The Necessity of Black Anger in the Success of Anti-Racism Movements

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**Abstract:** Parks presents their collage project through which she argues that Black anger must be considered as a key factor within anti-racist social movements.

**Keywords:** Black anger, anti-racist social movements, intersectional conflict analysis, art, arts approaches to conflict, Agnes Scott College

**Creative Statement**

*Black women are strong. Black women are always angry. Black women are overly sensitive.* To be Black and to be a woman means you are under the magnifying glass of a society that hates you, a society that believes you are not even human or worthy of being treated as human. The stereotypes that plague Black women range from over-sexualization to mammy-fication, but one of the most common tropes that Black women face is the idea that they are always angry. “The angry Black woman” stereotype makes it seem as if Black women only feel and express anger and become angry for little-to-no reason. This stereotype is brought up often in workplaces, educational institutions and political discussions and impacts how Black women interact with others and respond to situations in their daily lives. It makes Black women feel as if they must watch their tone of voice, be careful with their reactions, and hold their tongue in order to not be categorized as the stereotypical Angry Black woman. Therefore, it can be seen how this stereotype impacts how Black women interact with social movements. It makes it difficult for Black women to be taken seriously when they are being treated as animalistic and violent beings.

I argue that Black anger must be considered a key actor within anti-racist social movements. Black anger is too vital of an emotion to be considered unnecessary when it comes to cases of state-sanctioned violence and the movements that respond to such violence. Anger is one of the primary emotions that fuel these social movements, but it is also the emotion that societal forces tell Black people they are not allowed to feel or experience. My primary research question responds to these claims and my art will reveal the role that Black anger plays in the success of anti-racist movements and whether it is necessary or not. I also hope to analyze how Black anger is necessary to heal from racial trauma and the traumas of racially motivated police violence.

The anger of Black women is not hateful nor is it destructive, but rather it is meant to fight against the oppressive systems that are set in place to make Black women struggle. Anger is the power of Black women to envision a world and life that treats everyone with humanity. Black women’s anger is a tool that is used to regain power and empower themselves to fight against hatred, racism, and oppression. It is a necessary emotion in the fight for equity and for Black lives.
Figure 1: Collage by Rosa Parks.

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Black women face double subordination because they are Black, and they are a woman. However, these two identities cannot be separated from one another because Blackness impacts how one is treated as a woman, and being a woman impacts how one is treated if they are Black. Black women face both oppressions from being Black and being a woman but also face a third oppression— one that is combined and made of both of their interlocking identities. Black women must face a combination of racism and sexism when they simply exist in the world.

This art piece is a combination of a collage and a poem. Using different magazines, I cut out images that relate to Blackness, police violence, and anger. I then took these scraps and combined them together, mixing and matching different magazine cutouts to create my final piece. Over the collage, I have placed an original poem that reflects upon Blackness and Black emotions, specifically Black anger. I wanted to make an art piece that juxtaposed Black anger and Black gentleness while raising the importance of both.

I created this piece to fully emphasize the experience of being a Black woman who is trying to not fall into the stereotype of “Black anger” whose main emotion during the past few years has been anger. Witnessing Black death at the hands of state-sanctioned violence has been a repetitive cycle that I cannot seem to escape. After witnessing these instances, I am then told by society, my government, the police, my friends, and my family, that I cannot react violently. That I cannot react angrily. That I must be careful and critical of the actions I do, and the emotions that I can express. Along with these suggestions, I am told by the media that Black women are violent and that our anger is pointless and shows our weakness. I am put into an impossible place, where I cannot express myself in a time of grief. These emotions all add up inside, and eventually, they reach a breaking point. This cycle is exhausting and mentally draining. This art piece represents the thoughts I, as a Black woman, have in this cycle and eventually shows how I think fully showing my anger would look. I want Black Anger to be given the fullest consideration by society, I want it to be respected, and I want it to be fully heard.

This art piece is for all Black girls and women who have locked their emotions inside and who have hidden their full experiences. I want Black girls to know that not only is it okay to be angry, but it is empowering. This is for Breonna. This is for Sandra. This is for Rekia. This is for all Black women.

Figure 2: Detail of collage by Rosa Parks.