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Koritha Mitchell (*center*)

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LOVE IN ACTION
Noting Similarities between Lynching Then and Anti-LGBT Violence Now

by Koritha Mitchell

> I use the word "love" here not merely in the personal sense but as a state of being, or a state of grace—not in the infantile American sense of being made happy but in the tough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth.
>
> —*James Baldwin*

> At my job I am the only out, visibly black woman in the college—when I remind colleagues that I am integrating the university but have no National Guard to help me do so, they are both surprised by the fact of my uniqueness and puzzled by my recourse to *that* history to drive home my point. Queers have long since been cautioned to stay away from the use of the moniker "civil rights" . . . To whose body does this history truly belong?
>
> —*Sharon Holland*

> If you are silent about your pain, they'll kill you and say you enjoyed it.
>
> —*Unknown*

At the 2012 Callaloo Conference, participants examined a topic too seldom explored in intellectual spaces: *love*. One panel in particular demanded that I continue to wrestle with its implications. I had the honor of moderating "Queering Love," the session in which Marlon Ross and Sharon Holland gave theoretically challenging presentations. Aside from offering powerful arguments, each made what seemed to be sidebar comments that left a lasting impression. Ross reminded us that, despite declarations to the contrary, it is a myth that black communities are exceptionally homophobic. He noted that African Americans have always recognized and accepted a range of sexual expression.[1] Yet, even as Ross urged us to maintain our faith in the community's welcoming spirit, Holland noted the danger of viewing the community as a family because it has yet to make space for lesbians. "We are not fully within the fold," she said to me after the panel.

Both descriptions felt right to me. Black communities are not as homophobic as has become the mainstream contention,[2] and these communities do not fully embrace lesbians. How should I understand the truth of both statements? Might thinking these declarations

together be the essence of queering love?—of understanding it in more dynamic ways? And, because love is worthless without action, how might wrestling with the tension between Ross's and Holland's comments translate into action? If queering love would reveal deeper truths, then it would also necessitate ever more demanding acts, the quest and daring and growth that James Baldwin identified as the work of love. Ironically, violence showed me how to queer love—how to free it from predetermined boundaries—and to accept Baldwin's challenge to embrace *being and doing* as its fundamental imperative.

When Holland reminds us that she is integrating spaces without the help of the National Guard, she points to a threatening specter that hovers over her everyday existence. The threat will not retreat; violence can emerge as easily as a response to her queerness as to her blackness as to her womanness. Very often in this country, it is violence that stands at the intersection of those identity categories. Facing this reality is not about accepting victimization as the distinguishing feature of one's identity. After all, it is not identity that is the problem, but rather, the country's aggressive heteronormativity, racism, and sexism. To identify these congregating oppressions is to claim agency—by telling the truth about the environment the United States creates for some of its citizens. Potentially needing the National Guard says much more about American society than about a queer black woman.

Studying lynching for the past fifteen years has taught me that violence is used to mark who belongs and who does not, so challenging it requires resisting the belief that those targeted have no rightful claim to space. To critique aggression is to insist that its targets deserve inclusion, not just tolerance. In the process, one must refuse to surrender to shame, the most powerful partner violence has. Because it polices the borders of mainstream acceptability, violence is supported by victim-blaming, by discourses and practices based on the belief that victims somehow "asked for it."[3] Because violence most often plagues those whom society encourages us to abandon, denouncing violence empowers us to embrace them. Thus, I analyze violence as a way of asserting the citizenship of marginalized groups, a way of insisting that those targeted belong to me and mine, and that we have a rightful place in the body politic.[4]

As a result, I cannot ignore the parallels I see between lynching at the last turn of the century and the violence plaguing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities today. Both forms of brutality emerge from an investment in denying citizenship, and both are designed to naturalize that denial.[5] Critiquing violence is one way to take up the love-inspired task of quest and daring and growth; given that both forms of violence limit the life chances of those targeted, both are relevant to anyone committed to equality and equity. As community organizer Mandy Carter puts it, "Are we about justice? Or, are we about just us?"[6] Here, I add my voice to the countless LGBT activists who have been working to disrupt the nation's tendency to kill . . . while saying the victim deserved and enjoyed it.

Why Go There?

Why would anyone link anti-LGBT violence to the history of lynching? Why would a scholar who understands the brutality of racial violence at the last turn of the century

suggest that attacks on LGBT communities be viewed through that lens? I can almost hear skeptics saying, "If you want to oppose the violence perpetrated against queers, fine, but leave lynching out of it." Or, "Yes, I've noticed transgender people seem to be particularly targeted, but that's *nothing* like lynching." Of course, the thousands who lost their lives to mob violence lived and died in a particular historical moment. Their suffering and that of their families should never be used as a prop that gets trotted out simply to make an argument for someone else's pain. The implications of their deaths are not exactly transferable across space and time. And yet, by taking seriously the particular practices that exerted lethal pressure on them 100 years ago, it becomes clear that similar forces remain at work today. Far from diminishing the horror of lynching by drawing parallels to today's anti-LGBT violence, this essay identifies similarities in order to expose the terror of *both* historical moments, along with the purpose of violence then and now.

Many are suspicious of any attempt to compare the plight of African Americans to that of LGBT people. The images conjured by the term "Civil Rights" are those of blacks being hosed down and attacked by dogs as they peacefully march for recognition of their citizenship. When one mentions LGBT people, what comes to mind is a middle-class white man who would enjoy unbound privilege if he would simply "keep his sexual preferences to himself." Equating the injustices heaped on African Americans with an otherwise privileged white man being denied the right to marry seems to diminish the price paid for the progress blacks presumably enjoy.[7]

Granted, many attempts to draw parallels between what gays experience and what blacks encounter have been troubling and devoid of any investment in the lives of people of color,[8] but that does not invalidate all comparisons. After all, we need not declare that the wrongs suffered are identical in order to recognize that they deserve to be addressed.[9] As *Sharon Lettman-Hicks, Executive Director and CEO of the National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC), put it, "Do we (the LGBT community) get hosed down and dogs sicced on us? No. But w*e're comparing how our community is treated, from a so-called civil society—the overt discrimination and bigotry." In other words, what the movements for Civil Rights and for LGBT Rights have in common is also what matters most: " . . . the core values are the same: No one should be discriminated against for who they are, whether that is on the basis of race, class, gender identity or sexual orientation" (Lettman-Hicks).

I see her *point, but the images* that typically come to mind when speaking of "Civil Rights" versus "Gay Rights" are misleading, and studying violence helps us to see how mistaken we are when "Civil Rights" conjures dogs and segregated lunch counters and "Gay Rights" invokes marriage equality. First, these images risk relegating the Civil Rights Movement to the past. We assume we have made progress because "whites only" signs no longer hang in public spaces, but the struggle has not ended. What was accomplished by segregation and racial violence at the last turn of the century is achieved even more efficiently today by the War on Drugs and mass incarceration, which Michelle Alexander aptly terms *The New Jim Crow*. As Alexander explains, "Although some African Americans are doing very well—enrolling in universities and graduate schools at record rates thanks to affirmative action—as a group, African Americans are doing no better than they were when Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. . . . Nearly one-fourth of African Americans live below the poverty line today, approximately the same as in 1968" (233). Also, as of March 2013, the Voting Rights Act, which guards against long-standing traditions of

allowing only whites to vote, is being challenged and the Supreme Court has agreed to hear the challenge, despite the fact that voter suppression was one of the most consistent features of the 2012 election.[10]

Clearly, then, any suggestion that the fight against racial oppression took place in the past is misguided—though many have been seduced by such rhetoric. Even Bayard Rustin, the black man who organized the March on Washington but was kept in the background because of his sexuality, was attracted to the presumed inevitability of the country's post-racial moment. He declared in a 1986 speech, "Today, blacks are no longer the litmus paper or the barometer of social change. Blacks are in every segment of society and there are laws that help to protect them from racial discrimination. The new 'niggers' are gays. . . . The question of social change should be framed with the most vulnerable group in mind: gay people" (275). For some reason, Americans think of marginalized groups as if they must stand in line and patiently receive their justice one by one. In fact, black lesbian commentator Jasmyne Cannick explained in 2006, "It's a slap in the face to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people to take up the debate on whether to give people who are in this country illegally additional rights when we haven't even given the people who are here legally all of their rights. . . . While I agree that immigration reform is an important issue—and perhaps it could become the next leading civil rights movement—we haven't even finished with our current civil rights movement." It is never useful to rank oppressions,[11] so this stand-in-line thinking must be actively and consistently questioned. Why should we assume that seeking justice for any one marginalized population can wait until we declare an end to other struggles?[12]

Americans must also realize that images of dogs, fire hoses, and lunch counter harassment represent a sanitized version of the violence used to keep blacks in their "proper place." Just as lynchings between the 1890s and 1930s often included rape and castration, sexual violence remained a tool for terror in the 1940s and beyond. Americans may think of Rosa Parks as a demure lady who was tired one day and launched the Montgomery Bus Boycott, but she was actually an anti-rape activist. As historian Danielle McGuire makes clear, "That supposedly 'spontaneous' event was, in fact, the culmination of a deep history of gendered political appeals . . . for the protection of African American women from sexual and physical assault" (51). Parks understood what Fannie Lou Hamer knew firsthand, that "A black woman's body was never hers alone" (Chana Lee 9–10). These women recognized "profound truths about the sexualized violence that marked racial politics . . . during the modern civil rights movement" (McGuire xx). In other words, those who wanted to keep certain people in "their place" used every weapon imaginable.

Besides being misled by narrow depictions of the struggle for racial justice, Americans who think in terms of "Civil Rights" versus "Gay Rights" surrender to an inaccurate conception of who LGBT people are and what inspires the activists among them. First, not all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people are white! Too often, Americans speak as if LGBT people of color don't exist. For instance, when I say that violence against these communities reminds me of lynching, some are stunned simply because their recognition of such violence begins and ends with Matthew Shepard, as if people like Sakia Gunn never walked the earth.[13] Mental barriers result from more than assuming that LGBT victims are always white, though. Americans must also address the degree to which our ideas about racial oppression are gendered male. As Evelyn Simien argues in *Gender and Lynching*,

"when given the choice between being attentive to allegations of Black male victimization and being attentive to claims of Black female victimization, African Americans—men and women alike—prioritize the plight of their wounded Black male," thereby rendering "the sexual violation and torture of countless African American women invisible" (Simien 7, 8). Black feminists revealed a similar dynamic in the wake of the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill hearings. Despite his record of distancing himself from African Americans, it was his black *maleness* that allowed Thomas to cast himself as a victim of "a high-tech lynching." Many recognize racial injustice only when black men are wronged.[14] African American *group identity* has been formed around a very specific figure, then: *the black man*.[15] (Saying *the black man* is straight is redundant, right?) If the formulation of African American group identity has made black women's victimization illegible, it can certainly place the experiences of black LGBT people in the shadows.

In addition to accounting for the existence of LGBT people of color, we should note the work that the activists among them are doing. The most recognized platform in LGBT struggles is that of the Human Rights Campaign (HRC),[16] but black and brown activists have long insisted that the HRC agenda is not necessarily the same as theirs. They have consistently declared that the most pressing issues they face emerge when racism, classism, and heterosexism converge. Their work often centers on immigration, the prison industrial complex, the outrageous rates of homelessness among LGBT youth, and economic access and empowerment.[17] For example, after 9/11, South Asians of all classes (and countries of origin) began experiencing racial profiling, much of which resulted in deportations and split families (Liu and Sen 4). Coming together in that climate helped birth a partnership between two California-based organizations, Satrang, which focuses on LGBT-identified South Asians, and the South Asian Network. Together, these groups help community members with employment issues and healthcare (Liu and Sen 6–9).[18] Similarly, New York-based FIERCE has focused its energies on "gentrification—how racism and capitalism intersect in who has access to [public space]." The organization convinced health service providers "to see gentrification and attacks on public space as a public health issue" (Liu and Sen 13, 15). And, when FIERCE wanted to stop the development of an entertainment complex that would privatize more space, they formed a coalition best articulated by the signs displayed at a demonstration: "Soccer Moms and LGBTQ Youth, Unite!" (Liu and Sen 16). Clearly, LGBT activists of color often mobilize around projects that have little to do with marriage. As activist and author Kenyon Farrow puts it, he and his allies are motivated by the fact that these communities are "struggling with the most critical of needs (housing, food, gainful employment), which are not at all met by same-sex marriage."[19] As they work on a wide array of issues, these activists are equally and simultaneously people of color and important members of LGBT communities.

Given the difference between the agendas pursued by LGBT activists of color and the HRC, treating marriage equality as the primary LGBT issue requires ignoring black and brown voices. In the process, race and sexuality are pitted against each other. Whenever that happens, one's logic ends up "erasing a community that is living and loving at the intersection of our movements for racial justice and LGBT equality" (Lettman-Hicks). Knowing violence as well as I do, I refuse to contribute to that erasure.

Parallels between Lynching Then & Anti-LGBT Violence Now

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) has done the most comprehensive study of violence against LGBT communities. The latest report, released in 2012, is based on information collected throughout 2011. In that year, there were 2,092 reports of bias-motivated incidents related to assumptions about sexuality or gender expression. Of those, thirty were murders. Like lynching at the last turn of the century, the violence today against LGBT communities is more varied and widespread than can be duly described in one essay. I will therefore focus my discussion on the features noted in the NCAVP report that I find striking in light of my expertise regarding lynching. These include: 1) the mundane quality of the violence; 2) the role of authorities; 3) the degree to which the success of marginalized groups motivates assault; 4) the lack of bias classification; and 5) the pervasiveness of sexualized attacks.

1) Mundane Quality of the Violence

Most of us know lynching through the song "Strange Fruit": "Southern trees bear strange fruit/ Blood on the leaves, blood at the root/ Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze/ Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees."[20] Since Billie Holiday's 1939 recording, versions of the song have come from artists ranging from Nina Simone to Sting; from British reggae band UB40 to Dwayne Wiggins (formerly of Toni, Toni, Tone). As a result, generations of Americans have come to regard the hanging body as the best representation of mob destruction.

These lyrics therefore help to explain why gruesome images of lynch victims have become so influential. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, mobs did not simply kill African Americans; they often also had pictures taken, thereby producing evidence of their handiwork and mementos of the experience. In 2000, nearly 100 such photographs reentered circulation via museum exhibitions and a photography book called *Without Sanctuary* (Allen, et al.). If the lyrics of "Strange Fruit" made us imagine the hanging body, the photographs challenged us to face it, and many have risen to this challenge because we were already convinced that the mutilated corpse best illustrates lynching horror. The African American bodies depicted are often bullet-ridden, burned, or both. The images have commanded enough interest to take the sixty dollar book of photography into ten editions since 2000, and to sustain academic conferences and journal issues on racial violence, major museum exhibitions around the country, and a virtual exhibition on the World Wide Web.[21] Perhaps most remarkably, the pictures led the United States Senate to issue in June 2005 a formal apology for having never passed antilynching legislation.[22]

What do we see when we look at photos of lynch victims? In one sense, we see undeniable evidence of the nation's brutality toward African Americans.[23] These victims were killed and virtually no one paid for their murders, proving that racial violence was condoned by our democratic society.[24] Given that reality, even whites who did not participate in the violence benefited from it, because they could not relinquish the privileges it underwrote for them. The fact that a black person's rights could be disregarded only reinforced the idea that citizens were white—that whiteness indicated that a person's dignity and lib-

erty should be respected and protected. The denial of black citizenship made whiteness a prerequisite for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Effectively confirming this mentality, at least through 1908, it was legal to send picture postcards featuring mutilated lynch victims through the United States Postal Service.[25] The federal government simply did not suggest that such postcards might not be the American way. Why? Because denying African Americans dignity, respect, and citizenship was very much the American way.[26]

While providing evidence of the nation's brutality toward African Americans, lynching photographs also reveal that photography was an important part of the mob's work. Especially between 1890 and 1930, lynchings were frequently theatrical productions, so newspapers often announced the time and location so that crowds could gather. Spectators knew they would see familiar characters (so called black "rapists" and white "avengers") and that these characters would perform a predictable script of forced confession and mutilation. Souvenir hunting would complete the drama with audience participation but because the most coveted keepsakes (such as the victim's bones and burnt flesh) were in limited supply, pictures became souvenirs.[27]

These artifacts of brutality are important, and should not be ignored, but they can also distract us from the fact that violence against African Americans was often not spectacular at all. Even if their death was theatrical enough to draw crowds and summon photographers, prior to that moment, lynch victims' lives were shaped by daily violence that was as mundane as it was inescapable. In other words, lynching spectacles were simply dramatic extensions of the many ways that black citizenship was denied. Blacks were not free to do the simplest things, such as make eye contact with a white person. Indeed, African Americans "lived under the threat that any encounter with a white person could morph into a fatal one. They also knew that state authorities would not intervene on their behalf" (Williams 102). Thus, African Americans lived in "environments made hostile by their unrepentant attackers running free in their communities, by unsympathetic law enforcement officers . . . and by state and federal officials who did not want to hear [their] stories of violent attacks" (Williams 5).

As important, all racial customs hinged on creating hostility and reminding African Americans of their vulnerability. In the 1950s, bus drivers in the South routinely snubbed and bullied black passengers. Every day, "drivers short-changed African Americans, then kicked them off the bus if they asked for correct change" (McGuire 70). Equally important to producing the intended effect, drivers "demanded blacks give up their seats for whites, and forced them to pay their fare at the front of the bus and then enter via the rear" (McGuire 72).

Aggression took many forms, but they all served the same purpose: keeping African Americans aware of the low regard their peers and their nation had for them. If the spectacular violence captured in lynching photographs emerged out of an environment where hostility and intimidation shaped everyday life, then these pictures represent much more than they directly depict. When we see these images, we should think of the less dramatic forms of everyday violence that may not have taken a life but were designed to limit life by denying black independence, dignity, and citizenship.

Today's anti-LBGT violence is not typically captured in photographs that circulate as postcards, but when videotaped, it is shared online in ways that serve a similar purpose. To recognize the parallels, one must understand that lynching photographs "represent a

gruesome ritual of white identification" that helped whites feel a connection to each other, even when class differences, for example, usually kept them from interacting (Smith). This dynamic has long been a feature of American culture. As Deborah McDowell concludes, "black death has made good spectacle for [white] audiences who have relished it historically in every form, from fatal floggings to public lynchings" (154, 168). The cultural work achieved by such spectacles was intensified, Shawn Michelle Smith argues, when lynching photographs became postcards, souvenirs meant to be shared (121). Postcards "serve as mementos with which individuals mark sentimental bonds with others—'I was there and I thought of you while I was there'" (122). The circulation of postcards "maps an imagined community of senders and receivers who share feeling for one another and, perhaps, for the scenes the postcard represents" (122). One particularly famous example features the charred corpse of a lynch victim and is inscribed: "This is the barbecue we had last night. My picture is to the left with a cross over it. Your son Joe." Sending this postcard, Joe presumably assures his parents that, with their guidance, he has become a man who understands his place in society and his obligation to keep blacks in theirs. When the postcard "is offered as a link between them, so too is the black body" (Smith 125).

Similarly, videos created to denigrate LGBT people reify everyone's understanding of who is vulnerable and who is licensed, and they allow the licensed to bond with each other over the spectacle of the denigrated "other." Thus, when Rutgers University students Dharun Ravi and Molly Wei recorded their classmate Tyler Clementi in a homosexual intimate encounter, there was little question that Clementi would seem perverse, not them. Just as dominant rhetoric cast lynching as an example of "civilized" white male authority "taming" black "savagery," Ravi and Wei's video would enter a culture that presumes homosexuality to be evidence of something gone awry that will destroy our "civil" society if left unchecked.[28] The logic is, "if we take a 'live and let live' approach toward these evil people, this will cease to be a good community and great nation." Without this kind of logic circulating, such a video would not have been so tempting to create and would not have been so damaging.[29]

An audiovisual recording of a very different sort featured 20-year-old Atlanta resident Brandon White, but it similarly distinguishes between the vulnerable and the licensed. A video was made as at least three men beat White, and it went viral, drawing the attention of the media.[30] White had been keeping a low profile, humiliated by the wide circulation of evidence of the brutality with which he could be treated. When he finally spoke out, members of a local organization, Change Atlanta, immediately offered support. Several later recanted, however, because White said in a press conference that he had been assaulted by strangers, but it was later discovered that he knew one or two of his attackers.[31] While Change Atlanta members may have felt they had been deceived on these finer points, the fact remains that White was beaten while homophobic slurs were yelled at him. Even if, as suspected, the motive for the beating had to do with White threatening to force one of his attackers out of the closet, it is troubling that such a threat could be perceived as justification for the brutal beating.

Change Atlanta leadership has since apologized for appearing to abandon White,[32] but the logic that led to the withdrawal of support speaks volumes, not about the members who were taking a courageous stand and perhaps faltered, but about the United States. After all, the fact that this video went viral reveals the conditions under which LGBT people

are expected to live. The video might be said to communicate a message similar to that conveyed when the protagonist of James Weldon Johnson's 1912 novel witnesses a lynching: "A great wave of humiliation and shame swept over me. Shame that I belonged to a race that could be so dealt with. . ." (187–88). In this scene, Johnson's narrator recognizes white savagery, "but he also sees the white *production of a dehumanized black object*" (Smith 128–29, emphasis added). The ease with which Brandon White could lose support and be deemed deserving of what this video depicts proves that the recording both emerges from and perpetuates an anti-LGBT atmosphere. Thus, the video is just one of many examples of the *production of a dehumanized queer object* at the mercy of heterocentric logic and its attendant power. The nation (not just Atlanta and not just Georgia) has created, and continues to designate, a class of people who can dealt be with in the harshest possible manner. No matter how one identifies, when compelled to witness the shattering of certain bodies, the message is clear: you don't want to be one of *them*.

When gay-bashing footage is shared, it reinforces for LGBT people that neither their peers nor their country value them, but such footage also sends a message to those who identify as *not them*. Even if one is critical of those in the scenario who figure as licensed, one cannot misinterpret the message regarding who is vulnerable. Even if one does not condone the perpetrator's behavior, it is difficult not to see one's own identity affirmed. After all, in this climate, even heterosexuals who do not participate in bullying or gay-bashing benefit from it, because they cannot relinquish the privileges it underwrites for them. The fact that LGBT people's freedom and dignity can be disregarded only reinforces the idea that citizens are heterosexual—that sexual conformity is the sign that someone should be respected and protected. And, as viewers, heterosexuals are linked to each other as part of a licensed group; a connection is forged over the denigrated queer body.

These more spectacular uses of media should not distract us from the mundane quality of anti-LGBT violence, however. In a society that insists upon creating hostile situations for certain populations, one is not truly free to do the simplest things, like walk down the street. As the NCAVP report shows, simply being outdoors increases LBGT people's vulnerability (46), but avoiding the street is no guarantee either, given that private residences remain the most common site of violence (10).[33]

Still, the everyday quality of anti-LGBT violence is most vividly illustrated by the categories of aggression NCAVP is committed to tracking, including discrimination. Some might be tempted to question the validity of designating discrimination as a type of violence, but this methodological decision confirms the rigor of NCAVP's approach. By including this category, the coalition demonstrates awareness of the truest purpose of violence: to deny targeted groups recognition as part of the body politic and to insist upon their vulnerability to, and subordination to, anyone who presumably belongs. The authors of the report state directly, "discrimination can be seen as a precursor to other forms of violence" (34). Therefore, the increase in reports of discrimination "points to a need to challenge violence at this stage in order to prevent it from escalating in the future" (34). In other words, we must understand that violence emerges from particular circumstances. When discrimination is tolerated, it reinforces a hostile atmosphere that makes people vulnerable not only to discrimination itself but also to physical assault and even murder.

Hostility shapes the environment created for LGBT populations in the United States so much that many do not notice it. For example, Americans typically respond with surprise

when this simple fact is stated outright: in most states, it is perfectly legal to fire someone simply because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Only federal employment non-discrimination policies will "ensure that it is illegal in all states to deny employment on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity" (Moodie-Mills 21), and the United States has no such law.[34] Victims typically have absolutely no recourse. The fact that the nation has failed to institute such protections shows that denying LBGT people dignity, respect, and citizenship is very much the American way.

As we have seen, aggression can range from a dirty look to assault to murder, but the goal is the same, to send a powerful message about how little ordinary individuals and the nation think of certain groups. The most common kinds of violence LGBT people face include discrimination, physical assault, verbal harassment in person, threats, and bullying.[35] Other forms of violence noted in the report include eviction, isolation, property violence, and arson (NCAVP 33). Homophobic jokes are also taken as inevitable features of popular culture and a natural part of the social landscape, which is another sign that Americans are not guided by the equity we claim to value.

As with all issues of citizenship, these victims of discrimination and other forms of violence are not interested in whether other Americans like them or approve of them. Heterosexuals and cisgender people[36] are not so admirable that LGBT people yearn to be "equal" to them. These citizens simply do not want their life chances—for, what else is being able to work?—determined by socially sanctioned prejudice.

2) Response of Authorities

The height of mob violence cannot be understood in terms of extralegal mobs or extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan because ordinary citizens participated in lynchings, and sheriffs and politicians often joined mobs or gave their blessing.[37] Being vulnerable to ordinary citizens is bad enough; having that vulnerability condoned by authorities intensifies the insult and injury and encourages more violence. Today, LGBT people routinely experience hostility not only from peers but also from police, teachers and employers, and public servants.

Turning to the police for help when one has been the target of violence should be a viable option, but LGBT people have learned they cannot take this right for granted. Given their "long histories with . . . discrimination and violence from the police," many LBGT people are hesitant to call them at all. NCAVP found that victims contacted police only 52% of the time. "Of the survivors and victims that reported, only 43% experienced courteous attitudes from the police" (NCAVP 19). Meanwhile, 38% reported that officers were indifferent,[38] and 18% reported hostility (36). When the police are hostile or indifferent 56% of the time, the incident for which one sought their help can suddenly become the *initial* assault. Additional violence can come in the form of excessive force and unjustified arrest. These and other examples of professional misconduct occur when "officers allow homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic attitudes to interfere with their role" (NCAVP 37). Unfortunately, these prejudices have long shaped the way law enforcement officials carry out their duties. As NCAVP reminds us, police officers have routinely raided establishments that welcome LGBT people "since the beginning of the Gay Liberation movement" (37).

Again, the message is clear: authorities, no less than peers, hold LGBT communities in low regard. Abuse or indifference from the police ensures that no one can escape this message.

Considering young people's experiences also sheds light on hostile settings created by authorities. As Aisha Moodie-Mills of the Center for American Progress explains, "Much of the focus on school climate for gay and transgender youth is about bullying and interactions among peers. But a recent study in the *Journal of Pediatrics* found that administrators, teachers, and law enforcement officials disproportionately punish students who are assumed to be gay or transgender" (37). Furthermore, "school discipline policies that remove students from the classroom, rather than address the antigay climate that sparked the situation, restrict their ability to learn and thrive academically" (Moodie-Mills 27). Even worse, "such disciplinary responses can fuel a school-to-juvenile justice pipeline for gay and transgender youth that results in unfair criminalization" (27). These practices reflect a lack of investment in making learning environments safe for all students.

The nation fuels animosity toward LGBT populations in countless ways, but American courts offer a particularly poignant example of how thoroughly hostility is endorsed. Attorneys defending murderers have at their disposal the "gay panic defense," any number of "strategies that rely on the notion that a criminal defendant should be excused or justified if his violent actions were in response to a (homo)sexual advance" (Lee 475). Its successful invocation rests on American acceptance of "the idea that a nonviolent homosexual advance by a gay man can cause a heterosexual man to panic and respond with fatal violence" (Lee 476). The history of these judicial strategies reveals a shift in emphasis. Initially, defendants linked their claims "to criminal law defenses based on mental deficiency, such as temporary insanity or diminished capacity. More recently, such defendants have used gay panic to bolster claims of provocation and self-defense" (478). Even more recently, "trans panic" defenses have emerged. Each iteration of this defense blames the victim for his own death; i.e., "if he hadn't made a pass at me, I wouldn't have killed him" or "if he hadn't lied about being a woman, I wouldn't have killed him" (Lee 478).[39] While generally ineffective when linked to claims of mental defect, these defenses have been relatively successful when accompanying claims of provocation (Lee 478). Even as the debate rages about whether these defenses should be permissible at all, the fact that they are, and have been used to exonerate murderers, illustrates that an apparently heterosexual person can expect some understanding if they kill an LGBT person.

Indeed, the United States creates and perpetuates a climate in which those who are deemed straight have a "state-sanctioned monopoly on violence."[40] The fact that "monopoly" is no exaggeration becomes clear when one considers CeCe McDonald and the New Jersey 7. In describing the events that led to McDonald's arrest, columnist Akiba Solomon asks, if a group of strangers verbally and physically assaults you, and "if one of the bullies pulls you toward him . . . and then receives a fatal stab in the chest with the scissors you've taken out of your bag to defend yourself, should you be the only person arrested?" A group of white women and men taunted and attacked an African American transgender woman, but she was the only one arrested. This outcome can be tolerated only in a society that insists that certain people are always suspect and disposable. As Kimberlé Crenshaw explains in a slightly different context, cultural beliefs are projected onto marginalized bodies, so they are deemed to be guilty based on "who they are, not by what they do" (1271, 1280). In McDonald's case, there were clear signs of self-defense,

including her brutally slashed face, but police officers still apparently saw her as the only criminal present. Now she is incarcerated. Activist Mercedes Allen rightly suspects that many who might otherwise be outraged and advocate for McDonald's release are ambivalent or apathetic because she was arrested and charged. Many Americans cannot shed "the belief that a person convicted of crime deserves the punishment somehow" (Allen).

Yet, being invested in the idea that those convicted deserve their punishment should make Americans more diligent about addressing institutional bias. Especially when racial profiling is rampant, and police and prosecutors are rewarded for pursuing the most vulnerable populations,[41] all of our nation's *-ism*s will determine who is arrested and charged and who is not. Though the prosecutor insists that "gender, race, sexual orientation and class are not part of the decision-making process," [42] Akiba Solomon and activist Janet Mock need not exaggerate to assert that, as a black trangender woman, "CeCe McDonald is being punished for *surviving*."[43] The same can be said of the New Jersey 7, lesbians who resisted victimization when they were harassed on the street.[44]

When hostility undergirds the practices of police, teachers, administrators, attorneys, and judges, the United States punishes LGBT people for surviving.

3) Success

Writing my book *Living with Lynching* taught me that mobs often attacked successful African Americans, not criminals, because accomplished blacks were the ones who didn't know their "proper place." Because oppressors have the power to frame public conversation, Americans assume that those brutalized by mobs must have done something wrong. It was meant for posterity to think that, and many worked to ensure that those living in the midst of the violence believed it, too. However, even while potential targets themselves, African Americans challenged this rhetoric. In her 1892 pamphlet *A Red Record*, anti-lynching crusader Ida B. Wells made it plain: "The mob spirit has grown with the increasing intelligence of the Afro-American" (62).[45] Writing in 1915, sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois declared, "There was one thing that the white South feared more than Negro dishonesty, ignorance, and incompetency, and that was Negro honesty, knowledge, and efficiency" (qtd. in Litwack xiii–xiv). A similar understanding had turned Wells into an activist more than twenty years earlier, when her close friends were killed. They were attacked because they owned a grocery store that competed successfully with white merchants. When they were lynched "with just as much brutality as other victims of the mob" even though "they had committed no crime against white women," it was a revelation to Wells. She explained in her diary, "this is what opened my eyes to what lynching really was. An excuse to get rid of Negroes who were acquiring wealth and property and thus keep the race terrorized and 'keep the nigger down'" (qtd. in McMurry 143).

Even in the midst of terror, African Americans examined their surroundings and noticed that when they affirmed themselves, when they obtained hard-earned success by minding their own business, they were attacked. African Americans therefore came to view lynching as a theater of mastery in which whites seeking (not assuming) racial supremacy used the black body as muse, antagonist, and stage prop. The vengeance with which some whites performed their supposedly superior status is quite revealing. As cultural theorists have

long contended, hegemony is never complete; it must continually reassert itself. Thus, if white supremacists denied black humanity and achievement, African Americans must have been convincingly establishing it.

I believe historians will confirm that anti-LGBT violence at this turn of the century should be interpreted the same way, as a response to success. What have gays done to deserve these attacks? What have they done "wrong"? They have managed to succeed despite the many obstacles put in their way. The mainstream cultural landscape now includes images of LGBT people where absolutely none—or only denigrating mentions—existed before. Ellen DeGeneres is one of the nation's most popular talk show hosts; she is welcomed into millions of American homes every day. In reality television, which reaches millions of viewers, queer men are respected confidantes on *The Real House Wives of Atlanta*, and RuPaul develops talent on *RuPaul's Drag Race*, underscoring the skills required to be impressive as a drag queen. Meanwhile, one of the most popular primetime comedies, ABC's *Modern Family*, features Cam and Mitchell, a gay couple lovingly parenting their adopted child. Finally, Anderson Cooper of CNN and *60 Minutes* and Rachel Maddow of MSNBC are among the respected reporters and political commentators whom hundreds of thousands of Americans trust. Of course, the community's triumphs can be understood in much smaller increments as well. The fact that not every single non-conforming person stays in the closet represents progress that many would love to see reversed.[46]

Just as LGBT achievement comes in various forms, so does the violence they encounter, and the variety ensures that an unmistakable message continues to be sent, that "those people" do not belong and should not expect to be treated as if they do. That is, they should be grateful if they are tolerated but never presume decent treatment to be their birthright. Ultimately, the hostility LGBT people face is part of a long tradition of what I term *know-your-place aggression*. If stated aloud, the sentiments might be: "You may have a degree, but you are still just a . . ." or "You may be better at your job than I am, but you are still just a . . ." or "You may have a higher g.p.a. than I do, but you are a . . ." These messages are created and conveyed with microaggressions and bullying, but they are also sent and received when someone is beaten or murdered and the response of authorities is to blame the victim. "You may think you have a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," the nation might as well say, "but we don't even have to care about your life and limb."

Therefore, while NCAVP highlights progress but urges readers not to interpret it as evidence that violence is becoming a less urgent problem, I argue that LGBT success clarifies why diligence remains crucial. NCAVP explains, "In light of the many victories for LGBTQH communities in 2011, it is important to remember the ways in which violence continues to affect *all* members of [these] communities. The *increasing severity* of hate violence . . . only reinforces the need to find new ways to reduce [it]" (14–15, emphasis added). While appreciating that the organization must choose its words carefully, I contend that success is *prompting* the increasing severity of attacks. Again, this pattern is nothing new. In the 1890s, when African American performers transitioned out of minstrelsy and into musical comedy, the first black "crossover stars" emerged. The comedy teams of Bert Williams and George Walker and Bob Cole and J. Rosamond Johnson reigned on Broadway. Yet, for members of marginalized groups, success brings aggression as often as praise, so violence constitutes the backdrop to their accomplishments. Therefore, when a race riot broke out in New York City in 1900, the mob was invigorated by cries of "get

. . . Williams and Walker and Cole and Johnson" (Johnson, *Black Manhattan* 126–27). They may have been Broadway stars enjoying extraordinary success, but that very fact would have made putting them in their "proper place" more satisfying for some Americans. Put another way, their being celebrities whom thousands of whites flocked to see did not make this country any less racist for their lesser-known brothers and sisters—or even, as it turns out, for them.

Know-your-place aggression can be found in every sector of American life, and striking examples currently involve President Barack Obama. Now that a man who is not 100% white occupies the office of the president, it has been disrespected in unprecedented ways. A state representative shouted "You lie" while Obama addressed Congress in 2009, a governor shoved her finger in the Commander-in-Chief's face, and more tellingly, "Once Obama became president, the Secret Service experienced a 400 percent increase in the number of threats against the president, in comparison to President Bush" (Kessler 225). Especially relevant to this discussion, depictions of a lynched President Obama circulate on the Internet and have received "likes" on Facebook.[47] Barack Obama has done everything according to what the nation says it respects. He earned an Ivy League education, he is married to one woman and models loving fatherhood, he is even-tempered in the face of ridiculousness. All of this constitutes what he has also done "wrong," then. Despite every obstacle American society creates for men who are not white, he has succeeded, and the success of marginalized groups often inspires aggression. Could the message be any clearer? "You may be President of the United States, but you are still just a n—. Americans will not only ask to see your papers [birth certificate, transcripts, etc.], but some will also relish the idea of seeing you in a noose." Is it any wonder that the Supreme Court is hearing a challenge to the Voting Rights Act in this climate?

If a Commander-in-Chief who is also a member of a maligned group inspires know-your-place aggression with his own success, his acting on behalf of other marginalized populations will result in additional know-your-place aggression being directed toward him and toward those groups. It is in this light that one should view our current historical moment. In addition to increased mainstream visibility, LGBT communities have won policy victories under the Obama administration, including the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"[48] and the passage of the first federal law to add protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity (Paschall 4).[49] So, besides not staying in the closet, LGBT people are demanding recognition and protection as citizens, and the federal government has not been completely unresponsive. Yes, based on this nation's history, that is the kind of success that beckons the mob.

4) Lack of Bias Classification

Creating a social landscape in which denigrating African Americans was the norm produced the perfect conditions for hiding the fact that mobs were most often motivated by a desire to keep blacks subordinate. Though inspired by a determination to destroy all evidence of African American success, white supremacists insisted that they acted out of necessity: if left unchecked, black men would rape white women and destroy civil society. Public messages were carefully crafted. As Ida B. Wells noted, "No other news goes out

to the world save that which stamps us as a race of cut-throats, robbers, and lustful wild beasts" (*Southern Horrors* 71). Because this strategy was so effective, racial violence became so routine that it was not always necessary to give reasons: "the finding of the dead body of a Negro . . . is of so slight importance that neither the civil authorities nor press agencies consider the matter worth investigating" (*Red Record* 107).

Today, brutalizing LGBT people is so common that identifying the perpetrator's motive is deemed optional. When violence is not classified as bias-related, the public is encouraged to remain ignorant of how much anti-LBGT attitudes limit the citizenship of members of these communities. Too often, authorities ignore the fact that homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia motivate assault. NCAVP reports, "In 2011, 55% of survivors that interacted with the police reported that the police classified their incident as a hate crime" (38). These law enforcement practices are significant for the climate they reflect and perpetuate. When victims are as likely to have the motivation of their perpetrators ignored as acknowledged, the result is an atmosphere in which the victim's particular experience is discounted and their understanding of their experience deemed irrelevant.

When LGBT people report violence to authorities who will choose to give bias classification or not, the issues can be life and death, but even when the stakes are not that high, Americans often insist upon being able to ignore marginalized people's realities. Though Dwight McBride describes this dynamic in the context of an intellectual conversation about racism, the broader implications become clear:

> if the people who are the most obvious victims of particular forms of discrimination (in this case racism) are also the most readily disqualified as witnesses to those same forms of discrimination, then according to such logic only those people who are not victimized by racism (i.e., whites) are the ones who are, indeed, the best and most reliable witnesses and judges to what actually happens to those racial "others" in our society. So what we have effectively done is to rhetorically de-authorize or de-legitimize the victims of discrimination in our society from ever being able to speak authoritatively about their own experiences of discrimination. We have rhetorically seized their ability to bear authoritative witness to, or even to be in the best position to know, what it is that happens to them in the world. And he who effectively controls the form of epistemology (how we come to know what it is we know) ultimately goes far toward controlling what it is we can know. (4)

Quite consistently, American society asserts that you simply cannot trust a person of color who says s/he has had a racist encounter, so why would you be able to believe a "queer" person who says s/he was attacked because of homophobia?

We live in a society that we know does not treat LGBT people equally, yet when something bad happens to them, Americans always want the option of saying it might have had "nothing to do with that." Every time this tendency is condoned, we add to the violence the person has already experienced. Unfortunately, the violence of denying a person's truth is at the heart of debates throughout the country regarding hate crime legislation and anti-bullying policies in schools.

We know how anti-LGBT our nation is (and our communities are), but some still insist that naming sexuality and gender expression in bullying policies and hate crime legislation amounts to "special protection." It is an infuriating claim, but it emerges in so many arenas that it might be called the (unjust) American way. To my ear, it sounds like the contention that affirmative action is "reverse discrimination," that allocating resources for oppressed groups is inherently unfair. There are many problems with this logic, but I will name only one: we have never been honest about the fact that whites have *always* had—and continue to enjoy—affirmative action. How else could land be distributed in the early days of the republic and it was given to whites, not Native Americans? The requirement for land was being white; the government set it aside for whites. How else did whites secure the vast majority of the land in the South (where blacks often out-numbered them) after Emancipation? The Homestead Act of 1863 and other government programs ensured that land was set aside for whites. How else did 98% of Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loans granted between 1932 and 1962 go to whites?[50] Historians have shown that discriminatory practices were sanctioned by the federal government, ensuring that access to home ownership was set aside for whites.[51]

Americans cannot reasonably declare that marginalized groups are placed at an advantage when we refuse to notice the advantages of dominant groups. How can we know the difference between an unfair benefit and a very belated attempt at equalizing opportunity when we are not honest enough to concede that the rules have *always* favored particular people? It is long past time to admit that dominant groups do not prevail because their members are so exemplary but because the system is set up to ensure that they win even when they are mediocre.

When proposals to designate sexuality as a protected category in school bullying policies are deemed "special protection" or when bias classification is denied after an assault, the real reason people are being targeted is ignored. The implications of this not-so-benign neglect begin with individuals and reverberate throughout the country. For example, when policies to combat crime are developed, they will be formulated in ways that attend to the violence perpetrated against straight people. Only criminal motives that have nothing to do with homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia will be addressed. The result? More of what we already have: policies designed to protect heterosexuals and leave LGBT populations vulnerable.

Currently, policies are designed as if the only people we care to protect are heterosexual. Because that is the case, the system works in ways that ensure that heterosexuals receive recognition and protection that others do not have. The policies and practices put them at an advantage. Special protection for gays? No, it would be the treatment that straight people are already taking for granted.

5) Sexualized Nature of the Violence

Racial violence has always also been sexualized violence. The attacks themselves have often been sexual in nature, but even when that is not the case, racialized violence has been explained away with assertions of sexual pathology that magically apply only to certain bodies. As is well rehearsed by countless historians, lynching was justified by the

black rapist myth. Black men were said to be so depraved that, if given half a chance, they could not keep themselves from raping white women. This logic allowed the most violent to lynch black men, and it allowed everyone else to remain indifferent. If black men are perverts, protesting even the most barbaric treatment of them becomes unthinkable. In the words of Ida B. Wells,

> Humanity abhors the assailant of womanhood, and this charge upon the Negro at once placed him beyond the pale of human sympathy. With such unanimity, earnestness and apparent candor was this charge made and reiterated that the world has accepted the story that the Negro is a monster which the Southern white man has painted him. And today, the Christian world feels, that while lynching is a crime, and lawlessness and anarchy the certain precursors of a nation's fall, it can not by word or deed, extend sympathy or help to a race of outlaws, who might mistake their plea for justice and deem it an excuse for their continued wrongs. (*Red Record* 78)

Of course, black men's supposed pathology did not exist in a vacuum. Black women were said to be so immoral that they could not exert a positive influence on black men and children, as white women did in their families.[52] Furthermore, black women were understood to be so naturally promiscuous, so sexually insatiable, that raping them was impossible. This made the rape of black women by white men a non-issue in national discourse, and it rounded out the sexual grounds for disregarding black humanity and citizenship. Blacks were too sexually depraved to be worthy of, or prepared for, civic inclusion.

Because sexuality was at the core of racial violence at the last turn of the century, when giving lectures based on the research that led to *Living with Lynching*, I always note how carefully mobs prepared for their photographs with the corpse. When a sheet covers the mid-section of a victim, it can be read as a sign that he was probably castrated.[53] As many scholars have noted, lynchings were believed to be a way to exorcise evil from society.[54] Because it was supposedly done out of necessity, even if a victim was sexually tortured, the mutilator's sexual and moral superiority remained intact. It was dirty business, but it could be done decently and in order,[55] and mobs proved that it had been when they added touches of propriety by covering the victim's mid-section before taking a picture.[56] As whites maintained a show of purported decency—but mostly because their every action was sanctioned by national discourse—even when they tortured and raped African Americans, labels like "sexually depraved" apparently refused to adhere to them.

A similar one-way logic of sexual pathology remains at the heart of American culture and politics today, so dominant discourses continue to identify "evils" that must be kept in check. Therefore, when violence befalls people who are maligned by dominant conceptions of "evil," most respond with indifference. In order to consider the parallels between lynching and anti-LBGT violence that involve sexualized logic, one must reach back to the data collected in 2008, which resulted in NCAVP's 2009 report, because changes in the report's structure make the percentage of attacks involving sexual assault less clear in the 2011 results than in previous years.[57] Throughout 2008, incidents totaled 2,424; of these, 48 % involved sexual assault. That is, nearly half of the attacks involved sodomizing the victim, raping the victim, or some other form of sexualized torture. Essentially, then,

people assumed to be moral attack those deemed sexually immoral, yet stigma ricochets off of attackers and clings to their victims.[58] American society places heterosexuality on such a pedestal that heterosexuals committing acts against queer people fails to inspire questions about straight people's morality. These heinous acts do not alter the assumption that heterosexuality is at the heart of revered American life—that real men are heterosexual, that real women are heterosexual, that truly worthy Americans are heterosexual.

At the last turn of the century, no matter what torture the most unruly whites heaped on black bodies, there was little reason for national response.[59] The victims were understood to be outside of any reasonable boundaries that could allow most Americans to feel invested in their fate. The encouraged response was "Who knows? He probably deserved it."[60]

Because pathologizing another person's sexuality encourages this kind of distancing, silence about the violence perpetrated against LBGT communities cannot be a coincidence. I am thinking, for example, of the gay man in New York who was tortured all night by nine attackers. He was "sodomized, burned, and whipped" and he was "burned with a cigarette on his nipple and penis" (Wilson and Baker). Why was there so little national outrage, concern, or attention? Surely, it has something to do with living in a country that not only devalues anyone who is not heterosexual but also pathologizes certain sexualities to the point that most Americans cannot really see it as a violation. Instead, people are more likely to consider it part of the "alternative lifestyle" that "those people" choose.[61] The thought may not be fully formed in the following harsh terms, but everything we are taught to believe about anyone who is not heterosexual encourages us to think: "Who knows? He probably deserved it and he might have even enjoyed it."

Taking Up the Task of Quest, Daring, and Growth

Acknowledging the circumstances marginalized people face is always a crucial step because the United States is susceptible to convenient amnesia. Americans often know *nothing* about the injustices producing abysmal living conditions for others, even if those others are their neighbors. As James Baldwin was fond of saying, American innocence is truly dangerous. But once people take the first step of acknowledging harsh realities and becoming informed, what should be the next?

Clearly, the activists and researchers who have been working for years on these issues are role models for us all, and their efforts change lives daily. Because they remain committed, they will continue to make more of a difference than I can claim to do with this essay. Still, I will gesture toward action steps that I hope will support their work, even though they are based on my particular perspective as a literary historian and cultural critic. If atmosphere enables the violence we oppose, we must work to change it, and that requires nothing less than a shift in culture, which begins with a shift in consciousness.

One way to tackle the mentalities that support current conditions is to change our language. Language is not simply a way of communicating what one thinks; it actually shapes what one is capable of thinking.[62] I therefore propose using language that focuses less on the disadvantage of oppressed groups and more on the *unearned advantage* of privileged ones. For example, I am a black woman professor in a society that does not as-

sociate black womanhood with authority, especially authority based on intelligence. Not surprisingly, then, I am often *Presumed Incompetent* (Gutiérrez y Muhs, et. al.).[63] However, in describing the environment that is reflected and perpetuated by those presumptions, I use language that redirects people's attention. Namely, the issue is not that I encounter extra disrespect from my students and colleagues because I am black and a woman; what is important is that my white male colleague is receiving respect as a matter of course. He is granted deference simply because he walks into the room as a white male. He does not have to do anything impressive for students and colleagues to assume he is qualified. It will not cross their minds that this man does not belong in the position or did not earn the position. Yet, their confidence is not necessarily based on his being good at his job; it is based on his looking like he belongs, looking like he is qualified—because everything in our society reinforces the assumption that white men are qualified.

Likewise, when a person walks into a room and is deemed heterosexual, s/he is immediately accepted as a decent person who belongs. Perhaps s/he is a school teacher. As long as s/he seems heterosexual, s/he does not have to worry about someone assuming that s/he is a child molester. Because that same positive assumption is not made about everyone who deserves it, this amounts to unearned privilege. It is not just that having one's decency and morality questioned is a disadvantage for LGBT people; it is that their heterosexual colleagues are respected and trusted as a matter of course.

If someone has a friend who is a gay teacher, that person might be able to sympathize and notice how unfair it is that the friend must deal with unjust suspicion, but that kind of sympathy is relatively easy, requiring little in the way of quest, daring, and growth. In a "great nation," we should demand more of ourselves and each other. Too many accept the notion that only when one's own child, family member, or friend comes out as queer is it necessary to re-evaluate whether this group's civil rights should be recognized.[64] Waiting until issues "hit home," too many Americans avoid the greater challenge that justice requires: acknowledging one's own privilege. Americans must grapple with the fact that our society has made an *unearned* advantage out of being able to walk into a room and *not* have your morality and decency questioned. The automatic vote of confidence allows you to work without suspicions hovering over you, depleting your strength. You can bring your best energy to the work you are passionate about doing. These circumstances literally make your job easier. Furthermore, given the realities of employment discrimination, heterosexuality literally helped you obtain the job in the first place. How can we change these unjust practices if we do not acknowledge them???

Allow me to describe the situation another way. Does a company end up with a staff that is 85% white because they are the most qualified the country has to offer? That is certainly what we are taught to believe. However, I have been surrounded by whites all my life, and that has not translated into being surrounded by excellence. When a candidate is white, they can be considered a "good fit" even when their qualifications are not all that impressive, but a candidate of color has to be exceptional (and put whites at ease) in order to get the same designation. Does an institution end up with a workforce that is 98% heterosexual because they are the best the country has to offer? That is what we are taught to believe, but I have been surrounded by heterosexuals my whole life and that has not meant being surrounded by excellence. It has not meant being surrounded by high moral standards. It has not meant being surrounded by stability. Do we end up be-

ing able to say, "She is the first openly gay person elected as state senator" because she is the first exceptional gay person to come along, or because heterosexuals could be elected without being exceptional?

It is important to notice these privileges because recognizing privilege is what Americans are most discouraged from doing. Clearly, then, refusing to identify privilege helps keep our society the way it is. When we refuse to acknowledge long-standing, unearned advantage, we fortify the status quo. Therefore, any hope of disrupting the unjust status quo—any hope of making real change—will involve noticing privilege, and shifting our language is a crucial step in that process. So, I am not impressed by anyone's ability to acknowledge that I am at a disadvantage because I am black and a woman; it is more important to see that Bob is at an unearned advantage because he is white and a man. Perhaps we should focus less on how Juan is at a disadvantage because he is gay in a homophobic society and grapple with the degree to which Beth is at an advantage because she is heterosexual in a heterosexist society.[65]

I believe that this sort of shift in language can help us see the need for other such shifts. For example, when discussing racial profiling, one cannot inspire much change by calling it "driving while black." The problem is "policing while racist."[66] Similarly, individuals are not attacked "because they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender."[67] They are targeted because this is a violently heterosexist society that cannot see a person as a citizen unless they fit a very narrow mold.[68]

This brings me to the *It Gets Better* project, which I believe is an especially clear example of how desperately we need new language. *It Gets Better* is basically an archive of YouTube videos by well-meaning individuals who want to send positive messages to queer youth who may be vulnerable to suicide because they feel hopeless about the future. From President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to pop sensation Ke$ha and ordinary citizens, young people can hear that they should persevere because the future will surely be better than their present reality, where bullies reign. Of course, any large-scale struggle will require a wide range of tools and strategies, so there are many ways to do some good. However, we should be rigorous about both the pros and cons of any given approach. In that spirit, I wonder if what makes the *It Gets Better* campaign so widely accepted is that it does not name privilege and does not disrupt the status quo. Rather than shine a glaring light on the environment producing the misery felt by the people for whom these videos are made, the campaign zeroes in on those in pain and suggests that they should make adjustments within their hearts and minds. Inadvertently, the overarching message corroborates the idea that what needs to be fixed is the person in despair. The logic is, "change your outlook, and things will be okay." This is simply not true because what needs to change is a society that can recognize humanity only if it comes in a particular package.

Besides offering a message that is not true, crucially, *It Gets Better* also ignores how accurately young Americans are interpreting their surroundings. Have we considered the possibility that they can see that the reasons for their pain are not temporary? When they look around, they see that the ideas that allow their peers to denigrate them are reinforced everywhere. Furthermore, they are smart enough to figure out that kids are not the only ones who bully. Children and teenagers are not the only ones who can be cruel. (Remember, their experiences with teachers and school administrators often show them that.) As

cultural critic Ruby Tapia puts it, "Adults bully. Parents bully. Institutions bully. Militaries sanction the inevitability of bullying." Furthermore, nations and presidents bully. In fact, they call it leadership and strength, they say it is noble, and they are happy to label you a praiseworthy patriot for agreeing. Given these realities, why would anyone believe it will simply get better?[69] The campaign does not even designate what "it" is. So, participants vaguely hope that those seeking comfort in these videos will think that the "it" is the pain they feel. But, what about the cause of that pain? Causes are not addressed as often as they should be, but when we acknowledge them, we are likely to name homophobia and transphobia. I would rather see Americans identify the cause of the pain as heterosexism and the unearned advantage bestowed on those deemed heterosexual.

Changing our language will help address not only the most violent expressions of the dehumanizing logic of the American status quo, such as racial violence and anti-LGBT violence, but also the conditions enabling that logic. We must actively challenge the repressive discourses that are peddled as natural truth. When we commit to doing so, one basic question will always arise: If this is so true or natural, why does it have to be reinforced so consistently and violently? If it is true that the poor are poor because they are lazy and not because our society is structured to keep them that way, why do we work so hard to expose the few examples of welfare fraud while turning a blind eye to the lying and cheating of the rich? And, why do we so actively portray corporate bailouts as something other than welfare? If black and brown people generally inhabit lower economic positions because their grandparents did not make the good decisions that their white counterparts did, then why is it so important to keep Americans ignorant of the fact that 98% of FHA loans granted between 1932 and 1962 went to whites? If being heterosexual is so natural, if it is all that God intended, why does it have to be so violently proclaimed "natural" and "God-given"? Why must people be trained from birth to adopt what is "natural"—by being bombarded with specific ideas about what girls like (and should like) *versus* what boys like (and should like)?

The potential for such questions is endless, but I will pose just one more, which was perfectly phrased by Minnesota State Representative Steve Simon in May 2011.[70] As a woman of faith, I believe his language links the past, present, and future in the most transformative way I can imagine. Indeed, for those who can truly engage the shift in consciousness that this language promotes, it may inspire the embrace of quest, daring, and growth that Baldwin urged. *How many more gay people does God have to create before we ask ourselves if God actually wants them around?*

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The third quotation in the epigraph has been attributed to author Zora Neale Hurston, but I have not been able to locate it in a specific source. I therefore remain unsure of the validity of those attributions.

This project began shortly after my book *Living with Lynching* was published in October 2011. One month later, I gave a lecture at the African and African American Studies Community Extension Center in Columbus, Ohio, and a man I later learned was Kevin Tyler stopped me in my tracks during Q&A by suggesting that the mutilation I had described was currently being visited upon gay people. I told him I had no idea what he was talking about and asked that he send me the information on which his claim was based. We kept in touch over the next several weeks, and he continued to send me troubling news

coverage. Soon after Tyler began educating me, I received an invitation to speak at a Bullying Institute for middle school and high school educators at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati. I was *very reluctant* to participate, but the information Tyler had been providing suggested that I had material from which I could make sense of how my expertise *might possibly* apply to the conversations educators were having about bullying. By the time I gave that lecture in March 2012, I was convinced that these issues were more related than I had initially imagined. In the year since that presentation, I have shared the text of my Freedom Center lecture, which was the embryo of this essay, with more people than I have ever consulted when developing an article. However, only one person actually followed through with feedback. I therefore owe much of my ability to stay with this difficult project to the encouragement of Professor Mollie Blackburn, author of *Interrupting Hate: Homophobia in Schools and What Literacy Can Do about It*. My other debts are most obviously tracked in my citations, but I must also highlight the difference it has made for me to be in community with scholars affiliated with the Diversity and Identity Studies Collective at Ohio State University (DISCO) and with artists, authors, and critics affiliated with *Callaloo.*

NOTES

1. See, for example, Ross's "Camping the Dirty Dozens."
2. For nuanced discussions of homophobia in black communities and racism in gay communities that pre-date the recent rise in claims of "black homophobia," see Boykin, especially 25–27, 37–38, and 44–49. However, as legal scholar Russell Robinson shows in great detail, the search for "black homophobia" is a post-2008 phenomenon. When California's gay marriage ban passed in 2008, the public conversation was largely framed by white gay men who blamed African Americans. The most outspoken accusers were Andrew Sullivan and Dan Savage. Media outlets circulated the assumption that blacks are especially homophobic, and scholars framed their research questions with this assumption in mind, either to prove or disprove. Robinson demonstrates that this trend is particularly troubling because what those who supported a ban on gay marriage most had in common was religion, not race. Robinson also notes, "A Lexis and Google search for articles on homophobia in the black community found just one article in November 2004 and 36 articles in November 2008." (Robinson's revised version forthcoming in 2014 in *UCLA Law Review* will incorporate the Supreme Court's decisions in the Windsor and Perry cases.)
3. The most recognized examples are when people say a rape victim "asked for it," but this sort of logic undergirds all violence designed to keep people in their "proper" place. Thus, victim blaming supports and justifies physical violence, and it is a form of violence in itself.
4. When I speak of citizenship, I am speaking in the simplest terms, about recognition and a sense of belonging. I know this can be seen as a limited framework because it relies inherently on entering existing structures, which are oppressive, rather than transforming them. As Cathy Cohen has noted, marginalized groups would do well to avoid "strategies built on the possibility of incorporation and assimilation" because such strategies simply make the status quo accessible to "privileged members of marginal groups." Meanwhile, "the most vulnerable in our communities continue to be stigmatized and oppressed" (Cohen 27). Still, this essay operates from a logic similar to that articulated by Melissa Harris-Perry (in conversation with political theorist Nancy Fraser), which emphasizes "the interplay of recognition and redistribution" (42). As Harris-Perry explains, "Recognition of race, gender, and sexual identity is not . . . simply a matter of self-actualization for the citizen, nor is recognition solely a matter of personal interactions among individuals. It is intimately bound to distributive justice" (42). That is, "distribution inequalities of social, political, and economic goods are related to the inability to 'see' citizens from low-status, stigmatized groups accurately" (42).
5. Naturalizing the denial of citizenship is also at the heart of mainstream rhetoric about immigrants, which is increasingly challenged by activists now known as DREAMERs because their work created the pressure that led to the Dream Act. Not surprisingly, the disgust in people's voices when they say "immigrant" relates to those who are black and brown while white immigrants do not seem to bother anyone. As such, the gay Pulitzer-winning journalist Jose Antonio Vargas has framed his revealing his undocumented status as coming out of a second closet. To similar effect, the leadership of the Audre Lorde Project (ALP) in New York City is unequivocal: "Ever since the Audre Lorde Project's early years of existence, Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Trans and Gender Non Conforming Immigrants of Color were one of the first groups of people ALP made center to its work." ALP continues: "We are part of a movement to achieve legalization for all people within the United States, and for all residents of the U.S. to have access to the same rights and benefits regardless of immigration/migration status."

Furthermore, "We are part of a broader movement of justice and peace globally, and are committed to building our work in solidarity with liberation struggles around the world. Because many of us are still connected with our communities of origin—we reject the us/them divide of citizens and foreigners, and are working toward a US foreign policy rooted in non-violence, fair distribution of resources, and equity" ("3rd Space Support"). Suggesting that this approach reflects a broader movement, a widely shared sentiment among activists attending the 2013 LGBT Creating Change conference was, "Now is the time for immigration reform and now is the time for LGBT people to accept that immigration reform is part of their movement as well" ("Activists).

6. Qtd. in Liu and Sen 20.
7. What we mean by "progress" must be examined because, as Michelle Alexander shows, blacks as a group are now in a worse situation according to several measures than when segregation was legal.
8. Examples of less-than-careful comparisons between the oppression of people of color and that of LGBT communities abound. Russell Robinson traces many of them and makes the case for why they are not only insulting but also not legally helpful to the marriage equality movement. Besides the many addressed by Robinson, one particularly relevant example for my purposes comes from author and activist Rob Watson, who specifically links his discussion of the Jadin Bell suicide to lynching. This piece does not even try to understand lynching by getting basic historical matters correct. Instead (and unfortunately this is not rare), this writer uses the plight of African Americans only to erase that plight and its current legacies in order to argue for what he believes is more important, this young boy's death. As Robinson says of attorneys building their cases on declarations that gays have it worse than blacks, Watson could have spoken profound truths about the hostility Jadin faced without using an entire race of people as a prop to be trotted out and immediately discarded. One example of the lack of knowledge about lynching—the phenomenon to which he compares today's homophobic culture—is his claim that lynch mobs "hid under sheets and cloaks." This is an odd movie-based understanding of lynching. That is not what characterized the height of mob violence in this country and what made it so terrifying, as I demonstrate throughout this essay.
9. It is also worth noting that some white LGBT activists recognize the problems with advancing arguments about their oppression by downplaying the injustices that African Americans faced and continue to face. See Clayton.
10. Voter suppression efforts were especially intense where I live, the swing state of Ohio. On the same day that I heard news of the Supreme Court ordering voter intimidation billboards down in Cleveland, that same billboard suddenly appeared down the street from my house in Columbus. News of and evidence of voter suppression is plentiful, but for some of the best coverage, consult the work of *The Nation*'s Ari Berman.
11. Clearly, I am influenced here by Audre Lorde, who explained, "Any attack against Black people is a lesbian and gay issue, because I and thousands of other Black women are part of the lesbian community. Any attack against lesbians and gays is a Black issue, because thousands of lesbians and gay men are Black. There is no hierarchy of oppression. I cannot afford the luxury of fighting one form of oppression only. I cannot afford to believe that freedom from intolerance is the right of only one particular group. And I cannot afford to choose between the fronts upon which I must battle these forces of discrimination, wherever they appear to destroy me. And when they appear to destroy me, it will not be long before they appear to destroy you." Lorde's argument also very much shapes the corrective to Cannick's logic that was issued only days after her article appeared. See "We 55 Respectfully Disagree."
12. As legal scholar Russell Robinson reminds us, people of color who are also LGBT find racial discrimination to be at least as much of a burden as discrimination based on sexual orientation. Also, though marriage equality attorneys proceed as if they must prove that life is worse for gays today than it was for blacks, legal precedent shows that this strategy is not only unnecessary but also will likely fail.
13. Russell Robinson suggests that Matthew Shepard and Tyler Clementi loom large in Americans' conception of anti-LGBT violence because mainstream movements rally around white victims and neglect victims of color in order to gain maximum sympathy in a nation that is not often moved by the plight of people of color. This tendency to choose victims that will be seen as more sympathetic and somehow more respectable has shaped many movements. Cultural historians now widely recognize that a politics of respectability led to Rosa Parks becoming the public catalyst for the boycott rather than the many black women whose mistreatment on Montgomery busses could have been the basis of the suit.
14. See Smitherman.

15. As Kimberlé Crenshaw demonstrated long ago, it is important to "call attention to how the identity of 'the group' has been centered on the intersectional identities of a few" (1299).
16. Like many American institutions, HRC is the most recognized of its kind because it is the most privileged and well funded.
17. NABJ recently launched a nation-wide program to mentor entrepreneurs, for example. See "NABJ and U.S. Small Business Administration Launch LGBT Economic Empowerment Tour" <http://www.nbjc.org/media-center/releases/nbjc-and-sba-tour-launch>. Also, see Ray on homelessness.
18. Satrang and SAN also actively create public visibility (festivals, etc.) so that there is more diversity among South Asian role models. See Liu and Sen 8–9.
19. Many are critical of the high priority placed on marriage equality in mainstream efforts. Many articulations are collected by *Against Equality* (againstequality.org). Even those not positioning themselves "against" equality see the limitations of a marriage focus. As Aisha Moodie-Mills reports, quality of life for black LGBT people "remained relatively unchanged over the last decade despite the significant gains the gay and transgender movement achieved" (1).
20. This song began as a poem by Jewish school teacher Lewis Allan (Abel Meeropol), whose wife originally sang it, but it became famous when Billie Holiday lent her voice to it. For more, see Margolick.
21. The photographs were first displayed at the Roth Horowitz Gallery in New York City as *Witness* in January/February 2000 but proved too popular for this intimate space. A larger selection of images arrived at the New York Historical Society on March 14, 2000. Originally scheduled through July, the exhibition's run was extended several times, amounting to a stay of nearly seven months. Next, the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh scheduled its display for September 22 through December 31, 2001, but extended it to January 15, 2002. The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Site in Atlanta presented a selection of photographs from May 1 to December 31, 2002. This run was complemented by an international academic conference titled "Lynching and Racial Violence in America: Histories and Legacies" at Emory University, October 3–6, 2002. Curators of the Atlanta exhibition used dimmed lighting and somber music to encourage contemplation. A similarly thoughtful exhibition was mounted in Cincinnati, Ohio, at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center January 19 to May 31, 2010. Virtual exhibition located at www.withoutsanctuary.org.
22. The Senate passed Resolution 39 on June 13, 2005. Full text of the apology on the sponsoring senator's website: <http://landrieu.senate.gov/lynching/index.cfm>.
23. Blacks are not the only lynch victims depicted in lynching photography, but they were often mutilated. The nonblacks killed by mobs were usually still clothed, and they were not typically castrated and burned beyond recognition.
24. The most comprehensive recent study of lynching is Philip Dray's and examples of mob members receiving no punishment abound. Even federal intervention when a black postmaster was lynched because whites did not want him in that position did not yield anything like justice. See 117–19 for that example, but the book contains many more. Also see Goldsby 180.
25. Lynching photographs would have fallen under the ban against "lewd, obscene, lascivious" material. See Smith 122.
26. Again, not all lynch victims were black, but photographs featuring black victims clearly accomplished particular cultural and political work because those images were most often circulated. Indeed, Ken Gonzales-Day notes that part of the reason that he must recuperate a history of Latino and Asian mob victims is that images of their deaths were not made and preserved with nearly the frequency of those featuring black victims.
27. For an excellent discussion of lynching souvenirs, see Young.
28. Though a broadcast was planned and promoted on Twitter, a video was never apparently shown to a broad audience.
29. The violence this video represents is *isolation*, a category of violence tracked by NCAVP, which is contextualized later in this section. Also see NCAVP 33. The fact that Ravi and Wei are of Asian descent does not diminish the power of nationalist ideologies; the atmosphere associated with Americanness encouraged them to feel justified in taking this action and to rest assured that Clementi would be the object of ridicule from a larger audience, not them.
30. The video was immediately posted on wordstarhiphop.com and circulated from there.
31. One source for this update is located at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rkMcp2dAV8>.
32. For an account of this update, one source is located at <http://www.thegavoice.com/news/atlanta-news/4242-gay-change-atlanta-organizer-apologizes-for-appearing-to-turn-back-on-brandon-white>.
33. Also see Ray. These issues are exacerbated for youth.

34. The struggle for *federal* legislation protecting these basic rights continues. For an overview and tips on how to help, visit the Gay and Lesbian Task Force's brief educational description at <http://www.thetaskforce.org/issues/nondiscrimination/ENDA_main_page>.
35. Quoting directly from NCAVP's 2011 report, the specific percentages for the most common categories: discrimination (23%), physical violence (17%), verbal harassment in person (15%), threats (12%), harassment (8%), and bullying (5%) (33).
36. "Cisgender" refers to those whose biological sex matches their gender identity and expression. For a list of privileges cisgender people take for granted, see Killermann.
37. See Wells, Dray, Allen et al., and Williams. For the participation of police in race riots as well as lynchings, see Muhammad as well as Rucker and Upton.
38. Indifference and hostility should be understood not simply as personal but also institutional, as the rest of this section strives to make clear. A larger landscape within the profession and beyond encourages these responses. In fact, police may actually receive responses of indifference and hostility from superiors and others if they respond with more passion about the violence these victims face.
39. Clearly, the fact that these tactics can be used reinforces and promotes stereotypes that mark very particular groups as "sexual deviants and sexual predators" (Cynthia Lee 477). Even when murdered, these victims are said to embody the dangerous depravity of anyone who does not conform to heterosexuality.
40. Qtd. in Williams 102.
41. See Alexander. Rewards for targeting the weak are built into our so-called justice system. She makes the case better than I can.
42. Press release on McDonald entering a guilt plea, hoping for mercy. Access at <http://www.hennepinattorney.org/NewsPress/tabid/391/EntryId/106/Young-Woman-Pleads-Guilty-to-Fatal-Stabbing.aspx>.
43. These stories are far too plentiful. Recent victims memorialized by Janet Mock include LaShai McLean, Agnes Torres Sulca, Shelley Hilliard, and Deoni Jones. See <http://janetmock.com/2012/05/01/usc-speech-cece-mcdonald-paige-clay/>.
44. Sundance Institute-affiliated filmmaker Blair Doroshwalther is developing a documentary about this case, titled *The Fire This Time*. For more information, please visit <http://blip.tv/grittv/grittv-got-docs-blair-doroshwalther-s-the-fire-this-time-2388045>. One example of analysis of the media coverage that this presumed "lesbian gang" received is here: <http://www.radioproject.org/2008/12/born-in-flames-case-of-the-new-jersey-7/>.
45. Wells was threatened with lynching and often spoke of herself as being in exile in her own country because she avoided her home, the South.
46. That some want to see these gains reversed becomes evident when one considers the large amount of money invested in programs to oppose LGBT rights as well as programs intended to make gay people straight. Anti-LGBT organizations include those to which Chik-Fil-A sent enough profits to spark controversy in 2012: WinShape Foundation, the Alliance Defense Fund, which supported California's Proposition 8 to outlaw gay marriage, and the Family Research Council, which the Southern Poverty Law Center designated as a hate group in 2010. On the movement to make gay people straight, see Erzen.
47. I have discussed other examples and cited additional sources in my blog post "Never-Ending Battles Require Sustainable Energy." Please visit <http://koritha.blogspot.com/2012/06/never-ending-battles-require.html>.
48. Especially because being able to serve openly in a military responsible for widespread oppression is arguably a very limited kind of success, Cathy Cohen's work is very relevant here.
49. See Whitlock for important reasons why harsher penalties for anti-LGBT violence is short-sighted and can intensify the hostility these communities face. The landmark bill is called the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act. Also, there have been changes among federal agencies that benefit LGBT communities, including employment protections, hospital visitation rights determined by designation not assumptions about relationship, housing non-discrimination protections, and health insurance non-discrimination protections (Paschall 5).
50. See Lipsitz 107.
51. Ira Katznelson offers a thorough account of the practices that determined the distribution of GI Bill benefits, social security, and FHA loans.
52. Many scholars address this dynamic. See, for example, Gunning.
53. Because lynching was so widespread and practices varied so much, historians do not agree on whether a covered mid-section should always be taken as a sign of castration. However, Dora Apel explains that when Tommy Shipp and Abe Smith were lynched in Marion, Indiana, in 1930, Smith's

naked lower body was covered after he was castrated (22). Apel believes that the same mutilation may have inspired a similar visual result in the last of a series of three photographs of victim Frank Embree: "Embree hangs limp and lifeless by a rope from a tree, a rough blanket pinned around his lower body, which may indicate his castration . . ." (34). For a different take on why black victims' mid-sections were covered, even if they were not castrated, see Wood, especially 100–02. To my mind, even if posterity has no way of knowing whether each covered man is castrated, the fact that they were naked and later covered suggests the importance of sexualized humiliation, at the very least. For those interested, Wood also offers information about two white men who were lynched in San Jose, California, whose naked bodies were *not* covered up for the photograph (214).

54. See Patterson, Harris.
55. This mixture of intense brutality with an interest in a show of propriety can be gleaned in many newspaper accounts. For example, the report of an 1893 Paris, Texas, lynching concludes: "Curious and sympathizing alike, they came on train and wagons, on horse, and on foot to see if the frail mind of a man could think of a way to sufficiently punish the perpetrator of so terrible a crime. Whisky shops were closed, unruly mobs were dispersed, schools were dismissed by a proclamation from the mayor, and everything was done in a business-like manner" (qtd. in Wells, *Red Record* 93).
56. Please note that my interest in the care with which lynchers prepared for photographs does not hinge only on whether or not victims were castrated. Even if they did not castrate victims, these victims are naked, so covering their mid-sections is an attempt at propriety in any case. Indeed, all aspects of presentation evince mob members' investment in perpetuating very specific notions about their own upstanding character versus the presumably despicable nature of victims. See Mitchell 7 and 30 and Goldsby on the mob's "camerawork."
57. All changes were made, of course, in order to maximize the report's potential usefulness for activists and policy makers: "Recognizing the unique and critical role that NCAVP's hate violence report serves, NCAVP continually strives to ensure that this report is accessible to multiple audiences, reflects the current lived experiences of LGBTQH communities, and provides practical tools to assist anti-violence programs and policymakers working to end anti-LGBTQH hate violence. In this year's report NCAVP expanded its person-level data including research questions that examined the impact of homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic violence across age and immigration status to allow us to better measure the impact of hate violence against LGBTQH immigrants and youth" (14).
58. A small number of these may have involved domestic violence, so not every perpetrator was necessarily heterosexual. These few exceptions do not negate the pattern, though, and what it says about our society.
59. As mentioned, the Senate issued an apology in 2005 because that body never passed antilynching legislation. For a seminal account of major attempts to institute federal protection against lynching, see Zangrando.
60. Of course, this example language is not meant to suggest that only men were lynched. On the history of women and lynching, see Feimster, who covers women's experiences as victims and as perpetrators.
61. The idea that LGBT people simply choose a "lifestyle" undergirds some justifications for how they are treated. I am not interested in these ideas, except to expose the ugliness and indifference they encourage. However, Keith Boykin has written thoughtfully about the issue. See Boykin, especially 52–56 and 187–88.
62. One way to understand this: English speakers say "I am hot" while Spanish speakers communicate something more like "I have heat." Depending upon the language(s) through which one thinks, one will conceive of this same experience in a different way, being hot or having heat. Language inevitably shapes how we think and what we can think.
63. *Presumed Incompetent*, edited by Gutiérrez y Muhs and her colleagues, does a great service to women in academia by corroborating their experience and reminding them that they are not alone. As important, it reminds women of color that they are not crazy for noticing the particular kinds of slights they encounter. I am not discounting the importance of this kind of work. I write intellectual autobiography for the same reason, to make sure others do not think they are alone. Please visit <http://works.bepress.com/koritha_mitchell/>. Still, as with all of our tools and strategies, I am encouraging a consideration of both the pros and cons.
64. In March 2013, an especially poignant example emerged. Two years after his son came out to him, Republican Senator Rob Portman decided to support gay marriage. There are reasons to commend the stand Portman is taking while his party's platform includes a commitment to amending the Constitution to enshrine discrimination against LGBT people. However, it is troubling that Americans

generally accept that issues must "hit home" before we can be expected to follow the Golden Rule of "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

65. I hope my intersectionalist analysis throughout this essay suggests that I understand that there are many factors that impact one's level of privilege and disadvantage, even if one aspect of one's identity is privileged in our society.
66. I first heard this formulation from Marc Lamont Hill in an interview with Mark Anthony Neal on the Duke University webcast series *Left of Black*. See Season 1, Episode 12: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88kf4hPHHKc>.
67. Here, my thinking resonates with an argument made by Ernest Hemingway scholar Debra Moddelmog during *Getting Beyond Bullying: Challenging Queerphobia: A Forum on Discrimination, Suicide, and the Future* at Ohio State University on December 3, 2010.
68. Again, thinking of citizenship, I am struck by the dominant tendency to speak venomously about black and brown "immigrants" specifically, even as this is a country of immigrants.
69. Janet Mock, a transgender activist and author, alters the most troubling conventions of these videos by emphasizing how much support she sought and received throughout her journey. In this way, her video challenges the illusion peddled by most that the simple passage of time will improve conditions.
70. In May 2011, Representative Steve Simon of Minnesota addressed the legislature in light of Republican efforts to set the stage for a future vote to add a ban on gay marriage to the state constitution.

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