as though they have any gender . . . [laughs] You know, the genderless people.

The ability to imagine equity for some women mirrored their ability to engage in resistance—resistance, as the fight to reclaim what has been taken away, devalued, and appropriated, and as the fight to be able to maintain, create, and develop new ideas and practices. Reclaiming and

believing that one and/or many deserves equitable treatment in violent environments can be the beginning of raising consciousness needed to challenge oppressive, unequal regimes. I argue that the research method employed in this study helped to reveal that women despite their experiences of intersectional violence used their imagination of equity to actualize very real actions of resistance both individually and collectively inside and outside of shelter environments.²¹¹

For other women, thinking about equity was not something that could be achieved and as such it could not be talked about, described, or drawn.



Figure 44. Audre.

Audre's concept is abstract and indicated her difficulty with imagining equity:

you can't even image it I really wasn't sure what that would actually look like in terms of a reality, hence the reason it has to be abstract I couldn't put it in words, so different colours and movement, and textures At the centre is just a bit of sun, the bright yellow the intermingling with the oranges, the red, the mixture, the togetherness . . . the source, the light, the giving, the energy . . . and then everything else can have . . . just light and joy . . . but everything is co-

²¹¹ Collins (2000) asserts "...[African/Black women] resist by creating their self-definitions and self-valuations in the safe spaces they create among one another. Sustaining an independent consciousness as a sphere of freedom [equity] enables African-American[African/Black] women to engage in additional forms of resistance " (p.205).

mingling . . . different shapes . . . different colours, there [are] different sizes literally; some turquoise going up past the energy source, but that's ok, because together, together they create . . . but what do they mean? Nothing, but they're there and they're ok to be there.

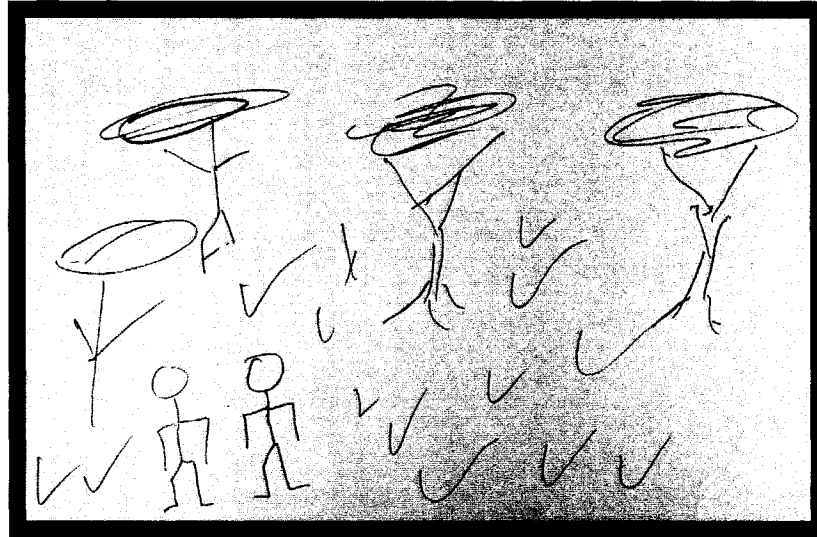


Figure 45. Wiwa.

Wiwa also discussed the difficulties imaging equity:

I swear . . . I don't know . . . Equity is like when everything is the same which is . . . in an ideal world which doesn't exist in this century . . . Everyone would [be] believed in . . . whether it's from the beggar . . . the pope, to the king and the queen. Ok, there is something you can learn . . . if you can only give yourself that chance to be open . . . and sometimes I wish I had the time to sit down with people in the street . . . I give whatever I can when I meet them . . . because there is a story there.

Equity was represented as equality and compared to poor peoples and rich peoples being heard and treated equally. Ironically, the beggar and the king and queen exist based on rigid class systems which subsist on the basis of capitalist relations which need these binaries of poor and rich to thrive.

Other women could not explore what equity could look like for them, but did explore what they would want equity to be for future generations. Discussions about equity explored the impact on women's experiences in the shelter and their methods of resistance. Numerous women who could not envision equity had difficulties in believing that resistance could change their circumstances. However, I argue that their participation in this research, and their lived and work experiences, are testimonies to their resistance and collective action. Equity in practice did not exist for most African/Black women working in shelters. Moreover, for the most part, these women had not experienced "equity" in their lives and work experiences due to intersectional violence. A critique of equity after examining women's experiences or lack thereof, suggested that "democratic notions" derived from colonial-based nation-states created and maintained by extreme violence, death, inequality, "Democratic rights", and repression inherently supported "inequity" as a strategic measure of governance. Hence, "equity" can also be seen as state guided rhetoric. Nevertheless, philosophies on equity are important, to generate the possibility of change and to challenge the inevitableness of inequality, inequity, and marginalization. I again argue that these discussions and imaging exercises on equity, which were done in the initial interview process, helped to familiarize women with the arts and resistance processes. In this research process, this was needed prior to their later participation in collective witnessing, consciousness-raising, and action. In the following section, anti-oppression praxis of women is put forth indicating that resistance is also conceptualized and practiced by these women while working in shelters.

Women's Anti-Oppression Praxis

In this research, anti-oppression praxis occurred differently depending on women's locations working in shelters. Anti-oppression conceptualizations are critical as they are direct

responses to both the lack of praxis of anti-oppression policies in shelters and to intersectional violence. As she stated in Chapter Five, Calypso explained her praxis, referring to her earlier location as a learner:

My philosophy, my personal thing is . . . [around differences] being open to learning. I said I'm a learner, being open to learning because never to assume that you know or that you are the expert, or because you did the training, or you did whatever, that you are now in a place where you are ultimate . . . Like that you arrived . . . I never think that I've arrived or that I'm there, you know, so I'm not no expert on nothing, but I'm always learning and opening my mind. My mind is open to accepting differences, different opinions . . . so having that openness to change some practices or behaviour or ways of thinking . . . If you are wrong about something, then shift and just think and act differently. That's how I go about doing [it] . . . but that's prior to being in any shelters. I think I had that with me.

Sojourner outlines her anti-oppression praxis:

My philosophy is that I treat everybody equal . . . I never ask a woman to do anything that I wouldn't do, and I treat every woman the same way. I don't say to Jennifer, "Jennifer, you do your chore," [and] "Jackie, you go free". . . No. If Jennifer come home sick and she's White and she is sick or something, she worked late, and she's come home and she tired, I would do Jennifer's chore, whether she's White, Black, South Asian, etc. I never discriminate against any of the women in that way . . . and to be civil and to treat everybody the same way . . . and if I hear anybody call anybody by any racial name, White, Black, . . . well, I tell them about it.

Women's anti-oppression philosophies dictated women's praxis and methods of resistance and fostered actions of resistance against intersectional oppressions in their work places and lives. The ironic connection to "equity" can indicate the tremendous resistance by

African/Black women working in shelters. For some of them, even though “equity” could not be seen and realized in their own lives, it still was a hopeful model of what could be in women’s practices. Anti-colonial lenses could have furthered their philosophies by challenging how the constructions of shelters function under imperial rule. Hence the inequitableness of “equity” could be redirected and redefined to support decolonization instead of only fighting for accessibility. Nonetheless, women in this research resisted inequities and violent experiences working in shelters. In the following section, women’s resistance in shelters is further represented.

Resistance Working in Shelters

What does resistance mean to me? It means speaking up sometimes, it means having to fight sometimes, it means not going along with the crowd sometimes, it means saying “No” a lot of the times. (Audre)

Women resisted violence working in shelters in profound ways. Using various mechanisms, including agency, identity, and education, women resisted intersectional forms of violence both individually and collectively.²¹² This was explained eloquently by Zora:

sometimes we may resist . . . especially women working in this field. I find that we are very assertive . . . because people don’t like us, because we don’t fit into the stereotype of typical women . . . specially if you’re [a] Woman of Colour That’s why a lot of women don’t last in their jobs . . . because they express . . . and also for the fact that you’re working with women, because I always say empowerment starts with you You empower yourself before you can empower women. If you don’t stand up for yourself . . . you can’t be advocating for other women. So sometimes, it’s like we say, women resist racism, women

²¹² Collins (2000) asserts “Prevailing definitions of political activism and resistance misunderstand the meaning of these concepts in Black women’s lives. Social science research typically focuses on public, official, visible political activity even though unofficial, private, and seemingly invisible spheres of social life and organization may be equally important ” (p.202).

resist violence against them, women resist this, you know . . . so . . . resistance for me can be good . . . as long as you are doing it, and you're fighting for your rights.

While Sojourner passionately defined her resistance as:

this term to me is that nobody pushes me around. I have my beliefs. I don't care who it is that is trying to change and make rules and regulations to govern me. It's not going to happen. It's never ever going to happen, and I will work there right there for as long as I want, but it's not going to happen. Some things are really stupid and some things they try to make you do, and make you . . . feel stupid about doing things, and I'm just not going to do it. So that I stand up for my rights, and if anybody try to put me down, I just talk to them about it right there and then. I don't let people walk over me.

Afrotrini depicted her resistance as:

In the community, in my work and work in shelters . . . I'm here, I'm Black, and a Dyke, and . . . doing this work. I've every right to be here because in that time I was working, when I was working in the shelter, there were mostly White women, and then I was working in one where there were all Women of Colour and . . . in both I constantly have to be doing this added [educational and advocating piece] . . . To me, it just seems like resistance is added energy to survive.

Resistance for these women was not simply expressed by talking, but by their everyday actions of demanding and asserting to be treated respectfully, stating what they would and would not do, and identifying who they were. Also these acts of women's resistance were being witnessed by other women they worked with and, as such, showed their personal empowerment; collectively, it exemplified differently located African/Black women's resistance in different times and places.

Resistance Acrostics

Resistance acrostics revealed that African/Black women actively participated in resisting in the woman abuse shelter community. African/Black women possess great sources of knowledge about their resistance. This diversified knowledge was revealed throughout this research. Acrostics, highlighted in previous chapters, are presented at this juncture as collective actions of resistance that were formulated at home and individually in focus groups. Women were asked to represent their resistance in shelters by creating a word association. After individually developing their acrostics, women shared in groups how their acrostics represented their resistance in shelters. This was done by engaging in long circular group discussions where women would sit in circle-like formations and begin talking from one woman to the next. Each woman would share about the issue or topic and interchangeably they would give feedback, comments, advice on theirs and other women's thoughts, and experiences. These circular discussions in this research resembled indigenous African women's circles. Collective witnessing of women's experiences and knowledges of resistance occurred in these circles, and consciousness-raising emerged as women shared similar and different stories of their experiences, reflecting their strategies of resistance. The act of developing and sharing their acrostics constituted collective actions of differently located women representing their experiences and actions in their own unique ways. The following are two examples of Creative Resistance done by participants in Focus Group One.

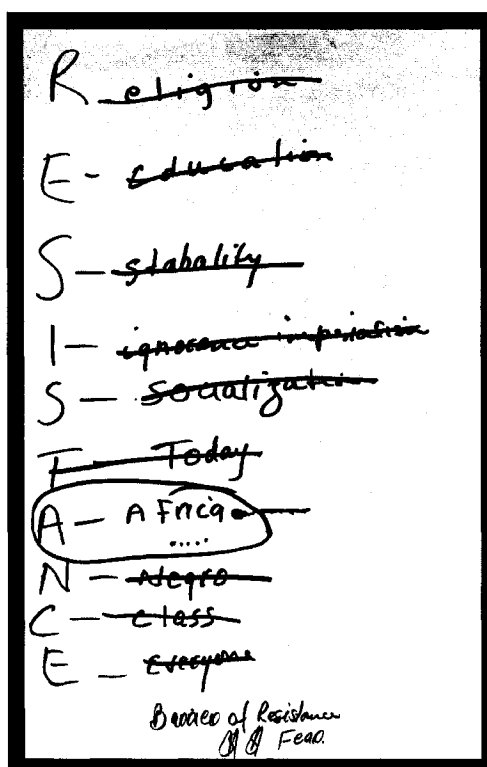


Figure 46. Acrostic by Assata.

Assata (Figure 46)²¹³ represented her resistance against barriers outlined earlier. The simple exercise of boldly crossing out her barriers depicted her resistance against those same obstructions. Figure 47 represents an acrostic created by Angela. For both Assata and Angela, their words represented powerful testimonies of their agency and their continued actions of resistance.

²¹³ Lines are crossed out indicating both the barriers to resistance and her resistance against them.

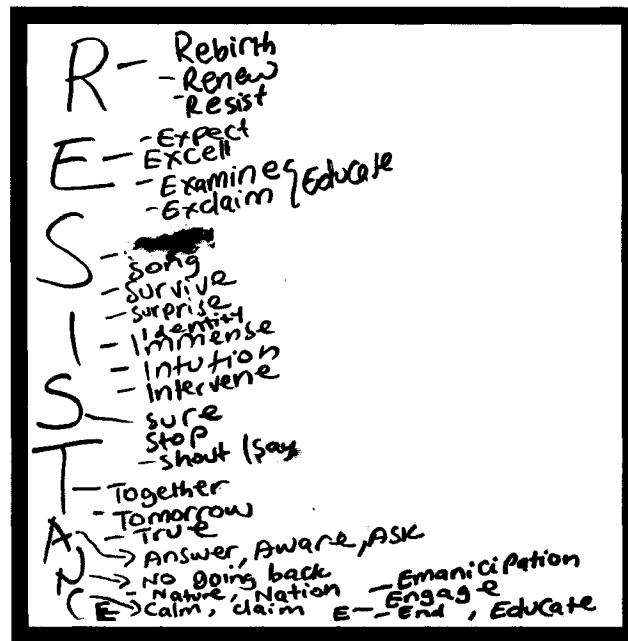


Figure 47. Acrostic by Angela.

The next is a collective acrostic outlining women's resistance in shelters made by participants in Focus Group Three:

Resilience, retreat, regroup, re-emerged, read between the lines
Expectation
Strong, Seek alliance with other women, slippery
Instinct
Set backs
T rue to my Blackness
Alliances, awareness
Navigational skills
Challenge the existing status quo, draw on experiences
Encourageable

All acrostics were distinctive; however, many women had similar descriptive words to define their experiences of resistance based on their unique standpoints. In the following section, the focus groups' resistance murals are discussed.

Resistance Murals

Collectively, women were asked to use words, colours, and images to draw what an anti-discriminatory, anti-colonial, shelter work environment would look and feel like. Additionally, they were also asked to image how they resisted and what their resistance looked like on the other side of the canvas. Focus group two, collectively, could not draw or imagine what an anti-discriminatory and anti-colonial working environment could look like, and women unanimously stated, “that it does not exist”. The group did image what their resistance looked like, showing that there is not always a correlation between imagining equity, anti-discrimination, and actively resisting (see Figure 48). Focus group three fully imagined what an anti-discriminatory and anti-colonial work environment could look like (see Figure 49). Both murals are displayed next.

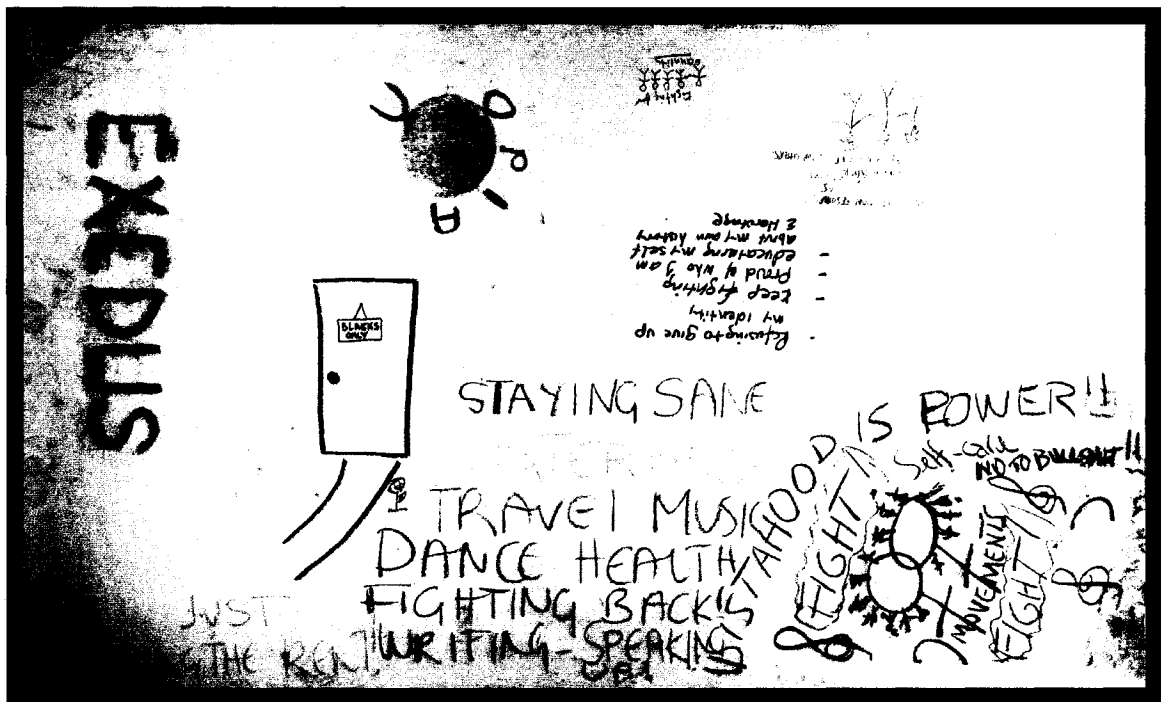


Figure 48. Resistance Mural by Focus Group Two.



Figure 49. An anti-discriminatory, anti-colonial shelter environment and Resistance Mural by Focus Group Three.

Both of these group murals show how, collectively, women in this research not only talked about their knowledges and praxis of resistance, but how they actively engaged in Creative Resistance and Resistance Education. Through mural making and other processes sanctioned by the theoretical and methodological approach taken in this research, women collectively witnessed, consciousness raised, and created collective agency by doing acts of resistance against intersectional forms of violence. In the next section, the theme of education as resistance is explained.

Education as Resistance

Angela relays the importance of education for resistance:

education is every day lived experience, sometimes your own experiences from where you come from, how you grow up, the things you've

encountered, how you're dealt with them. All this have helped you grow . . . education wise . . . but it's also important for that piece of paper, in terms . . . need to go to school and the sharing.

Women often stated throughout the research that education was one of the most important methods of resistance for African/Black women working in shelters, as well as for African/Black communities resisting intersectional violence. Women spoke of education in several ways. Education was looked at as formal acquisition of diplomas, degrees, and trainings. Also, education was looked at in terms of indigenous African/Black feminist knowledges and cultural identities, as well as anti-colonial, anti-oppression practices. Buchi shared her thoughts on cultural differences and practices and the need for education:

When you come from Africa . . . you're not exposed to, and I find that . . . they have not been sensitive towards that piece. So I felt, a lot of the time, I was doing an educational piece . . . by introducing African food, whenever I can, and sharing the customs and the situations. It's like when an African woman sees me, a younger woman, sees me, not because I'm a staff, is she running towards me to take the broom from my hand, and the staff think "Oh! That's bad"? No! She's doing it because she sees me as an Aunt, and she calls me Auntie. It doesn't matter what, and again for staff who are non-Africans, and non-Black, not understanding that issue and judging me as if either I am being a dictator abuser or I am making this girls do this for me . . . or that I am getting special privilege because they call me "Auntie" or "Mom". It depends on their age, and I find that's the hardest part, and I think it is still the hard part that needs to have a lot of education.

Some women felt that education would give more access for work opportunities and could provide them with more decision-making power at work as expressed by Fannie, Executive Director of a shelter:

I think the best approach for [resistance] is an education of people of the oppressed groups. I think that people who are oppressed, and who have historically been oppressed, do not, for the most part, have a very good understanding of their own oppression. I do not think that they realize or understand how they, in many ways, facilitate their continued oppression, and that oppression of their own race, cause I always figured if you can't get it, well. If I can't get you to get it, how the hell am I going to get the White people to get it? . . . I think that it's going to come down to . . . learning and understanding . . . One of the things that I realize about Black women who work in shelters, for the most part, and who stay in the shelters, or they're the ones that stay in the shelters, and they refuse to go back to school and get an education, because they figured they don't need it, and they're going to work in the shelter until they retire. I don't like that mentality . . . but I think that they backed themselves into a corner . . . I know all the reasons why it is difficult for Black women . . . right, but I also know of all the reasons that we could, as part of our resistance, make it a lot easier . . . For one I think, our children have to stop having children . . . before they have an education . . . I think that somehow our children have to realize that even if you want to be a barber that you should be the most educated barber, if you want to be a mechanic, whatever it is that you want to do, you should just know everything that you can know.

Despite the fact that all the women in this research had degrees or diplomas, they were still in powerless positions in their workplaces. In addition, as stated earlier, three Executive Directors in shelters in Toronto are African/Black women, and one of them got there through nepotism. Can having an education create access to power and defeat oppression for African/Black women? Would this support an anti-colonial agenda?

In opposition to the idea that education would create access to power, women such as Calypso affirmed the downfalls of thinking that an "education" would protect African/Black women shelter workers from discrimination and intersectional violence:

you can become educated . . . but when you go to the bank your ass is Black . . . and you're still ain't getting that loan You go for a job and may have the skill level [and] education as somebody else, but I mean being a woman, being Black, being all these things, you are not going to be treated the same way, and the lucky thing is that you won't get the job because of your race or whatever, culture, sexuality, depending on how you show or don't show. You know there can be so many different things . . . unfortunately.

In addition, women such as Assata passionately talked about indigenous African/Black identity formulations and sense of belonging as critical for education and methods of resistance. Educating oneself, and especially children, about being African/Black was methods to not only resist, but to survive and strategize in colonial contexts by passing on knowledges to other generations:

I always taught my children, you are African first and Jamaican second and Canadian third. But I've resisted so much. When my oldest daughter was fourteen, she was already in Jamaica in boarding school. So I want them to have Black teachers. I want them to get a taste of the culture. I want them to have belonging. I want them to have some place that they can call home. I want them to have ownership. I want them to feel that they belong. I want them to feel proud of who they are and of their culture, and I want them to see the good things about their culture and the not so good things about their culture, and I want them to use what they have learned here and to incorporate it into their everyday lives I want them to have education, opportunity that I never had, and I also want them to be able to know how to survive in less than none I also want them to reclaim part of who they are as Black children, and I didn't want them to be in a system that would influence them to be something else that they are not.

Participants equated education as African/Black identity formation and survival, and hence critical for resistance against formal and informal systems of dominance. Women refused to be

solely responsible to educate the “oppressor”, putting the responsibility on the shelters and state.

Makeba asserts:

For me, it's always, always . . . education, education, education, educating people Without that we can't go any further and we need to take, you know, part of educating ourselves and educating as a people, education is a lifelong experience and people will think just because you're, you know, you're a Person of Colour you know about racism. That's not true. And just because you're White, you don't need to be a part of that, so instead of . . . when the shelters or any other organizations are . . . having the training for anti-racism, anti-oppression, instead of sending the Black people only, send the other people who are the oppressors and . . . as opposed to But at the same token, I'm still saying you should . . . have equal opportunities and equal access of the information and the education for all people who are willing to and have an open mind to learn and at the same token pass that information to others. But education is the key for me. We need to, we never have to stop educating and getting education for ourselves as well.

Again, in a colonial run society, expecting “the state” or state-supported institutions to dismantle systems of oppression is a complex oxymoron. Educating community and colleagues on having an integrated anti-colonial, anti-oppression praxis is also critical for resistance. How is identity incorporated into the praxis of resistance? In the following section, identity as resistance is revisited.

Identity as Resistance

African/Black women resisted not only essentialized, colonial derived notions of derogatory sameness and Blackness through counter-hegemonic identity formations, but more importantly they resisted by creating changing, fluid identities of their own. These identities represented differently located African/Black women and peoples. Through both individually and collectively derived perceptions of themselves, African/Black women shelter workers

challenged the first and second tenets of the Identity Trichotomy explained in Chapter Three. Moreover, differently located African/Black women in this research formulated diverse conceptions and praxis of self, collective, and transnational identities. Their identities were portrayed as fluid, always changing, politically, socially, spiritually, and economically, shaped by their conceptualizations and actions; this is identity as resistance. In addition, indigenous feminist knowledges, mothers, grandmothers, elders, and sisters, and education are also themes of identity as resistance.

Distinctively, African/Black women working in shelters are differently located as previously mentioned in this research. Even among African/Black women who were born in the same country, differences existed between class, sexual orientation, age, and immigration processes. For example, Sojourner and Afrotrini are from Trinidad, but they have different sexual preferences, were different ages, and came from different class backgrounds. Makeba and Claudia both came from Ethiopia; while they shared a language, they have had different immigration stories and experiences working in shelters. Nefertiti and Zora are both from West Africa, but they speak different languages and have different spiritualities, a mixture of traditional African spiritualities and Christianity. The uniqueness of differently located African/Black women identity is well founded in this research. Women connect and do not connect, depending on their multiple locations.

However, the ramifications of colonial relations, historically and presently, create diverse hidden conscious and unconscious connections for differently located women. Hence, the conscious resistance of Assata to “reclaim her Africa” based on her experiences of loss during enslavement, and Angela’s loss, pain, and connection to Rwandan mothers after the massacre and her connection to African peoples raised in the African Diaspora, indicated that

African/Black identities are varied, but rejoin though differently, as a result of colonial relations and interconnectedness. Calypso who calls herself African, despite the real lived and felt exclusion when she is not called an African by other African women workers, can also be seen as resisting “normative identity categories” which exist as a direct result of colonial divide-and-conquer.

Unconsciously, there are connections and interwoven shared identities that are often not revealed as a direct result of the division and stolen identities of ancestral connection in Africa and throughout the African Diaspora. For example, since our histories which are vast and different have been erased or warped in many incidences by colonial relations, it makes it difficult to directly “confirm” the specificity of whether there is or not an ancestral connection with African/Black women from one place or the other, specifically the African continent and the African Diaspora. Nevertheless, the notion of the possibility of connecting with our Africanness/Blackness, however differently defined, strengthens in times of adversity as collective agency, identity, and resistance increase, often as the result of domination. Hence, transnational identities of African/Black women are dictated by women’s experiences throughout various communities, based on their assumed or given identities, and shared specific lived and work experiences. By no means is connecting collectively essentialist and singular or fixed in its definition of Africanness/Blackness, but rather it creates larger forums in which revolutionary actions such as state dismantlement can be taken up differently by differently located African/Black peoples. The tenets of the Identity Trichotomy struggles to dismantle racist notions of derogatory sameness while establishing differently located self- and collective perceptions based on the need for collaborative agency and resistance. This is highlighted

through the locations, experiences, and actions connected to self- and collective conceptualizations of African/Black women's identities in this research.

Women's identities are transformed into resistance as anti-colonial and indigenous feminist knowledges are passed on by mothers, grandmothers, other mothers, elders and sisters through knowledges of self, ancestral heritage, resistance, and mirroring processes. Afrotrini described her identity and how it connected to her resistance:

I think assertiveness is damn good. My mother taught me to be very assertive. I had no choice Can you imagine if she didn't tell me? Look at all the shit I went through already Can you imagine if she wasn't telling me that? I would be a mess. I've seen sisters who are doing it; they're a mess! My sisters! My mother is my world, my mother is my world I recognize, you know, that I really scored in having the mother I have.

Assata shared a story where she identified her connection with another Black woman as resistance:

When I met with what I consider a powerful Black woman in the shelter who have raised her children, single mom raised their children, to see how far her children have reached, and her herself at the same time educate herself This is how I go around and connect with strong Black women. I see my grandmother in her. I'm so close to her that her strength also feeds me I talk to my children about her just to get them, you know, just to get my children empowered by her story.

In this quote from her interview, Assata described her relationship with Sojourner, one of the elders in this research.

Identity is also used as resistance to challenge barriers often dictated by the "box" and as such challenges restrictive racist notions and intersectional violence. Esmeralda explains:

I think resistance, in terms of this, would be resistance to this whole Eurocentric framework of you have to talk to me to tell me what's wrong with you, and when you can't express yourself, and you can't do all these things . . . if you can't speak English, I'm going to bring an interpreter. If you can't do this like it's almost like we're forcing them into this one box, and this is the only way that they're able to get therapy to get help and then whatever else, but we haven't explored any other options, So, I think that in terms of looking for equity and inclusion that this would be a really good idea.

Claudia reiterated:

Well I resist that . . . constantly being labelled that, "Oh, you are aggressive, you are rude" . . . so that's what it is. That is my way . . . I don't really internalize it, and I don't view myself, you know, being any lesser than anybody else, but people try to push you to put you in that box and you know it is a struggle.

Self- and collective perceptions are important in relation to African/Black women's identities and resistance. Communities and societies locally and globally have dictated, controlled, assimilated, silenced, and have tried to destroy African/Black women's identities through systems of dominance and interlocking oppressions. This insidious violence has been imprinted, both consciously and unconsciously, on African/Black people's identity formation. Historically, racist perceptions of African/Black women and African/Black communities have been synonymous with colonization, enslavement, rape, genocide, and other forms of mass violence inflicted on the African/Black communities throughout Africa and the African Diaspora.

In a local and global community where African/Black women are continuously subjected to violence, their self- and collective perceptions are critical not only for challenging and deconstructing racist, sexist, classist, and hetero-normative identity categories, but also to assert

alternative reflective identities that support individual and collective agency and resistance. Providing differing notions of African/Black identities does not only support and eradicate racist notions of sameness backed by colonial rhetoric and genocidal praxis, but it can provide collective perceptions that are stronger, more flexible, and more inclusive. This can occur as different perceptions fuse to include collective stances that promote a wider kaleidoscope of African/Black identities that individually and collectively advocate against colonial violence while promoting agency and resistance.

Forming transnational identities supported resistance as African/Black women kept and formulated relationships with their home countries and ancestral and African Diasporic ties. This is exemplified by Sojourner, raised in the African Caribbean Diaspora, when she identified her groundedness and connection to Africa, and her connection to her ancestors when wearing African clothes:

What grounds me a lot, too, . . . is the most important one for me, is when I put on my African clothes. If somebody is bugging me and I put on my African clothes, I feel grounded . . . I feel grounded. I feel as though my ancestors are with me. I feel tall, even if I am short . . . I feel good, I feel grounded. I feel I could take on anything and it wouldn't bother me. When I dress up in my nice African cloth, I feel good, I feel really, really good.

Connecting with homeland and ancestral identities gives women identities that support and rejuvenate spirit and mind, that actualize feelings of belonging. This situates women in histories within multiple struggles for African solidarity and resistance. Connecting and forming alliances among African/Black women have been highlighted throughout this research. Additionally, maintaining and establishing alliances among other anti-colonial movements is also critical for dismantling colonial empires and creating resistance. hooks argues that Non-

Black allies can also participate in the struggle to dismantle racist representation of race by transforming their images of Black people while incorporating revolutionary attitudes about race and representation (hooks, 1992, p. 7). Consistently, Non-Black allies who appropriate Black images of subjectivity in narratives and popular culture must integrate the perspectives of Blackness dictated by diverse members of the Black community. hooks quotes Christian Walker, a Black artist:

If white artists, committed to the creation of a non-racist, non-sexist and non-hierarchical society, are ever to fully understand and embrace their own self-identity and their own Miscegenated gaze, they will have to embrace and celebrate the concept of non-white subjectivity. (hooks, 1992, p. 7)

White women are not being focused on as allies here although there has been a great deal of research and discourse on such alliances. White women can and have been part of alliances supporting anti-colonial, anti-racist movements. However, internal and external practices of and benefits from White supremacist local and global governance need to be actively de-supremacized, as well as their ideologies and practices, in order to form strong alliances. Hence, this means that White women would have to give up unearned privileges and learn to really engage in active “power sharing”, but most importantly “power giving back”. In the following section, Creative Resistance is further explored.

Creative Resistance

Women participated in Creative Resistance, itself a part of Resistance Education, in several ways throughout this research process. Individually, women used visual representations and words to locate who they were in relation to intersectional factors and their work in shelters. Their daily shelter work experiences were revealed through “a good day, a bad day, and a normal day” exercises, as well as the exercises in which they imaged what “equity” would feel and look

like. These were all methods used to generate resistance. Creative Resistance occurred as the arts were used in different ways to reflect women's identities, locations, experiences, philosophies, and perceptions of themselves both inside and outside of their shelter work environments. Women often silenced and stereotyped by racist and colonial notions of derogatory sameness, excluded from most research and writing about the violence against women movement, presented differently located and familiar experiences. Through various expressive art methods such as acrostics, journaling, drawing, writing, painting, mural making, and poetry, women participated and represented their changing identities. Their experiences of intersectional violence and how they resisted were also shared. Collectively, women imaged through words, colours, and through self- and collective dialogues. However, due to time constraints, only a few women were able to journal, draw, and create artistic representations at home. As a result, the interviews and the focus groups became places where individual and collective expressions/actions of resistance were expanded and created.

The process of art-making and dialoguing about women's identities, their experiences working in shelters, and their methods for resistance created a space where collective witnessing, consciousness raising, knowledge sharing, and action transpired. Women supported one another with affirmations, smiles, laughter, shared stories, and shared pain. This was done as women created artistic representations beside each other, talking and commenting on what each and others did. Witnessing women's experiences in a collective environment helped to validate the existence of women's diverse locations, their experiences of intersectional violence working in shelters, and their experiences living in Toronto as African/Black women. Also, the witnessing of different women's locations and experiences through their own perceptions supported the existence of differently located African/Black women's resistance against ideas of fixed

“sameness”. Collective consciousness raising resulted as women’s experiences were validated and diverse praxis of resistance were discussed.

In the following section, future strategies for future resistance is discussed.

Future Strategies for Collective Resistance

Through the arts and by brainstorming, women formulated future strategies for collective resistance, developing avenues to create further collective consciousness. Figure 50 portrays a mural of collective resistance created by Assata and Angela in Focus Group One (see Appendix K for Additional Creative Resistance Representations).

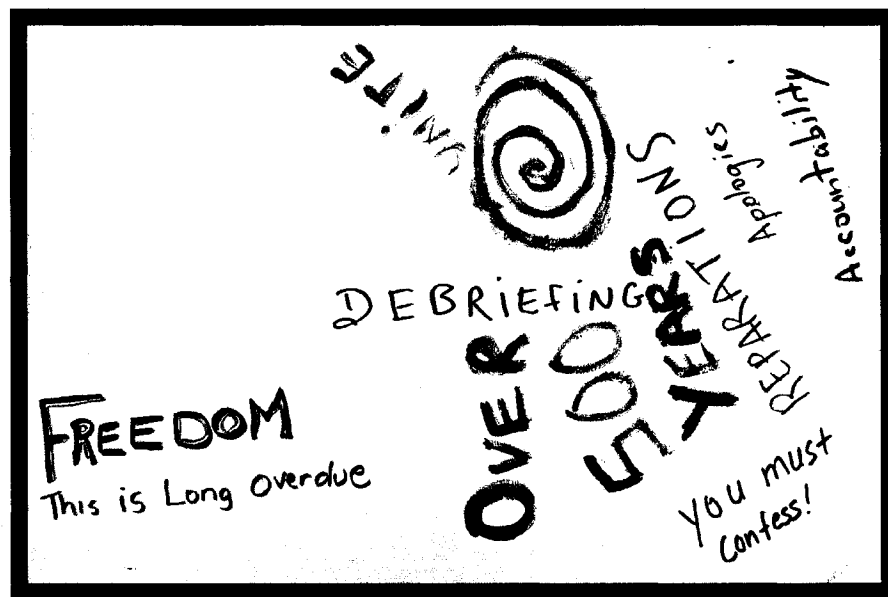


Figure 50. Resistance Mural by Assata and Angela.

Angela described her illustrations:

We need to unite. As long as we are divided and we are feeling unconscious, there is not far we can go. We have to come together. Without resistance, they are happy that we are divided, and the conquerors continue to prevail. We have to have a goal where each one of us has to focus on.

As well, Assata discussed the need for debriefing over collective experiences of trauma to begin the healing process and reparations for atrocities committed in African/Black communities:

Debriefing . . . because even when you send soldiers to war, before they go home you have to debrief them. We have been at war with ourselves for 500 years. We need debriefing as a people No one has ever really admitted or validated that they have done something to the African peoples. Every other people you could think of have gotten reparations, acknowledgement, apologies, except the African peoples.

Collective action existed from the onset of this research as women's agency was represented individually and in-group processes. Murals were created collectively as places of active resistance where women interchangeably and creatively expressed their experiences of violence, and anti-colonial praxis and resistance. Through "one minute of resistance" exercises, women collectively activated agency, writing and reciting spoken word pieces evoking resistance. One minute of resistance is another aspect of the methodology that uses the method of spoken word and poetry to collectively create collective agency and actions within Resistance Education processes. The following are the results of one minute of resistance generated in focus groups:

One Minute of Resistance

Focus Group One

Belong
 Whole
 Warmth
 Bigger
 Spiritual
 Ancestors, ancestors
 Rise
 Love

Focus Group Two

Continue the struggle
 Don't give up your rights
 Love yourself
 Self love
 Share and impart knowledge
 Elders
 Don't let nobody tell you where you should be
 Black to me is a lifestyle, certainly not for sale
 Don't let the status quo...
 Self affirm
 Harambee
 Acknowledge the work that we have done
 Resistance
 Unity
 Congratulate each other
 And affirm

Focus Group Three

Be proud of yourself,
 They will always try to put you down,
 Don't give up the fight,
 Stand up for your rights,
 Don't forget who you are,
 And pass it on to your children,
 Don't forget where you came from

One minute of resistance pieces were all completed at the end of each focus group. The exercise helped to bring closure to the sessions and foster group cohesiveness. Women recited out loud their pieces several times with all group members. This process marked the breaking down of the walls of silence and the merging of individual and collective stories and actions. Moreover, the act of participating in creative expressive arts processes from an anti-colonial feminist framework resulted in simultaneous acts of resistance. In the following sections, the reflections of women participating in this research are revealed.

Reflections After

After the participatory group process had finished, women responded collectively about how they felt and what they thought about after participating in the research. Numerous women stated that it was a “healing”, “therapeutic”, “empowering and validating” process. Makeba explained how the research process was therapeutic for her:

First of all, I would like to say thank you, for giving us, giving us this opportunity. I found it really therapeutic, not in the western sense of therapeutic because where I come from it doesn't work that way, but really I felt very safe. I don't think I would ever say this cuz a lot of time it's a White word, but I felt really safe and blessed to share this experience. I've been bottling up for a long, a long time and to see and to hear again other people, I'm not alone there. Other people who are sharing the same experience makes it feel . . . better in many ways. So, I'd like to thank you for that, for giving me that opportunity.

Nefertiti articulated how the research process was validating for her:

The first thing is the whole experience has been very validating for me It's just wow! Like, actually just sitting down and just recognizing all these things, the real experiences and stuff [I] haven't had the time to pay attention to all this stuff that's been happening It's a great feeling, and just even the process of

even being encouraged to even do it on paper or write about it, or it's just a whole like table turning thing, you know Our things are not really thought of as important The whole thing is great. It doesn't happen often, or . . . ever . . . in my experience working in the shelters or anywhere, and it's very beneficial I think I'm coming out [a] much stronger person. Nothing has changed on the outside, like all the things that we're talking about are the same, but for me, I am much more enriched by this experience.

Women also stated that the experience of participating in this research study made them less isolated and more connected with differently located African/Women working in shelters, which can be difficult based on our legacies of separation during colonialism. Wiwa explained by connecting her experiences using the arts:

I thought, to me, art is like . . . I have never done that before, but I think it's a good way of . . . it brings out the inner one in you . . . things that you've never thought of . . . you take things as they come and you never really sit down and really evaluate and think you know whether this is, and it becomes an individual thing, it's [Wiwa's] issue . . . that's how you should deal with it, so it doesn't become like our issue. Now that everybody's talking, it's like we're on the same page. One thing I was also picking up of when she was saying that what I would want to see come out, I think we, just in Toronto, if you look at the Black Diaspora, Black women in their struggles, whether it be in the corporate, or in the shelters, or front line, I think we have the same experience, life experience, in terms of what we go through, but I think there's that lack of connectedness, and unfortunately, without the connectedness in us is going to be left to each individual parent whether or not that parent is able to pass it to the youth I haven't, I have yet to see like, you know, a body of Black women who work in this, coming up together to just speak about their issues and put the issues first. I think we have really gone into these small cliques of, you know, Caribbean women, African women, Somali women, and I think it's the same thing as the

colonialism . . . So, I wish there was something that would come out of it, that would say, “Hey, let’s get together” . . . because in unity there is strength.

In particular, other women talked about the engagement with the arts as being an innovative experience that challenged them to think differently, to act differently, and to resist creatively. Fannie expressed:

it has been a great [experience] in that I was never, as a child, a person who would like to play with the . . . paint and stuff like that. I was a very kind of prim [little girl] who didn’t really get my hands dirty. I only did that as I grew older. So that was an experience and I think it provided, you know, another forum in terms of how you look at . . . the world, because it’s always very good to look at other people’s work and kind of critique it. But when you’ve never seen yours . . . so you see yours for the first time and it’s totally different. So that was good . . . I have known [Sojourner] for a long time, and I didn’t know she was such a [good] writer. I think she should really write a book.

Accordingly, Assata discussed her experiences with the arts:

I feel good about that. I also feel that I have gotten something back. I enjoy doing whatever it is that I am doing. I do not know what to call it [laugh] – art. The art makes it a little bit of fun even though it was so hard to do. So I am enjoying that also. I have enjoyed that also . . . I want to thank you very much for providing the safety.

The women went on further to discuss the significance of having a “safe” space to talk about these difficult experiences as expressed by Angela:

Just the positiveness that I feel here in this room, in terms of feeling safety to be able to talk about this. I need everybody to know that I never had talked about this in this context, in this kind of setting. It has actually been liberating for me, because I feel like I could say things that I have held back because I wasn’t sure if I trusted or sure if somebody could hear me. People have different awareness

levels, but in here I was mistaken I could trust and that gave me the courage and strength to discuss some very painful things Thank you for supporting me through them, hearing them. I want to say through all of this there has been a lot of learning; in fact, more awareness as well. I am glad for that.

Women went on to say that this research and their documentation of experiences needed to be shared, and that other African/Black women needed to experience this research process. Hence, women had a lot to say about where and how the work should be disseminated as part of the resistance process.

Disseminating Knowledge: Stopping the Silence

An important part of the research methodology was asking women who worked in shelters how they wanted the research to be disseminated. This gave women a chance to organize and dictate how and where they would like their voices to be heard. Again, breaking the silence of African/Black women working in shelters in Toronto is another critical part of actualizing and creating resistance. Women became not only agents of resistance, but also agents who formulated future strategies for how the research and their resistance is heard and seen. At the end of the focus groups, women were asked how they wanted this shared production to be disseminated. Women stated that they wanted other African/Black women to have the knowledge acquired by this group of women and for it to be shared in the woman abuse community in Toronto and elsewhere. Nefertiti reflected:

Oh! Perhaps . . . the EDs and all those people, I don't know even what they're going to get out of this, unless they are ready at a certain stage, themselves. So it would be useful or helpful if it's possible to go into and some of the shelters and to talk to women who are experiencing this. Use this material to give them something . . . workers themselves, because we didn't have this while we where

there. So all the things were going on, or not going on, because we were too busy with other stuff, day to day stuff . . . just couldn't happen. So it would be helpful.

Meanwhile, Nana exemplifies:

I'd like to see that study that you're doing not shelved in a house. I'd like to see it expanded upon, and even go further . . . I think . . . our youth, they need it. We have no future with no history . . . so I think this is a legacy, this is a part of something, and I think to put it out there and not shelved . . . I actually enjoyed being here . . . I'm really, really happy cuz I'm really, really understanding the extent of what is going on. It's not just my story; it's everybody here in this room, our vocalizing and verbalizing the experiences that we're gone through. And it's good to know that you're not alone. You may feel alone sometimes, because the tactic is to conquer and divide to isolate you and don't include you right. So it's good to know that there is a lot to look forward to.

Women also stated that they wanted other women to experience this research process and hence wanted these groups to be extended for other women to have similar opportunities for self-discovery, validation, and collective resistance. Women also discussed having community and public forums to discuss the findings of the research and overwhelmingly insisted that the research get out to communities so that their stories, experiences, and knowledge could be told to a wider audience. Makeba articulated:

I think we should take it into the next level . . . I don't think an individual voice will get us anywhere. I think we should take it to a next level, organizing us all, our own community, and get together and have that forum, and speak about it and talking to our EDs, in our agencies, it's only getting us fired. We have been that, we've seen it, and we have been labelled, and a lot of things, so we're not going back to the days work, but we need to organize it and strategize it into the next level. I think funders need to hear this. I think all sort of people (also our people) has to be up there and say this is what, yes, it's nice to have that shelter bla, bla,

bla, bla, and from the outside and this is what they are doing. But unfortunately . . . when you shelter other people, but you're hurting . . . you have the group of people and it's not about our workers' experience We're talking about residents' and clients' experience as well. So that goes without saying, you know what they're suffering and it's part of that proof. So it should go to the higher level in my book.

Some women wanted some sort of report to be sent to funders to show the hypocrisy of shelters. Other participants thought the methods used in this research enhanced communication and self-care and should be shared with different people.

It became clear that women were taking agency and demanding accountability of the research and the researcher. As a result of women's push and the methods designed in the research, women were told that a community forum would be held after the completion of the study. In this forum, discourses on African/Black women in the violence against women community could be discussed and debated, and, hopefully, existing alliances among women would be strengthened and new ones established. Clearly, women's experiences indicated that their participation in the processes of this study reflected their acts of resistance and their engagement with the theoretical and methodological foundation expressed in this research.

Summary

In this chapter, women's resistance against intersectional violence in their daily lives and work experiences at shelters were illustrated. I first examined barriers of resistance and coping strategies to establish the groundwork from where resistance emerged. The art processes and women's reflections on the method were also described. Views on what an equitable shelter work environment would look and feel like were shared, indicating that "equity" does not exist in the lives of African/Black women. In fact, the fruition of equity is often tied intimately with

colonial state relations. This exclusion, however, fosters women's resistance. Despite women's inequitable treatment, African/Black women's praxis of inclusive anti-oppression at their work in shelters challenged institutionalized practices of violence by giving a counter-hegemonic response. Nevertheless, as the data revealed in Chapter Six and Seven, some African/Black women also had oppressive epistemologies.

Differently located African/Black women resisted both creatively and collectively, showing the importance of identities, collective witnessing, conscious raising, and actions of resistance against state sanctioned violence. Future strategies for change were examined, as well as women's reflections participating in the research process, and suggested ways of disseminating the results were discussed. All of these were critical processes in the integrated theoretical framework and methodology that comprised the underpinnings of this research. Hence, African/Black women's participation and knowledge-sharing supported and initiated acts of resistance.

Chapter Nine is the conclusion of this dissertation and provides an overall summary of the major themes that emerged in the findings chapters. Chapters Five established the locations of the women. Chapter Six explored women's identities, and lived experiences of intersectional violence. Chapter Seven examined women's experiences working in shelters, and Chapter Eight described women's resistance, their reflections of the research process, and their thoughts on dissemination. In addition, Chapter Nine outlines the significance of my research, the political and revolutionary implications and future recommendations, limitations of the study, my reflections on the research process, and participants' epilogue one year after the completion of the study.

Chapter Nine:

Conclusion

Introduction

I believe that I have achieved what I set out to do in this research which was to rehistoricize African/Black women's experiences and depict their resistance in shelters in Toronto within the anti-violence movement, and to develop and practice an anti-colonial research methodology to be used as a tool for revolutionary action and political and social change. Again, I stress here an anti-colonial praxis that is against sexist, classist, heterosexist, ableist, ageist, and racist forms of violence inside and outside of anti-colonial and transnational feminist movements.

Chapter Nine is the conclusion of this dissertation. First, an overall synopsis of the major themes that emerged in the findings chapters is provided. Second, the significance of my research, particularly focusing on Resistance Education and giving some examples of its applicability in different Diasporic locations is illustrated. Particularly, I briefly look at examples of how I could apply this model to anti-violence work in Trinidad and Tobago, and I hypothesize about the formulation of diverse resource manuals for differently located populations. Third, the political and revolutionary implications and recommendations for the use of this research are explained. Fourth, limitations of the study in relation to future research strategies are presented. Fifth, my brief reflections on the research process are described. Finally, participants' epilogue one year after the completion of the study is depicted.

Summary of Major Themes From Findings Chapters

There were four major themes that are illuminated from Chapters Five through Eight of this research project.

1. An important theme revealed was African/Black women shelter workers' experiences of *intersectional violence* in their life, in general, and in their work, specifically. The experiences of violence as a result of the impact of colonialism and other interlocking factors were supported by the findings in this research. Moreover, the legacies, actions, and impacts of colonialism's violence locally and globally were experienced by the women participating in this study and their various communities.
2. The theme of *restructuring* was also an important finding in this research. The restructuring process, being done without the entire input of residents, staff and community members, created drastic changes in the woman abuse shelter community. In this research, participants revealed that restructuring in shelters dramatically changed their working experiences. Some women discussed their move from part-time and/or relief positions to full-time staff as women were fired and asked to reapply for their jobs. These same women spoke about initially being excited about their new positions in shelters, only to find out later that they were understaffed, underpaid, and responsible for training new, inexperienced workers who usually wound up in positions of power over them. Other participants spoke about the devastating experiences of being fired and asked to reapply for their own jobs after years of working at the shelter. The struggles to maintain woman abuse services and the struggles to maintain integral work environments have been difficult in these times of economic and organizational restructuring. The impact of organizational restructuring on shelter workers is immense, especially for African/Black women, First Nation women and Women of Colour. What is clear is that the organizational

restructuring in shelters has been happening simultaneously with government cuts in social spending.

3. Another major theme is that the findings supported the concept of the *Identity Trichotomy*. Women who participated in the research revealed their struggles to dismantle essentialized homogenous concepts of all African/Black women usually prescribed by the racist, colonial state sanctioned lens (tenet one). Women used examples of the “box” to describe their experiences and their fight to challenge notions and praxis’s of “derogatory sameness”. The heterogeneous identities of differently located African/Black women (tenet two) in this research proved important for their identity formations, and it illustrated examples of the indigenous feminist knowledges and resistance strategies inherited and/or passed down from one generation of women (from their grandmothers, mothers, sisters, and elders) to another. Collective identity (tenet three) was also revealed in the findings as women discussed group cohesion in their interviews and focus groups proving that collective identities were utilized and needed to support resistance against colonial and intersectional violence perpetrated against African/Black communities. As a result, women engaged in collective resistance locally and globally, participating in transnational feminisms throughout this research process and in their lived and work experiences.
4. A critical finding is that the *integrated, feminist, anti colonial, art-based methodology proved to be a powerful way to carry out research*. The implementation of the seven features of the methodology outlined in Chapter Four provided necessary guidelines to support resistance-centered data collection, while depicting and generating

revolutionary actions, and honouring the overall research process. The participants' ongoing feedback, during and after the research, provided a thorough evaluation of their experiences in the research project. It also provided open discussions about power relations in this study. Locating exercises established participants' definitions and conceptualizations of terms, and provided women's lived and work experiences of intersectional violence and resistance needed to understand African/Black women's shelter workers. Traditional Eurocentric research methodology was challenged by providing counter-hegemonic methods in this research. Through self-dialogues, discussions on disseminating the findings, and the use of Creative Resistance methods, Resistance Education occurred. In addition, the value of doing art-based research without interpreting, but rather giving women the space to name and infer about their own practices, supported the integrated framework used in this research. Many women's perceptions of the arts were changed, enhanced, and supported as they engaged in Creative Resistance actions throughout this study.

Significance of My Research

My research is significant as it can be utilized in various disciplines and within diverse communities locally and globally. There are three main uses of Resistance Education:

1. Research
2. Education
3. Psychology

In this research project, Resistance Education was utilized as *Research* and *Education* as it added innovation to qualitative methodology by developing new theoretical and methodological practices to collect data, and to conduct research while informing and providing education on

African /Black shelter women's experiences and resistance in the shelter community in Toronto. As well, Resistance Education is significant as it can be used in psychology as a tool for practicing feminist/womanist centered psychotherapy. Psychology was not thoroughly discussed throughout this particular research project, but a colleague and I have practiced and are beginning to write and present on our conceptualizations and praxis of anti-colonial psychology through the process of Resistance Education. Hence, the significance, of Resistance Education in these and other areas will be explored for many years to come through multiple fields.

Some Examples of Resistance Education's Applicability

Anti-violence work in Trinidad and Tobago.

Resistance Education can be used as a model to examine the experiences of violence against African/Black women and other Women of Colour in Trinidad and Tobago. 15 years ago, as a teenager I went to visit the first woman abuse shelter in Trinidad - now there are seven. Since 1991 there has been numerous policy changes, supporting anti-violence initiatives; a creation of a National domestic violence crisis telephone line, extensive research done by community and regional organizations (i.e., CAFRA – The Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action started in 1985); and several implementations of education initiatives and training for police, social workers, and other stakeholders in the violence against women sector in Trinidad and Tobago.

Particularly, applying the Resistance Education model would be useful in examining the manifestations and dynamics of intersectional violence against African/Black women and other racialized women to document their resistance. This research model could address intersectional violence as opposed to only gender violence. This model would address the Diasporic historic and contemporary experiences of African enslavement, South Asian indentured labour, other

People of Colour merchants, and White colonial rule in an environment that tends to talk about culture and racial cohesiveness without addressing hierarchies of oppression. Moreover, applying the Resistance Education model to Trinidad and Tobago would require working and consulting with a network of women who are already engaged in anti-violence praxis. Creative Resistance processes, such as “One Minute of Resistance” and other artistic politicized methods could be used as advertisements for anti-violence initiatives in the particular political economy context of Trinidad and Tobago. I have briefly outlined this example using Trinidad and Tobago as I am familiar with the details of violence against women in this environment, as I am of African Trinidadian-Tobagonian heritage, and I have worked with this population for many years.

Resource manuals.

I would like to produce a series of Resistance Education manuals to provide supports and information to a variety of populations. The following are four examples:

1. Manual for survivors of violence (Psycho-educational/Psychotherapeutic)
2. Manual for workers within the woman abuse community on how to apply Resistance Education with “clients” and staff (train the trainer).
3. Resistance Education: Community Based Resistance Manual.
4. University Course: Resistance Education as Research Methodology.

These manuals would be accessible to a variety of communities and would incorporate Resistance Education theory and praxis in the three areas presented above.

Political and Revolutionary Implications and Future Recommendations

There are many political and revolutionary implications of this research; five main ones are outlined in this section.

First, African/Black women shelter workers' voices and experiences have been further historicized and re-centered as a result of this study. Women's standpoints supported the often-missing stories of African/Black women in the woman abuse shelter community. This research directly challenged the silencing and exclusion of these same women's experiences by the shelter community and by anti-violence movements in general. Indigenous feminist knowledges provided important ways of knowing and representing women's identities, resistance, and knowledge production.

Second, the acknowledgement of women's experiences of intersectional violence in the findings of this study can perhaps be used to sustain, explore, and foster continuous revolutionary change through dialogues, engagement with critical pedagogies of resistance, and to a lesser extent for policy development and structural changes, both locally and globally, in order to confront and dismantle these forms of oppression.

Third, women's active resistance and agency inside and outside of shelters have been identified throughout this study as important elements representing revolutionary change that challenges notions of colonialism's inevitability transnationally. This research provides information and acts as a source for various educational and revolutionary centered fields that attempt to deal with anti-violence, social change and social justice practices. Therefore, Adult Education, Women's Studies, Sociology and Equity Studies, Political Science, and other disciplines that try to address feminist, anti-colonial, anti-racist, areas can utilize this research.

Fourth, the collective consciousness-raising, witnessing, and action by differently located African/Black women add to anti-colonial transnational feminist movements and supports continued de-colonizing processes and anti-violence praxis. Moreover, the revolutionary

implications of this study expand African/Black feminist scholarship by providing further research on African/Black women's lived and work experiences and actions of resistance.

Fifth, Resistance Education, a counter-hegemonic theorization and praxis was practiced in this research and through Creative Resistance methods revealed that the arts are critical tools for learning, teaching, providing agency, researching, and resisting against colonial violence. In addition, Resistance Education has been proven to be useful as a revolutionary tool and research methodology to depict, discuss, and initiate social change.

There are eight main recommendations for future use of this research:

1. To encourage and continue research on African/Black women's lived and work experiences and actions of resistance in various settings to generate the often-missing stories of these women's lives.
2. To disseminate the knowledge and finding of this research as a continual process and act of Resistance Education.
3. To foster anti-colonial alliances that challenge anti-Black racism.
4. To highlight that indigenous feminist knowledges and Creative Resistance are critical forms of resistance.
5. To incorporate an integrated feminist, anti-colonial, anti-racist, art-based approach in all forms of political action and mobilization to challenge patriarchal, hetero-normative, racist, sexist, heterosexist, ableist, ageist (intersectional violence), theories, praxis, and structures both in dominant and "progressive" spheres.
6. To utilize the feminist, anti-colonial, art-based methodology developed as a tool for revolutionary research, and social and political change inside and outside of differently located anti-violence women's communities.

7. To evaluate the violence in anti-violence shelters and women's communities.
8. To have the methodology expanded, critiqued, taught, practiced, and changed to support critical unessentialized concepts and praxis of resistance centered actions.

Limitations of the Study

In a global climate where African/Black women are often talked at or about, but rarely honoured or validated for knowledges developed, shared, and used; this research engaged in critical pedagogies of resistance, agency, and action by utilizing anti-colonial methodology to re-center African indigenous feminist women's voices and experiences. Hence, it is critical to mention the limitations of this study to enhance future research strategies and to support the understanding that all research methodology should never be fixed, but rather viewed as always being fluid, and as such needs to be constantly re-examined, critiqued, and reformulated. My research was an entry point into the examination of African/Black women shelter workers' experiences in the woman abuse community. There are three main limitations of this study.

First, the study was done in only one major city in Canada which has a particular historical and cultural makeup that lends itself to mainly English-speaking women. For this reason, the experiences and actions of resistance by differently located African/Black women who work in shelters in other cities in Canada, i.e., French-speaking Montreal are not examined in this research. Also, cities such as Halifax and Calgary which have distinct historical and political contexts for African/Black women were not reviewed in this study. Future research locally could be expanded to include these cities. Additionally, a study of African/Black women working in shelters from various cities globally would also expand the findings and increase the African Diasporic representation spoken about in this research.

Secondly, as this study is being done in Turtle Island, I would have expanded the questions about the relationships with African/Black women and First Nation's women in particular, elaborating on their experiences working with each other in shelters coming from distinct colonial relations. The discussion on African women and First Nation women alliances could be expanded in future research looking for example, at anti-Black racism and the importance of problematizing the concept of "Black Settlers". Expanding discussions of internalized White supremacy and tokenism as divisive methods among these distinct groups, and fostering anti-colonial alliances, which are all critical to the dismantlement of colonial violence are other areas for future research. Additionally, I would have also liked to focus more on African/Black women's relationships with each other in the colonial context, in particular analyzing the importance of addressing internalized colonialism as a tool to interrupt the divisive strategies of colonial violence. Alliances between anti-racist feminists from multiracial and cross-cultural backgrounds in light of anti-Black racism would also be imperative to examine.

Thirdly, the art-based Creative Resistance process could have been enhanced more if a longitudinal study was conducted that had women involved in self-dialogues through Creative Resistance methods and monthly collective meetings with participants. Also, the follow-up piece a year later could have incorporated Creative Resistance representations done by and interpreted by women as responses that could have been used for the epilogues and as visual validations of the usefulness of the methodology in women's lives. Finally, one collective focus group consisting of all participants could have provided an even richer experience of working and resisting using art-based Creative Resistance.

My Reflections on the Research Process

The overall research experience and process has been one of overwhelming gratitude to the women who so freely participated and shared their indigenous feminist knowledges, differently located identities, stories of intersectional violence, and resistance in this research project. I felt humbled by being granted access to these women's lives, some of whom were dealing with such vulnerable, painful daily experiences of violence; yet whose perseverance, and love of self and community, represented generations of African/Black women, in particular, and African/Black peoples' revolutionary struggles, attitudes, and actions generally.

I no longer work in shelters as doing so while writing this research became difficult, and I needed space to be able to articulate the findings and to be able to address the pain that I felt. More importantly, I needed to "let go" of a shelter movement with which I had been so closely involved since I was nine years old. This dissertation's mere existence represents actions of resistance; and for me it is a rebirth of memories, stories, laughter, pain, honouring, and revolutionary fervour of so many African/Black women, including my mother, my sisters, many friends, women and children, residents, elders, colleagues, myself, and generations to come, that will now have a place in the history of shelter movements in Toronto. Additionally, a community forum will be held and papers written to support the collective actions generated from women in this research. Hence, this study is an example of a continual revolutionary process. Even though, many others and I are no longer working in shelters our commitment and resistance persevere.

Epilogue: One Year Later

I sent out five follow-up questions, approximately one year after the completion of the interviews and focus groups (2006), to the women who had participated in this research. The following five questions were asked:

1. What has happened in regard to your working situation? Are you still working in shelters or with woman abuse? In what capacity? Have you changed jobs? Been promoted? Quit? Been restructured? etc.
2. Have there been any changes in your life over the past year?
3. Are you utilizing Creative Resistance in your life/work? If yes, in what capacity?
4. Looking back, how has your participation in this research impacted you?
5. Is there anything you would like to share? Comments?

Fourteen out of the 18 women interviewed and/or who participated in focus groups responded to the request for follow-up. Ten women submitted the questions via email; four women answered the questions via telephone; and four women did not respond at all. Out of these 14 women, eight had continued working as frontline workers and six women continued to work in non-frontline woman abuse related services in shelters and/or other organizations when the initial interviews and focus groups were conducted in the fall of 2004 and summer of 2005. In the follow-up, seven women, who had worked frontline in shelters, responded that they had been laid off due to restructuring processes at four different shelters. These laid-off women were comprised of both full-time workers and relief workers at collectively and hierarchically run shelters. Additionally, one woman who had returned from pregnancy leave and reduced her hours to part-time work at the shelters was restructured by management who asked her to return to full-time hours. Hence, 95% of the African/Black women who had responded to the follow-up questions were no longer working in shelters. Even though most women in the research are not working in shelters one year later, women during and after the study are committed to supporting collective actions against intersectional violence in shelters and in society locally and globally. The upcoming community forum and the subsequent dissemination of the research findings is a

direct example of how women have taken actions in this research to guarantee that other women benefit, learn, and continue to resist. Other collective actions of resistance cannot be fully documented in this dissertation as disclosing them could compromise confidentiality and job security for the participants. Over 44% of the 18 women who participated in this research and who responded to the follow-up had experienced restructuring in less than a one-year period.

Sojourner explains her experience of another restructuring process:

With the restructuring, they decided to eliminate the relief budget that was in existence for over 20 years. As a result, there was no relief shifts, only on holidays. There are six holidays in the year, and 10 relief staff fighting for them. I decided to quit.

Nana discusses her experience of restructuring:

The working situation is still the same, instead of out in your face; it's more subdued since the investigation. I have been laid off due to downsizing/been restructured. I am sure that I do not want to work in the shelter movement. It's not favourable to Women of Colour, better yet Black women. Right now I would stay in the social service/social work sector, working for larger agencies, school boards, Ontario works (etc.).

Similarly, Nefertiti relates her experience being on sick leave from a shelter she had worked in for over 10 years which was restructured:

So much to my surprise the organization, the woman shelter, decided to restructure and let go some staff and I was one of them. I was let go with out any warning, reason, and not being informed that I was let go. I had to make several calls to the human resource person who never returned my call. Because I was persistent, staff answered the phone and transferred my call. I was told by them that I left my position having been on medical leave in 2004. I said, "Oh, I did inform you that I was on medical leave"; I sent them a letter in February 2004.

This information was disregarded. I asked for this information in writing [being laid off]. Their lawyer informed them that the organization did not owe [me] any explanations. Since my recovery about a year ago, I have been working at a mental health crisis center on a relief basis as a crisis worker.

These findings are quite dramatic especially after revealing the context of intersectional violence that existed in shelters and its impact, in particular, on African/Black women's lives. Is there a correlation between anti-Black racism and who is laid off during restructuring processes? Unfortunately, the preliminary findings in this research support the fact that, increasingly, African/Black women are the first to be laid off during organizational restructuring processes in shelters. A multiracial research study on organizational restructuring and layoffs in shelters is needed to explain, verify, or challenge the findings in this research. Furthermore, two women, one frontline worker and another outreach worker, had reduced their work hours to part-time. Fannie, the only participant who was an Executive Director of a shelter still works in that capacity. Interestingly, during this research process, I also experienced organizational restructuring, and as a result, with no warning was laid off the relief staff pool from a collectively run shelter.

Moreover, restructuring is another way that institutional, community, and corporations (including woman abuse shelters) use to get rid of, silence or eliminate African/Black women, their work experiences, and indigenous knowledges, by systematically using various excuses to cut employees and/or their wages, giving Black women less access to decision-making spaces. Restructuring is happening in most sectors of Canadian society and disproportionately, African/Black women are being the "victims" of organizational downsizing. With historical and contemporary contexts of anti-Black racism in Canada and globally, this research has proven that Black women are being impacted, but that they are continuously resisting in various forms

against these violent practices. African/Black women's leadership in a range of fields (academia, social service agencies, government, and other institutions) need to be supported by autonomous collective bodies/initiatives. These autonomous spaces and initiatives need to support African/Black women in anti-racist, anti-oppression and human rights advocacy, resistance centered activism, work safety and job security, political policy creation and implementation, and for the establishment and maintenance of African/Black women's leadership roles. For example, we need African/Black women's Collectives to deal with and create actions to challenge intersectional violence. Hence, the political economy of woman abuse shelters, outlined in the beginning of this dissertation, and the related restructuring that creates new challenges must be incorporated by innovative theoretical and methodological praxis and actions such as Resistance Education. This will further support African/Black women's contemporary experiences as we continuously position ourselves in leadership roles in a range of fields through resistance centered, feminist, anti-violence, art-based, anti-colonial works and activism throughout our local and global diverse communities. The community forum to be held is the beginning of networking with other African/Black women and anti-Black racist allies in furthering a politicized theoretical and methodological praxis through Resistance Education methodology that challenges intersectional violence and creates and encourages African/Black women's leadership and know how through creative processes. The findings revealed in this epilogue support the need for further research, and action in this and other areas of African/Black women's lives.

Thirteen out of the 14 women claimed to use Creative Resistance as part of their lives. Therefore, Creative Resistance and Resistance Education has been proven to effect and create

revolutionary change as women continue to utilize it in their lived and work experiences, and within their actions of resistance.

Kariabengbeng explains her life commitment to Creative Resistance, “I continue to be committed and dedicated to pursuing truth, honestly speaking through my work as an artist, a citizen of global world culture, a Black woman, a lesbian.” Angela echoes the importance of resistance in her life more than a year later when she says:

Absolutely, I still caucus with other women who were affected with me. We are still pushing for changes that will make the workplace more tolerable. We belong to a sub-committee that advocates for better working conditions while at the work place. I sing and listen to my African music. I am very connected to my community that gives me a sense of belonging.

Women continuously wrote about the empowerment, learning, education, healing, validating, supporting, and feelings and building of community felt by participating in this research. Women stated that it had impacted their lives in some way. Afrotrini wrote about her learnings as a result of participating in this research:

You know, this research came at an important time in my life where I had to figure out what my next moves would be in the VAW (Violence against Women) sector. I was able through this project to actually SEE where I was at, to be able to talk to other sisters about their experiences, to create links, not to feel alone. I must say that in this field we do not get the chance to talk about our experiences in this field. By writing, drawing, etc. I really appreciated it. For someone who resists that way of expression, I totally see the value of it. It really grounded me. We can get caught up in talking about all the issues we face as Black/African women, but to see it on paper, to actually look at where we are at, was powerful for me.

Likewise, Calypso describes her experiences one year later:

Tremendously. Forced me to reflect on and articulate my overall experience as an African woman in women's service and how truly unhappy I am with the hypocrisy and pretence . . . the racism entrenched in the structure of an organisation that has done so much to work against it can be discouraging at times . . . reinforces that fact that I really don't belong in this place/country (not that there is a utopia somewhere else) The focus group became a catalyst that forced me to make some serious life changes. It also validated my experience as part of a group experience of African/Black women in women's services and allows me to have more empathy for my sisters who are struggling in this work. I carry the strength of the experience with me everyday. I am at work – it has definitely given me more courage.

The use of Creative Resistance by the majority of participants one year after the end of the initial research process proves that Creative Resistance can initiate longstanding changes. Hence, within the restructuring processes of our increasingly globalized communities, Creative Resistance needs to be continuously practiced and theorized in various fields as ways to challenge intersectional violence and promote African women's leadership and politicized activism in a variety of spaces. This work can be used as an entry point into further discussions towards political actions that challenge the exclusion of Black women in the political economy of Toronto and globally. I will conclude this dissertation with a quote from Kariabengbeng as it is a summary of the importance of depicting African/Black women's experiences and doing resistance-centered revolutionary research:

The issues you have raised as a researcher are so important to the continued survival of the human spirit. The creative energy of Black women and the lives they must live in a contemporary world culture reduced to fascistic, racist fundamentalism is powerful and belies the insidious nature and complicated ways in which oppression has learned to disguise itself. The new language of resistance has many tongues and requires much more of our openness to learn new and

creative ways to be when combating the forces against us. I am proud of you for your courageous attempt to bring this voice to the surface, bringing us that much closer to untapping a beneficial source of human possibility.

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Appendix A:

Nellie's Employment Equity Policy, Anti-Racism, and Anti-Oppression Policies

Nellie's

Employment Equity

Policy

Nellie's is committed to employment equity. This means eliminating discrimination and providing equality of opportunity and treatment in all of aspects of employment. This includes pro-active and positive measures regarding the hiring and promotion of groups facing discrimination in employment.

To this end we will recruit, hire and maintain a staff team that reflects the diversity of Metropolitan Toronto.

Nellie's undertakes to actively identify and remove barriers in employment and advancement to women of colour, women with disabilities, bisexual women and lesbians and First Nation women.

Accessibility and accommodation will be maintained as an organizational priority and reflected in all aspects of the agency.

Procedures

Recruitment will include ethno-specific, bisexual/lesbian and disabled organizations and press in addition to mainstream organizations and media. The employment equity statement will appear on all job postings.

Selection of new employees will be based on skills and experience and where these factors are relatively equal women from equity seeking groups will be selected.

Annual training will be provided to all staff in the area of anti-oppression.

An annual review will be completed to review all employment systems and evaluate the employment equity policies and practices of Nellie's. The review will include recruitment, selection, promotion, evaluation, training and termination of all employees.

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Nellie's

Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Policy

Statement of Principles

Nellie's recognizes the intrinsic value of culture and believes that cultural diversity is a source of enrichment and strength.

Nellie's believes that every woman and child is unique and must be treated with respect and equity. That every woman and child has the inherent right to social and economic justice and that every woman and child has the right to self determination and a right to contribute to society in her/his own way.

Nellie's recognizes that all women face misogyny and sexism, however some bear an additional burden of oppression due to racism and other forms of discrimination.

Nellie's recognizes that all members of non-dominant racial and ethno-cultural groups suffer from racism and systemic discrimination.

Nellie's recognizes that each group experiences discrimination and racism differently depending on the history of each group and how visible its members differ from the dominant group in Canada.

Nellie's analysis of racism recognizes the dynamics of power and privilege and how these tools serve to perpetuate racial oppression in society.

Nellie's is an anti-racist organization that questions and rejects the status quo, challenges existing power relations and believes that racism can and should be eradicated.

Nellie's will take a pro-active organizational stance in the struggle against racism and will reflect this commitment both internally and externally.

Nellie's will ensure that all Board members, staff, volunteers, students and clients adhere to these principles and policy. Nellie's programs and services will be delivered within an anti-racist, anti-oppressive framework.

Nellie's will ensure that diversity is reflected in the board, staff, volunteers, students and clients and actively seek to eliminate barriers to participation.

Definitions of Racism and Discrimination

Discrimination is behaviour based on prejudiced feelings and attitudes that lead to differential and unfavourable treatment of persons based on factors such as sex, race, culture, class, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identification and disability.

Racism is an action or practices by individuals or institutions which subordinates individuals and groups because of their race, colour or ethnicity. Racism is a form of discrimination and combines power and prejudice, whether it's social, economic or political, to the advantage of one group, a dominant group, and to the disadvantage of another, a non-dominant group. Racism can be systemic and refers to the

pervasive structures and practices that exclude groups on the basis of race, ethnicity and makes individual acts of racial discrimination acceptable. Incidents of racism include but are not limited to: unwelcome remarks, jokes, slurs, innuendo's, name calling, stereotyping, graffiti, insults or taunting about a person's racial, ethnic, cultural, religious or social background, threats, intimidation, avoidance, or exclusion, display of racist, derogatory or offensive material, any comment or conduct that is unsolicited and known or ought to be known to be unwelcome and is likely to cause offense or humiliation. Racism and discrimination may be intentional or unintentional, verbal or nonverbal, subtle, passive or overt in nature.

Nellie's will not tolerate racism or discrimination in any form by staff, board, volunteers, students or users of Nellie's services. Nellie's will inform all the above parties of their rights and responsibilities outlined in this policy.

Nellie's will treat all complaints seriously and sensitively. All investigations will be handled in a manner that respects the confidentiality of the complainant(s), witnesses and the alleged offender(s). Any interference with an investigation including intimidating or coaching of a complainant or witness will not be tolerated.

The procedures outlined below do not affect the individuals right to file a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

Complaint Procedure

Step 1

1. The complainant and/or witness will ask the alleged offender to stop her behaviour immediately, outlining the offensive conduct. The alleged offender should be reminded that such behaviour is not tolerated. The complainant has the right to ask a third party to speak to the alleged offender on her behalf.
2. Any witness(es) to the incident should intervene immediately. In all cases, the witness does not have the option not to respond to incidents.
3. The alleged offender must be given an opportunity to stop the behaviour and offer reparation(s) to the complainant.
4. The complainant and/or witnesses shall make a written record of the incident, including dates, times, locations and a detailed account of the incident and forward this to the Program Manager.
5. Should the alleged offender not offer reparation or the incident is of such a nature that this is not acceptable action will be taken including appropriate disciplinary action of staff, board, volunteers and in the case of service users discharge from Nellie's services.
6. The complainant has the right to go directly to Step 2.

Step 2

1. A written complaint shall be forwarded to the Executive Director.
2. The Executive Director shall review and investigate the complaint within 10 working days.
3. The alleged offender(s) have the right to be made aware of the allegations against them and respond to the complaint in writing.
4. The Executive Director, upon review and investigation will summarize the findings and take appropriate action.
5. The complainant(s) will be met with and a copy of the written resolution provided.
6. A report will be forwarded to the Board that documents the resolution of the complaint.

Step 3

1. Where the resolution of a complaint is not satisfactory to the complainant(s) or the complaint is directly with the Executive Director a written complaint should be forwarded directly to the Nellie's Board of Directors.
2. The Board of Directors shall retain a community race relations consultant to investigate and resolve the complaint.
3. The written findings and action taken to resolve the complaint will be documented.
4. Both the complainant(s) and alleged offender will be met with and a copy of the written resolution provided.

The Declaration will also be integrated in many local events all around the province, on that same day. But this is just a beginning! We would like to have over 1,000 womens groups, trade unions, community groups and solidarity committees endorse the document by March 8, International Womens Day.

We are thinking about organizing local meetings, maybe on the first Saturday of February, in the form of public agoras, where women from all communities, in all the regions of Ontario can get together, do pot luck, update the Declaration and strategize on what we should do when the government refuses to answer our demands. Local and regional autonomy will be encouraged. We will soon have a list of regional contacts around the province. We would like to translate the Declaration in other languages; suggestions as to resources for translation would be appreciated.

If you wish to endorse the Declaration for December 6, we will add the name of your organization to the list. Please call before 5 p.m., on Tuesday December 5 in Toronto:

Katryn Penwill, Oasis at (416) 923-9292; fax 923-8452, or

June Veacock, OFL at (416) 441-2731; fax 441-0722 in Ottawa:

Ghislaine Sirois, Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes: (613) 241-8433; fax: 241-8435.

Please circulate this memo and the Declaration in your networks. A French version of the Declaration is available on request. I can be reached, fax & phone at: (416) 763-2558; e-mail: acote@web.apc.org

En solidarité.

Ontario Womens Declaration
December 6, 1995

We, the women of Ontario, have assembled together to declare our opposition to the policies of the Conservative government, and to demand a radical change in the way it governs this province.

WHEREAS the Conservative government of Mike Harris has announced a staggering 8 billion dollar spending cut, including cuts of \$800 million in education, \$1.3 billion in hospital spending and \$1.4 billion in transfers to municipalities, representing 47% of their transfers in the next two years; and whereas it has taken the following steps since coming to power last June:

- a 21.6% reduction in social assistance recipients allowances;
- the elimination of grants for new non-profit child care centres;
- cutbacks in transportation services for the disabled; the elimination of funding for the prevention of spousal abuse;
- the elimination of funding to second-stage shelters for battered women;
- cutbacks in the funding of other shelter services;
- cutbacks in immigrant settlement programs;
- deep cuts in funding for the arts and culture;
- elimination of funding for new abortion clinics;
- cutbacks in the funds allocated to Childrens Aid, and a reduction in the services available to survivors of incest;
- a reduction in funding for social services adapted to the specific needs of cultural and racial minorities;
- cutbacks in the French-language services provided by municipalities and a number of government departments; cutbacks in the social services provided in French in several cities, including Toronto, Hamilton and Welland;
- elimination of funding for the gay and lesbian youth counselling telephone line;
- the adoption of new regulations that penalize women on social assistance if they share their dwelling

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with a man;
 cuts to family counselling services;
 the abolition of the Employment Equity Act;
 a freeze on expenditures for pay equity, and the elimination of pay equity for over a 100,000 women;
 the abolition of the Jobs Ontario job creation program;
 deep cutbacks in funding for low-income, co-operative and not-for-profit housing, and the privatization of public housing;
 cutbacks in the services provided to pregnant women;
 closing of the womens College Hospital in Toronto;
 cutbacks in funding for health services in hospitals and home care; a \$10 million cutback in the program providing home oxygen to the sick;
 the abolition of Bill 40, which prohibited the use of strike-breakers; the introduction of legislation jeopardizing major victories of the trade union movement;
 the implementation of a snitch-line against welfare recipients.
 allowing user fees on all drugs received by 380,000 seniors and 1.3 million people receiving social assistance, allowing pharmacists to charge most seniors a dispensing fees on each prescription drug that they buy, in addition to imposing on them a \$100 a year user fees.
 allowing municipalities to impose user fees for such things as garbage collection, visits to public parks and library services;
 allowing community colleges and universities to raise tuition fees by 15%, and , respectively;
 making it easier for municipalities to privatize public services, such as public utilities;
 allowing for increased property and school taxes.

WHEREAS the Harris government has announced its intention to take the following measures within the near future:

the dismantling of rent control legislation;
 the introduction of workfare;
 cutbacks in the legal aid budget;
 the elimination of legal clinics such as the Pay Equity Advocacy and Legal Services;
 amendment of the Employment Standards Act to limit potential claims by employees who have lost their jobs because their workplace was shut down;
 a watering down of the environmental protection regulations;
 the abolition of the Advocacy Commission and the repeal of the Advocacy Act;
 cutbacks in the procedures for monitoring the health and safety of working women, such as inspection of hazardous working conditions;
 abolition of the subsidies for 68,000 day care spaces;
 a redefinition of the concept of disability, and possible elimination of the financial support given to thousands of disabled persons;

WHEREAS the government is threatening to cut back funding to womens groups who criticize its policies, thereby demonstrating lack of understanding of the role of these groups in the democratic process and an attitude similar to that of abusive men who try to control their partners through threats and violence;

WHEREAS the Harris government has aligned itself with international finance and business interests in limiting the role of state intervention to action that will benefit only the affluent class, and has already committed itself to the following policies:

the abolition of annual filing fees for corporations, at a cost of \$15 million to the public treasury;
 a 30% reduction in income taxes in the next three years for a total loss in government revenue of \$5

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billion.

WHEREAS the immediate and future effects of these measures will be:

increased poverty for the most vulnerable women;
 increased poverty of children, with one in three children living in Toronto currently being on welfare;
 a deterioration in the living conditions of the population as a whole;
 a deterioration in housing conditions and increased homelessness;
 a loss of autonomy for the disabled;
 continued barriers to employment for women, and in particular women of colour, aboriginal women and disabled women, or their confinement to job ghettos with no opportunity for promotion;
 increased family violence;
 the confinement of women to their traditional role in the family;
 increased unemployment, with a predicted direct job loss of 4,300 and an indirect loss of up to 120,000 jobs;
 a deterioration in the health and well being of women;
 the loss of public day care;
 a deterioration in womens working conditions; the further erosion of the environment; increased vulnerability of working women to sexual and racial harassment; the erosion of Francophones entitlement to French- language services; the erosion of the rights of cultural and ethnic minorities to health and social services adapted to their needs; the increase in womens workload due to the cuts in health and social services; the erosion of womens right to participate in full equality in the democratic process; the deterioration of social solidarity; the increased vulnerability, dependency and domination of women.

We can only conclude that the Harris government is waging a veritable war against women.

We believe that the policies being implemented by the government violate the fundamental rights of women that are guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and international human rights law. For example:

The cutbacks in social assistance violate the right to an adequate standard of living... including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions as guaranteed in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (article 11).

The introduction of workfare will violate the right to a freely chosen or accepted job, and the right to just and favourable conditions, equal remuneration for work of equal value without discrimination, as guaranteed in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (articles 6 and 7).

The cutbacks in support programs for battered women and in domestic violence prevention programs endanger the life, liberty and physical and psychological security of women, protected in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (section 7). They are inconsistent with the obligation to develop approaches based on prevention that promote the protection of women against all forms of violence and guarantee the establishment of specialized services, as set out in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted by the UN General Assembly in February 1994, (article 4).

When the government violates its constitutional and international obligations in regard to womens rights, it goes beyond the bounds of legality, and acts illegally. In so doing, the Harris government has lost all legitimacy in our eyes.

Page 3 of 4

On this 6th of December 1995, we the women of Ontario commit ourselves to defending the fundamental rights of our mothers, our sisters, our daughters, our friends, our lovers and our neighbours. We will fight to defend the hard-won legal, economic, social and political gains women have achieved throughout the 20th century. As the many thousands of women who met in Beijing last September chanted: We are not going back!

We hereby put the Harris government on notice that it must forthwith cease its policies of cutbacks; they are discriminatory and they are destroying the services and support networks that have been developed over the last thirty years.

We demand that this government radically reorient its approach to the administration of public affairs, and we call on it to govern fairly and equitably, and to refrain from exercising its power solely in the interests of big business and businessmen.

its administration must be egalitarian, that is, it must tend to decrease, and not increase, the social and economic disadvantages of women, and of men in historically disadvantaged groups;

its administration must be equitable, that is, it must accord equal protection and benefit to women and men of all colours, ethnic or cultural origins, sexual orientation and social status, in terms of both its policy and program objectives and the methods by which they are administered;

its administration must be legal, and it must be consistent with the universal principles of fundamental justice. In particular, it must respect human dignity and freedom and the equality and independence of women;

its actions must be guided by the principle of universality, and its programs must be delivered effectively and efficiently to everyone living within the provinces borders.

We demand that the government order an immediate moratorium on all cutbacks or reductions in services that might increase the disadvantage suffered by women.

We demand that the government tell us, by March 8, 1996, International Womens Day, what concrete steps it intends to take to promote the rights of women and to restore, preserve, strengthen and promote the following rights, laws, programs and services:

a public child care system; access to affordable housing and rent control; the right to work and to benefit from just and favourable working conditions; pay equity; public transportation in cities and outlying areas; the right to health; measures aimed at spousal abuse and sexual assault; income security; French-language rights and services; legal aid; the reinstatement of Bill 40, and the full recognition of trade union rights; the Employment Equity Act; the rights of aboriginal peoples; health and social services adapted to the specific needs of minority communities; citizenship rights for immigrant women; occupational health and safety; the right to education.

We will await the reply of the Harris government next March 8.

We the women of Ontario consider that this is a state of emergency. We formally notify the government of Ontario that if it continues to attack the rights of women, we will take all steps necessary to secure and defend our legitimate rights. womens groups will not bow down to threats and attacks by the government.

We will resist all forms of subordination.

(disponible en français)

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Appendix C:

Ministry of Community and Social Services Shelters Annual Reports Received

Agency	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
Annual Report Available	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No
Redwood	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
North York	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Emily Stowe	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Andriyan	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Interval	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Yorktown/Samaroo	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
YWCA	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Ernestine	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Women in Transition	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Womens Habitat	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
** if records destroyed as per records schedule please explain											

Appendix D:
Ministry of Community and Social Services
Salary Ranges (2003–2004) for Shelter Staff

Position Title	Salary Range
Executive Director	\$51,572 - \$78,446
Volunteer Coordinator	\$8,198 - \$35,853
Relief Counsellors	\$12,999- \$45,451
Administrative Assistant	\$32,328- \$40,000
Children's Advocate	\$36,428 - \$48,576
Program Manager	\$45,000 - \$59,030
Children's Programmer	\$7,611 - \$30,282
Counsellors	\$32,613 - \$44,815

— 2003-04

Appendix E:
Historical African/Black Women Pseudonyms

1. *Sojourner* Truth
2. Queen *Nefertiti*
3. *Harriet* Tubman
4. *Calypso* Rose
5. *Audre* Lorde
6. Queen *Nana*
7. *Zora* Neale Hurston
8. Miriam *Makeba*
9. *Esmeralda* Ribeiro
10. *Portia* White
11. *Assata* Shakur
12. *Fannie* Lou Hamer
13. *Buchi* Emecheta
14. *Claudia* Jones
15. Diana *Wiwa*
16. *Angela* Davis

Appendix F:
Research Information Flyer and Letter



ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR
STUDIES IN EDUCATION
OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF TORONTO
252 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5S 1V6
Telephone: (416) 923-6641

African/Black Women Participants Needed!

You are invited to participate in a research study about the experiences of African/Black women working in the woman abuse shelter community in Toronto.

The research project is called: *Resistance Education: African/Black Women Shelter Workers Perspectives*.

If you are an African/Black woman who has worked between 1995-2005 in woman abuse shelters for over 2 years as a part-time, relief, or full-time, counsellor, children's advocate worker or in any other employed capacity in a Collectively run or Executive Director run shelter, you are eligible to participate.

The purpose of this study is to explore the following areas:

- To record the experiences of African/Black women working in the woman abuse shelter community in Toronto, focusing particularly on how factors such as race, class, sexual orientation, age and disability affect their work.
- To develop and use an art-based methodology to enhance the data collection process, and to evaluate whether it might be a useful resource for African/Black women shelter workers to support equity in their workplaces.
- To contribute to current theoretical debates in the areas of anti-colonialism, anti-racism, feminism, and women and violence.

This study will use an art-based methodology. Art-making* (including poetry, writing, drawing) will be used throughout the research process, during interviews and focus groups. Participants are allowed to withdraw from this study at any time.

All interviews and focus groups will be kept confidential. There will be no cost to you nor will you receive payment for your participation. TTC tickets and a light snack will be provided at the focus groups.

Roberta K. Timothy, the researcher**, is a Doctoral candidate at OISE/UT.

She will be conducting interviews of 1½ -2 hours and a 4-hour focus group with participants during April 2005-June 2005.

Appendix G:
Interview and Focus Group Guides for May–June 2005

Resistance Education: African/Black Women Shelter Workers Perspectives
Semi-structured Interview Guide

What this research project is about:

This proposed research examines African/Black women employed in woman abuse shelters in Toronto, focusing particularly on how factors such as race, class, sexual orientation, age and disability affect their work experiences. The research aims at recording the experiences of these workers through the use of an art-based methodology.

Purpose

- To develop and use an art-based methodology to enhance the data collection process, and to evaluate whether it might be a useful resource for African/Black women shelter workers to support equity in their workplaces.
- To contribute to current theoretical debates in the areas of anti-colonialism, anti-racism, feminism, and women and violence.
- To foster resistance.

My experience:

I have worked in many shelters in Toronto as a children's advocate worker, counsellor, and group facilitator.

I work from an anti-colonial framework.

Emily Stowe, Interval house, Redwood, Stop 86, Nellie's

Art-making for this project may include journaling, poetry, storytelling, painting, mural making, drumming, etc.

1) General personal information

- Age
- Ethnicity/Country of Origin
- Education
- Language(s) spoken
- Immigration status
- Length of time in Canada (if applicable)
- Children
- Sexual orientation
- Class affiliation
- (Dis)ability

- **How did you find out about this project?**
- **Why did you agree to participate in this study?**
- **Do you have any expectations about participating in this study?**
- **Do you use the term/terms African women and/ or Black Women to identify yourself?**

I will mention some words. Please define these terms based on your work and lived experiences?

- Feminism
- Colonialism
- Racism
- Classism
- Sexism
- Heterosexist/ Homophobia
- Ageism
- Ableism
- Equity
- Resistance

2) Shelter Work Information

Information recounting your work in the women abuse shelter community in Toronto.

- How long have you worked in shelters?
- What is some of the other work you have done?
- What are some reasons for choosing shelter work?
- Number of shelters working in or that you worked in?
- Do you work with people other than women abuse survivors at your shelter?
- How long have or did you work at each shelter?
- Have you worked in Collective or Executive Director run shelters?
- What are the advantages and draw backs of the Collective and Hierarchical shelter models?
- What are some of your position(s) held at shelter(s)?
- What are some of the services that you have delivered within the shelter?
- Are you aware of any anti-oppression/anti-discrimination policies at the shelter?
- Are these policies implemented?
- Are these policies relevant for the day to day running of the shelter and for work interactions?

3) Artistic Representation

- What are some of your experiences using the Arts?
- Do you have experiences with art-making, in your life, work in shelters, with abused women, co-workers.
- What are your feelings about using artistic representation in this research?
- What are your feelings about using artistic representations as a way to collect information?
- What are your feelings about using artistic representations and as a resource to support equity in your workplace?
- What are your feelings about using artistic representations to foster resistance?.

3 Art-Making exercises

- Using words and/or images, locate who you are in relation to factors such as race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation and (dis)ability.
- Using words and/or images represent a good day, a bad day, and a normal day, working at the shelter.
- Using words and/or images, describe what an equitable working environment would look and feel like.

4) Shelter workers' experiences and perceptions

- What are some of your experiences as an African/Black woman working in woman abuse shelters in Toronto?
- What is the impact of factors such as race, class, age, sexual orientation and disability on your work in woman abuse shelters?
- Have you experienced oppression/discriminatory attitudes, procedures and/or practices towards you while working in the shelter?
- As a shelter worker what is your anti-oppression/ anti-discriminatory philosophy in relation to your work?
- Have government cuts in funding over the last 10 years impacted your experiences working in shelters?
- Are there many Women of African descent working in the shelters that you work in?
- How are your relationships with other Women of African descent who work in the shelter? "Women of Colour" and other Women?
- Do you have coping strategies for dealing with experiences of discrimination at your workplace?
- What are some strategies and recommendations for dealing with oppression/discrimination in woman abuse shelters?
- Recommendations for anti-racist policies in shelters

5) Follow-up

- Based on interview, identify other issues that you would like to discuss in the focus group.
- Focus group will deal with resistance and action.

What days and time is good for the focus group?

What is the best time to contact you?

Any other questions/comments?

Focus Group

1. Introduction and welcome (15 min)

- a) Confidentiality and anonymity
- b) Comfort rules

- c) Journaling process/artistic representations
- d) TTC tokens

**2. Locating yourself
(20 min)**

- Who are you? Based on factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation etc.?
- *Who you are in relation to working in the WAC in Toronto?
- Exchange representation with another person and explain who you are and who your partner is in relation to working in WAC.

**3. Brainstorm a list of areas to be discussed based on experience working in shelters
(10 min)**

- Based on issues outlined in brainstorming exercise Fill in the shelters acrostic relating it to your experience as African/Black women working in shelters. (Show big size example of an acrostic)/ RESISTANCE

a) Take one or two issue from the list to depict- Using words/images/Colour etc. what has your experience been working in women abuse shelters as African/Black women?

(Group mural 10 min)

**4. b) How has racism, colonialism and other types of violence impacted your experiences working in shelters?
(Group mural 10 min)**

5. a) What would an anti-colonial, anti-discriminatory work environment feel and look like? (Story/Mural 10 min)

6. b) What resistance means to you in relation to your experiences working in WAS?*
How have you resisted? (10 min)

Group discussion (20 min)

- c) Brainstorm a list of Future strategies for collective resistance/change (10)

6. Feeling ideas participating in this project

- What is your experience using the arts and

creative expression in this project?

- What is your experience participating in this project?
 - Usefulness of creative expression/art
 - Could anti-colonial art-based methodology be used in your workplace?
 - What supports would be needed?
 - Could or do you see this being useful in your life? **(5 min)**
7. What do want to be done with this research?
(5min)
8. One minute of resistance (drumming)
 - Check out/ shake off exercise
(5 min)

Appendix H:
Participants' Comfort Rules for Focus Groups

COMFORT RULES MADE BY FOCUS GROUPS PARTICIPANTS

COMFORT RULES
FOCUS GROUP 2
JUNE 2, 2005

- **Confidentiality**
- **Respecting each other**
- **Not personalizing**
- **Personalized**
- **Not interrupting**
- **Listening**

COMFORT RULES
FOCUS GROUP 3
JUNE 10, 2005

- **One person speaking at a time**
- **Speaking in the eye**
- **Respecting peoples opinions**
- **Listening Active**

Appendix I:
Brainstorm List of Women's Experiences and Issues
Discussed in Focus Groups

BRAINSTORMED LIST OF EXPERIENCES/ISSUES DISCUSSED IN FOCUS GROUP TWO

- Stereotypes of Black Women, i.e. misunderstood, misinterrupted, aggressive, experience of violence, racism, classism, heterosexism, homophobia.
- Women do not take care of each other
- Resistance
- Invisible caregivers
- Nurturing role, positive and challenging
- Diversity among African/Black women
- Conversation/experiences of African/Black lesbian women in shelters
- Relationships between African/Black women in shelters
- Positive experiences working in shelters
- Taking care of ourselves/ "sexy"/ being in our bodies, resistance
- Hierarchy-White on top
 - Token-Black manager/Asian
 - Screwing up
 - Other staff –different women of Colour
 - Frontline staff-large percentage of Black women
 - Crabs in a barrel
 - No voice
- Elder Black women

BRAINSTORMED LIST OF EXPERIENCES/ISSUES DISCUSSED IN FOCUS GROUP THREE

- Relationship between African/Black women in shelters
- Hierarchy
 - ED-White women
 - Middle management-women of colour
 - Frontline-Black women
 - Black/African lesbians
 - Elder women-burn out
 - Black management not respected
 - Black on Black violence in the shelters (internalized colonialism)
 - Issues of power/powerlessness (perceptions collectively and individually)
 - Stereotypes of African/Black women
 - Unintelligent –

RACISM
 - No power to help them

- **Internalized White supremacy**
- **Fear**
- **Black women leadership/treatment**

Appendix J:
Shelter Survey

Dear Colleagues,

For over 15 years, I have worked in various women abuse shelters in Toronto as a counsellor, children's advocate worker, and group facilitator. Currently, I am doing research on the experiences of Black women/Women of African descent working in women abuse shelters in Toronto. I am trying to compile statistics of the demographic, and linguistic makeup of Black women/Women of African descent shelter workers. Your organizations participation in this survey would be very helpful for this research project. All shelter names will remain anonymous unless shelters choose to reveal their identities.

Please answer the following questions in regards to Black women/Women of African descent shelter workers:

1. What is the total number of women (shelter workers) employed at your shelter?
 - ❖ # Of Relief - Part-time, Shift workers, Counsellors, Children's advocate workers:
 - ❖ # Of Full -Time or Collective Member - Counsellors, Children's advocate Workers:
 - ❖ # Of Managers
 - ❖ # Of Administrators
 - ❖ # Other
 - ❖ # Total:

2. How many Black Women/Women of African descent work at your shelter?
 - ❖ #Of Relief- Part-time, Shift workers, Counsellors, Children's advocate workers:
 - ❖ #Of Full -Time or Collective- Counsellors, Children's Advocate workers:
 - ❖ #Of Administrators:
 - ❖ #Of Executive Directors
 - ❖ #Of Managers (Collective):
 - ❖ #Of Managers (Hierarchical):

❖ Total#:

3. What parts of the world do the Black Women/Women of African descent shelter workers come from:

- ❖ Africa
- ❖ Caribbean
- ❖ Central and South America
- ❖ North America (Canada, United States of America, Mexico)
- ❖ Europe
- ❖ Other countries (please be specific)

4. What are some of the languages spoken by Black women/Women of African descent shelter workers?

5. Has the ethnic background of shelter workers in your shelter changed in the last 15 years (1985-2005). Yes or No? Please explain:

6. If possible, please send any statistics of the cross-cultural backgrounds of shelter workers in your organization from 1985–2005.

Thank you for taking time to fill out this survey!

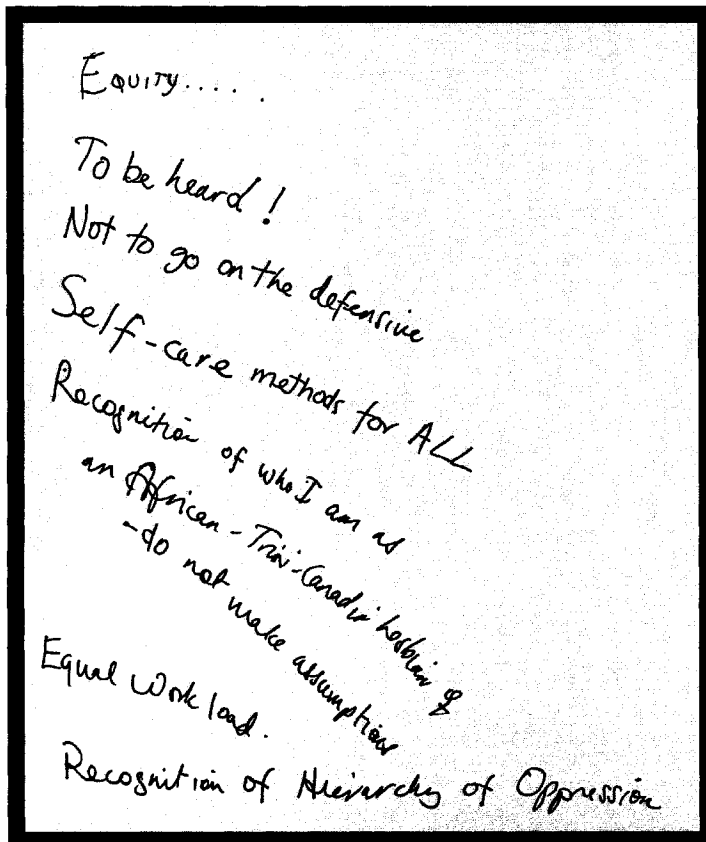
Warmest regards,

Roberta K. Timothy (Ph. D Candidate)

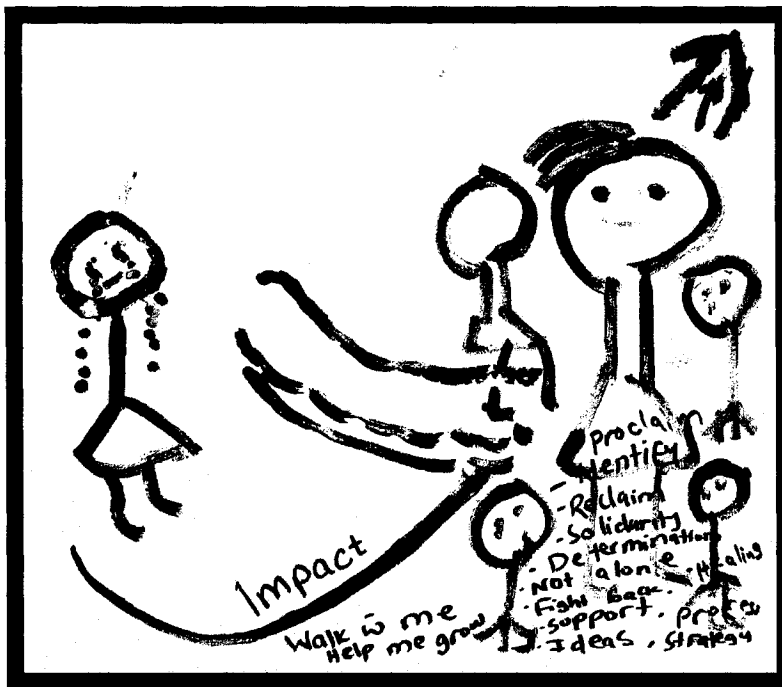
Please send completed survey to:

Email: rtimothy@oise.utoronto.ca

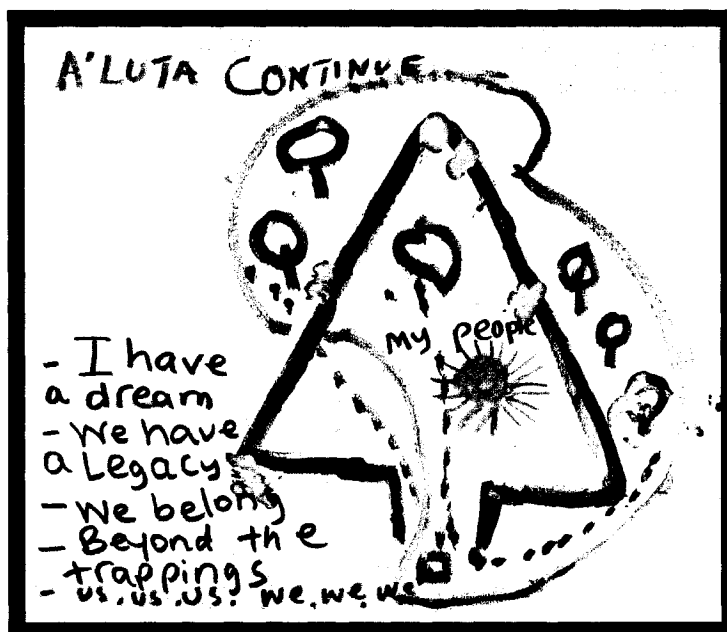
Appendix K:
Additional Creative Resistance Representations
Done by African/Black Women Shelter Workers



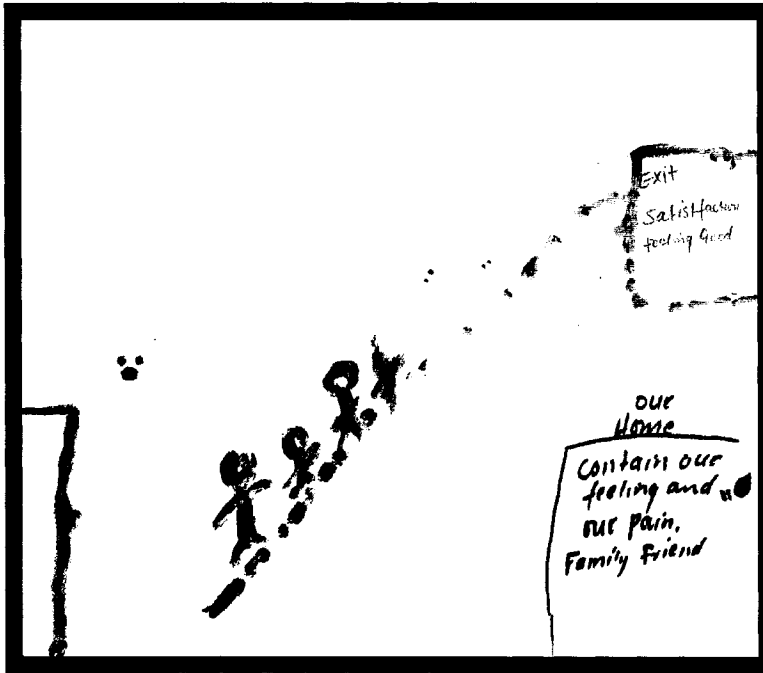
Afrotrini: Equity in the Workplace



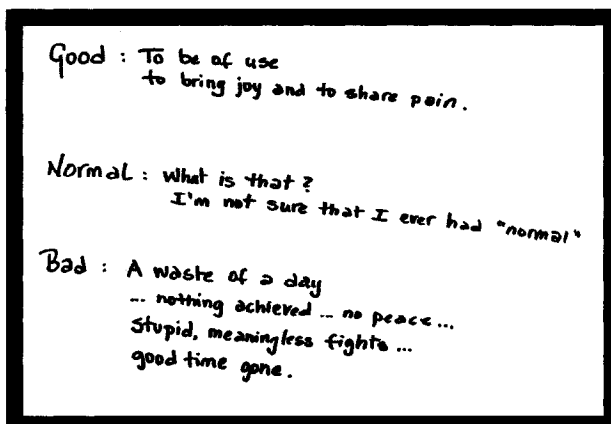
Angela experiences of violence working in the shelters



Angela: Resistance, focus group 1



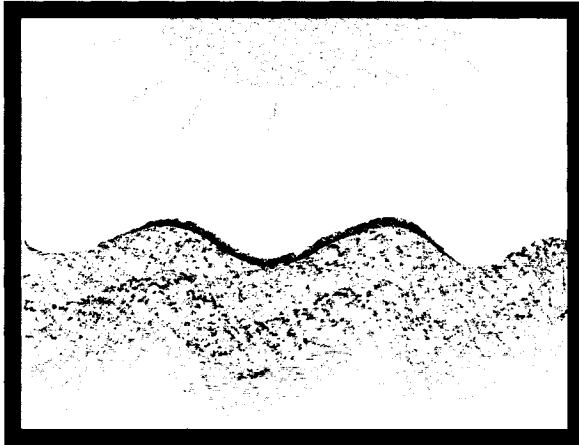
Assata: Impact of oppression



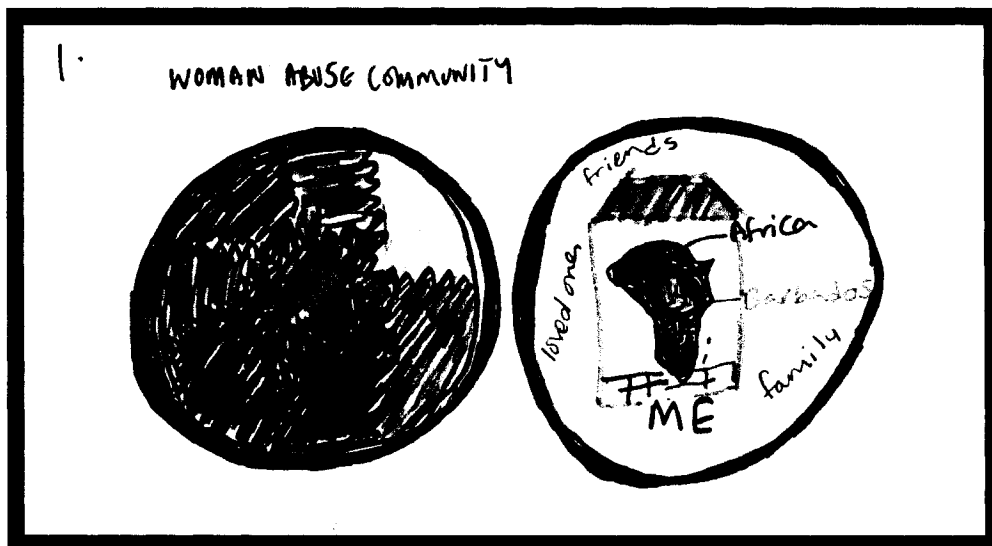
Audre: Good day, normal day and bad day working at the shelters

- Good day would be when one woman gets her rights - Home - Custody - deciding that she will not return to an abuser and knowing I have made a change
- Normal day at Nellies is dealing with Crisis
- When ~~one~~ ^{we} have to discharge a woman and find that she is again a victim and is on her own again after giving false hope of support and friendship.

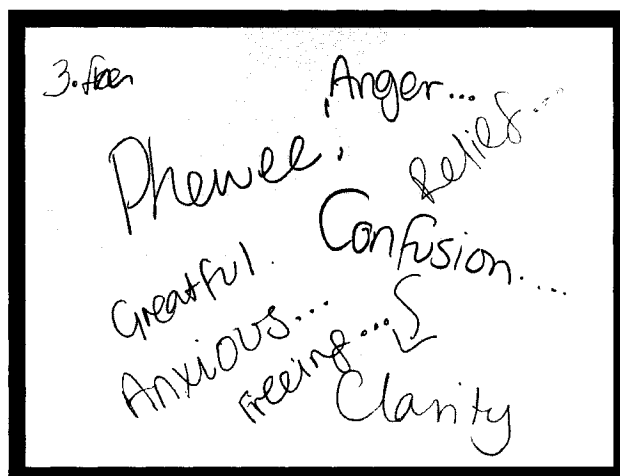
Buchi: Good day, normal day, bad day working at the shelters



Calypso: Equity in the workplace



Calypso: Who I am in the woman abuse shelter community



Calypso: Journal

Resistance means - getting up
every day going to work same
and leaving same

Resistance means not losing touch
with myself, and my clients

Resistance dealing with isms inside
and outside of the work environment

Resistance - speaking up and challenging

Resistance fighting for my clients

Calypso: Notes on Resistance p. 1

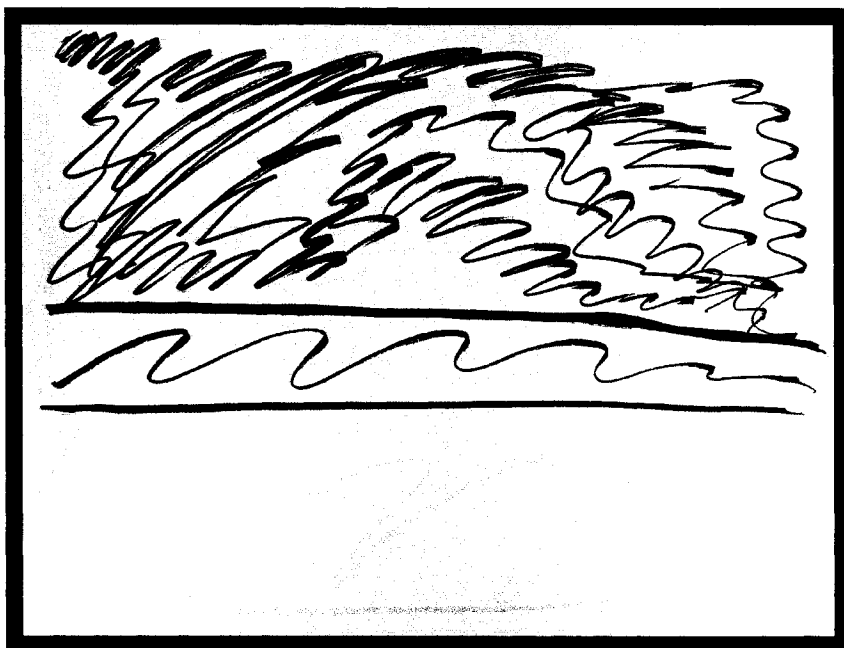
rights in oppressive system

Resistance staying healthy

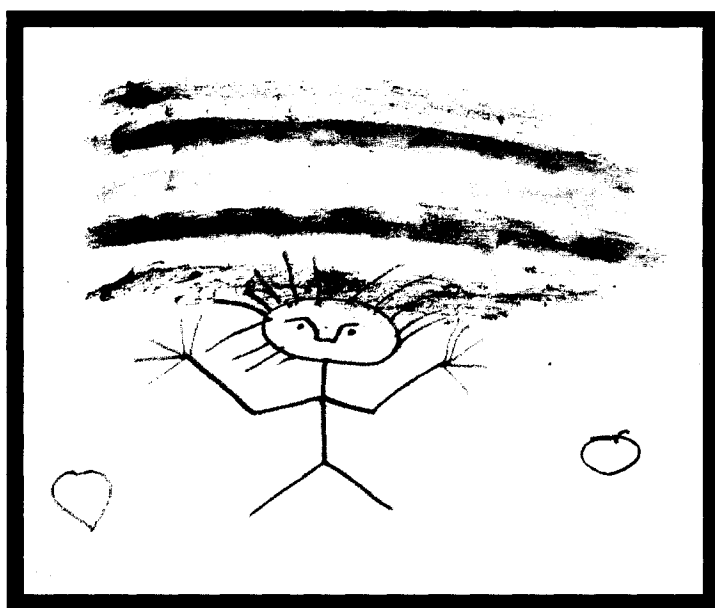
taking breaks, not overworking

~~Resist~~

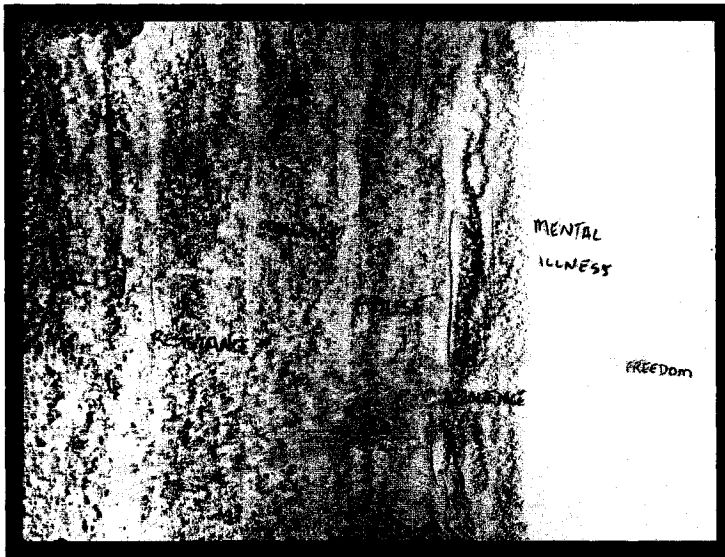
Calypso: Notes on Resistance p.2



Esmeralda: Equity in the workplace



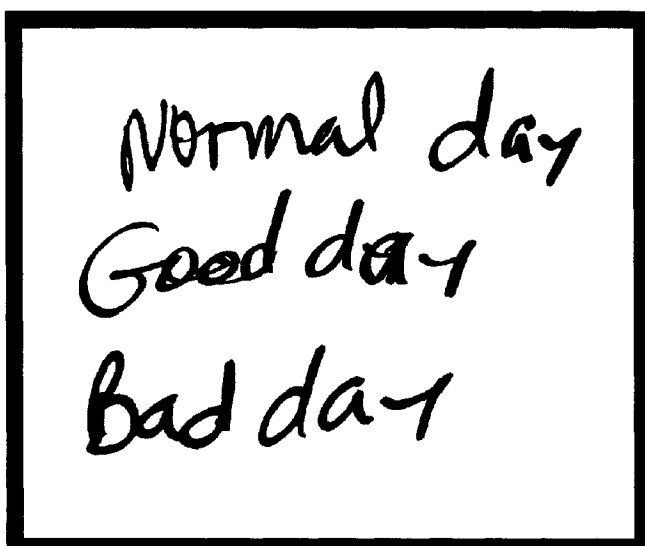
Fannie: Focus group



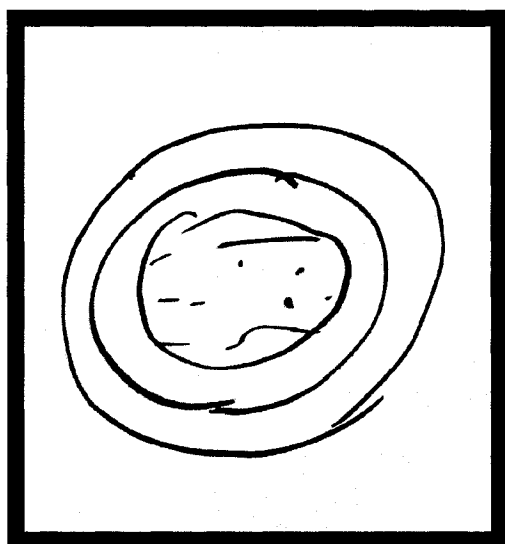
Harriet: Good day, bad day, normal day at the shelter



Harriet: Equitable work environment



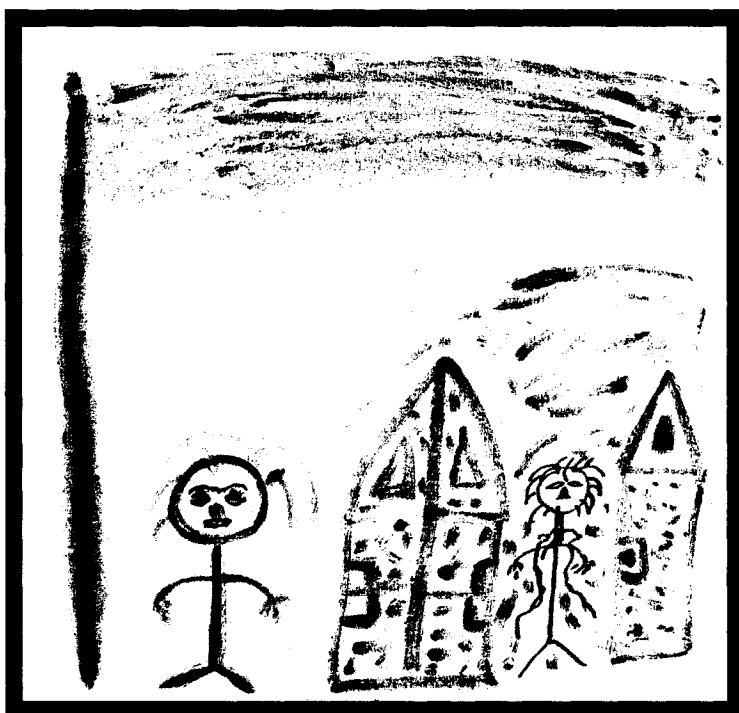
Makeba: Good day, normal day, bad day at the shelter



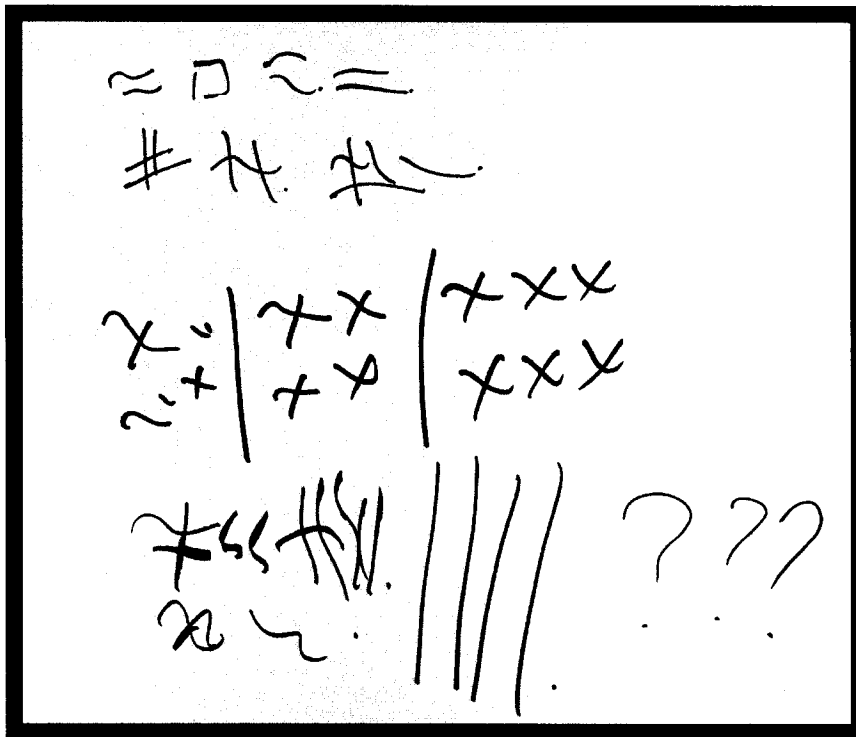
Makeba: Equity in the workplace



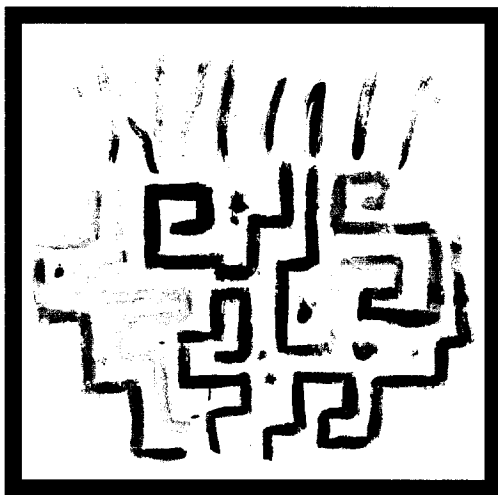
Nana: Who am I in the shelter. Focus group.



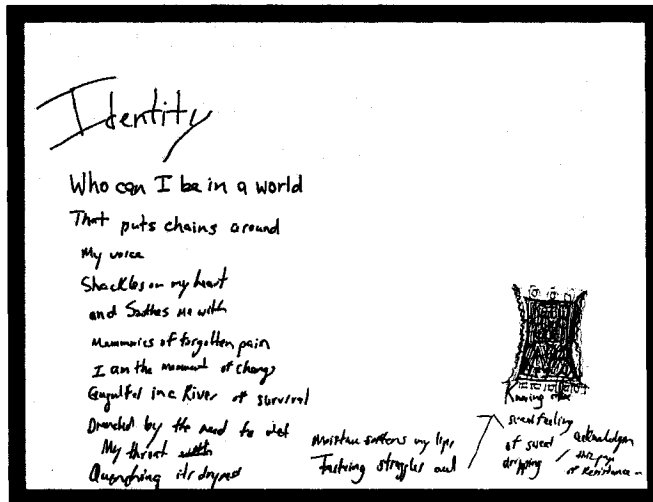
Nana: Focus group



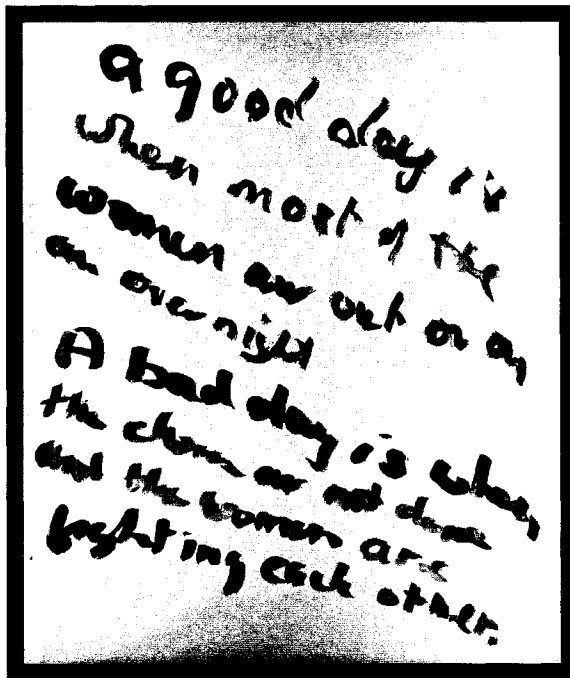
Nefertiti: Good day, normal day, bad day at the shelter



Nefertiti: Focus group



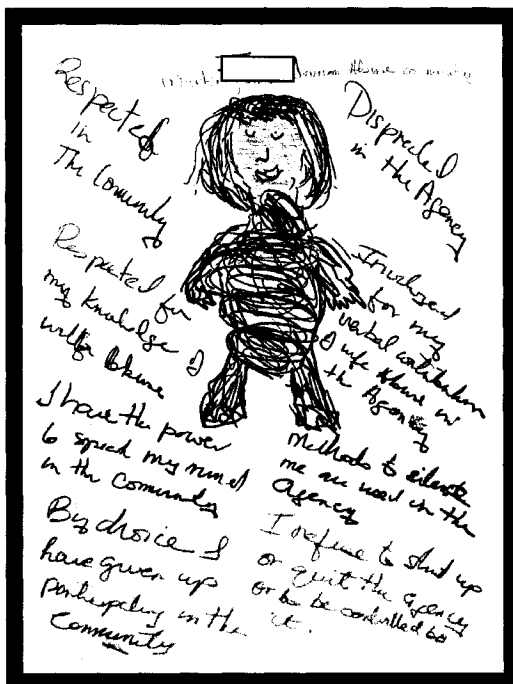
Roberta Timothy: Self reflection



Sojourner: Good day, normal day, bad day at the shelter



Sojourner: Equity in the workplace



Sojourner: Notes from journal

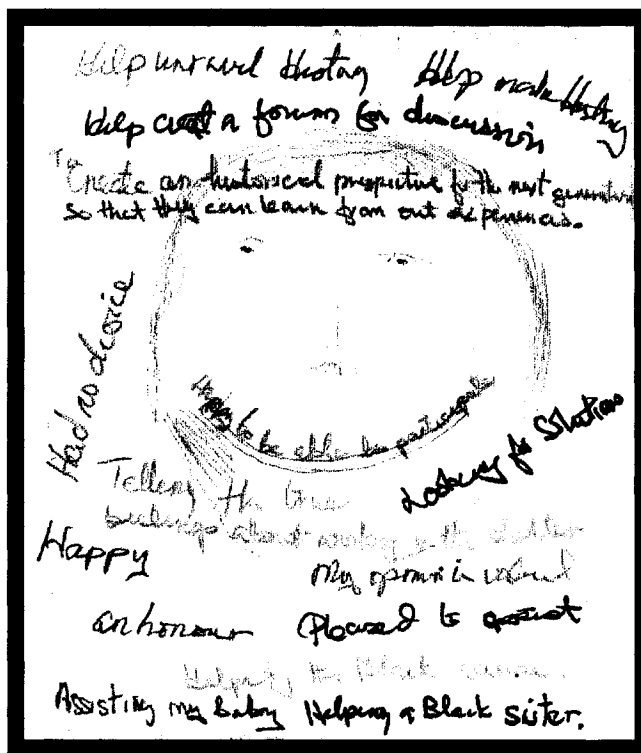
You can be called all sorts of names but they can't call you stupid.

Be very professional in your execution of your duties so that you can defend your actions when necessary.

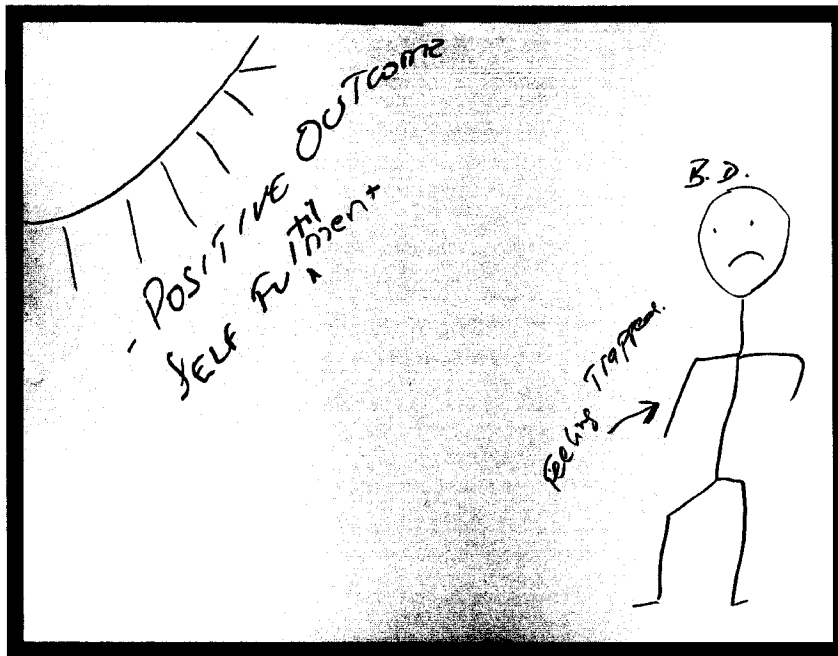
Treat your Black sisters with respect even if they are not very respectful of you. Don't fight with them in public but kick them all in private. Don't let the other race have fun at your sister's expense. Call your sister on her internalized racism if you can by gently explaining another side of the story. If you are in management situations show respect so that she knows that you care.

Stand up for what you believe in then take a break from the fight, then reevaluate and return it is a fight to the finish - your finish.

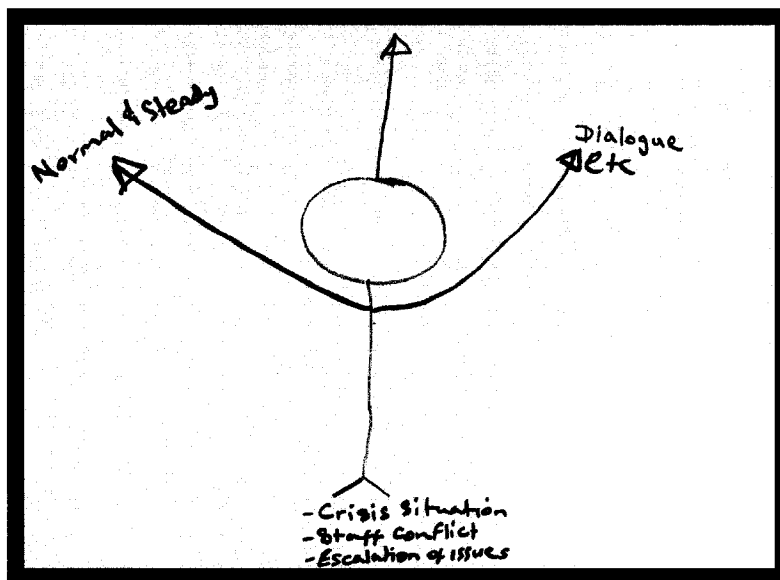
Sojourner: Notes from journal



Sojourner: focus group



Wiwa: Good day, normal day, bad day at the shelter



Zora: Good day, normal day, bad day at the shelter