Toward an Intellectual History of Black Women

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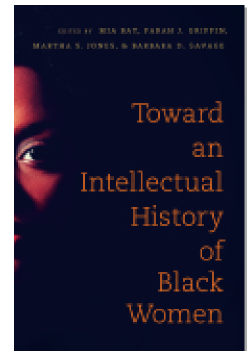

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Histories, Fictions, and Black Womanhood Bodies

Race and Gender in Twenty-First-Century Politics

MARTHA S. JONES

In the midst of the highly contested 2008 primary campaign between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, an alternative candidate made a brief appearance before the American public. Feminist activist Gloria Steinem introduced the figure of "Achola Obama," a candidate whose personal biography mirrored that of Barack Obama. Achola was, as Steinem described her, a lawyer, a community organizer, the parent of two girls, a child of a white American mother and a black African father, an experienced state legislator, and an "inspirational voice." She was in every respect a counterpart to the former Illinois senator. Except Achola was a woman. Inventing the character of Achola, Steinem hoped that the contrast between the actual male candidate and an imaginary female would persuade readers that all else being equal, it was gender that made it unlikely that Achola would become a U.S. senator and candidate for president. Achola's femaleness, Steinem argued, rendered her candidacy impossible, while her male counterpart, Barack, appeared poised to take the Democratic Party's nomination. Her message: Race was likely to trump gender in 2008.

It was a cynical move, one that erased black women from political culture even as it purported to champion their interests. Steinem's elision of the history of black women's presidential candidacies made clear how both race and gender undermined their viability. In 1972, Steinem had failed to back fellow National Women's Political Caucus founder Shirley Chisholm's bid for the presidency.[1] Steinem, along with many leading feminists, had opted instead to back the eventual nominee, George McGovern.[2] Steinem ignored the black women who, in 2008, were themselves commenting on the puzzle of race, gender, and politics. For example, Carol Moseley-Braun, whom Steinem had supported for a presidential bid in 2003, had publicly weighed in: "The dynamics for race are different than the dynamics for gender; . . . they are less likely to be expressed in regard to Barack Obama than they are to be expressed with regard to Hillary Clinton."[3] Steinem

never invited readers to contemplate how "Achola" might have explained her failed candidacy.[4] Shut out were the ideas of black women who viewed their position in the Obama-Clinton contest and in politics generally as intersectional and thus incapable of being reduced to a race-versus-gender analysis.

Commentators were eager to explain the Clinton-Obama contest in race-versus-gender terms. The *New York Times* published first Gloria Steinem and then feature writer Mark Leibovich with each attempting to explain how identity shaped political culture. Their starting place was history. Wasn't gender, as in womanhood, a more crippling political liability than race, as in blackness, they queried. The past might provide useful analogies. Steinem's January 2008 op-ed "Women Are Never Front-Runners" asked, "Why is the sex barrier not taken as seriously as the racial one?" She looked to history for answers: "The abolition and suffrage movements progressed when united and were damaged by division; we should remember that." Steinem went on then to read the terms of the Fifteenth Amendment to conclude: "Black men were given the vote a half-century before women of any race were allowed to mark a ballot."[5] Less than one week later, Leibovich authored a feature piece, "Rights vs. Rights: An Improbable Collision Course,"[6] that relied on the "bitter case" of the "abolitionist-women's rights split" to explain how race had trumped gender: "Blacks won the right to vote with the 15th Amendment in 1870," while women won theirs decades later in 1920 with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, Leibovich suggested.

These analyses proceeded as if all the African Americans were men and all the women were white. Nowhere was there an accounting of how black women had been positioned in nineteenth-century politics and the result was a misleading picture of the past. The political community referenced was the post–Civil War American Equal Rights Association (AERA). The AERA included many activists who had simultaneously advocated for the abolition of slavery and the rights of women, understanding oppression justified by race and gender to be equally irrational. What we remember as a distinct women's suffrage movement was founded in 1869, only after a series of debates over the terms of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Even then, there never emerged one unified women's movement. Instead, two organizations were born—the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) and the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA). The latter remained committed both to the cause of African American political and civil rights and to women's suffrage. Many black women took

hold of the women's rights paradigm of the 1860s and brought it to bear in their religious institutions, embarking upon a churchwomen's movement that demanded the right to vote and hold office.[7] The invocation of an abolitionist–women's suffrage split may have been expedient for the purpose of political provocation, but it bore little resemblance to the complex past that it played upon.

A look at the history of African American women might have helped commentators understand political culture. It also would have made plain how black women had never reduced their political identities to race or gender. The 1860s were not characterized by a divide between black men's interests in abolition and white women's interests in the vote. Instead, it was a complex political culture of long-standing and overlapping coalitions that was strained and refigured. More to the point, the alliances between abolitionism and women's rights were never forged by white women and black men alone. African American women worked alongside Frederick Douglass and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, figures that too frequently stand in for the whole. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, a poet and antislavery lecturer, was among the black women who took part in the AERA meetings (and later would join the AWSA).[8] In her analysis of American politics during an 1866 meeting, she did not pit "women" against "black" people or race against gender. Instead, Harper urged: "We are all bound up together in one great bundle of humanity." Harper argued that injustice flowed from race and sex, and that, as a black woman, she embodied that political crossroads. Just as black women were participants in those movements' collaborations, so too were they parties to the fissures. When the AERA began a contentious debate over the Fifteenth Amendment, Harper reportedly explained: "When it was a question of race, she let the lesser question of sex go. But the white women all go for sex, letting race occupy a minor position."[9] With Harper in mind, the lessons of the 1860s are not only about the errors of political divisions; they are lessons that refute an essentialist claim about how identity maps onto political positions and about the necessity for an intersectional perspective that understands race and gender—as embodied in Harper's black femaleness—as always and necessarily linked.

On the Fifteenth Amendment, only a constrained and formalistic reading of the history of voting rights could lead to such distorted conclusions. The Fifteenth Amendment did not guarantee voting rights for all black people. Black women remained formally disfranchised after 1870 *as women*. In subsequent decades, they campaigned for women's suffrage, sometimes

alongside white women, while also challenging Jim Crow–era racial oppression in campaigns against segregation, lynching, and the disfranchisement of all black Americans. African American men exercised the right to vote in significant numbers during Reconstruction's brief experiment in interracial democracy. However, by the 1890s, they were targets of violence, legislation, and custom that successfully crushed their numbers at the polls and their influence in political culture. Even after 1920, black women remained disfranchised under the South's Jim Crow regime. And no voting rights saga would be complete without consideration of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (passed during the lifetimes of Steinem and Leibovich). That act marked the end of a nearly 100-year-long contest waged by black men and women.[10] Steinem and Leibovich elided the overwhelming weight of the historical record. Never in our history was political culture as simple as a contest between black men and white women. And for understanding the views of today's diverse electorate, such paradigms are ill-fitting and just plain irrelevant.

If commentators could overlook black women as historical actors, it was not as easy to overlook them as real members of the body politic in 2008. Steinem was challenged by many, including Melissa Lacewell-Harris, then a professor at Princeton University. (Today known as Melissa Harris-Perry, she is a professor at Wake Forest University and host of MSNBC's Melissa Harris-Perry Show.) Lacewell-Harris's confrontation with Steinem took place during a broadcast television exchange on *DemocracyNow!* A scholar of political science and African American studies, Lacewell-Harris drew additional authority from having worked with Obama in Chicago; she spent weeks in the field with his presidential campaign. But she also spoke directly as a black woman: "I'm sitting here in my black womanhood body, knowing that it is more complicated." Lacewell-Harris's tone was stinging as she explained that she was "appalled" and "offended" by Steinem's essay. She echoed the popular reaction: "We have got to get clear about the fact that race and gender are not these clear dichotomies in which, you know, you're a woman or you're black." Lacewell-Harris's analysis was laced with history—the caretaking work of black women in white homes; the stories of women who were part of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the civil rights movement, the Black Panther Party, and NOW; the aborted nomination of Lani Guinier to the Department of Justice. She questioned Steinem's underlying premise, that black men were "standing over and above" white women. Their relative numbers in Congress suggested the inverse. An intersectional analysis was required,

Lacewell-Harris insisted: “Maybe if we look through the prism of black women’s experience and not just to try to use black women’s experience as a kind of, you know, look at how much harder it is for women, but instead to really try to understand that intersectional experience, I think we’d come to a clearer perspective.” Steinem’s only response was to agree.

Lacewell-Harris was one voice in a groundswell of response to Steinem. Online newspaper comment sections and blogs lit up with lessons for Steinem, lessons offered up by black women about their relationship to the body politic. Commentators challenged first and foremost the erasure of black women’s ideas. By 5:32 on the afternoon that Steinem’s op-ed was posted, “YBF,” who provocatively reported her location as “Invisible,” commented on the *New York Times* online version: “As a young, black, female attorney who voted for Hillary to become a senator, I am highly offended by this piece. Am I supposed to vote for Hillary simply because she is a woman, but not Obama because he is black? Steinem, and a lot of white feminists frankly, fail to see the intersection of race and gender and therefore do not acknowledge me and my experience in their analysis/rhetoric.”[11]

Black women needed neither a university post nor a television camera to weigh in. In the blogosphere they claimed their presence in the marketplace of political ideas. They variously wondered, queried, insisted, lamented, and preached in the face of the incapacity of the *New York Times* to recognize their position and grapple with their perspectives. “Dear Gloria: Ain’t I a Woman Too?” wrote Tamara Winfrey Harris on *BlogHer*, invoking the words often attributed to nineteenth-century activist Sojourner Truth.[12] An entry on *The Angry Black Woman* signed by Nora asked, “Which Came First, My Uterus or My Skin?”[13] “Ms. Steinem’s . . . arguments for why sexism trumps racism ignores those of us who are women of color,” wrote Pam Spaulding on her blog *Pam’s House Blend . . . always steamin’*.[14] Shark-Fu wrote on her blog *AngryBlackBitch* in a post titled “I’m Worried Too, Ms. Steinem . . .” that “after reading Steinem’s Op-Ed I felt invisible . . . as if black and woman can’t exist in the same body.”[15] What neither Steinem nor Leibovich appeared to anticipate was that black women might retell history by drawing upon their own stories to illuminate the puzzle of race, gender, and the dynamics of American politics.

What might give us pause here is that Steinem did not appear to have anticipated the terms of her confrontation with Lacewell-Harris or the broader groundswell of criticism elicited by her essay. The evidence of black women’s histories that so powerfully undermined her race-gender

dichotomy was in a sense plain to see: in the work of scholars, in her lived experience, and in the popular consciousness of black women everywhere. The evidence was also in the campaign itself. The presence of Lacewell-Harris in the precincts of Iowa and New Hampshire, for example, is a sign that Steinem need not have left her pundit's perch to discern that black women were more than fictional devices. They were well-armed, sophisticated agents of political culture who aimed to shape the outcome of the presidential campaign, and do so by their own terms.

If Steinem managed to overlook the voices of most black women, she remained hard-pressed to bracket out figures like Oprah Winfrey, Donna Brazile, Toni Morrison, and Michelle Obama, who by 2008 were too prominent to overlook. As they worked to shape the election and our analysis of it, these women offered up an alternative view. They rejected the view of race and gender as an ill-fated dichotomy in politics, and spoke to the nation through their "black womanhood" bodies and minds. Along the way some began to craft political theories of black womanhood. Oprah Winfrey, television personality, media mogul, and philanthropist, joined Barack Obama on the campaign trail at the end of 2007. Her presence helped to draw enormous crowds to public rallies while generating an excitement that carried over from meeting halls to American living rooms. Taking the political podium for Obama was a first for Winfrey, and she knew that many observers questioned her presence. Winfrey put that question squarely on the table for one audience during a rally in Des Moines, Iowa, announcing, "At last I'm here." She would leave the pundits to parse the meaning of her presence, Winfrey joked. But she then went on to explain her sense of belonging to the body politic as an African American woman: "When you strip us all down, when you take away our race, our color, our ethnicity, our backgrounds, our sex; when you strip us all down we are American at our core."[16] Winfrey's invocation of a political ideal blind to difference allowed her to resolve the race-versus-sex dichotomy posited by Steinem and Leibovich. These markers of social difference were not at odds in Winfrey's view. Instead, they could be acknowledged and then dispensed with.

Winfrey was not alone. Black women spoke in a sort of chorus of intersectionality. Political analyst and Democratic Party leader Donna Brazile took a somewhat different view. But she also resisted the argument that her blackness and her womanhood were irreconcilable in the realm of politics. In a spring 2008 exchange over the character of the Democratic Party, Brazile chided: "Just don't tell me that I can't stand in Hillary's camp

because I'm black, and I can't stand in Obama's camp because I'm female, because I'm both. And I'm grumpy and might go with McCain."[17] Brazile's point was twofold. There was nothing essential about her politics as a black woman, and party analysts ought not underestimate the extent to which black women might enact a political agency that defied easy dichotomies of race and sex. Toni Morrison's words, while more subtle, were no less clear. In an open letter to candidate Obama, she rejected a simplified politics of identity. Like Winfrey, it was Morrison's first time endorsing a political candidate. She knew her views might be essentialized. Morrison explained that she "cared little for [Clinton's] gender" and also did not "care very much for [Obama's] race." Morrison distanced herself from Steinem's dichotomy and then invoked a politics without "age, experience, race, or gender." She called it "wisdom."[18]

History emerged as a powerful tool in these rethinkings of black women's place in political culture. Nineteenth-century U.S. history, the history that so concerned Steinem and Leibovich, took center stage. When Michelle Obama took to the podium at the August 2008 Democratic National Convention (DNC), she came armed with an ambitious arsenal. Her speech drew upon childhood reminiscences, moral philosophy, and her role as a mother and turned on a view of the American dream as produced through struggle and determination. Struggle was part of our history, Obama suggested, and she placed the occasion of her speech squarely into a historical frame: "This week we celebrate two anniversaries. The eighty-eighth anniversary of women winning the right to vote and the forty-fifth anniversary of that hot summer day when Dr. King lifted our sights and our hearts with his dream for our nation." Obama claimed two histories: the history of gender—as represented by the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, and the history of race—as expressed through the civil rights movement. She continued: "I stand here today at the crosscurrents of that history, knowing that my piece of the American dream is a blessing hard won by those who came before me."[19] Obama took her audience back to the dichotomies set forth by Steinem and Leibovich and then mapped out the intersections—or, in her terms, crosscurrents—that expressly ran through her black womanhood body. In Obama's vision of American political culture, she was the daughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Frederick Douglass, and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, *and* of Martin Luther King Jr., Gloria Steinem, and Shirley Chisholm. Race and sex, in her analysis, were not a fraught dyad or risky political categories of analysis; they were the lived experience of African American women.

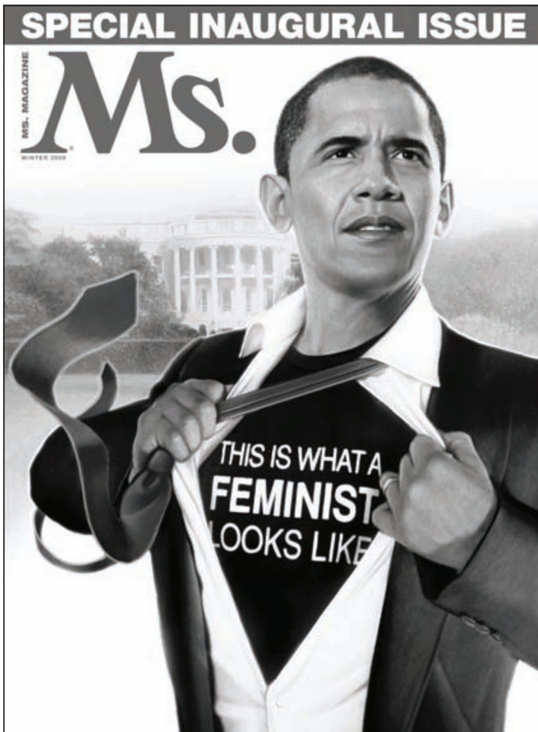
In an echo of Steinem, Hillary Clinton, who had tried to avoid confronting head-on a race-sex analysis, was drawn into the debate. In her address to the DNC, Clinton also turned to the past to explain how Democrats, particularly her women supporters, could see their way to backing Barack Obama in the general election. She offered a vision that might reconcile the race-gender divide. Clinton began by invoking a touchstone that Michelle Obama had already held up, that of the Nineteenth Amendment's eighty-eighth anniversary. Clinton explained: "I'm a United States senator because in 1848 a group of courageous women and a few brave men gathered in Seneca Falls, New York . . . to participate in the first convention on women's rights in our history. And so dawned a struggle for the right to vote that lasted seventy-two years. . . . Eighty-eight years ago on this day the Nineteenth Amendment giving women the right to vote was enshrined in our constitution." Until this point, Clinton seemed wedded to the script that Steinem and Leibovich had sketched out. She invoked the rights of women and allied herself with the figure of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. She arguably was more attentive to history, however, pointing out that there were indeed men among the participants in the Seneca Falls convention. What about race? Could Hillary Clinton navigate the fraught dichotomy?

Clinton took the plunge and attempted to traverse the race-sex dyad. She continued: "How do we give the country back to [courageous Americans who defy the odds]? By following the example of a brave New Yorker. . . ." At this point, we might have expected her to invoke Frederick Douglass, who spent many years in upstate Rochester. But, Clinton had learned from Steinem's self-inflicted strife. Instead she continued, ". . . a woman who risked her life to bring slaves to freedom along the Underground Railroad. On that path to freedom Harriet Tubman had one piece of advice: 'If you hear the dogs, keep going. If you see the torches in the woods, keep going. If they're shouting after you, keep going. Don't ever stop, keep going. If you want a taste of freedom, keep going.'" It was inspired political theater, and the convention hall roared. Clinton had offered a resolution to the race-sex divide and it came in the form of a black woman. Indeed, Clinton's implicit pairing of two histories—that of Cady Stanton and of Tubman—argued that not all the women were white and not all the black people were men. For a moment, the possibilities for Democratic Party politics and Barack Obama's election relied upon the wisdom of an African American woman. Or did it?

The following day commentators scrutinized Clinton's remarks. Most appeared to know something about Tubman even prior to Clinton's speech.

But while they knew of her courageous leadership among fugitive slaves, questions emerged about the veracity of Clinton's remarks. "Did Harriet Tubman Really Say That?" queried Sewell Chan of the *New York Times*.[20] It was a curious inquiry that simultaneously undercut Tubman and the political candidate that invoked her. The answer, it turned out, was "no," and a small group of historians had the last word on Clinton's attempt to mend the race-gender rift in her party. In an eerie parallel to Steinem's invention of Achola Obama, it turned out that Clinton, too, relied upon a fictionalized Harriet Tubman. Tubman had been the subject of recent historical study, generating three book-length, scholarly biographies.[21] Milton Sernett puzzled at Clinton's move to quote Tubman. She had not been a literate person and so most of what is attributed to her is highly mediated through others, he explained. But with respect to Clinton's specific quote, Sernett pointed out that it approximated a four-line quatrain attributed to Tubman. Unfortunately, despite being often repeated, particularly in children's literature, there was no evidence that Tubman ever uttered such words. Sernett explained that the origins lay in several midcentury semifictional accounts alone. Historian Kate Larson agreed with Sernett. Clinton had relied upon fictional accounts of Tubman's life written more than a half century earlier. In their final assessment, both Sernett and Lawson attempted to prop Clinton up. Sernett ultimately condoned her reliance upon the fictional Tubman, noting that it went toward establishing a refrain in her convention speech "that was more feminist than some of her other speeches." Larson did the same, suggesting that the words were in the spirit of Tubman, who "encouraged black and white women to 'stick together' to win the battle for the right to vote (many white women activists were willing to sacrifice giving the vote to black women in order to attract southern white women to the cause)." Tubman was left somewhere between the historical and the fictional, reduced to a symbol for "feminist" ideas and giving women the right to vote. Tubman looked less and less like the intersectional figure that black women had promoted.

These questions did not cease with Barack Obama's rise as the Democratic candidate, or with his election to the presidency. Neither the finality of election-night scenes of a triumphant Barack Obama nor the inauguration-day spectacle of a new first couple parading through Washington resolved theories of irreconcilable dyads and enduring intersections. Two companion scenes from January 2009 suggest how the place of black women in political culture remained unsettled. Such questions still



President Barack Obama on the cover of the Winter 2009 issue of *Ms.* magazine. Reprinted by permission of *Ms.* magazine, © 2009.

bubbled to the surface in new and curious ways. The first was in January 2009, when *Ms.* magazine carried such questions into the postelection season.[22] Barack Obama adorned the cover, depicted from the waist up, with jacket open, tie unraveled, and white button-down shirt open to expose a black t-shirt. This superhero figure gazed with gravity into the distance, while the text on his t-shirt revealed his true agenda: "THIS IS WHAT A FEMINIST LOOKS LIKE." Commentators buzzed as they tried to reconcile the image of the new African American, male president with the feminist moniker. Was it a cruel jab at Clinton supporters? Was feminism postwomen, with men its superchampions? Perhaps the cover meant to suggest that Barack Obama and not his wife, Michelle, would carry the legacy of campaigns for the rights of women into the future. In a postessentialist world, perhaps black men could claim to be the rightful sons of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. *Ms.* publisher Eleanor Smeal explained the cover in rather constrained terms: the aim was simply to "capture both the national and feminist mood of high expectations and hope."[23] No consensus emerged, but the image added a layer of complexity to the historical

blueprint that had influenced the campaign. Perhaps here, Obama was no more than another fictionalized black body called into service to promote a feminist vision.

Nearby, a black woman, Michelle Obama, was taking the public stage as First Lady. Many had speculated about what her role would be in the White House, and she asserted that home and family would be her principal concerns during her husband's tenure. Still, listening in on Mrs. Obama as she began to preside over public occasions, we heard her returning to the questions about race and gender that had animated the previous season. In April 2009, Michelle Obama and Hillary Clinton, now secretary of state, reunited at the invitation of Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. The occasion was the unveiling of a bust in the Capitol's Emancipation Hall. Sojourner Truth, the enslaved woman turned women's rights and antislavery activist, was being made part of the nation's collective memory. Amid an elaborate ceremony, Obama took the podium to introduce the unveiling. She explained the occasion's significance in terms that were by now familiar to any student of U.S. political culture: "Just as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott would be pleased to know that we have a woman serving as Speaker of the House of Representatives, I hope that Sojourner Truth would be proud to see me, the descendent of slaves, serving as First Lady of the United States of America. So I am proud to be here. I am proud to be able to stand here on this day for this dedication. . . . Now many young boys and girls like my own daughters will come to Emancipation Hall and see the face of a woman who looks like them."[24]

Her suggestion was a new one in this long debate about race, gender, and history in American politics. While we may be students of history, perhaps history is also watching us. Sojourner Truth stood just over Obama's shoulder, literally in bust form and figuratively as a standard-bearer from the past. Obama suggested that we might be accountable to a historical past, even as we are left to sort out which past that might be. Her remarks departed from her summer 2008 analysis of history's "crosscurrents." Instead, she drew a picture of two streams of American womanhood—one of white women and the other of black women and the descendants of slaves. On that day Obama's black womanhood body—like the body of Truth and those of her young daughters—was memorialized as yet another touchstone for the forging of our political culture and the collective memories upon which it is built.

Notes

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1. Julie Gallagher, "Waging 'The Good Fight': The Political Career of Shirley Chisholm, 1953–1982," *Journal of African American History* 92, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 392–416.

2. Paul D. McClain, Niambi M. Carter, and Michael C. Brady, "Gender and Black Presidential Politics: From Chisholm to Moseley Braun," *Journal of Women, Politics and Policy* 27, no. 1 (2005): 51–68.

3. "An Interview with Carol Moseley-Braun," The Buying of the President 2008, The Center for Public Integrity, http://www.buyingofthepresident.org/index.php/interviews/carol_moseley_braun/ (accessed October 1, 2010).

4. When confronted with similar charges in 2009, Steinem declined to reconsider her claims or the underlying facts, insisting that she meant only to call for the invention of political coalitions across lines of race and gender. For an extended exchange on these points, see "Race and Gender in Presidential Politics: A Debate Between Gloria Steinem and Melissa Harris-Lacewell," January 14, 2008, Democracy Now!, http://www.democracynow.org/2008/1/14/race_and_gender_in_presidential_politics (accessed 1 October 2010). Later in 2008, Steinem faced yet another opportunity to grapple with her ideas about race and gender in American politics when Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney announced her intent to run for president on the Green Party ticket. See "Green Party Announces Its Ticket for 2008 Presidential Election," *New York Times*, July 13, 2008. There is no record of Steinem's analysis of McKinney's candidacy.

5. Gloria Steinem, "Women Are Never Front-Runners," *New York Times*, January 8, 2008.

6. Editors illustrated Leibovich's article with side-by-side portraits of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Frederick Douglass. That they had been the Clinton and Obama of the nineteenth century appeared to be the suggestion.

7. Ellen DuBois remains the leading view of the politics of the AERA and the women's organizations that followed. See *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848–1869* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978). Subsequent scholarship has questioned Du Bois's overly broad interpretation to suggest, for example, how racism and black women's alternative view of political culture led to multiple women's movements. See also Evelyn B. Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850–1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); Louise M. Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Martha S.

Jones, *All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

8. On Harper, see Melba J. Boyd, *Discarded Legacy: Politics and Poetics in the Life of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994); and Corinne Field's essay in this volume.

9. "Debates at the American Equal Rights Association Meeting, New York City, May 12–14, 1869," in *The Concise History of Woman Suffrage: Selections from the Classic Work of Stanton, Anthony, Gage, and Harper*, ed. Mari Jo Buhle and Paul Buhle (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 257–75.

10. Ann D. Gordon et al., eds., *African American Women and the Vote, 1837–1965* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997).

11. Readers' comments, http://community.nytimes.com/comments/www.nytimes.com/2008/01/08/opinion/08steinem.html?sort=newest&offset=2 (accessed October 1, 2010). By 5:52 P.M. that day, the *Times* had closed the page for comments, inviting readers to submit letters to the editor instead.

12. whattamiisaid, "Dear Gloria Steinem: Ain't I a Woman, Too?," January 9, 2008, *BlogHer: Life Well Said*, http://www.blogher.com/dear-gloria-steinem-aint-i-woman-too (accessed October 1, 2010).

13. nojojojo, "Which Came First, My Uterus or My Skin?," January 15, 2008, *The Angry Black Woman: Race, Politics, Gender, Sexuality, Anger*, http://theangryblackwoman.com/2008/01/15/which-came-first-my-uterus-or-my-skin/ (accessed October 1, 2010).

14. Pam Spaulding, "Talking New Hampshire, race, and gender issues on the radio at 3:30 ET," *Pam's House Blend . . . always steamin': An Online Magazine in the Reality-Based Community*, January 9, 2008, http://www.pamshouseblend.com/showDiary.do?diaryId=4114 (accessed October 1, 2010).

15. Shark-Fu, "I'm Worried Too, Ms. Steinem . . ." January 8, 2008, *AngryBlackBitch: Practicing the Fine Art of Bitchitude*, http://angryblackbitch.blogspot.com/2008/01/im-worried-too-ms-steinem.html (accessed October 1, 2010).

16. CNN Newsroom, "Barack and Oprah," December 8, 2007, http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0712/08/cnr.05.html (accessed October 1, 2010). Winfrey's remarks can be viewed in their entirety at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t27gjV10zHk (accessed October 1, 2010).

17. Brazile's comments were made during a CNN debate with commentator Paul Begala. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzOTfbpGj1s&playnext=1&list=PL93AF843516F24BDE (accessed October 1, 2010).

18. Morrison's letter to Obama of January 28, 2008, was released by the Obama Campaign; see http://my.barackobama.com/page/community/post/samgrahamfelsen/CGVRG (accessed October 1, 2010).

19. Michelle Obama, BarackObama.com, August 26, 2008, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTFsB09KhqI (accessed October 1, 2010).

20. Sewell Chan, "Did Harriet Tubman Really Say That?," *New York Times*, August 27, 2008.

21. Kate Clifford Larson, *Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of*

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