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A Piece of Land: Black Women and Land in South Africa and the United States of America

Alessandra Williams

Macalester College, a.lebea.williams@gmail.com

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A Piece of Land:

**Black Women and Land in South Africa and the
United States of America**

**By
Alessandra Williams**

Dear Grandfathers:

We have seen and tasted the dislikes of an endless peril.

May the day when we finally grasp the privilege of peace come soon and plentiful.

*May the final hour where our self-proclaimed enemies admit defeat and retreat their
heinous behaviors come soon and plentiful.*

*On that decided day, I shall shake the grace which are the palms of your hands and say,
simply, "Thank you."*

*Your Granddaughter,
Alessandra Lebea Williams*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | V |
| PREFACE..... | VI |
| | |
| PART I: AT THE FRINGES OF OUR CONSCIOUSNESS..... | 1 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 2 |
| LAND REFORM IN SOUTH AFRICA..... | 3 |
| LAND OWNERSHIP & COLONIALISM..... | 3 |
| THE APARTHEID REGIME..... | 5 |
| LAND REFORM STRUCTURES IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA..... | 6 |
| GENDER ANALYSIS IN THE LAND REFORM DEBATE..... | 9 |
| WHY USE GENDER ANALYSIS?..... | 9 |
| WHAT GENDER ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK WILL BE USED?..... | 10 |
| THE MEANING OF PROPERTY RIGHTS FOR WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA..... | 11 |
| PROPERTY RIGHTS IN A SOUTH AFRICAN CAPITALIST SOCIETY..... | 11 |
| PROPERTY RIGHTS, WOMEN’S RIGHTS, & HUMAN RIGHTS..... | 12 |
| CASE STUDY..... | 14 |
| RESEARCH..... | 18 |
| RESEARCH METHODOLOGY..... | 18 |
| RESULTS..... | 19 |
| <i>Ruth Hall</i> | 19 |
| <i>Lozelle du Plessis</i> | 21 |
| <i>Bouwland</i> | 22 |
| <i>The Women on Farms Project</i> | 24 |
| DISCUSSION..... | 26 |
| CONCLUSION..... | 30 |
| | |
| PART II: 'DISCOVERING' RESISTANCE..... | 33 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 34 |
| THE ORIGINS OF SHARECROPPING, 1619-1877..... | 35 |
| THE CULTURE OF DISSEMBLANCE..... | 35 |
| RECONSTRUCTION..... | 37 |
| BLACK WOMEN ACTIVISTS IN THE ‘NEW SOUTH’..... | 40 |
| CONTEXTUALIZING RESISTANCE..... | 40 |
| SHARECROPPING IN THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA, 1877-1950..... | 42 |
| THE GREAT MIGRATION..... | 43 |
| THE GREAT DEPRESSION..... | 44 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| DOMESTIC WORK | 49 |
| LAUNDRY WORK | 51 |
| RESEARCH | 53 |
| RESEARCH METHODOLOGY | 53 |
| RESULTS | 55 |
| <i>Sharecropping Life</i> | 55 |
| <i>Education in the Mississippi Delta</i> | 56 |
| <i>Black Landownership in the Mississippi Delta</i> | 57 |
| <i>The Mississippi River Flood</i> | 57 |
| <i>The Lumber Industry</i> | 58 |
| <i>The Great Depression</i> | 58 |
| <i>The Great Migration</i> | 59 |
| <i>The Mississippi Delta in the 1940s</i> | 59 |
| <i>Domestic Work</i> | 59 |
| CONCLUSION | 63 |
| | |
| PART III: THE PRAXIS | 65 |
| INTRODUCTION | 66 |
| CHAPTER ONE: THE MAKINGS OF TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM | 67 |
| CHAPTER TWO: RE-CONTEXTUALIZING THE NATION | 68 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: MAPPING THE TERRAIN | 71 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: THE EXECUTION OF IT ALL | 73 |
| THE STRUCTURE | 73 |
| THE PROCESS | 74 |
| <i>Interviewing Women</i> | 74 |
| CONCLUSION | 76 |
| REFERENCES | 78 |

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Preface

On the newly democratic soil of South Africa in the Spring of 2006, I began to embark upon concrete research to ease my own anxieties and my own confusions about this most precious natural resource known as land. Land has been commodified, privatized, and exploited in order to enable capitalism, or the protection of formal assets, to flourish in an individualistic, highly competitive, and profit-driven manner. Within the frameworks of history and modernity, land has been upheld as a publicly accessible resource to be distributed amongst community members. In addition, land has been taken ownership of in order to employ and fulfill an aspect of one's basic necessities and has been simultaneously marked as a tangible venue for social and economical uplift. It has been reserved and protected for the most privileged, for the wealthiest, and for those who are most equipped to grasp the modes of classical economic terminology. Land has both socio-economical and cultural significance, because individuals connect heritage and community survival with this most powerful resource. Interestingly enough, I have not been disconnected from the global, complex politics of land ownership.

My Southern great, great grandfather owned land and many other properties. Most unfortunately, the Ku Klux Klan stole his self-earned properties and after multiple attempts to lynch him, the white supremacist organization ran him out of town, forcing him to leave his belongings and properties behind. Some generations later, my mother would grow up in a sharecropping family. As Ms. Della B. Johnson's story will establish in " 'Discovering' Resistance", such stories of violence, terror, and thievery are not few and far between.

As former slaves flocked to the 'homeland' of Liberia, as constructed by white American compatriots in the 1820s, they carried with them the various perils of U.S. slaveocracy. Upon their arrival, they became the leaders and transformers of the political, economical, and social landscape and most unfortunately, enslaved the native populations. My father, being a native Liberian of the Mano tribe, only proved to deepen my own unrest with

personal history. I found myself dwindling within this mind-boggling disorder: I am the descendant of American slaves who took reroute of the Middle Passage only to enslave my Liberian ancestors. Thankfully, I eventually came to the realization that my journey to reconciliation included the following: wresting with complex scholarship, literature, and histories to discover the hope in truthful and honest research methodologies.

While enduring the tedious processes of my research, my Professor and mentor, Peter Rachleff, asked me an important question: how do you go beyond this being a study *about* women, to it actually having and employing a feminist perspective? After giving the question considerable thought, I discovered my response. This work, entitled *A Piece of Land: Black Women and Land in South Africa and the United States of America*, seeks to redefine vocabularies on women's rights and access to land. I employ the feminist perspective by critiquing systems which prove to be a disservice to women's livelihoods. This project allows me to employ a radical feminist approach which legitimizes a specific foundation for discussing black women's unique and interconnected positions.

When I first read *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw* by Theodore Rosengarten, I was unaware of the difficulties of ethnography work. Ethnography is the ability to listen, to ask the right questions, to challenge the position of the interviewee and the interviewer; to view *both* the interviewer and the interviewee as knowledge producers. Understanding that the structure and the orality of memory is truly an intellectual process. In the research conducted on black women and land in South Africa and the United States, I worked to reach beyond my own understanding. I hope readers of this project aim to do the same.

In Part I of *A Piece of Land*, I will discuss land reform in the Western Cape of post-apartheid South Africa and whether it can and will assist women in acquiring access to and ownership of land. To forget to historicize the specific historical processes and social forces at play and subsequently, universalize the experiences of black women is not my objective. I do not aspire to conform to colonialist discourse and apply Western conceptual frameworks to the African continent nor do I desire to generalize my research

on South Africa to somehow speak to the mass entirety of Africa. I am fully aware of the complex dimensions surrounding my research in the South African region as a person who embodies the wills of American higher education. Amidst my understandings of my position and my acknowledgement of historical and geographical specifications, I do, however, fully realize the importance of finding and analyzing an interesting relationship between black South African and black American women; I am a firm believer that liberation and actual freedom are not possible if bodies with this historical connection to oppression seek only to differentiate and neglect to see the ways in which history and future possibilities are interconnected.

In Part II, I will discuss sharecropping in the post-Reconstruction, pre-Civil Rights era and the ways in which black women were actors of resistance and agents of change in their communities. Black women sharecroppers in the U.S. after Reconstruction have an intriguing relationship to land ownership. Land is a resource as well as a property through which persons become inclined to capitalist aspirations. Formalized property law has enabled the individual to seek and possibly obtain the exponential incentives land provides.¹ One way to theorize the pathway to landownership in the South is as follows: landowner hopefuls would develop *real* capital when they possessed a property such as land that had the potential to produce commodities, to be exchanged for a monetary return, and to then partake in her/his process of accumulating wealth. Those unable to acquire the goods necessary to partake in the wealth land enables, like many blacks in the post-Reconstruction era, were left with an intangible connection to land as executed through the fruits of their labor-power. In the loss of their tangible wealth, the freedpersons of the U.S. found themselves aspiring to an intangible belief that the system of sharecropping would enable them to finally acquire land and become farm owners.²

Part III is an in depth analysis of how these nations, South Africa and the United States, have a fundamental relationship through feminist epistemology and more specifically,

¹ For more on formalized property law, especially in developing nations, please see Hernando de Soto's *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else* (2000)

² P. Daniel. *The Shadow of Slavery: Peonage in the South, 1901-1969*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1972) 24.

transnational feminism. In Part III, I will discuss how transnational feminism must be contextualized in order to better understand and appreciate the research, or better yet, the knowledge which has been informed by women's stories, women's authorities, and women's communities in South Africa and the United States.

PART I: AT THE FRINGES OF OUR CONSCIOUSNESS

**THE CHALLENGE OF GENDER TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN
LAND REDISTRIBUTION POLICY**

Introduction

From the land ownership struggles and labor inequities during 17th century European settlement to the apartheid legislation that plagued the second half of the 20th century, South Africa's long history of racial injustice cannot be denied. One of the most important tasks of the current political agenda will be to assist those who have been historically disadvantaged. Land reform policies have the ability to make efforts towards this agenda in their initiative to allow some individuals to finally exercise their right to land and property, and land reform policies can also support S25 (5) of the South African Bill of Rights which establishes that the "state must take reasonable legislative and other measures within its available resources to foster conditions which enable citizens to gain access to land on an equitable basis".³ However, South African citizens and policy makers must take land reform initiatives further and acknowledge proactively the ways in which the historical and modern traditions and social norms of patriarchy continue to disenfranchise women on the basis of race and gender. This often hidden violation of women's rights demands for transformation in the intellectual, political, and capitalist structures of South African society through advocating for a more complex understanding of women's struggles in the economic sphere. In this paper, I will argue that with the implementation of efficient social infrastructure which accurately considers women's unique positions, the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD) program in the rural areas of the Western Cape has the potential to assist women seeking to participate in and benefit from land redistribution projects, but unfortunately, the historical processes of capitalism and patriarchy place numerous constraints on women, as historically disadvantaged individuals, from finally acquiring, managing, and owning property.

Before beginning the process of defending my thesis, I will clarify some of the thematic and complex terminology used throughout the paper. The first to be discussed is rural

³ The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Property Section (subsection 5). <http://www.polity.org.za/html/govdocs/constitution/saconst02.html?rebookmark=1#25> . 2006 Feb 25.

areas, then property rights, and finally, historically disadvantaged groups. By rural areas, I am describing the non-urban centers of the Western Cape where the environments are largely commercial, agricultural farming areas (e.g. Stellenbosch) lacking the information, industry, transportation infrastructure of a common metropolis (e.g. Stellenbosch). Secondly, when women's property rights are discussed, they are meant to represent, as feminist theory requires, both a de jure and a de facto establishment in the right to have fundamental access to acquiring, owning, and managing land as well as having actual decision-making power in how land will be used as an LRAD beneficiary on a commercial farm. In this essay, I am discussing how women's property rights or rights to land can be provided through land redistribution projects if LRAD processes allow them to be actual beneficiaries, shareholders, decision-makers, managers, and owners of land. However, the LRAD agenda will struggle to provide women with personal investment in economic protection, security, and subsistence in a society following capitalist principals. Finally, historically disadvantaged groups describes a large population of individuals (e.g. coloureds and blacks) who have fallen victim to a host of both legalized and institutionalized political, social, and economical atrocities in South African society, some of which will be discussed in the first chapter.

Land Reform in South Africa

Land Ownership & Colonialism

Land reform policies are an important asset to South African society as these policies are crucial in bringing to action the Constitutional commitment to equitable access to land and compensating those who have been wrongfully affected by historical circumstances such as colonialism. It is important to mention that land ownership during the pre-colonial period was not equally distributed between men and women, but it is also important to understand that the exploitative nature of colonialism built and enforced an institutional system where women were socially and economically degraded in a grossly oppressive manner.

As described by Ola Uduku, colonialism was often a process which confused the ways in which property should be allocated. Two major property rights structures existed during this period: the first, private property, was utilized by European economic activities (e.g. mining and plantations) and the second, communal property, was the major form of African land ownership.⁴ According to the author of *Institutions and Development in Africa*, John Mbaku, the communal property rights regime was used by Africans before the arrival of European settlers and rarely fell victim to a ‘tragedy of the commons’, but with the arrival of the European colonialist came the misconception that communally owned properties were unoccupied or without formal ownership and could therefore be confiscated and exploited.⁵ European settlers confiscated the native’s land not only for the means of acquiring personal ownership, but also as a wealth accumulation strategy or, in other words, to use the land for consumptive and economically productive purposes which resulted in further exploitation and oppression of native peoples.

The European colonialists’ ideologies of land claims afforded them the rights to make exploitative use of the native’s land, and for the purposes of extracting wealth from the land’s resources, they eventually controlled the native’s labor. For example, in the 1680s, the Dutch East India Company gave alcohol as a gift to Khoikhoi leaders, but as the need for agricultural labor grew, it transformed this system into a system of wine as wage or the tot system.⁶ As laborers became increasingly dependant upon alcohol and alcohol consumption, it transformed their cultural traditions to alcohol reliance and complicated their control and ownership over their own labor. The farm workers were subjugated to economic and social inferiority, and since the European settlers had made unauthorized claims to the native’s agricultural land, they were refused rights to property as well as the ownership over their land and labor. European settlers would gradually perceived themselves as Africans with European ancestry who had a divine right to use and control the properties, nevertheless they believed their future claims to resource benefits would

⁴ J. Mbaku. *Institutions and Development in Africa*. (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Pres, Inc., 2004) 208.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ P. Scully. “Liquor and Labor in the Western Cape, 1870-1900.” In: J. Crush and C. Ambler (Eds). *Liquor and Labor in Southern Africa*. (Athens: Ohio University Press) 56.

be furthered secured through political manipulation and strict property rights assignments.⁷

The Apartheid Regime

In 1948, the National Party began implementing its plans for South Africa to be ruled by apartheid laws. Apartheid segregated individuals on the basis of race, privileged a minority through providing them with access to wealth and power, and oppressed a majority through economic isolation and racial subordination. As privileged racial groups enjoyed the luxury of living in close proximity to the prominent economic centers of South Africa, others were uprooted and displaced from their properties. For instance, blacks living in Sophiatown were removed from this flourishing, urban community and were forced to live in areas with less desirable land and inferior homes. Sophiatown inhabitants are an example of individuals who owned, managed, and controlled the responsibilities and rights to their own property, but due to apartheid legislation, were forcibly removed from their properties.

The apartheid city model's long lasting effects include, but are not limited to, spatial isolation from the most promising employment opportunities and exclusion from utilising the most arable land. According to A. J. Christopher, by 1991 the impact of the apartheid city model was so devastating that only 8.6% of the population lived outside the boundaries of their designated areas.⁸ Mbaku makes this statement concerning apartheid and violence towards Africans:

Instead of protecting all the people from external and internal aggression, the state became the source of a significant part of the violence directed at the African peoples of South Africa. As a consequence, the state failed to perform its protective function, making it difficult for Africans to engage in entrepreneurial activities or create wealth that they could have used to meet their needs.⁹

⁷ Mbaku 225.

⁸ Christopher 125.

⁹ Mbaku 255.

The tot system and the apartheid city model are just two out of endless examples of injustices on the basis of race, labor, and property rights. Other injustices include slavery which began in the mid-1600s and continued until 1834. The Dutch East India Company captured slaves from areas such as India, Ghana, Madagascar, Mozambique, islands of the East Indies, and Angola, and because these slaves labored on the wine farms, the slave society of the Cape contributed heavily to the agricultural economy of South Africa.¹⁰ Wine farmers became some of the wealthiest members of the colony as they acquired large estates from the free labor of their slaves.¹¹ Given the impact of the apartheid city model, the tot system, and other systemic inequalities on the landscape as well as the agricultural and economic sectors, proactive measures such as land reform policies must occur to disrupt the cycles of oppression in South Africa.

Land Reform Structures in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Land redistribution can assist in the completion of South African policymakers' goals of Black Economic Empowerment or BEE, because it provides an opportunity for historically disadvantaged groups to own and manage land. Under the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD) policy, a household has access to R60 000 if three adults apply and pool their grants together.¹² In August of 2001, LRAD introduced a racial eligibility requirement as well as a specific focus on marginalized groups such as women, young people, farm workers, disabled persons, and the poor in place of the poor household restriction of the former program known as the Settlement/Land Acquisition (SLAG) (which provided grants amounting to only R16 000 per *household*)—an innovation requiring applicants to make a contribution in capital, loan, or labor form was also established.¹³ Due to high farm expenses, beneficiaries gather grants in large groups to purchase farms from a willing seller or use grants to go into partnership with a farmer by purchasing a portion of an existing farm; this process,

¹⁰ *Iziko: Museums of Cape Town*. "Heritage of Slavery in South Africa: Slavery at the Cape." <http://www.museums.org.za/iziko/slavery> . 18 May 2006.

¹¹ *Iziko: Museums of Cape Town*. "Heritage of Slavery in South Africa: Slavery at the Cape."

¹² Hall, *Land and Agrarian Reform in South Africa*, 28.

¹³ *Ibid*.

the *share equity scheme*, is the only method used to date on vineyards.¹⁴ Unlike laborers working under the tot system, beneficiaries actually have an economical share in the land, but the farmers, who are usually white, still have dominating control as the beneficiaries lack funds to purchase the land outright.

The problematic implications of share equity schemes range from a beneficiaries' inability to have equal input on business decision-making to a lack of understanding on women's employment statuses. Share equity schemes are largely a phenomenon of the Western Cape¹⁵ and are a favored approach in the area because it transfers ownership into the hands of the poor while disturbing neither the scale of production nor the structures of established commercial enterprises.¹⁶ Although share equity schemes have the potential to provide workers with feelings of empowerment in their current workplace as shareholders of an enterprise, these schemes seldom offer shareholders more influence in the business, because the master/servant system prevails.¹⁷ Furthermore, legislation supporting the share equity scheme has refused to recognize that most seasonal workers are women whereas most permanent workers are men and even though women benefit most when income is distributed between two heads of households, it does not guarantee women power and control over financial decisions.¹⁸

The future personal, economic stability of women in South Africa can only be ensured through sufficient policy recommendations and implementation. The ANC promised to redistribute 30% of white owned land to black South Africans by 1999, but only 1% had been transferred by 2001.¹⁹ Land reform policies have not been as effective as originally promised for reasons such as the willing buyer/willing seller method, possible candidates' limited awareness of existing policies, and the lack of enforcement and support. The

¹⁴ Moseley, "Post-Apartheid Vineyards", 16

¹⁵ Hall, *Land and Agrarian Reform in South Africa*, 34.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 32.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 33.

¹⁸ Hall et al. "What land reform has meant and could mean to farm workers in South Africa. Theme: Farm Workers and Land Reform in Southern Africa." (Paper presented at the *SARPN conference on Land Reform and Poverty Alleviation in Southern Africa*. Pretoria. 4-5 June 2001) 7.

¹⁹ C. Mather. 2002. "The Changing Face of Land Reform in Post-Apartheid South Africa: the Restructuring of Citrus Exports after 'Deregulation.'" (*Journal of Southern African Studies*. 29(2), 2002) 3.

willing buyer/willing seller framework assumes that rural dwellers have sufficient funds to receive a sizable grant to be a competitive and successful participant in land redistribution. The willing buyer framework for land redistribution further disenfranchises women because, as will be discussed in upcoming chapters, women in rural areas do not have access to and power over the most vital functions of their communities—the right to own and manage the land. In addition, profit-driven white farms struggle to survive in South Africa’s competitive economy and therefore do not desire ‘unskilled laborers’.²⁰ Land reform researcher Ruth Hall exclaims:

White and black commercial farmers and agribusiness—a locus of male economic power—have shown a preference for replicating the model of capital-intensive owner-operated commercial enterprises that characterize white agriculture, a sector which is itself in crises.²¹

As many women in the rural areas fall into this category of an ‘unskilled’ laborer, they struggle to compete with male beneficiaries equipped with better skills to operate in the farming industry.

In addition to the gender implications of the willing seller/willing buyer framework and the profit-driven farming industry, the culture of paternalism also presents numerous constraints to the success of land redistribution on Western Cape fruit and wine farms. Paternalism is a way of organizing farm life according to a worker’s dependence on the farmer, the social interactions taking place on a particular farm, and the relationship between farm life and farm conflicts to the world existing outside the farm institution.²² In contemporary South African society, paternalist relationships have transformed from the farmer existing as master and father to the farmer representing the ‘manager’.²³ Researcher on South African land redistribution, Andries du Toit, says, “The discourse of

²⁰ C. Cross and Michelle Friedman. “Women and Tenure: Marginality and the Left-Hand Power.” In: S. Meer (Ed). *Women, Land, and Authority: Perspectives from South Africa*. (Oxfam (UK and Ireland) and David Philip Publishers (South Africa), 1997) 21.

²¹ R. Hall. *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: Progress on Women’s Rights in South Africa’s Land Reform Program*. (Shadow report from Civil Society for the Women and Land Lobby Group Conference, 27-28 November 2001, Harare) 8.

²² A. du Toit. *The Farm as Family: Paternalism, Management, and Modernization on Western Cape Wine and Fruit Farms*. (A Report on Fieldwork conducted for the Centre for Rural Legal Studies, July 1992) 4.

management removes the person or the manager from the exercise of power. For the discourse of management, it is the rules, the files, the tables themselves that judge. Management discourse makes power and discipline increasingly impersonal.”²⁴ Du Toit’s analysis of the culture of paternalism relates directly to the share equity scheme, because in this process, the workers have a share in the enterprise, but the farmer still has control of a significant proportion of the business. As the farmer often holds the biggest individual share of land, he has the ability to maintain the greatest power in decision-making. With the new culture of paternalism, any systems of injustice existing on the farm are no longer about racism, cultural disempowerment, or a superiority/inferiority complex, but rather decisions are an unbiased reflection of duties, workload, farm activities, etc. Paternalism strips land redistribution beneficiaries of influence in a farm’s business processes and as male and female beneficiaries are left to negotiate power amongst themselves, women are often left powerless.

The future of land reform is dependant upon land availability, budgets, post-settlement support and black economic empowerment.²⁵ The reliance on a willing seller compromises the success of the land redistribution project as policymakers have refused to lower the market-value price of commercial farmland and many landowners have refused to sell their farm to black land reform beneficiaries.²⁶ The embedded structures of racism and paternalism as well as the unequal distribution of wealth are some key factors which mold the context of women’s lives within land redistribution projects.

Gender Analysis in the Land Reform Debate

Why use Gender Analysis?

Women living and working in rural South Africa experience economic subjugation through the embedded systems of patriarchy within employment and domestic practices.

²³ du Toit 24.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Hall, *Land and Agrarian Reform in South Africa*, 55.

Women have very little power in making decisions about their own labor and acquiring land for personal ownership. For instance, women constitute a majority in the rural areas of South Africa, but due to their marginal position in the community, they have rights to only a miniscule proportion of the land.²⁷ Rights to land in the rural areas are the productive base of the community and therefore residential rights, access to arable land, ability to use common resources (e.g. wood, water, communal grazing land, etc.), and a person's overall political, social, and economic power are entangled within the property rights discourse.²⁸ The human rights of women living in rural areas are continuously undermined as they do not have access to the most important functional aspect of their community, namely property distribution and usage.

What Gender Analysis Framework will be used?

As capitalism and patriarchy have united in an effort to control and dominate women's labor and property rights, it is necessary to utilize a feminist framework to understand and to transform capitalism in South African society in such a way that its diverse population of women can also participate and benefit from its wealth. In the context of my research, gender analysis requires an analysis which recognizes women's general unique positions on Africa's non-Western, post-colonial, post-independent, developing continent and which recognizes women's specific unique positions as members of rural communities in the highly modernized Western Cape of South Africa. In this essay, I will use the radical human rights model in order to take the language advocating for equality in all sectors further and recognize women's unique position and varying needs in a capitalist, patriarchal society.

²⁶ Ibid, 56.

²⁷ J. Small. "Women's Land Rights: A Case Study from the Northern Transvaal." In: S. Meer (Ed). *Women, Land, and Authority: Perspectives from South Africa*. (Oxfam (UK and Ireland) and David Philip Publishers (South Africa), 1997) 45.

²⁸ Small 45.

The Meaning of Property Rights for Women in South Africa

Property Rights in a South African Capitalist Society

Karl Marx theorized capitalism as an anti-human system where an individual's power is turned against them.²⁹ Capitalism has paved the way for wealth accumulation, private ownership of profitable, financial assets, the lawful protection of personal, property rights, and ideologies promoting the power of individuals. It has also induced poverty, inequality, and exploitation on entire cultures of people, societies, and nations. In the South African context, capitalist structures have taken an interesting turn with its newly democratic government. In 1996, South Africa's new macro-economic policy—Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR)—replaced what structured land redistribution strategies, the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP), with neo-liberal ideologies of economic policy which work to attract foreign investment, promote privatization, redesign state assets, and compete with other economies utilizing deregulation and trade liberalization.³⁰ Under GEAR, land reform becomes a cost and not an investment, and therefore market-based structures, such as the willing buyer/willing seller strategy are implemented.³¹

As the South African capitalist state seeks to both grow economically and satisfy the needs of its poorer populations, it makes for a socially compromised, market-based land redistribution framework. In South Africa, the state works to consolidate the market by attempting to assist those who have been unable to participate in the formal economy with the initial resources to become market producers and consumers.³² Through its aims to draw the historically disadvantaged into the land market, there is little attention towards decommodifying land and most attention towards compatibility with the

²⁹ M. Lebowitz. "Karl Marx: The Needs of Capital vs. the Needs of Human Beings." In D. Doud (Ed.): *Understanding Capitalism: Critical Analysis from Karl Marx to Amartya Sen.* (London & Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2002) 34.

³⁰ Hall, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, 9.

³¹ *Ibid.*

market.³³ Without the disturbance of markets or the political and social atmosphere, land reform in post-apartheid South Africa has been reduced to that of a market-based approach which seeks to deracialize land ownership.³⁴ This new framework is unfortunate, because to ‘deracialize’ land ownership may allow a few black or coloured, male, upper class persons to enter the commercial agriculture industry, but it will not necessarily remove the social, economical, and political barriers which prevent poor, coloured and black, women from acquiring and maintaining land ownership.

Property Rights, Women’s Rights, & Human Rights

Property rights are now considered an integral part of fulfilling one’s individual human rights. Authors Mary Ajayi and Abiodun Olotuah define property rights as the ‘right to own, acquire (through purchase, gift or inheritance), manage, administer, enjoy and dispose of tangible and intangible property including land, housing, money, bank accounts, livestock, crop and pensions’.³⁵

A woman’s economic wellbeing is immediately compromised when she is unable to accumulate enough assets to survive in South Africa’s highly competitive, capitalist structure. In 2005, the United Nations produced its Human Rights Resolution establishing human rights as a universal, intertwined, interdependent, and indivisible set of principles, and in addition, women’s equitable access and control over land as well as their personal right to sufficient housing and property ownership as an integral part of human rights fulfillment.³⁶ In modern South African society, property rights involve more than simply accumulating luxurious assets and inconceivable wealth; it defines economic survival and contributes to human rights fulfillment, because one cannot fulfill her/his basic needs without accumulating sufficient capital.

³² Greenberg 4.

³³ Ibid, 5.

³⁴ Ibid, 9.

³⁵ M. Adebola Ajayi and A. O. Olotuah. “Violation of Women’s Property Rights within the Family.” Gender-Based Violence Trilogy. (*Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, Volume 1,1 : No. 66, 2005) 59.

The maintenance and protection of property rights encompasses the tangible element which allows capitalism to exist. Property rights fuel ideologies behind individualism and allow individuals to sustain their perceived security amidst the competition and the monopolistic enterprises dominating the market. The right of ownership is the most important subcategory of property rights as it encompasses use rights, earnings rights, and transference rights.³⁷ South African legislation has acknowledged the importance of protecting a person's right of ownership in its radical definition of domestic abuse. In South Africa's Domestic Violence Act (Act No. 116, 1998), the definition of domestic violence includes physical, emotional, and psychological abuse as well as damage to property and economic abuse.³⁸ Damage to property is described as "the willful damaging or destruction of property belonging to a complainant or in which the complainant has a vested interest" and economic abuse is described as:

- (a) the unreasonable deprivation of economic or financial resources to which a complainant is entitled under law or which the complainant requires out of necessity, including household necessities for the complainant, and mortgage bond repayments or payment of rent in respect of the shared residence; or
- (b) the unreasonable disposal of household effects or other property in which the complainant has an interest.³⁹

If women do not have a voice in the financial decisions made concerning her home and her life, then it is certainly the "unreasonable deprivation of economic or financial resources" and women will not have decision-making power as an LRAD beneficiary and shareholder of a farm. The cases of domestic violence in South Africa are astronomical and this human rights violation not only affirms male's power in household arrangements, but also undermines women's abilities to participate in economic uplift strategies such as land redistribution, in fear that she may be physically harmed for attempting to do so.

³⁶ Ibid, 58.

³⁷ Mbaku 212.

³⁸ *Government Gazette*. 2 December 1998. Vol. 402: No. 19537.
<http://www.polity.org.za/html/govdocs/legislation/1998/act116.pdf>. 18 May 2006.

As the United Nations describes women's access to and control over land as an irrefutable asset to the fulfillment of human rights, I have chosen to discuss women's ability to acquire and own land in order to evaluate the possibilities of LRAD contributing to the fulfillment of this basic human right. Andries du Toit proclaims that the "Western Cape has known capitalist relationships for longer than any part of the country"⁴⁰ for through processes such as the tot system, apartheid, slavery, and modern farm relationships and power dynamics, the quest for capital accumulation and economic power has resulted in cultural domination, racism, and gender inequities. The effective implementation of social welfare programs is not enough to afford the right of ownership to the most oppressed groups, such as women living in the rural areas of South Africa, because this can only be achieved through a complete transformation of the ways in which gender, labor, and the economy are structured.

Case Study

In South Africa, a large body of organizations, movements, and programs exist with goals of making land redistribution more effective. For my essay, I have chosen to discuss research on the Promoting Women's Access to Land (PWAL) Program, because of its efficient use and practice of gender analysis to understand, challenge, and transform land reform and advocate for women's land rights.

Collaborating with the Department of Land Affairs (DLA), the National Land Committee (NLA), and other NGO's and community organizations working with land reform, the Promoting Women's Access to Land (PWAL) Program seeks to recognize and respond to land reform's challenges in accomplishing gender equity goals.⁴¹ Using formal research, training of land reform affiliates, the facilitation of grassroots case studies following a participatory methodology, and a national conference consisting of southern African and

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ du Toit 1.

⁴¹ C. Cross and D. Hornby. *Opportunities and Obstacles to Women's Land Access in South Africa*. (A Research Report for the Promoting Women's Access to Land Program, February 2002) 5.

international delegates which will produce recommendations and strategies to be conducted by Program stakeholders.⁴² The Program seeks to assess the ways in which land reform processes in South Africa refuses to meet the needs of the poor and landless and how women in particular have been neglected.⁴³ The PWAL's framework for assessment is as follows: what benefits do these agrarian reform projects offer to South Africa's poor rural women?⁴⁴

Agrarian reform projects have great potential in providing a multitude of benefits to poor rural women, thus PWAL seeks to discover these benefits and analyze the challenges to women obtaining these benefits. The Program's research component required its researchers to identify core gender issues which were prevalent in land reform projects overall and in these general categories of land specifically: state-led, civil society, and private sector processes.⁴⁵ After the conceptual framework and the major themes of the research were discussed at a workshop in June 2001, poor rural women and the LRAD program were finalized as a major category of research.⁴⁶ The workshop also discussed the private sector, in regards to individual farmers and organized agriculture, and concluded that the private sector plays a major role in the government's efforts to redistribute land, thus the private sector has significant influence over poor rural women's gateway to future land access.⁴⁷ Overall, the PWAL research study would create a response to questions concerning the implications of poor rural women as beneficiaries and concerning the land access and security issues which will arise when they are forced to interact with organized capital institutions.⁴⁸ Although the new efforts of the DLA are a potential gain for poor women, the PWAL research methods recognize the class-bound implementation strategies preventing poor women's involvement, because these women benefit least from transformation of gender roles and are least likely to seek assistance from government offices and the designated service providers.⁴⁹

⁴² Ibid, 5.

⁴³ Ibid, 11.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 12.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 14.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid 16.

The researchers' focus on the economical implications of the LRAD program is an important one, because differences of class and socioeconomic status are a major hindrance to women's participation.

The working methodology of the PWAL study sought to analyze existing statistical information and incorporate their strategies for gender evaluation. The PWAL research study's methodological approach utilized qualitative data collection strategies through informant interviews with commentators and implementers as well as participatory focus groups with community members.⁵⁰ To increase perspective on the qualitative material, quantitative data was gathered from the Quality of Life (QOL) quantitative database of the DLA which is a land reform resource edited by the Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate.⁵¹ The DLA's 2000 Quality of Life survey which provides statistics on the developments of state-led land reform was examined in conjunction with the PWAL researchers' additional work and gender findings on the database.⁵² Some of the general findings include that land reform beneficiaries usually had better access to services than other rural African households and 80% of the beneficiaries applied expecting to generate an income but only 22 percent were able to do so.⁵³ These findings demonstrate how LRAD provided an increased access to social infrastructure but simultaneously hindered economic development and complicated the ability for LRAD beneficiaries to conduct sustainable livelihoods since the program did not assist them with generating a stable income. As households heads, primary caregivers, and breadwinners, women will struggle to participate in LRAD if it does not guarantee financial stability.

The results of the research ranged from findings concerning women's exclusion from spaces of authority and power to women being refused important modes of communication with their male counterparts. The interviews conducted by PWAL identified two areas where women beneficiaries in the share equity scheme are excluded from information networks and decision-making: the first is the initial stage of interaction

⁵⁰ Ibid, 17.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid, 20.

⁵³ Ibid 21.

between the farmer and the workers or the neighboring land redistribution community tends to be a male bonding experience which excludes women; the second takes place during the establishment period when consultants arrive to develop a business plan to apply for LRAD funding.⁵⁴ Women could be more involved if DLA gender policies were implemented during the early stages of decision-making, but since communication between the DLA and the private sector ends after the farm is purchased and arrangements are made, the informal partnerships of male farmers and male farm workers can reestablish women's exclusion from decision-making power.⁵⁵ If women do not have voice in the initial stages of communication and business arrangements, then they are immediately removed from decision-making power and permanently prevented entrance into business discussions, recommendations, and implementation strategies.

The interviews also demonstrated that in the farm-based private sector, poor rural women are poorly educated in agricultural technology.⁵⁶ For instance, a Standard 7 level is the minimal requirement in modern farm management and, in the Western Cape, the PWAL interviews found that many women were turned away when applying for training as wine estate forepersons, because they were not prepared for the technical components of the course.⁵⁷ In order for women to fully benefit from the course and advance in the agricultural sector, the course managers asserted that women must be offered additional skills and education.⁵⁸ Creating a partnership with the private sector offers poor rural men and women opportunities of skills development and building a track record for bank credit qualifications, but women will continue to struggle to be equal partners in the private sector, because they do not have access to credit, information, and resources.⁵⁹ Overall, the PWAL study revealed the ways in which women are ostracized from the initial stages of development, prevented participation in business conversations, and lack the necessary skills for agricultural work. If the male-bonding tendencies which render women voiceless are not dismantled and women do not have access to education and

⁵⁴ Ibid 91.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Corn and Hornby 91.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 92.

skills training initiatives, the LRAD forum will be of no service to women and therefore of little service to historically disadvantaged groups.

Research

Research Methodology

The main purpose of this research chapter is to enhance my project on South Africa with primary resource information from individuals working within the research, planning fields, and project levels of LRAD in the Western Cape. Through the process of the research, I developed a personal understanding of land redistribution and gained firsthand experience of the ways in which LRAD works through the knowledge of researchers, project implementers, and actual LRAD beneficiaries. My research question was as follows: how does the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD) program affect the property rights of women living in the rural areas of the Western Cape?

The initial objectives of my research were to gain insights on the role of women in LRAD projects, the social infrastructure, or lack thereof, in place to support women in gaining full participation in the LRAD program, the connection between property rights and the LRAD forum, and some policy recommendations to ensure LRAD in South Africa is supportive of women.

I interviewed individuals in the Western Cape working for the research and daily planning fields of LRAD and visited a farm to interview individuals working for the commercial farming industry. My data collection strategy can be described as qualitative research using structured and semi-structured interviews as applicable to the interviewee's circumstances. The data was compiled, and inserted into my essay to

support my thesis statement with primary resource information.

I endured two major challenges in developing, conducting, and completing this research. Issues of language were one of my biggest worries considering how I am not fluent in any of the major languages spoken in the Western Cape, aside from English. Working with poor rural women would have presented a major problem with such language barriers. I also believed it would be both unethical and a violation of a radical feminist approach for me to interview poor rural women considering how I had just begun to delve into the research topic. To best resolve such a challenge of ethical issues, I chose to structure my project around researchers and LRAD project implementers. Secondly, Bouwland is a highly successful farm compared to many of the other LRAD projects, therefore, in addition to Bouwland, I would have preferred to visit a farm that had not acquired the same success. Unfortunately, logistical processes, time constraints, and transportation issues prevailed. Many of the LRAD farms are located over an hour from the city of Cape Town, thus Bouwland was conveniently located at only 30 minutes from the city. Overall, this research proved to be a challenge in regards to both ethics and personal dynamics, but, in the end, it evolved to be a great asset to my essay and it greatly deepened my understanding of land rights and women's equal participation in LRAD projects.

In this research chapter, I will begin by listing some of the results of the interviews. Secondly, I will briefly evaluate the results and discuss the overall connection of the research to the subject and theoretical framework of my essay. It is important to mention that the initial interviews were more extensive than to be described; I have chosen specific excerpts to examine here.

Results

Ruth Hall

On April 28, 2006 I emailed Ruth Hall a questionnaire. The questionnaire was returned to me through email on May 12, 2006. Ruth Hall is a researcher for the Program for Land & Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) and has done extensive research on South Africa's

land reform policies and practices with a specific focus on gender equity. According to Ruth Hall, PLAAS has provided research on the progress and challenges of land reform, has made recommendations for policy, and has previously trained state officials. She believes PLAAS may have also contributed to the current debates and critiques of land reform. When I asked Ruth Hall to describe her professional relationship with land redistribution projects in South Africa, she stated that she has previous experience in NGO and advocacy work and currently publishes and conducts policy research at the national, programmatic, and project level. In addition, I asked Hall to describe the ways in which she believes she has made an impact on the success of land redistribution in the Western Cape and/or South Africa in general. Hall replied that through various presentations to the media, academics, NGOs, and parliament, she has contributed by raising the public's awareness of agrarian reform through such reports as *Evaluating Land & Agrarian Reform in South Africa* (2003), the *Assessment Survey of LRAD projects in the Eastern Cape* (2004), the *Diagnostic Review of Communal Property Associations* (2005), and *Land and Agrarian Reform in Integrated Development Plans* (2004-5). Below are some of my questions and Ruth Hall's responses.

Why is or is not land redistribution important to the lives of South African civilians, to the redistribution of wealth in South Africa, and to the empowerment of historically disadvantaged groups in South Africa?

It is one way of redistributing the wealth of the country – though obviously not the only, let alone the most straightforward way. Methods like a Basic Income Grant (BIG) which would transfer cash into the hands of poor people at little administrative cost to the state might be much more effective. The difference is that land reform is one of very few initiatives to transfer ASSETS to disadvantaged and poor people. In this way, it combines the potential to address welfare needs (alleviating poverty and inadequate access to food) with long-term restructuring. Whether or not the current program of land redistribution is realizing this potential is, however, another matter entirely. My view is that it is not – both because of the limited scale of delivery, and because the way in which land is being redistributed (who is getting it, how much, where, on what terms, and what other resources and support comes with the land), which leads to significant risks of project failure.

Do you believe land redistribution will assist historically disadvantaged individuals in finally having the support, the resources, and the skills to acquire and to maintain property, and to protect their property rights? *It depends. On the whole, I would say: not in the way redistribution is being implemented at present.*

What do you believe should be the most significant function of land redistribution projects in South Africa? *It must work at three levels in conjunction: (a) poverty reduction in the rural areas, (b) restructuring of the agrarian system and the wider economy, (c) symbolic meaning of*

redistributing land, which is part of national reconciliation and redress for the injustice of dispossession. I think it is dangerous to try to separate out these functions – it could lead to either a superficial and cosmetic approach, or a welfarist approach that doesn't deal with history nor contribute to sustainable transformation.

Do women have equitable access to government grants for farmland purchase? *In theory, yes. In practice, no.*

If so, what initiatives have been implemented to allow for such gender equity? *The conversion of the grant structure from operating on a household basis (R16,000 per household under the SLAG program) to individual grants (from R20,000 per individual). This is, despite other problems with LRAD and the market-based approach, an important improvement, and a necessary response to the critique in the 1990s that the household grants tied women into intrahousehold relations and decision-making and in this way undermined the objective of gender equity. However, the small grants (compared to the price of land) still tie women into male household members' projects, since many grants must be combined to make up the purchase price of land.*

Lozelle du Plessis

On May 5, 2006, I conducted a semi-structured interview with Lozelle du Plessis. I describe the interview as 'semi-structured', because I had a list of questions for Lozelle du Plessis to answer, but I was also open to adding new questions as the interview proceeded and as I learned more about the work, knowledge, and experience of du Plessis. Du Plessis tracks the progress of land redistribution projects for the Department of Agriculture in Elsenburg. When I asked Lozelle to tell me more about her work at the Department of Agriculture, she told me that she works with agricultural economics and keeps a database of LRAD forms. She described her profession further in these details:

An agricultural economist makes sure a farm is profitable. As an agricultural economist you will go to a farm. I would make suggestions about how a farm can optimally use land and how to be most efficient based upon inputs versus outputs. Some economists specialize in marketing or tracing the entire supply chain of transport costs, extra costs, and how that affects the farm...Within our agricultural economist program, we have a macroeconomic division on statistics and macroeconomic analysis and a microeconomic division on marketing and natural resources and production economics. We answer questions such as: what's the carrying capacity of a piece of land and how many animals can be on this piece of land?

After introducing herself as an agricultural economist, Lozelle du Plessis described how land redistribution works in the Western Cape as well as the problems and complexities of the process.

Later in the interview, du Plessis described how a conversation concerning gender and LRAD arose in a departmental meeting:

We had a departmental meeting yesterday. With the department, there are certain forums where

the public can pose questions. One question was what is being done for women in the Department of Agriculture? Our division head was saying about what profits were being made in regards to inputs versus outputs, an unbiased tool to see if you are making profits or not. This tool isn't designed to pick up gender differences. Women are becoming very important so why can't we use this tool to figure out the role of women? In my database, the LRAD database, I'll have details about how many beneficiaries are women. Your question is a very important one. At this time, it's just about racial equality and not about women. We are still a bit behind in that. You can't tell them to be sustainable or don't cut down this tree if they have nothing to eat. There is so much to be done. There is no rule that 50% of beneficiaries need to be women. If most are men and are trying to buy a farm, it will be about giving it to previously disadvantaged people.

Du Plessis made this important statement about race, gender, and decision-making power, "It's hard for farm workers to speak. It's the same for women. The idea still exists that women must be quiet. In all of the projects there are women, but I wouldn't say they play a big role. If you talk property rights, I would say they are like any other beneficiary."

As the interview progressed, Lozelle du Plessis identified these problems with the LRAD program:

- *Land reform has a limited budget.*
- *The application processes of the Department of Agriculture (i.e. it can take years before a proposal is approved) are slow.*
- *The business plans proposed by the beneficiaries' appointed consultant are unrealistic.*
- *When large numbers of beneficiaries form themselves into a trust to buy a farm, it can cause disputes. Because some live and work on the farm and others live and work elsewhere, decision-making processes are confusing and lack structure.*
- *Much training exists for LRAD farms. However, for farms that do not have female participants, they are not able to receive training from institutions such as Florida A & M University (U.S.A) which requires 50% female participation in the project.*

Lozelle du Plessis mentioned the dispute issue amongst beneficiaries multiple times during the interview. On one specific occasion, she established:
The LRAD farms aren't very successful. It's not about race in regards to success, it's about the lack of knowledge. It's the government's fault in not assessing whether they know about a farm. There are too many people trying to make decisions-if you had 60 bosses, you would fight too! People have a longing for land, because they haven't had it. It's not about the farm, it's about having a piece of land.

Bouwland

On May 12, 2006, I visited the Bouwland wine farm. Bouwland is one of the Western Cape's major BEE projects. After two years of logistical processes, Bouwland began in 2001. In addition to the grants pooled by 60 beneficiaries, Bouwland received extensive

government funding and bank loans. Today, 74% of the farm is owned by the beneficiaries (the rest owned by Beyerskloof) in their trust. Of the 60 trustees, 22 are women and 10 women are apart of the Bouwland team or team of permanent workers.

On the farm, I was accompanied by Lozelle du Plessis and spoke with Cecil Jaap, Veronica Campher, and Florrie Elias. Cecil Jaap is a coordinator, director, and trustee of Bouwland. Florrie Elias is a trustee and permanent worker in the marketing department. Veronica Campher is a trustee and permanent worker in the marketing and customer service department. Campher informed me that with the approval of Bouwland, she would be going to America for training. With the training program, she would enroll in courses and study in Washington D.C., New York, and Seattle. In 2001, she was the first to be selected for the Burgundy exchange program and in 2004, she was reelected. The program was so successful that another ten were selected. I asked Campher some questions about women and the Bouwland farm:

Does Bouwland have specific programs to support its women employees?

I wouldn't say there are specific programs for women. We are busy employing one of our trustees, which is a woman, to help with the promotion of the wine and the administration. That is not in place yet, but we are busy with that.

How long have you been working for Bouwland?

I started working with Beyerskloof at first in 1999. In 2001, when Bouwland came along, I became part of that.

What do you believe is the next step for Bouwland? In other words, is Bouwland working towards a specific goal at the moment?

The next step is to have our own infrastructure on our own land. I think that's very important.

Do you believe women play a major role in the success of land redistribution projects?

Not yet. More can be done to empower especially women.

What needs to be done to facilitate women's success and empower women?

A few catering courses. There are so many of our trustees, specifically myself, that need to do a computer course. I say catering because at most our general meetings, we have to go and buy stuff, but if there are women, they can do that for us. There are so many strong women out there. The other thing I do is there are a lot of people that come to me. On the 23 of May, a woman came to me who was busy with youth. She wanted me to come to the program and tell them where I came from until where I am right now.

(Lozelle du Plessis) To give them hope?

To give them hope. I went from a child where life wasn't easy at that stage. Maybe you have parents that drink a lot, as in my case. At the end of the day, you have to overcome that. You must be strong. I was telling myself the whole time, when I am a grown up, I don't want to have that life. I wanted to better my life and the life of my children. I promised myself that I didn't want my children to have that life. Many of the trustees have children and at the end of the day, their children must benefit from that. It's not about me, Veronica, for me it's about my children and

Bouwland. At the end of the day, I want to ensure that my children, my grandchildren, benefit from this.

Later on, I asked Cecil Jaap some questions about women and Bouwland:

What is the role of women on the farm?

I came out of the belief not to employ women, because they have to go on maternity leave and all. In the 1980's, things started to change. My belief is that women are more present, more committed than men. They are determined to finish the task. We have got 10 women on our team. I see women doing a lot of jobs men do. We would like to have more women involved in our business.

What's the best strategy to get women involved?

If we have our own Bouwland, women will become more involved in the business. We must expand.

The Women on Farms Project

August 21, 2006, I interviewed Fatima Shabodien and Debra de Vries at the Women on Farms Project in Stellenbosch, South Africa. The Women on Farms Project (WFP) is at the forefront of organizing poor, rural women (mainly Xhosa, a black ethnic group of South Africa, and coloured women) in the Western Cape. The WFP consists of programs in labor rights program, housing, and an economic development initiative for women. When I asked Fatima Shabodien about her position as the Executive Director of the Women on Farms Project, she stated:

In 1997, I worked for the department of land affairs in the monitoring department. At the time it was quite exciting as we were discussing the quality analysis of land. The unit was established through the World Bank and they wanted to know what the difference was. There wasn't a methodology, so it was very sad that after that investment, the findings were watered down. People were very alienated as a result of it. In terms of gender, women were completely missed in terms of strategy. So two years after, I realized I couldn't do that with a good conscience. I went to grad school and researched women and land and ownership and citizenship--how did this affect the relationship of a farmer and a farm worker? I worked in Indonesia. There, the focus was structuring civil society, but I came back here in 2004 and started working with women on farms. You cannot work with farm workers and farmers and not deal with land, specifically in gender terms. With the growing crisis of evictions, we chose to establish a program specifically for that. The farm women, land and housing program was launched.

When I asked Debra de Vries to describe her duties as the Director of Women, Land, and Housing, she stated:

My background is the trade union movement. In the 80s, I started with the clothing and textile movement. At the time there was no farm workers unit. At the time we organized the shop and the land where the materials come from. I left there and went to work for the Food and Allies Workers Union (FAWU), the biggest food union in the country organizing and processing since 2004. My position was initially in education. I was responsible for international coordination, which meant that we were affiliated with the international coalition of food workers. There is very little being done. Farm workers didn't have rights--had your sort of paternal farmer where farm workers had to follow. It is exactly a month now that I am the Coordinator of the Women, Land, and Housing program.

During the course of the interview, Debra de Vries described the daily workings of patriarchy on LRAD farms:

Of course we come from a traditional, patriarchal society so we see the contradictions. It means a lot of encouragement—practical experience and exposure. In terms of South Africa's situation, as partners working on farms, that right is given primarily to the man or to the husband. But if the partner or male partner is fired, women are told that they have no rights.

I asked Fatima Shabodien to discuss the potential for women finally gaining access to land as owners and decision makers under LRAD's willing seller/willing buyer platform. Shabodien responded as follows:

O.K. I don't believe that the capitalist framework can provide women any kind of security. I think that by virtue of the system and its biases, it's going to privilege a few and those already on the margins become further marginalized through such a system. I think it doesn't matter how gender sensitive it is. The fact that its premises, the basic framework, the cornerstone of all of it is designating property, is private property, makes it problematic. And it will reproduce systems of inequality. And that's the racist part of that, even though land reform is a very operational objective. Hierarchies will develop in the other divisions which are not as exclusive like gender—how far up in the church you are in your area, how close to the farm you are, how close to the farmer, these kind of techniques of marginalization is reproduced. What I seek through all of that is through the inefficiency of the method. It will reproduce another system of hierarchy. It's not going to put forward an equitable system of land redistribution.

Shabodien continued this same discussion of women, land redistribution, and capitalism with these statements:

For me, the question of it is also, the induction of it. The Department of Land Affairs first introduced it as a poverty alleviation strategy to land reform as a mechanism for black economic empowerment. It is about the emergence of a black capitalist class. It wants to replace some of these white commercial farmers with black commercial farmers. It doesn't help the population. It doesn't help seasonal women farm workers on a commercial farm. So fundamentally, it doesn't change the structure of a system of oppression. It further disadvantages South Africans. It wants to replace white farmers with black farmers and that's not what people died for.

Discussion

The discussion section of the research chapter must begin with an examination of the tangible power of farmers, as informed by Debra de Vries. Indeed, LRAD allows workers to have a share in farmland. However, the farmer still has the power to dismiss the shareholder from his employment, thus the worker and farmer are neither equal shareholders, partners, owners, or decision-makers. The farmer has the power of authority over the business and managerial aspects of the farm, because he holds the most substantial share of the land (Vries asserts that the farmer will own 50% of the land as compared to the 50% which is divided amongst the workers). If a worker is to have ownership over a share of commercial farmland, then their ownership rights must be protected in the same manner as the farmers. Farm workers' abilities to assert their newly established authority as shareholders is immediately compromised if they must be concerned with job security.

Many lessons are also learned from Ruth Hall's interview. We learn that with the failures and inefficiency of projects aside, land redistribution has the potential of providing access and assets to poor people, addressing the needs of the disadvantaged, and alleviating poverty in general. However, land redistribution must work to deal with history in a responsible, comprehensive, and proactive manner otherwise land redistribution carries no symbolic meaning and will not work towards national reconciliation. Hall mentions that an initial goal was established where 30% of land would be redistributed to women but this aim received no implementation. Women's involvement is exaggerated through statistics which refuse to recognize which grant amounts women have the most access to and why. From Hall's responses to the questionnaire, it begs questions of what the obligation of officials and implementers of land redistribution projects and policies is to actually ensure that 'marginalized groups' are given priority and the initial goals working towards gender equity are monitored, especially considering how procedural rights where women *can* participate in a meeting and *can* participate in election procedures is not enough since, in the words of Ruth Hall, women struggle to "get in, to stay in, to decide on how the land is to be used, to derive benefits (produce & income) from it, to control

their own labor, etc.”

Lozelle du Plessis’ description of the LRAD database reveals that structures which will show the disparities between men and women are lacking. Tools and technological equipment that exists and has the potential to reveal gender differences are not being used for the purpose. Furthermore, the initial goals of LRAD are immediately rendering the oppression and discrimination faced by women to be irrelevant, secondary, or simply insignificant if its goals are concerned with racial uplift and not both racial and gender equity. The history of colonialism, paternalism, and racial oppression in South Africa has wrongfully impacted the lives of both men and women of coloured and black backgrounds in ways which has prevented them an equal voice and share of power in such land redistribution processes as the share equity scheme. But even in the midst of extensive racial inequality, the manner in which women are degraded and suppressed further than man must also be recognized. Women cannot be considered “any other beneficiary” when they endure circumstances which prohibit them for being applicants who understand the complicated LRAD process, beneficiaries who can take advantage of skills training without additional help, and decision-makers in the economics and business aspects of the farm.

Du Plessis also describes the many issues preventing LRAD’s success. If the budgeting, application, and business issues are not resolved, then an applicant’s potential as an efficient farmer, and business administrator and manager is undermined before they even become beneficiaries. Assistance for beneficiaries exists locally, nationally, and internationally, but if women are not equal participants as farmers, business administrators and managers, then something as important as training for the beneficiaries cannot be taken advantage of.

From Plessis’ identification of some key problems with LRAD implementation, it is clear that LRAD has not been very successful. If the government has goals of alleviating poverty and assisting historically disadvantage people according to a neo-liberal economics framework, then the profit-driven, capitalist framework of LRAD becomes

immediately central to the lives of the beneficiaries. A piece of land or a share in a farm as a beneficiary holds great symbolic importance to an individual who has been prevented access to land through ingrained and institutionalized forms of oppression. It is unfortunate that for some beneficiaries it is about finally having land and not necessarily about managing the farm, however if the beneficiaries, often from the poorest of backgrounds, exist in a society run by GEAR and other market-driven structures, whose to say that they should not want land as property for present and future investment in sustainable livelihoods?

On note of accumulating enough assets to conduct a sustainable livelihood, Ruth Hall asserts that the largest obstacle preventing women's and poor person's involvement is the grant-based framework for land purchase. As discussed earlier in my essay, the willing buyer/willing seller method or in general, the market-driven strategies of land redistribution will undermine the success of the LRAD program's goals of prioritizing 'marginalized groups' as some of the most marginalized individuals—the poor and women—do not have access to large amounts of capital in order to acquire the actual status of an 'equal participants' in land redistribution projects.

My interview with Veronica Campher demonstrates the important roles women play on LRAD farms. Campher works for the marketing and customer service departments, performs clerical duties, and participates in skills training programs, and of course, all of these tasks are necessary to maintain and manage an efficient wine farm. At the same time, Campher acknowledges that more needs to be done to empower women to be equal participants in land redistribution projects and she asserts that women are in need of basic skills training. Interestingly, Campher states that a way to empower women's success is their completion of a catering course. At this moment, I begin to wonder more about Campher's understanding of women's empowerment in land redistribution projects. Is it possible that Veronica's idea of equal participation and gender equity is one that prefers a more passive and domestic definition? If so, have not the culture of paternalism, historical inequities, and institutionalized gender roles influenced this point of view?

My interview with Cecil Jaap demonstrates how men have the ability to change their gender problematic points of views. Jaap was honest in describing his former views of women and work. Through his discussion of women's commitment and determination and especially his statement about more women being involved in the business of Bouwland, it brings hope to the possibility of women gaining equal access to the LRAD process. However, both Veronica Campher and Cecil Jaap state that the best way to get more women involved in the business of Bouwland, is to expand and develop their own infrastructure. Expansion can indeed open up the possibilities of increased women's involvement, but if women are not equally present in the initial developments, then it is unlikely that women will be supported in an expanded Bouwland. The participation of women in all levels of farm business, development, and expansion cannot remain at the fringes of LRAD beneficiaries', project implementer's, and state official's consciousnesses; it must be considered a priority mode of understanding and implementation on LRAD farms.

Fatima Shabodien establishes that LRAD may provide an opportunity for historically disadvantaged groups to gain access to land, but the fundamental construction of capitalism, as the willing seller/willing buyer framework operates under, automatically prevents gender equity. This Western construction known as capitalism has been founded upon the rightful ownership of property amongst wealthy, white males; processes which seek to work within the gendered and racialized borders of capitalism, simultaneously seek to degrade and compromise women's voices and abilities. The Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development program immediately ostracizes women in its simplistic goal of 'deracializing' commercial agriculture. Shabodien's insights assert that not only is this LRAD opportunity incapable of enabling women the resources to own land, but it also refuses to acknowledge the long-lasting effects of colonialism, apartheid, and slavery. The South African state's current aspirations to 'deracialize' refuses to honor the resistance and activism of those who fought against oppression and risked their lives to be agents for racial equality, gender transformation, and the political and economical rights of all South Africans.

Conclusion

The tasks necessary to protect women's rights are numerous and complicated, but fortunately, they are not impossible if policy makers and female as well as male citizens of South African society advocate for women's property rights. Because women have marginal power in deciding how finances should be spent, South African policy makers must implement more initiatives to dismantle the male's traditional position as head of household, thus women will have more ownership over household financial decision making and if she desires to purchase land with a government grant, it will be within her bounds to do so. The family structure is often the most adequate form of support for any individual. If women are to benefit from land reform policies, the social norms of male as head of household may disturb her abilities to receive family support on acquiring property, thus additional services must be developed for women to seek support elsewhere. Land reform policy must work to transform the cultural milieu women are entangled within by incorporating affirmative action infrastructure that will empower, protect, and educate women as well as target fundamental change of institutions. In a language most applicable to them, potential beneficiaries must have knowledge of the existing land reform policies and other resources necessary for their success, especially women in rural areas lacking adequate literacy skills. A lack of affirmative action assumes a fair, equal system where all come to compete with equal skills, resources, and access which, of course, any capitalist structure prohibits.

The Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development program consists of a multitude of problems and challenges to its success. It is in need of implementation that pays adequate attention to the gender implications of the program methodology, to the diverse needs of poor individuals living in rural areas, and the strategies necessary to provide land access to historically disadvantaged groups--then, and only then, will LRAD fulfill its potential in allowing women to acquire, to manage, and to take ownership of land. The South African state has paid its verbal, de jure respects to the disadvantaged in the Bill of Rights in its proclamation to "foster conditions which enable citizens to gain access to land on an equitable basis", but without a de facto obligation which actually

establishes conditions allowing poor rural women to be equal participants and decision-making beneficiaries in all areas of farm industry business, this proclamation is nearly null and void in the livelihoods of the most marginalized groups in the post-apartheid 'new South African nation' of democracy and racial acceptance.

Ruth Hall makes this assertion about the overall significance of land in South Africa, "Land is not only a source of income, a route to food security and a store of wealth. It is of symbolic importance as much as it is of utilitarian value, and a critical dimension of economic transformation in South Africa." The continuous violation of women's property rights in terms of access to land will prevent the success of land reform policies in South Africa. The empowerment of women within the context of property rights is one of the most effective ways to dismantle gender inequity in South Africa, because property rights not only encompasses basic essential rights such as housing but also constitutes whether one can survive economically in a market-driven, capitalist society. Historical processes of injustice are interfering with the success of land reform in the present, and only with the help of a radical human rights, gender analysis approach to gender equity which recognizes women's varying needs, can women's equitable access to land be achieved.

PART II: 'DISCOVERING' RESISTANCE

**BLACK WOMEN AND RESISTANCE IN THE SHARECROPPING MISSISSIPPI
DELTA, 1877-1950**

Introduction

These generations of tenant farmers, all but forgotten between the excitement of Emancipation and the promise of the Great Migration, built essential structures of freedom into the economy and culture of their communities, creating a foundation in which the twentieth century would rise.

- Sharon Ann Holt, *Making Freedom Pay*¹

I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me!
And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?

- Sojourner Truth, "Aint I A Woman" (1851)

After a most perilous era of dehumanizing servitude and barbaric enslavement (1619-1865), Reconstruction arose with new promises of providing refuge for the Civil War's poor, displaced, and disadvantaged. Unfortunately, Reconstruction (1863-1877) not only became yet another failure on the part of the government to treat black people as a culture of human beings worthy of citizenship in the United States of America, but its collapse promulgated yet another system of social, political, and economical inferiority, namely sharecropping. Sharecropping plagued the plantation South with a host of atrocities, but it did not prevent black women in the Lower South, Mississippi Delta region from leading lives as activists, as everyday resisters, and as profound actors of daily community organization and leadership. In this paper, I will discuss the ways in which black women played a crucial role in transforming white supremacy, patriarchal vocabulary, structures of class produced by the dominant capitalist campaign, and the multitude of institutional perils proceeding both slavery and the fallen promises of Reconstruction.

Before proceeding with developing my previously described thesis and argument, I will briefly describe the organization of my essay. In Chapter One, I will begin by describing the role of black women in slavery as it pertains to their prescribed labor duties as slaves

⁶⁰¹S. Holt. *Making Freedom Pay: North Carolina Freedpeople Working for themselves, 1865-1900*. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2000) xxiii.

and their private lives as separated from slave owners--the latter statement best described as the *culture of dissemblance*. In Chapter Two, I will produce a summary of the Civil War and Reconstruction as applicable to women's livelihoods in a non-urban, Lower South, cotton region. In the next chapter, I will evaluate the system of sharecropping and contextualize the meaning of everyday resistance. Furthermore, I will discuss women's daily forms of labor and activism in the sharecropping, Mississippi Delta regions. The Research Chapter will include an in-depth analysis of my research methodologies, the end product of my fieldwork, and a discussion of some implications of my research. Lastly, I will develop some final commentary concerning this body of work on the lives of black women who have toiled upon sharecropping lands.

The Origins of Sharecropping, 1619-1877

The Culture of Dissemblance

Beginning in 1619, when the first Africans arrived in Jamestown, Virginia, a system of racial subjugation, institutionalized servility, and restrictions on one's personal labor burgeoned. Slavery evolved into a system of sexual exploitation and mental, psychological, and social subservience extending nearly 250 years. Slaves could simultaneously fulfill the roles of agent/subject, person/property, and resistor/accommodator; they lived multiple lives both visible and invisible to owners.⁶¹ Patriarchal slaveholders believed that bondage was a necessary evil while antebellum paternalists believed slavery to be a positive good, because African slaves were better off in the protective, loyal, and civilized care of planters.⁶² Daily plantation life consisted of a "roll call" where owners called the slave's name to make sure they had reported to work; the "roll call" practice demonstrates the preoccupation with time and labor slave

⁶¹ S. Camp. *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004) 1.

⁶²Ibid. 18.

holders practiced.⁶³ However, slavery far surpasses inequalities concerning a lack of control of one's time and labor power. Slavery was genocide, racial persecution, and an obliterating massacre of black bodies and black livelihoods.

The enslaved were refused the basic privileges naturalized citizens of the U.S. shared. Pass laws placed strict regulations on black mobility, nevertheless the act of running away from the plantation cannot be the sole definition of resistance.⁶⁴ Since locomotion was a privilege of whiteness, the prevention of movement was conducive to enslavement.⁶⁵ To refute such inequalities as restricted mobility, slaves feigned illness, ran away on a short-term basis, took longer than necessary to complete tasks, resisted the sexual advances of owners [whenever possible], purposely broke household appliances, contaminated prepared food, and for those that were able to acquire the forbidden skill, read in secret.⁶⁶ Slaves resisted the system of slavery and negotiated their labor conditions on a daily basis solidifying the fact that they were not 3/5 of a person [as the 1787 constitutional convention delegated in its 3/5 compromise where blacks were calculated as partial beings], but rather individuals deserving of a place within the ranks of humanity.

Black women's resistance during slavery can be best described in the form of the *culture of dissemblance*. Historian Darlene Clark Hine defines the *culture of dissemblance* as black women's actions and personalities which the outsider presumed to be openness, but on the contrary, was their way of shielding the truth of their private lives.⁶⁷ With the invisibility of dissemblance, women adhered to a policy of silence and were able to create alternative images of black womanhood.⁶⁸ Black women began the processes of creating spaces for daily resistance in the culture of dissemblance. In this environment of privacy and secrecy, black women could assert their needs of empowerment and self-respect.

⁶³ Ibid. 20

⁶⁴ Ibid. 18

⁶⁵ Ibid. 25

⁶⁶ R. Kelley. *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*. (New York: The Free Press, 1994) 20.

⁶⁷ D. Hine. *Black Women and the Re-construction of American History*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) 37.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 42.

The daily functions of inferiority complexes on the plantation economy readily and continuously degraded the mental and physical statuses of black women's bodies, thus their culture of dissemblance enabled them a constructed time and place to have ownership over their cultural integrity and spiritual freedom.

Reconstruction

Some practitioners of history credit the abolition of slavery to the government and military organizations of the United States, but much contemporary scholarship demonstrates how slaves largely emancipated themselves. For instance, slave owners who were confident in the loyalty of their slaves, especially their most privileged and prized slaves in the Big House, received a rude awakening during the Civil War when slaves articulated objections more than ever.⁶⁹ The resilience amongst house slaves in performing their prescribed duties forced white women to complete household chores they were unaccustomed to, or in some cases, to actually become wage laborers.⁷⁰ In addition, slaves scrambled for money to release captured Union soldiers; they cooked, cleaned, and disclosed information to army troops; they resisted on the plantation and in their households by refusing to accept the lack of compensation for their labor.⁷¹ Many slaves fled the slaveholder's grasp completely and left the plantation to join the Union Army.⁷² It was not simply the maneuvers on behalf of the military and decisions made by Congress and White House administrators, but also the measures taken by slaves that brought forth the end of slavery.⁷³ The abolition of slavery would not have been accomplished without the will of slaves to take the matter into their own hands. In 1865, the slave population had finally been made aware of the end of slavery. Former slaves then entered a Reconstruction period designed to facilitate their needs as freedpeople.

⁶⁹ T. Hunter. *To Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997) 5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 16-17.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 20.

⁷² *Ibid.* 17.

⁷³ *Ibid.* 20.

The Reconstruction period began formally in 1863 (arguable so since slaves were not actually emancipated until 1865). Black people worked to make the best of this period of societal renewal and Southern transformation. For example, on June 18, 1866, laundry workers in Jackson, Mississippi conducted a citywide meeting and submitted a petition to the mayor outlining their grievances over working conditions.⁷⁴ An excerpt from the petition stated, “We do not wish in the least to charge exorbitant prices, but desire to be able to live comfortably if possible from the fruits of our labor.”⁷⁵ This was an extraordinary accomplishment considering how the laundry workers were just barely out of bondage, but to their disappointment, respondents to and critics of the petition ‘disparaged black women’s intelligence, political acumen, and organizational skills by attributing the strikes leadership to white male carpetbaggers.’⁷⁶

On the contrary to the end result of the laundry workers petition in MS, the Reconstruction period consisted of many successes in regards to former slaves gaining political control over Southern communities. For instance, four black men were elected to the Alabama Constitutional Convention in 1867.⁷⁷ But once again, the surrounding community did not uphold this push for racial transformation and progression. James Alston was the only one able to survive a lynching and flee the violent purges of the Ku Klux Klan to attend the convention.⁷⁸ The failures of what should have been a period of assisting the displaced, the poor, and the freed, accomplished little success in increasing black people’s social and economical mobility. On the contrary, Abraham Lincoln established Reconstruction as a period of reinstating Southern States to the Union and forgiving without consequence the leaders of the Confederate Army and the everyday practitioners of slavery.

During Reconstruction, Government programs such as the Freedmen’s Bureau were created as a kind of social welfare program to assist the Civil War’s ‘refugees’. The

⁷⁴ J. Jones. *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, From Slavery to the Present*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1985) 75.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 76-77.

⁷⁷ D. Hine and K. Thompson. *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America*. (New York: Broadway Books, 1998) 154.

Freedmen's Bureau constructed the male as the traditional head of household without critical regard of economic ability and productivity.⁷⁹ Interestingly enough, both female and male ex-slaves desired women to obtain a primary role as caregivers and household domestics rather than as workers and laborers.⁸⁰ Of course, the former slaves decision to do so must be contextualized. After centuries of existing as the beastly, asexual opposites of white womanhood as well as having little control over their bodies, their children, and their home life, women's and men's desires to construct women as caregivers within the home is certainly understandable.

Reconstruction came to a devastating end in 1877. In hopes of maintaining political control, the Republican Party established a secret compromise with Democrats in their decision to remove stationed troops from the South, this allowed private and self-interest groups, Southern white officials, members of both the white elite and the white working class to establish varying levels of de facto control over the safety, political autonomy, and economic stability of black people. The end of Reconstruction forced blacks to fend for themselves amidst racial violence, white supremacist ideologies, labor struggles, and educational inequities in the period post-reconstruction and pre-civil rights between 1877 and the latter 1940s.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 62.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 63.

Black Women Activists in the ‘New South’

Contextualizing Resistance

The Mississippi Delta is a region which includes the agriculturally fertile land surrounding the banks of the Mississippi River. It extends from the southeastern section of Missouri through the states of Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and finally ending along the Gulf of Mexico coast in Louisiana.⁸¹

Author Nan Elizabeth Woodruff compares the case of African Americans in the Delta to the excruciating violence of the 20th century Congo. In the early 1900s, the Belgian King Leopold II declared his plans to implement ‘progressive’ initiatives in the fields of development and industry while disguising his other initiatives: subjecting African peoples to unfair labor practices, murder, rape, and displacement.⁸² During this same time period, the American South had declared a progressive era where the Old South of ‘slavery, racism, ignorance, poverty, and defeat’ had been left behind.⁸³ On the contrary to these theories of progressivism in the Delta economy, an actual system of disenfranchisement and segregation was in place.⁸⁴

Of the 878 plantations in the Delta region, tenants operated 92% of them and 95.4% of these tenants were African American.⁸⁵ “By the dawn of the twentieth century, peonage in the Southern cotton belt was a confusing mass of customs, legalities, and pseudo-legalities. Nearly every Southern state legislature had passed a contract-labor measure that in many ways resembled the black codes of Reconstruction.”⁸⁶ Federal law had

⁸¹ N. Woodruff. *American Congo: The African American Freedom Struggle in the Delta*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003) 9.

⁸² Woodruff 1.

⁸³ Ibid. 2.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 30.

⁸⁶ Daniel 24.

abolished debt peonage in 1867,⁸⁷ but the legislation failed to be instrumental in the lives of African Americans. The major factor distinguishing debt peonage and sharecropping was whether the landowner forced the tenant to remain on a plantation on account of his acquired debt.⁸⁸ But with established laws such as vagrancy, which placed restrictions on the daily structures of black labor and black mobility, laws against peonage never reached fundamental accrument.

These complex dimensions of sharecropping require that resistance be contextualized in regards to a specific person(s), place, and time. The term resistance carries certain presumptions and qualifications such as the longevity of social change preceding the resilient action. Resistance is the revolutionary behavior of the masses as well as the collective action on behalf of the oppressed to voice their opinions on social issues. But to best serve the needs of this particular research on the activism of black women in the Mississippi Delta region, resistance can no longer be confined to the former definitions. The vocabulary around resistance itself must be deconstructed in order to fit the particular circumstances of black women's livelihoods as sharecroppers, 1877-1950.

In *Weapons of the Weak*, James S. Scott defines everyday resistance as an implicit disavowal concerned with immediacy and de facto gains.⁸⁹ Scott asserts that resistance on behalf of the peasantry often concerns personal needs; they require little planning; and they avoid direct conflict with the elite.⁹⁰ For instance, gossip can be considered resistance, because it violates custom law about obeying authority; it is a discussion that is defined according to its own grammar rules, it opposes the accepted conversational frameworks; and it is a collective act to voice democratically the information to those existing on the periphery of the dominant, authoritative, and elitist realms.⁹¹ Everyday resistors often do not publicly credit themselves or others for their revolutionary

⁸⁷ Ibid. ix.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 24.

⁸⁹ J. Scott. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) 33.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 29.

⁹¹ Ibid. 282.

behavior. Anonymity is crucial in the safety and security of these kinds of resisters.⁹² However, a critical examination of the lives of black women sharecroppers will reveal the many ways in which women sought to alleviate the discrimination in their daily lives and in their communities.

Sharecropping in the Mississippi Delta, 1877-1950

Sharecropping in the post-Reconstruction, pre-Civil Rights era comprised of the involvement of a variety of actors. Landowners profited off of the labor and the poverty of tenants while loan officers increased landowner's financial responsibilities with high interest rates. Local merchants forced tenants to purchase equipment and other necessities in their stores where ignoring the actual market prices and overcharging tenants was a perpetual practice. Blacks were unable to acquire land in their own right since extensive collateral was necessary to do so. The lack of access to capital pressured African Americans to participate in short-term compensation measures such as selling what properties they possessed (e.g. livestock) to access capital. In exchange for funds to purchase farm equipment and other items, a banker arranged a contract to receive a large lump sum of profits from a grower's crops—a practice called the crop lien system. In this way, croppers (short for "sharecropper") were forced to grow cotton and purchase food items in the neighborhood store instead of growing these items themselves.

Although sharecropping manifested a multitude of flagrant atrocities, it developed some interesting changes in the lives of black people. Freedpeople did not view tenancy as a balanced settlement between chain gang labor and land ownership, but rather as a starting point for eventual self-ownership.⁹³ Sharecropping allowed black people to gain authority over their personal lives and to construct a home life lacking the supervision of

⁹² Ibid. 36.

⁹³ Holt 1.

whites. The system enabled blacks to develop increased supervision over the spatial aspects of their culture of dissemblance. In her book *Making Freedom Pay*, Sharon Ann Holt establishes, “Household production was the crucial 'escape clause' in freedpeople’s agreement to till the white man’s land.”⁹⁴ As the facilitators of the household economy, women gained a new sense of power over their home life and labor. The compromise of farm tenancy contributed to women’s power in utilizing their labor to subsidize debt as well as the costs of laboring equipment and family needs; the very possibility and potential of women’s labor provided new meanings of freedwomen’s labor outside of the home.⁹⁵ Farm tenancy meant that women’s labor and productive behaviors were no longer subject to complete expropriation and external conscription.⁹⁶

The Great Migration

As World War I began in Europe, the signs of economic development offered black workers an option that had not been available since Emancipation: an alternative to the white supremacist, plantation South.⁹⁷ Southern blacks would travel to the Northern cities of Detroit, Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York in the 100s of thousands hoping for new opportunities and for an escape from the violence, segregation, and racial tensions of the South. This mass movement of black bodies would be named The Great Migration where an approximate half million blacks traveled North between the years 1916-1921.⁹⁸ Black migrants entered industrial cities like Detroit where Henry Ford transformed labor processes by offering increased incentives and leisure in exchange for a laborers production output, assembly line efficiency, and mechanical labor. Those who traveled to New York City found themselves mingling amongst the ‘vogue’ of the 1920s Harlem Renaissance with avant-garde and politically charged literature, the musical and artistic genius of jazz, and the dazzling entertainment of night clubs.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 2.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 19.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Woodruff 40.

⁹⁸ Jones 156.

In the years 1870-1910, 6,700 blacks traveled North each year⁹⁹, but many still remained in the South amidst the violence of the Ku Klux Klan, the financial grips of landowners, and the endless debt of sharecropping. Black women migrants to the North tended to be ‘young, single, separated, or widowed, and they often made the journey alone’.¹⁰⁰ From 1880-1910, 11% of black, rural households in the South were headed by women.¹⁰¹ However, those women who were managing a farm and/or supervising their children’s field work were not necessarily single, because many men left home to work for a nearby planter.¹⁰²

The Great Depression

In 1927, the Mississippi River flooded the Delta and brought the hidden system of peonage into the open.¹⁰³ Natural disasters such as the 1927 flood would expose the ‘unnatural caste system in the South’.¹⁰⁴ Planters attempted to sieve power over their black laborers who desired to flee the flooded lands and relief agencies made miniscule preparations to tend to those in need believing the levees would hold.¹⁰⁵ As if this economical and environmental disaster were not enough, The Great Depression would come and sweep the nation off its booming tier of mass consumptive industrialization.

With the stock market crash of 1929, the U.S. economy was devastated. As one of the most devastating economic downturns in history, people of all walks of life were in need of state assistance more than ever. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal sought to dismantle the financial devastation of the Great Depression through governmental sponsored relief programs. In Black Side Inc.’s documentary of The Great Depression, a contributor proclaims, “He [Roosevelt] saved capitalism, whether it's a good thing or not, I’m not about to betray my sentiments, but he saved it.”¹⁰⁶ Following

⁹⁹ Jones 155.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 155-6.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 92.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Daniel 149.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 150.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 151.

¹⁰⁶ *The Great Depression*. A documentary series. Black Side Inc., 1993.

John Keynes theories of Keynesian economics, the New Deal worked to stabilize the economy using the state to generate and control the market as well as the power of demand and consumer purchasing to fuel the economy.

Black farm women took local, temporary jobs as wage laborers for the miniscule amount of 40-50 cents a day.¹⁰⁷ According to the 1937 Women's Bureau, 'female cotton pickers of Concordia Parish, Louisiana earned a total of \$41.67 annually, most found, or accepted, gainful employment for less than 90 days each year.'¹⁰⁸ Jacqueline Jones establishes:

Specifically, most of these women could find only seasonal or part-time employment; racial and sexual discrimination deprived them of a living wage no matter how hard they labored; and they endured a degree and type of workplace exploitation for which the mere fact of having a job could not compensate.¹⁰⁹

The legislation designed to assist citizens in the wake of the Depression, excluded farm workers and domestic servants from access to the benefits and purchasing power protection of the Social Security Act (1935), the Fair Labor Standards Act (1938), and the National Industrial Recovery Act (1933).¹¹⁰ During the Depression, 90% of black women worked as domestics or field laborers, therefore not more than 10% of black women could take advantage of legislation promising assistance in minimum wages, social security, and unemployment insurance.¹¹¹

Unfortunately for some, the implementation of the New Deal took form in the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Civil Works Administration (CWA), and the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA). The AAA offered compensation for planter agreeing to these guidelines: to growing less cotton and to extend a sum of the allotment to their tenants.¹¹² Planters often failed these guidelines by utilizing the compensation to purchase advanced farm equipment and retire the calculated debt of their tenants.¹¹³ The

¹⁰⁷ Jones 202.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 199

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid. 201.

¹¹³ Ibid.

government's pull to drive up the demand of cotton served an economically functional purpose, however it simultaneously failed to assist in ensuring sustainable livelihoods for Southern field laborers as it had initially promised.

The CWA and the WPA had their own set of problematic, dysfunctional issues. The CWA forced black women to perform domestic duties for the administrators' friends' homes to receive a ration of groceries.¹¹⁴ In addition, the WPA blocked relief assistance to those refusing to pick cotton.¹¹⁵ An eighty-five year old black woman, Mrs. Mary Jane Harris, had severe high blood pressure and was responsible for taking care of two girls.¹¹⁶ After picking cotton for a month, she left the fields to tend to her health and household concerns—the WPA cut her monthly relief check immediately.¹¹⁷

Unlike the implementation strategies of the WPA and the AAA, advocates for sharecroppers in the Roosevelt cabinet such as those officials of the Resettlement Administration (1935) and Farm Security Administration (FSA) worked to provide relief for the rural poor.¹¹⁸ As wives, laborers, and household heads, black women were able to benefit from low-interest loans, government-sponsored relocation assistance, low-cost housing, and collective farming strategies.¹¹⁹ The FSA developed a successful photography project displaying black and white portraits of working women; these photos helped to reveal the physical arduousness of women's daily labor and the necessity of FSA programs to assist rural inhabitants during the depression.¹²⁰ The collective farming strategies enabled small farmers to work on a larger, state-controlled farm. However, the FSA efforts were understaffed and underfunded; the programs reached only a few thousand of an approximate one million farmers in need and the initiatives also failed due to acknowledge the strong desire for individual land ownership.¹²¹

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 157.

¹¹⁵ Woodruff 156.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 156.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 156-157

¹¹⁸ Jones 203.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid. 203.

¹²¹ Ibid.

Since blacks were often unable to reap the benefits of the New Deal, they found other ways to meet their daily needs. Black women welcomed extended family members into their homes who were able to work and make a financial contribution to household needs; they offered to care for family members in need; and at times made the unfortunate decision of asking their children to postpone marriage in order to stay and help with the household's current needs.¹²² These strategies have been cited as social and familial disorganization, but in essence, black women's caretaking efforts allowed black families to adjust and survive.¹²³

The Southern Tenant Farmer's Union gained a membership of 10,000 in 1934.¹²⁴ At least half of the STFU members were black, proving that interracial organizing should not begin with upper echelon pronouncements, but rather with grassroots activity.¹²⁵ The STFU posed such a threat to the sharecropping that white landowners worked to squash the union movement with terrorist attacks, e.g. violence, explosives, and harassment.¹²⁶ Large planters announced that cotton pickers would be paid 40 cents for each hundred pounds picked compared to the 60 cents paid in the previous fall of 1934.¹²⁷ White, Socialist organizer of the STFU decided that union members should organize a strike refusing to pick cotton for anything less than the union wage.¹²⁸ At a conference with a representative from Arkansas communities, the majority vote decided that laborers would pick for the current wage announced, but would strike for \$1.00 per hundred pound of cotton picked in the September harvest.¹²⁹ Ms. Carrie Dilworth, black union organizer, recalls how she and other union members organized for the strike in her vehicle:

I was lying down on my stomach holding the door cracked open, and I'd push the leaflets through the crack and spread them out in the street. You pick up speed and that'd just make them things go flying all over the yards...Then this car came

¹²² Ibid. 227.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 203.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid. 204.

¹²⁷ Woodruff 169.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

swooping by us. I said, 'Cut the lights off and let's go right into these woods.' We got down in a little curl and cut the motor off. If they had caught us," she continued, "I don't know what they would've done to us."¹³⁰

The STFU union was successful in raising wages, because they caught landowners off guard; the planters did not believe the union was capable of success.¹³¹ Union membership grew tremendously after the victory with a rise of 25,000 in just a few weeks.¹³²

Some unfortunate events did occur after the strike. Sharecroppers were evicted from land, union members became the victims of violence, and unfavorable weather patterns prevented the achievements of future strikes.¹³³ In spite of these issues, the many successes of the strike should not be undermined. The STFU was a union where blacks, whites, as well as women worked together to lead a successful strike.

In 1937, three labor organizers were arrested when they organized a strike on the Belsha plantation in Arkansas. Henrietta McGhee and Will and Alberta Vaughn were all placed in a large cell with men. As if the two women's placement in a cell filled with men were not bad enough, a planter lawyer was appointed by the court to represent them. The judge levied a \$250 fine and after refusing to accept the bonds offered by the union lawyer, the judge sent the labor organizers to work off their sentence on the judge's relatives farm, the Rolfe plantation. C. A. Stanfield, a union attorney, came to the black organizer's defense, but it only proved to cause Stanfield and McGhee to receive a beating by the planter and county health official W. H. Winters. The union lawyer appealed the case twice, under the case of peonage. Considering the violation of civil and human rights the black organizers had endured, peonage may not have been the most comprehensive legal venue, but the Fourteenth Amendment which guarantees due process of law proved to be an improbable case as well in the Mississippi Delta.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Ibid. 169-170.

¹³¹ Ibid. 170.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid. 170-173.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 180

The Great Depression transformed the makings of state intervention with consumerism, employment strategies, and relief efforts, but the state of discrimination in New Deal legislation as well as the reluctance on behalf of Southern planters and relief organizations proved to be a continuum of disadvantages for black people.

Domestic Work

One of the most important ways black women implemented activist behaviors is through working in the household as well as conducting wage work to increase financial stability. The efforts on behalf of women to subsidize the family's responsibilities is not to be taken out of context in saying that black men were the opposite of hardworking black women. The 'irresponsible' father and 'black matriarchy thesis' reiterate the problems of using white middle class comparisons of black families.¹³⁵ These kinds of theories describe how women worked to supplement their family's status, but the men were lazy and satisfied with the impoverished lifestyle of sharecropping. It is important to mention that women and men were compensated differently for their labor.¹³⁶ Men toiled for future compensation in cash only to receive recurring debt, therefore they worked no more strenuously than necessary to appease white creditors and sustain their household and family needs in the process.¹³⁷ In essence, both men and women worked to improve the lives of their families in the midst of the detriments of sharecropping; they just did so differently.

Discussions valorizing notions of the dysfunctional black family refuse to discover the importance of situating black histories into their own context. Seeking to compare blacks and whites exclusively, especially in terms of the nuclear family structure, only prove to make false accusations about the functions and structures of the black families. Unlike male labor in the field, women's labor in the household received immediate gratification in childcare since she was attending to the needs of her family.¹³⁸ However, this mode of

¹³⁵ Jones 104.

¹³⁶ Jones 105.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

gratification does not speak fully to the experiences of women working as domestic laborers in white homes.

A discussion of black women domestics applies directly to this research, because female sharecroppers worked in white homes to ease the debts acquired in a sharecropping household. Black women domestic workers lead lives where James Scott's definition of resistance becomes strongly apparent. The modes of resistance practiced by these women were not always the most innocent of behaviors. An examination of their activist struggles and successes are not to be romanticized; they must be analyzed in such a way that allows their resilient practices and their working conditions to be considered.

Domestic servants fulfilled various roles as applicable to the white employer's financial status. Middle income white households employed a general domestic worker and perhaps a full or part-time cook; upper class white households often hired a child-nurse while members of the elite employed staff to fulfill numerous specialized roles which included cooks, kitchen sculleries, waiters, drivers, butlers, personal attendants, and bedroom maids.¹³⁹ Domestic servants earned an average wage of \$4-\$8 per month while a select few were able to earn \$10-\$12 per month.¹⁴⁰ Remarkably, these wages changed very little over time as well as across job specializations.¹⁴¹ Instances involving some payment variations across occupations persisted as follows: kitchen sculleries earned the least while the salaries of cooks were slightly higher.¹⁴²

Domestic workers' resistive behaviors were enacted both passively and aggressively. Some of the more aggressive behaviors include sabotage techniques where domestics burned and spit in food.¹⁴³ Domestic workers' resistive behaviors also included what was called 'pantoting'. These household employees believed they had a 'right to take home leftovers, excess food, and redundant or broken utensils for their home use.'¹⁴⁴ Pantoting

¹³⁹ Hunter 52.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 53.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Kelley 19.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

was considered immoral in many of the households where it was regularly practiced. Is it possible to dismiss the morality in seeking not to waste food or to deny what domestic workers believed to be apart of the early negotiations of domestic labor?¹⁴⁵ Employers blamed the immoral behaviors of black women and argued that these behaviors were the cause and rational for domestic worker's low wages.¹⁴⁶ For other employers, pantoting served as a form of charity for the poor 'pickaninnies'¹⁴⁷—a racially derogatory term used to describe black women. The post-Reconstruction and pre-Civil Right South was a ground of constant racial violence and conflict. For black domestic workers, drastic times of violence against their communities and personal welfare, called for drastic measures to alleviate their poverty.

Laundry Work

Laundress work became the 'single most onerous chore in the life of a nineteenth-century woman' since most Southern, white working families engaged the services of a laundress.¹⁴⁸ Industrialization in the United States of America increased the mass production of washable fabrics and the amount of manufactured cloth purchased by consumers, simultaneously increasing the needs of washer workers.¹⁴⁹

The tasks of a laundress worker were many indeed. A washerwomen's duties began on Monday morning and continued through Saturday when the clothes were delivered to the owner.¹⁵⁰ Laundresses made their own soap from lye and starch; gathered working materials such as benches, batting blocks, washboards, fuel, and containers for boiling; retrieved and carried water to clean, boil, and rinse the garments; made soap from lye and starch; scrubbed and soaked fabrics in separate tubs according to their perspective water temperatures; hung the garments on clotheslines, trees, or fences to dry; ironed the dried

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 20.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 19.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Hunter 52.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 56.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid 57.

clothes with heavy irons which they had previously heated; and rubbed the irons with beeswax to prevent the buildup of residue.¹⁵¹

The previously described arduous tasks of a laundry worker certainly left little time for black women to tend to personal needs. As black women were needed in various venues to assist their families, devoting time to take care of themselves was one of the most tangible ways she could resist economic subjugation, sexual exploitation, and unfair working conditions. In her book on black women laborers post-Civil War, Tera W. Hunter proclaims:

Laundry work was critical to the process of community-building because it encouraged women to work together in communal spaces within their neighborhoods, fostering informal networks of reciprocity that sustained them through health and sickness, love and heartaches, birth and death.¹⁵²

Laundry work allowed women to work together and form the private community, the *culture of dissemblance*, which was necessary for them to survive. Survival strategies such as gossip, certainly encouraged some strife and struggle between laundry workers when rumors caused occasional public brawls. However, gossip allowed women to pass on vital information about childcare management as well as knowledge of safety to adolescent and adult laundry workers.

Because of the harsh conditions in the South and the construction of everyday resistance, much of the daily resilient practices of black women are unknown. Black workplace theft in the South is hard to determine, but some say blacks resisted by ‘stealing’ labor time to spend on family and/or themselves.¹⁵³ For example, a domestic worker may ‘steal’ time from work to read a book from her employer’s collection. By using the company’s or employer’s time to fulfill their personal desires, black laborers had the ability to take back some of the precious time which had been devoted to their employers; they were able to ‘resist being totally subordinated to the needs of capital.’

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid. 62.

¹⁵³ Jones 20.

In the process of working as sharecroppers, household caregivers, and/or domestic laborers, black women did not have much time to and for themselves. Furthermore, washerwomen's duties were strenuous, but women with children had better control over their hours and were able to increase their income by increasing their clientele and seeking assistance from family.¹⁵⁴ Both domestic and laundry workers utilized a risky resistance strategy to negotiate unfair labor practices—they quit.¹⁵⁵ Quitting their low paid occupations allowed them time to tend to family needs or to participate in community and social activities.¹⁵⁶ White employers were guaranteed an abrupt leave of their household help when a black church organization or secret society hosted a fundraising and social activity.¹⁵⁷ The quitting tactic was entirely permissible in the U.S. free labor process, nevertheless black women quit with little to no notice, which proved consistently to frustrate the nerves of employers.¹⁵⁸ Quitting may seem to be a simple practice of alleviating the stresses of one's personal life. On the contrary, this tactic enable domestic workers to negotiate their wages and assert their needs as working women and as human beings.

Research

Research Methodology

The purpose of this research chapter is to provide a concrete resource to enhance my studies on sharecropping in the Mississippi Delta and black women activists. I chose to interview a former black female sharecropper, because her story would be a powerful asset to my paper, since her experiences are an entryway into the fundamental narratives of history. My research question was as follows: What were the common experiences of resistance amongst sharecroppers, especially women who were not renowned for their

¹⁵⁴ Hunter 57.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 59.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 60.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

everyday behaviors of resilience, during the time period of the 1870s and the latter 1940s?

The objectives of this area of research were to develop firsthand knowledge of the ways in which black women engaged in daily forms of resistance to survive personally and to protect their communities as sharecroppers. In addition, I hoped to make worthwhile connections between the information disseminated from scholarly literature and the information recited by the interviewee.

I conducted a semi-structured interview with a former sharecropper in a town outside of Delhi, Louisiana. The interviewee, Ms. Della B. Johnson, was born in 1927. Her name and the names of her family members were changed to allow for anonymity and confidentiality. The names of places, and the like, remained the same. I prepared some general questions to ask Ms. Della B. Johnson and she responded as she desired. The responses were compiled and restructured to allow for utmost clarity and to fit the purposes of this essay. Ms. Johnson was interviewed over the phone on five separate occasions during the months of January through April. I chose to conduct an interview with only one person, because I wanted to conduct an in-depth interview where the details of her daily life were understood, evaluated, and presented effectively and respectfully.

Conducting this interview was a remarkable challenge. Initially, I believed I could finish the interview in just a couple sessions. However, as I began to learn more about her story, I discovered how exceptionally it applied to my research and how Johnson's story was indeed complicated, but truly fascinating and enriching. Ms. Johnson's interview taught me about the incredible difficulties of ethnography work in creating an efficient methodology that will appreciate and accommodate for the interviewee's circumstances. A working research methodology is crucial, but it is even more crucial that it mold to the needs of the interviewee. Most importantly, I learned the significance of retelling history through the experiences of women. Ms. Della B. Johnson spoke as if her story didn't matter, as if her experiences were not activism, but rather 'just life'. Hopefully, the

interview process was also an informative experience for her, enabling her to discover the ways in which the orality of her life story, is an historical erudition at best.

I will begin by presenting the results of the interview, not in excerpts, but rather in its edited entirety. Della B. Johnson's story is larger than could even be examined here, therefore I will present a comprehensive layout of my findings, because her story is as historically accurate as the literature presented in the previous chapters. The very structure of the results section reflects this since it is organized in the same manner as the previous sections of Part II. After the historical narrative has been delivered, I will contextualize the information in a discussion.

Results

Sharecropping Life

When I was young, before my grandfather died, my grandfather never did sharecropping. He rented his land. I didn't get on the sharecropping until after he died. My granddaddy one time owned his own land. So I'm trying to talk about sharecropping. My husband and I got married. We did a sharecropping. I never did stay on the farm when I got separated and got my divorce. But on the sharecropping, you live on the white man's place. The man who owns the place is the one who buys the seeds. We used mules at first. You want me to go back to when we used mules? When we married, the man who owned the land owned the tractor. We plowed the land and the white man furnished the seeds. He even would buy the fertilizer cause he furnished a little money to raise the crop with. He'd give you a little old money for March, April, May, and June--fifteen dollars for the whole season.

When they plow that land up, you could pull some with mules, but when it got on with the tractors, it would lift up the land. You would put the plant full of seeds. You'd go down the row with it. But when the cotton come up, it would be thick--as wide as a man's hand. You cut out a space as long as the hoe. Then they plow behind you to throw that dirt back up there. You plow it every week then. All that keeps it growing. A land go square so many acres. You go over it. But you steady hoeing. If the man had a son old enough to be plowing, he be plowing too. It's constant work until its ready to be picked. A bug called the boll weevil, oh just bother you. It's a poison you use. But then they made machines you could poison it with the mules, then the tractor poison it. It was hard work. You was constantly working. You went out sun up, come home to eat, rest for an hour and work till sundown. It was plenty hard work to do. You did that till the cotton open till August. Then August come you picked all day. You didn't stop to eat. You worked all the summer. You start in February with breaking up the land. When the crop made, you rest for a little for a few weeks. Then you pick till you get all the cotton down. Then winter. It wasn't easy, there was a lot of hard work going on. You fed the chickens corn. You cut grass. If you was able, you raised sorghum.

That's when you raise that garden. You raise collard greens, butter beans, peas, okra. On the edge of the land where your cotton is, you could raise extra peas and corn. You needed to raise a

big patch of corn and you usually raised pigs and a cow. You milk a cow. You could skim the cream off the milk and you could pour the milk in a jar. Just shake the jar up and down and you'd have your own butter. You could drink that milk. All that helped out with the food. You got up early in the morning. You could raise hogs and raise it up big. Then you killed that when the weather was cold. Boil the water and cool the water over in a barrel; kill the hog and drag it to where you have a barrel; get the hog and push him in the barrel with that hot water; scrape the hair off of that hog; then you have nothing left but the meat; wash it good; salt it down so many days; you hang your meat in the smoke house and hang it up in there; you use the chips and smoke the meat. Once you smoke it, it keep for months. You didn't have refrigerators like you do now.

Me and my husband was together cause he lived a long time. He did sharecrop all right. He was field boss at the time. He'd just be out there with the hands. He'd be out there seeing that they worked. He'd stop raising crops at that time cause he had got old. In the beginning, we married and went on to sharecropping. We got married the 12th of March. We moved into our house on the plantation. I got my garden off first thing. We get that little check and buy a little grocery. We plowed mostly with tractors then. They'd plow up the land for each person. One or two people did the plowing with the tractor. They'd lift up the land. It be somebody to bring them water. They'd plowed up everybody's land. They'd have a truck to put the seeds in and take it to one place to another. In about two weeks you'd be out there chopping that cotton. As the woman of the house you'd be at home cooking. All the big kids out working. You'd lay by the latter part of June. The bolls be just white with pretty cotton. You'd pick all day long. And oh it was hot. But you'd still be working. He would be plowing you see. As soon as he caught up with his plowing, he'd help me hoe. Everybody picked cotton. Men mostly talked to the boss man. The boss man didn't stay in the field with you. It be mostly the man and his wife and kids in the cotton. Unless they got behind, they'd ask the white man for extra hands. You had to pay for that. He'd give you the hands and put it on your account. We'd have to pay for the people to help us.

They stopped giving that check. When you started picking cotton, it'd grow and mature. Then you'd start opening it up in July. In latter years, it would be a little later. But you'd take the cotton to one place and the seeds go to another. The cotton goes to a compress. That's where cotton buyers buy it. The white man would sell the cotton. He'd give you what little money left. He'd gets half of what you make. If you gin 10 bales. You'd get 5 and he'd get 5. You'd come out in debt then you had to do the best you could in the winter cause he didn't furnish you in the winter.

Education in the Mississippi Delta

Some children didn't get no school. The white man that owns the land say the kids wouldn't go to school if they had to hoe in the spring. The kids went to school when all the cotton was out. That's why kids got so little learning and old folks couldn't read. The black children couldn't ride buses. They walked to schools sometime at a church. I went to school at a church myself. Just rough, just rough. They call them 'boss men'--the men that own the lands. They make women with babies come out and work the fields. Some of the boss men act like it was slavery. And to make a day, you stayed till sun up and sun down. That was 40 cents a day. But when I was big enough, I got at least a dollar a day. That sun would be boiling hot.

I always told my husband that they wouldn't go to field and miss school. So that happened. They'd go to field for field time, but they go to school. I didn't have money for college, but I did all I can to get them through high school. I put away every penny. If they said they were sick I'd take them to the doctor and if they said they wasn't sick, I'd send them to school. Dead or alive, you

going to school whether you wanted to or not. Cause I wanted to got to college, but I didn't have the means. No, my husband just wasn't an ambitious person. He'd just set aside the same o, same o. I always looked forward to having more. When you energetic it goes into your kids. My mama's granddaddy, he came out of slavery and he bought his own place. I don't know how many acres. It couldn't been but 20 acres. I was young and didn't ask no questions. He had a home and a land. If you raise in a family like that it makes you want to do something. My granddaddy had his own land and his own stuff. It just make you want something. His folks didn't have a place. My grandmother's words was always, if anybody say something about a pretty car, she say get you somewhere to park it. Meaning get you some land, not the white mans. Get something of your own, she always said. That makes a difference. when you raised like that, that's all you know is to get something of your own.

Kids went to school in the winter time. If the white man said they couldn't go to school, it was cause they had to be out there hoeing, My grandfather just got to the fourth grade and my grandmother got to the third grade. That just disrupted everything. My grandmother didn't get no further than the 2nd grade. But if we didn't get our arithmetic right, she would know we didn't get it right. We were just so book smart. But yes, I sent my kids to school. All of them went on to a university just about. I had twelve kids--two died. One died as a baby. I was forever teaching them something. I would have Sunday School at home with them like that. I'd take a paper up like they do at school. They was always at school and hearing about learning things. I just love to read so I'd read out loud to them and everything. So they was always being exposed to material. I just believed in doing. Get a paper and do something.

Black Landownership in the Mississippi Delta

A few of them was able. But the whites would burn them out, kill them. But they kept on trying. You just had to work with it. The white man wanted it, he meant to get it. He didn't borrow money from the white man. He went to the store and made his own arrangements. My grandfather lived in Mississippi. He was a farmer. When he and my grandmother married, I don't think he owned land then but he early started buying land every fall--whatever he could afford. He'd invite all the men close around and they'd cut trees down and back then they towed it buy hand. They had mules to tow stuff up and the ladies would cook. They'd eat all night and work. They'd do this on the weekend on Saturday night. They'd clean up the land and they could work the land after they cleaned it up. They made fire in them to help burn them up. Then after they started buying the land, he bought 120 acres when he stopped. In the meantime, he had the freight line to haul heavy stuff and he had a country store. He had a grist mill to grind the corn. He had a shop for his tools. He was a very hard worker and raised his children to be hard workers. He fed sorghum to his cows. He raised as much as he could for his family. He was out on the farm and it was easy to raise that stuff. He raised hogs and all of that. He didn't throw away nothing, he had some cows and he cured the hide and repaired the shoes so he didn't have to buy the shoes often. He made the chairs from the cow hide. Everything was used. Younger people under him could take care of the family. I'm not sure when he and my grandmother married but there second child was six years old. When he moved to Louisiana it was in 1923.

The Mississippi River Flood

He came by train. His stuff was sent by train. He had somebody to meet him in a wagon. They could bring some of the plow tools. The boards would go in the bottom of it and all that. He moved to Wisner when he came to LA. The Ku Klux Klan put a not on his door and told him to leave. They said if he didn't get him out he'd have the whole damn state. They first tried to scare him. They ran into him one night, men be on them horses and things. They jumped on him and they beat him up. He got a weed in his mouth and that's how he breathed. But they still half beat

him out. They told him to leave but he wouldn't cause he had all his land. He and his son was going along and they got to him and beat him up. But they got away. But that time they put a sign on his door. Then he had to get out. When the say move, you had to move. Cause they could have strung him up. They'll kill the whole family and wouldn't nothing be done about it. All they had to do was take the land. They told him they put three oil wells on there after he had gone. He didn't want to fool with it no more. He started farming again. He rented some land. He was able to bring two mules with him. He was a hard worker so he went to work. Buying up more horses making big crops. He really didn't try. That got the best of him. Afraid it might get took from him. He started buying land in Rayville. He went back to Wisner. That's where he died. He moved out of the high water. The flood in 1927. He moved from the farm then just to get out of the water. The water took Rayville. The train took them to Delhi.

I don't know what they would've done if they had caught them then. But a lot of lynching went on time to time. There was one right round close. They had trees called the lynching tree, cause so many had been hung here and yonder. It's hard to put your finger on one. I can't say one that I knew right off.

The Lumber Industry

They had plenty lumber. Folks was building everything then. Wasn't no such thing as tin buildings and things. They built everything out of wood then. Even the house had shingles on top made of wood. Granddaddy might of hauled somebody something but he was never hauling for a lumber yard.

Papa didn't get in that lumber part. When them folks would cut down trees to clear the land. He got what he needed for firewood. But he didn't just haul any lumber to any fresh place. He was never just directly in the lumber business. Some people ask him to haul things for people with the freight wagons. Back then you could sell your own cotton, cause folks had there own land. When they gin the cotton, the seed been took out of it. If you wanted to bring it home to wait and see it later, then you bring it to your shed and get it ready for sell later when the price go up. He just hauled different stuff. They had the saw mills where they would fix that lumber. And uh, if they needed the mules to take stuff. I forget what you call them mills right now. They'd break it down and pile it on the wagon where they wanted the saw mill put up. They could actually move it. You didn't have big trucks then to do it. So they got the big wagon to haul to the next place.

When I was a sharecropper, they worked at the mills cutting trees and making lumber. They wouldn't a been sharecroppers, cause they wanted them in the fields. Lumber folks had to work year round with that lumber. They steady hauling them logs all around the train that time. They get stuff off the railroads then. They had the mills close to the forests then.

The Great Depression

We always people who raised gardens with okra, sweet potatoes patches, sugar cane patches, sorghum. That was my granddaddy's time. Me and cousin, we didn't know it was a depression cause there was food at our house. We had milk and butter. We didn't know but I'm sure the grown folks knew. Are stomachs were full. A lot of folks had it really hard. My grandmother raised chickens, ducks, geese. We just didn't know. By them being such hustlers, we didn't know. Our folks raised peas and corns. They raised hogs and had meat at home. Collard greens and

onions year round you didn't have to buy. They were just independent the way they lived. They raised so much, they didn't have to go hungry the way others did.

My family, we was living in Wisner, LA. The water come up and we had to come to Rayville. The flood got Rayville and they had to leave and it come right here to Delhi. They had camp for them. It didn't last a whole year, I'm not sure what time it was. They stayed down there and the train brought them. When the flood was over, the train took them back home to Rayville town. They made it home on their own cause they could walk on home from the train.

Black folks didn't have many homes then. They build scalpels in the house and they knew the water was coming in the house. It's like fixing a real tall table. Some folks would have a loft in the house where they could see the top of the house. A lot of them put their furniture in the house. So a lot of them saved their furniture like that. They took their animals and things. Some places right here were dry. But they didn't have just land just under which is why they had them camps. They saved a lot of their stuff like that.

I didn't never hear them say that they gave them no relief other than the camps. Maybe they fed them a little bit somewhere. I just don't know. But so much land was taken, went under water in a lot of places.

The Great Migration

A lot of people was in the country then. They had long big fields. They worked with mules so there would be a lot of houses, a lot of people. With the migration, a lot of them went north to the steel mills who was uneducated. During world war II a lot of them went to make the shelves and things for the soldiers. You'd be working for the government then and you wouldn't have to go into the services. That was the only way you could get saved from going to war. People went to leaving to get them jobs for so much more money.

The Mississippi Delta in the 1940s

If you stay somewhere thirty years, you had squatter rights. They started hiring people to hoe and buying those big tractors when folks went to town for the big jobs. That's when they started leaving the farms, in the 40s. Some been there over thirty years and they started putting them off. They call it independence crops when there wasn't nobody working them like they used to. The owner would just have hundreds of acres of cotton and had folks to chop it out. Then they had different chemicals to burn the grass. The grass wouldn't come out like it used to, it be just clean.

They were kicking sharecroppers off the land cause they wanted independence crops. But didn't nobody tell them why they had to leave. They turned them into day croppers. They hired folks to hoe it. They let the tractor driver stay in a house just to work everyday. They paid them by the day. Well we had stopped farming. But my husband was a tractor driver so we stayed in the house.

Domestic Work

These folks that work for these white folks for nothing. I've done it myself. Like I said I never did have a decent job. They call it domestic when you work around the house. Bunch of little white kids, you know how messy they are. You know how they not taught to obey us, so you know how worrisome that could be. I would clean as much as five a week besides my own. A house in the

morning and a house in the evening. That was when you wasn't raising cotton as much. Other things went to taking the market and they started raising other things, soy beans and things. Farm type people got together and organize and get people to find sales for them. You stop along those and see a stand and ask the folks if they would be interested in buying vegetables. That way we had fresh vegetables and could sell it. Our co-op was up the street. We'd meet up there and take our stuff. We'd do that five days a week, Monday through Friday. I used to raise peas and butter beans and whatever I thought they'd take. I used to do my share of work. In domestic, they supposed to take you 1,2,3 dollars an hour but I never got over. Farming went from one thing to another. I started doing domestic service when I married. Cause you could use the extra money. My husband didn't go off and hunt for them extra jobs. He was more of an at home person. You go off and make that dollar or two. It wasn't much but you always needed to buy a little something. You did what you were told to do. I never did have to wash on the boards when I started. They had washing machines. I never did like cooking. I may have to make a sandwich for children but not meals. I'd wash. I always got along with kids. I always got along well with people. Lots of time I was around my family.

Discussion

I have no inclination toward repeating or restating what Ms. Johnson has already clearly established. In this discussion Chapter, I desire to expand on some of the issues she described by thinking about them in a broader, theoretical, and contemporary context. These issues are as follows: the workings of white supremacy in depriving blacks of land and some concrete ways that black women were viable actors both inside and outside of the household.

Ms. Della B. Johnson's interview demonstrates how vigorous and time consuming sharecropping duties were in the Mississippi Delta. Field hands labored in dangerously-tempered weather conditions and painstakingly involved children in the labor intensive activities. Education for black children in the Delta revolved around the agricultural calendar, because the massive production of cotton was dependant upon the labor power of both adults and children.

She endured many hardships of poverty and her family encountered extensive violence from white community members. Unfortunately, it seems as if her husband fell victim to a social inferiority complex. It is unfortunate that Johnson's husband has passed away. It

would have been helpful to hear his perspective on sharecropping. I am sure his story as a supervisor of field hands is a profound one. I would have been interested in being informed about the ways in which his occupation as field boss may have enabled him a leadership position in the community. She, however still desired to have more. She wanted to continue the legacy established in the words of her grandmother, "...if anybody say something about a pretty car, she say get you somewhere to park it. Meaning get you some land, not the white mans." Johnson also found ways to subsidize the costs of household responsibilities with gardening techniques and cheaper food preparations. In this process, Johnson taught financial resourcefulness and savings techniques to the next generation of family members.

In the interview, Johnson speaks of the construction of a lake. She says:

Well, from the beginning. It would be a national interest thing. These white people, the leading people, the mayor. The one's responsible for the lake, they fixed it so it would have to go around. Go right up to the white one's house. so it would make there houses very expensive. They wouldn't sell so they wouldn't let the water come to their house. I believe something gonna be done. Cause one day somebody's gonna sue.

This lake, Poverty Point, was made in Delhi, LA in order to exist as a city attraction to visitors. While in the middle of preparations for the man-made lake, planners visited the homes of black people. The planners asked the African Americans to buy their homes. Because the blacks had been there for many generations, they refused to be bought out. Of course, if one's home is near such a body of water, one's property values will rise considerably. Interestingly enough, the lake was structured so that it revolved around a set of white homes, stopped in the vicinity of the black homes, and resumed again at a latter set of white homes. These contradictory constructions can be seen today in Delhi, LA.

It is indeed a privilege to go inside the life of a woman whose grandfather and great grandfather owned land not long after the end of Reconstruction. Johnson has offered a truth-telling narrative of a woman whose familial predecessors owned land until white supremacist grasps ensured that U.S. capitalism did not protect the right of ownership to

its black landowning citizens. Johnson was both sharecropper and domestic worker, but managed to send 9 of her 10 children to the privileged realm of higher education. Because she was ‘forever teaching them something’, her children would go on to own successful businesses, to work in executive positions for federal institutions, to serve honorably in the armed services, to attend vocational and university institutions, to be awarded scholarships to Harvard University, and to pass on the torch of success to children, nieces, and nephews.

As one can conclude from the additional evidence provided here, Della B. Johnson’s story is a long and complicated one. All the many details of her life simply could not be placed in the results nor the discussion section. Johnson even told me about an incident at the grocery store which demonstrates her part as an actor of grassroots resistance activities:

That was a quite a few years back now. I came over here in ’68. This guy [a Black Panther] came in the store when I was shopping. I forgot his exact words, but he said, “We are boycotting this store. These folks wouldn’t hire blacks, we tried to get him to hire. You already got this so keep that. But leave the rest.” I bought what I had and left. But they started hiring them. But that store went out of business. They were just making it better. They threw the groceries down outside. You didn’t have no money to waste. But they did make it better.

It is the daily initiatives of women such as Johnson who ensure that mass movements for social change, like that of the Black Panther Party, were possible. I hope readers may not be tourists of the information provided here, but efficient knowledge-seekers. May the reader not be deceived into thinking that this autobiography is disconnected and repetitive, for it is in the very way she chose to articulate her story that makes it authentic. This interview is not a mere reflection, it is the story of a woman turned knowledge-producer instantly in her personal delivery of historical events. Ms. Della B. Johnson’s story shows that the definition of resistance must be contextualized, for seeking to alleviate one’s immediate and long-term obstacles has the potential to change one’s personal life, family life, community life, and beyond.

Conclusion

In Spike Lee's documentary on Hurricane Katrina, "When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts" (2006), spectators are made aware of the horrible devastation of the disaster on New Orleans and the surrounding community as well as in the lives of those who were left behind and neglected by state and federal officials. The overwhelming majority of this neglected population was poor, black, and elderly U.S. citizens. In February of 2007, I attended a panel of academic scholars and film educators on Lee's documentary. One of the panelists, Professor David Change, stated that the properties destroyed represented the capital accumulation of generations which had been made against all odds by the descendants of those who were once property. He continued on to say, "Capital matters in this society. The property of seven or eight generations is now gone." If capital is indeed an important factor in one's personal survival in the United States capitalist society, then Ms. Johnson and her ancestors have been robbed of the ability to maintain their financial livelihoods.

Unfortunately, in the fact of its debt peonage and financial subservience, the quest for land ownership remained a dream deferred. Here, in the Mississippi Delta, land ownership for freedpeople is rightfully acquired by a few, a figment of the imagination for many, and a means which ends in a sharecropping peril for others. Even amongst its obvious economic devastation in the lives of its laborers, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which sharecroppers found ways to resist the sharecropping system for the purposes of personal survival and providing for future generations. Certainly, the daily resistive actions of black women sharecroppers has not been discovered here by, for these behaviors have been known to their families and to their communities; the agency of community actors is in need of no outside validation to be deemed 'resistance'. Women's actions of resistance are not something in need of discovery; their resistance on behalf of change was alive and thriving, it simply requires that one open their minds to a new and more comprehensive understanding of resistance.

PART III: THE PRAXIS

A TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST APPROACH

Introduction

With its world-renowned, liberal Constitution, the post-apartheid, post-1994, ‘new’ South Africa currently finds itself at a political, socio-economic crossroads of utilizing neo-liberal practices of economics to assist historically disadvantaged groups such as black people and women. In the post-Reconstruction, pre-Civil Rights era, the United States of America failed to reconstruct the economy of the South in such a way that allowed freedpersons to acquire the property necessary to survive under its capitalist framework. As different as the time periods, geographical politics, cultural and feminist genealogies, localized struggles, imagined communities, and statutory wealth of these nation-states may be, they find a crucial relationship through feminist epistemology. Feminist epistemology aims to infiltrate constructions of knowledge with a critical integration of women’s struggles for self-determination and empowerment as well as a practical understanding of women’s contribution to the methodologically accepted ways of knowing as professed in the classic realms of politics, economics, and the social sciences. *A Piece of Land: Women and Land in South Africa and the United States of America*, is an extensive study which works to legitimize the importance of including women’s stories in areas of scholarship where women are not at the forefront of an individual’s consciousness, such as on issues of landownership. After completing the project of historicizing women’s land ownership experiences in “The Challenge of Gender and Transformation” and “‘Discovering’ Resistance”, the purposes of “The Praxis” is to utilize a transnational feminist praxis to contextualize the historical and contemporary positions of Black South African women in the Western Cape and Black American women in the Mississippi Delta in order to create a concrete understanding of the ways in which interviewing women reshapes and redefines the workings of a hegemonic capitalism.

Chapter One: The Makings of Transnational Feminism

Transnational feminism is rooted in the thesis, objectives, and praxis of feminist epistemology. Feminist epistemology asserts that women have a distinct position and relationship to history that enables them to conceptualize the global activities of humanity in a manner that challenges traditional male biases.¹⁵⁹ This epistemological thesis is a praxis that recognizes the ways in which the knowledge of women's social politics within the frameworks of history and modernity have been excluded, distorted, and misrepresented. A number of distinguished human enterprises, such as science, have been historicized as strictly male whereas areas where women have been represented, such as in subsistence work, their contributions have been rendered inferior to that of their male counterparts.¹⁶⁰ In the end, feminist epistemology does not work to simply create an addition of details or to mobilize women to participate in the knowledge of science, but rather to integrate a shift in the normative perspective and to transform the nature and understanding of truth and knowledge.¹⁶¹

The previous studies of South Africa and the United States not only create an understanding of land processes and the historically disadvantaged, but they also work to reveal the importance of women's voices and social science perspectives. The world now finds itself in this era of globalization—the homogenization of cultural and commodity exchange. Globalization calls for a focus on a comparative feminist praxis that rethinks history with women's self-determination¹⁶² as well as a feminist democracy that appreciates sexual politics and understands interconnectedness.¹⁶³ The need for interconnectedness brings us to the idea of transnational feminism, a theoretical body of knowledge seeking to understand the global positions and relationships of women. Transnational feminism graduates from an ideal to the ranks of a praxis when it works to

¹⁵⁹ U. Narayan. "The Project of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Nonwestern Feminist." In A. Jagger & S. Bordo (eds), *Gender, Body, Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being & Knowing*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989) 256.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. Edited by M. Alexander and C. Mohanty. (New York: Routledge, 1997) xv-xvi.

appreciate the cultural, geographical, and historical locality of nations while simultaneously critiquing the role of global capital in structuring and reconstructing women's livelihoods. To think internationally, is to create an understanding of universal patriarchy, culture, and the value of capitalism,¹⁶⁴ and feminism specifically, must aim to 'theorize and practice democracy from an anti-capitalist standpoint'.¹⁶⁵ An anti-capitalist standpoint is significant, because capitalism was created and theorized according to the very biased contortions of truth and fact that feminist epistemology has sought to challenge and dismantle. While the practitioners of capitalist discourse were preoccupied with superfluous monies, blacks were the abject definition of property as slaves in the U.S. and the victims of racial segregation and isolation from the economic and educational centers of South Africa.

Chapter Two: Re-contextualizing the Nation

In their obvious differences of time and history, it is important to contextualize the relationship of South Africa and the U.S. in specific regards to the theoretical navigation of the *A Piece of Land* project. As described by Nan Woodruff in *American Congo*, the white, landowning, elite constructed the environment of the Mississippi Delta with propaganda proclaiming the 'Progressivism' of the 'New South'. In post-1994 South Africa, the land question finds itself mingling amongst the language of South Africa as the 'rainbow nation' of racial and ethnic inclusion. This kind of liberal and progressive orality makes it extremely difficult to discuss the politics of land ownership and racial exclusion.

In this chapter, I would like to discuss how these two countries begin to have an intriguing relationship when the term 'nation' is re-contextualized. Benedict Anderson

¹⁶³ Ibid. xxviii.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. xix.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. xxxiv.

establishes that all communities larger than a village are imagined.¹⁶⁶ Nations have no originators; nations are not people, but rather a narrative of identity.¹⁶⁷ In the Editor's Introduction of Arjun Appadurai's "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy", Simon During extends Anderson's theory of *imagined communities* to discuss *imagined worlds*:

An important fact of the world we live in today is that many persons on the globe live in such imagined communities, and thus are able to contest and sometimes even subvert the 'imagined worlds' of the official mind and of the entrepreneurial mentality that surround them. The suffix *scape* also allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes, shapes which characterize international capital as deeply as they do international clothing styles.¹⁶⁸

Black women in South Africa and the U.S. are confined to the nations as their states create and recreate ideals of nationalism. However if nations are indeed imagined, these women encompass the ability to situate themselves within the amalgamation of nations which form the identity [of identities] in transnational feminism. Transnational feminism bears its legitimacy upon the ideal of the fluidity of patriarchal landscapes, thus it may certainly align itself amidst the thesis of an imagined world (not imagined in the sense of the clear reality of patriarchy, but rather imagined in the sense that women may have an ideological relationship to transnational feminism).

Transnational feminism must seek to acknowledge the implications in the use and practice of an international framework. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Mohanty identify three essential components of international terminology: it must go beyond discussing women in similar conditions and in different geographical locations, to thinking about some global trends of women's conditions; the language should evaluate the various connections amongst individuals rather than designating a common set of qualities between all non-U.S. citizens (the U.S. has been specified since it continues to be 'premised within a white, Eurocentric, masculinist, heterosexist regime'); international frameworks must adapt a socio-political, economic, and ideological framework that is

¹⁶⁶ B. Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. (London: Verso, 1983) 6.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 205.

¹⁶⁸ S. During. In "Arjun Appadurai: Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." *The Cultural Studies Reader*. (London: Routledge, 1993) 222.

grounded in a discussion of race and capitalism. Antiracist and anti-capitalist positions are crucial in the development of feminist solidarity.¹⁶⁹

A great manifold of phrases have been coined to express the end of an era and the beginning of another such as pre-colonial, post-Emancipation, pre-1994, and post-Civil Rights. It grows increasingly difficult to discuss the colossal phenomenon ‘globalization’ when the naming of time periods in different geographical locations signifies a shift in modern, social processes. The specific time periods of South Africa (post-1994) and the U.S. (1877-1950) are 50-100 years apart in *A Piece of Land*. I am also utilizing a modern concept, transnational feminism, to discuss an historical era in the U.S. However, it is extremely important to discuss women’s positions in this very manner. In their book *Race, Nation, Class*, Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein proclaim that capitalism breaks the test of time.¹⁷⁰ ‘Racial and/or ethno-national-religious groups or communities’ are constantly recreated since racism claims continuity with the past and constantly reinstitutes past boundaries of oppression into the present.¹⁷¹ Alexander and Mohanty exclaim, “We use the formulation ‘colonial legacies’ to evoke the imagery of an inheritance and to map continuities and discontinuities between contemporary and inherited practices within state and capital formations.”¹⁷² The legacy of colonialism which has informed the capitalist states of modern and historical societies such as those replicated in South Africa and the United States. Certainly, each nation-state creates its own political, economical, and social identities as regulated by state power and negotiated by the members of its communities, but the ways in which capitalism has conquered time and locality cannot be denied.

¹⁶⁹ Alexander & Mohanty xix.

¹⁷⁰ E. Balibar & I. Wallerstein. *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. (London: Verso 1997) 34.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Alexander & Mohanty xxi.

Chapter Four: Mapping the Terrain

In Paul Gilroy's *Against Race*, he asserts the significance of disadvantaged persons working to liberate themselves from the racial markers and categorizations society has attributed to them. Individuals such as freed slaves were assigned an inferior social standing as solidified by a *raciology* or a hierarchical construction of human beings according to markers of skin color. Gilroy establishes that when a group is endowed with the 'alchemic magic of racial mastery', it delineates their consciousness in various ways.¹⁷³ Since black persons have been made to be forever wary of the stereotypes attributed to their race, it has certainly informed how they view their communities and themselves. Sojourner Truth describes how women were perceived post-Reconstruction in the U.S.¹⁷⁴: "In the eyes of the 19th century white public, the black female was a creature unworthy of the title 'woman', she was mere chattel, a thing, an animal."¹⁷⁵ *A Piece of Land* works to reveal how groups, such as people of color and women, have been historically disadvantaged and simultaneously, reveal how these same groups have been agents of change in their communities.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, psychoanalyst, philosopher, and anti-colonial activist Frantz Fanon discusses the ways in which black bodies of the colonial Diaspora have endured an inferiority complex. This inferiority complex has informed how black people identify with themselves internally and externally, to their perspective colonial nations, and to oppressed persons internationally. Author of *Frantz Fanon: Conflicts and Feminism*, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, exclaims, "Blackness, not colonial oppression and its psychological and material manifestations, is the fundamental source of angst." Blackness is a term encompassing countless identities, cultures, languages, religions, histories, ethnicities, nations, revolutions, liberation movements, oppressions, societies, and more. As members of the black diaspora struggle to develop solidarity in their own

¹⁷³ P. Gilroy. *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000) 15.

¹⁷⁴ At the 1852 convention on the women's rights movement in Ohio, Truth spoke publicly on the conditions of the black female slave, becoming one of the first feminist to call attention to race.

¹⁷⁵ B. Hooks. *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women & Feminism*. (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981) 159.

communities, identifying with black persons internationally seems a farfetched aspiration.

Transnational feminism is no easy task for members of the black diaspora, since the constructions of ‘blackness’ evolve into such a paradox. In these studies of South Africa and the United States, I have sought to tackle some of these very contradictions and difficult questions. Pakistani Activist Nighat Said Khan proclaims that there can be no victory in the women’s movement in the Global South until Northern academics work to critique their state and their institutions.¹⁷⁶ In addition, Nigerian Activist Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi exclaims:

Feminism has thrived in the academics in the North because feminists in those countries have been able to acquire the spaces and resources. Unfortunately this has led to intellectual hegemonies—the sisters in the North are the ones with the money, technology and access to international publishing, all crucial sites for the production of knowledge. They thus appropriate the knowledge bases of women in the South. Within the global women’s movement we have a dichotomy whereby the women from the North are regarded as the thinkers and scholars and the women from the South are the practitioners, with more value and respect given to the former.¹⁷⁷

Working to critique one’s nation as Khan and Fayemi suggest, is no easy process. If I had not embarked upon to journeys to South Africa, this project would have been physically and aesthetically possible for the very reasons that Khan and Fayemi establish. A global women’s movement requires surpassing one’s own personal, cultural, and national comprehension; a quest which can only be made truly successful if one detracts from her/his familiar spaces and resources.

¹⁷⁶ N. Khan. “Up Against the State: The Women’s Movement in Pakistan and its implications for the Women’s Movement.” In M. McFadden et al., *Feminist Politics, Activism, and Vision: Local and Global Challenges*. (Toronto, Canada: Inanna Publications & Education Inc., 2004) 86.

¹⁷⁷ B. Adeleye-Fayemi. “Creating and Sustaining Feminist Space in Africa.” In *Feminist Politics*, 39.

Chapter Four: The Execution of it All

The Structure

With the use of knowledge from academics, activists, researchers, NGO workers, community members, authors, farm owners and laborers, *A Piece of Land* is a culmination of knowledge works from both South Africa the United States. A methodology bearing international strategies is incomplete without one's being vulnerable to an intellectual challenge where one must reach beyond her/his former understandings and misconceptions. In *The Future of Women's Rights*, Adeleye-Fayemi discusses *glocalization*. Globalization is transformed into a new concept when its 'b' is replaced with a 'c' to form *glocalization*. *Glocalization* is a term used to describe how women's local circumstances are impacted by the global processes and simultaneously, how women's local actions impact global processes.¹⁷⁸ *A Piece of Land* is structured so that a reader, first and foremost, has a profound comprehension of the local challenges of land ownership and historically disadvantaged groups. After having exposure to the land question in areas of South Africa and the United States, the reader is made aware of their international relationship through global processes of capitalism, raciology, psychological inferiority complexes, colonial legacies, and universal patriarchy. I prefaced locality, because it becomes increasingly difficult to appreciate the particularities of nations, in and of itself, when it is superseded by a discussion of global forces. Indeed, globalization and international philosophy is a fundamental component of this project, but the preeminent goal is as follows: to promote thinking that solidifies the significance of women's stories in the progression of politics and the social sciences and women as agents and knowledge producers of history.

¹⁷⁸ B. Adeleye-Fayemi. "Creating a New World with New Visions: African Feminism and Trends in the Global Women's Movement." In J. Kerr, Ellen Sprenger, Alison Symington, *The Future of Women's Rights: Global Visions & Strategies*. (Zed Books: London, 2004) 39.

The Process

Interviewing Women

Is there a better way to discover the knowledge and truth of women's livelihoods, activisms, and communities than to hear it from the women themselves? I should hope not. In her essay "Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms", Ann Oakley asserts that the normative, dominant, and accepted processes of social science research are rigidly idealized within a 'masculine model of sociology and society'; a process which is especially unrealistic in the theory and practice of a feminist interviewer and an interviewee who does not identify as a feminist.¹⁷⁹ 'Proper' interviewing motif is as follows: be sympathetic and friendly to the interviewee to stabilize their comfort, but not to displace them from their position as objects of information;¹⁸⁰ the interviewee must adapt and respond to the interviewer's rapport or the previously indicated questions and definitions of the research;¹⁸¹ the interviewee is a passive component of the process as responder and never questioner;¹⁸² interviewee and interviewer must act as depersonalized bodies with no opinions and no bias towards what evolves into a hierarchical research process directed and produced by the expert, psychoanalyst interviewer.¹⁸³ These so-called 'proper' interview processes, are far from ideal for women interviewing other women. Interviewees cannot be treated as mechanical robots whose sole purpose is to provide an interviewer with specified which lacks sensitivity to the interviewee's circumstances.

Oakley indicates three crucial elements to a fulfilling process of women interviewing women: the use of a rigid criterion for an interview is ethically inexcusable; the problematic contradictions at hand in the research process must be revealed; an interview is best served non-hierarchical with the interviewer prepared to disclose and

¹⁷⁹ A. Oakley. "Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms." 31.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. 33.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. 35.

¹⁸² Ibid. 36.

¹⁸³ Ibid. 37.

contextualize their personal position.¹⁸⁴ Prior identity deconstruction is crucial for methodological purposes, especially if the interviewer is not a member of the community she/he is interviewing. When I interviewed Fatima Shabodien and Debra de Vries of the Women on Farms Project, I came prepared to first discuss my position and personal relationship to the research. When I first met Debra de Vries, she was hesitant to speak with me. As I discussed my personal position, she responded to my statements with numerous interrogations. De Vries had every right to question why I chose to interview her and Shabodien as they were about to discuss issues that involved their communities and women's livelihoods. At the interview progressed, de Vries became comfortable me and we even told a few jokes. She eventually disclosed to me that she had many reservations about the interview, because I was American. The ways in which she had stereotyped and generalized Americans into an impermeable box certainly frustrated me. Simultaneously, I was as equally unfair as de Vries. I assumed the interview would be without such problems, because I was both a woman and black. I thank de Vries for this difficult experience, because she showed me firsthand that 'women' and 'black' are not universal categories. If transnational feminism is to be effective, there must be a strong consideration and sensitivity towards locality and personal position.

Interviewing women is a most difficult privilege and a most challenging reward. Women are hesitant to share their histories, because they wish to protect the sanctity of their bodies and their stories. Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi asserts:

It is very difficult to create and sustain feminist space in many African countries for several reasons. Feminism is still very unpopular and threatening. The word still conjures up bogeys of wild, naked white women burning their bras, imperialism, domination, an undermining of African culture, etc. Feminists are subjected to ridicule and insults. They are called 'frustrated', 'miserable spinsters', 'castrators' and 'home wreckers'. In some cases, their lives are threatened.

Of course, this would be very difficult for white, Western, feminist to digest. Western societies may be wealthy and powerful, but patriarchal capitalism is *far* from eradicated. In spite of this fact, the resources of communication and collateral which have enabled

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. 41.

Northern feminist organizations to produce great quantities of feminist knowledge.¹⁸⁵ It is in this difficulty and discomfort that all feminist should be made aware of the great challenge ahead in formatting and practicing transnational feminism; as my experiences at the Women on Farms Project emphasize, it will be no easy task. Conducting research in a foreign country is difficult, because one is confronted with the politics of researching issues that are outside of one's own national community. It requires that one have concrete goals, an efficient research method, and an understanding of the historical processes and social forces intersecting with one's research. Then, and only then, will people be willing to work with you, because you desire not to appropriate or invade their community, but to be an active member for both community development and self-fulfillment. In the end, there can be no success in expanding transnational feminism, if, as feminists following a feminist praxis, we are not at times uncomfortable and challenged. Continuous ease with such a difficult task of transnational feminism will not deconstruct ones cultural biases, and it surely will not allow one to reach beyond her/his understanding.

Conclusion

The praxis of transnational feminism has been absolutely instrumental in tackling this complicated work with a concrete methodology. The praxis of transnational feminism must be without a continuum of misinformed generalizations that refuse to recognize the importance of women as intelligible authorities over the historical and modern implications of their stories; the praxis must endure the challenge of contextualizing women's positions in an era of globalization without neglecting to assert the diversity of women's livelihoods; the truth and knowledge of women's stories should not be romanticized, but rather understood according to their perspective communities' historical processes and social forces; transnational feminists must work to delve into the

¹⁸⁵ B. Adeleye-Fayemi. *Feminist Politics*, 115.

difficult territories where women's voices are greatly marginalized, such as land ownership.

For women of the Black Diaspora, the struggle to maintain the *culture of dissemblance*, and to breach out of it in order to be the engineers and authors of their histories, is no simple process. In *Talking Back*, Bell Hooks says, "I wish to help make a world where our work will be taken seriously, given appreciation, and acclaimed, a world in which such work will be seen as necessary and significant".¹⁸⁶ The invasion and exploitation of proprietary spaces runs long and deep in the complex and diverse history of black bodies. To have a piece of land is to acquire more than an asset to be used for productive purposes or a commodity to be exchanged for cash incentives. A piece of land is to acquire what historically disadvantaged groups have been deprived of for centuries. It is the immediate transformation of a dream deferred.

While conducting this analytical research process as a liberal arts, undergraduate, African American female student in this cyclical matrix where theory and practice find themselves in an interlaced structure within the parameters of academia, I have, of course, discovered that I am not exempt of my own biases and cultural baggage. However, I must assert that although my idealistic behaviors may be confined to the boundaries of my individual construction, I do not believe this should overwhelm my desire to complete a paper which may situate itself as a piece of scholarship, but more importantly to me, will respectfully and insightfully embody the realities of these particular voices of humanity.

¹⁸⁶ B. Hooks. *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1989) 48.

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