THE UNBROKEN CIRCLE: A HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY STUDY OF BLACK SINGLE MOTHERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

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Introduction

Families and households managed solely by Black women have been an integral part of American society since the days of the British colonization of North America and, as such, have been at the nexus of race, gender and class within the United States. Because racism permeates and transcends all social relationships, economic and political arrangements such as slavery, segregation, and desegregation have not operated in the public arena alone, but have seeped into the private arenas of sexuality, marriage and family, and the personal lives of Blacks and whites, men and women.

The history of Black single mothers and their families is part of the history of American family life. Three principles have shaped the development of American families:

> First, there was the puritanical tradition, which condemned fornication with the threat of fire and brimstone. Second, there was a highly developed sense of racial purity frequently codified in laws against miscegenation. And third, there was a strong moral commitment to a patriarchal family life.[1]

Black families have been shaped by sexual conservatism, a patriarchal family life and a strong sense of racial pride. However, Black single-mother families have existed outside the patriarchal family, and often reflect the reality of sexual intercourse outside marriage. In their earliest states, such families reflected interracial sex (that is, white male sexual exploitation of Black women slaves). In fact, both Black and white family life was undermined by the actions and guilt of ruling elite white men who violated their own social codes by having sex with Black slave women. In addition, this elite group ignored the desires of Black women and men to have marriages and families of their own.

Black single-motherhood first evolved as the manifestation of the slave woman's legal and cultural social death. Her capacity for both social and biological reproduction of slavery assured maximum profits and social control for the racial patriarch or ruling elite. However, Black single-motherhood was also a viable family type which Black men and women adopted in response to a system which did not recognize their right to a

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1. O. Patterson, Slavery and Social Death, A Comparative Study, 261 (1982).

legal marriage and family. Within the slave community, single-mother families co-existed with outlawed two-parent families. After emancipation, during Reconstruction and during the segregation era, Black single-motherhood continued to provide a survival strategy for Black families still relegated to second class citizenship and social marginality by racism, apartheid, pogrom and poverty. During the desegregation era of the last thirty years, Black people have achieved legal recognition as citizens and have forced the dismantling of segregation and apartheid. But new forms of racism have emerged, characterized by racially-based economic injustice, contentious gender and class relationships within the Black community and use of the media to amplify the social sciences which camouflage, promote and shape public policies that continue racism and strengthen white nationalism. Today, Black single-motherhood is both chosen by and imposed on Black women attempting to address social and economic changes.

In each era, Black single-motherhood has been interwoven both with Black estranged and nonresidential fatherhood and the emasculated patriarchal status and power which has accompanied the social death of Black men. The sexism of the ruling elite is not only directed at women; it is also aimed at stunting the development of Black manhood, whether it takes a patriarchal or non-sexist form.

This essay, *The Unbroken Circle*, examines Black single-mother families and their historical development during three eras: slavery, segregation and desegregation. It focuses on the beginnings and contemporary condition and experiences of these families. The concept "social death," which is the theoretical framework for this study, comes from Orlando Patterson's cross-cultural study, *Slavery and Social-Death.*[2] The study includes a Black feminist perspective and expands Patterson's concept of "social death" beyond the institution of slavery into the second class and marginal position of Black people within a racist society. In addition, the study examined another theoretical framework, the dialectics of oppression, and found that the debased condition and position of the oppressed always led to their conscious resistance and desire for freedom. Black resistance to social death took the form of creating viable families, whether patriarchal or female-headed, and of developing extended kinship networks along with political and protest strategies.

To consider Black women as historical human beings, all we have been taught about the assumptions and givens of historical development, societal progress and personal and political power must be unlearned. These notions have been given to us through the prism and eyes of white men, whose wealth, privilege and power have been based upon the subjugation and domination of men and women whose skin is darker. To understand the story of those darker-skinned men and women we must become both expansive and thorough, visionary and scientific, Africanized

2. See generally *supra* n.1.

and feminist. The traditional framework upon which we have based our person and our politic, our commitment to law and society, our experiences and learning about the family and home must change if we include the history and experience of Black single-mothers.

Slavery and Women

> All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and men at last are forced to face . . . the real conditions of their lives and their relations with their fellow men [sic].[3]

In describing the vision of the modern environment and the impact of the profound transformation capacities of capitalism, Marx unwittingly also described the transition of Africans from free men and women into captured and chattelized slaves. In a larger sense he also described the essence of their relationship to a society which designated them mules of the new world economy and used racism to banish them to the realm of the socially dead.

Social death shadowed every African captive chattelized into lifelong servitude in the Americas. The now familiar story of holocaust and uprooting was underscored by color, cultural and language differences between African and European men, their women and their children. To be socially dead was more than being separated from the music and tastes of one's motherland. It was to exist perpetually outside the circle where people decided things, allocated resources, made laws, communicated with God, wrote histories of the past and made plans for the future. The socially dead could neither choose, nor dream; they could only watch others choose and dream.

Yet, as everything traditional and familiar was fleeting and transitory for the African captives, they clung to that which remained both solid and intangible: love, spirit, freedom, and of course, family. The bare relationship of exploitation and hatred between Black and white men, and the social distance between their worlds and histories were contrasted by the connection and commitment between and among Black men, women and children.

The harshness of this "secular excommunication" was not especially designed for slaves of African descent in the United States. As Patterson's study of slavery demonstrates, "the definition of the slave, however recruited, is a socially dead person."[4] Furthermore, slaves in all societies lived outside the society of men, were alienated from their ancestors and progeny, and were dishonored and controlled by violence and power.[5]

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3. M. Berman, All That Is Solid Melts Into Air, 21 (1982) (*quoting* K. Marx, The Communist Manifesto, (1848)).

4. Patterson, *supra* n.1, at 5.

5. *Id.* at 13.

Slave women had an additional and particular kind of social death. "In all slaveholding societies slave couples would be and were forcibly separated and the consensual 'wives' of slaves were obliged to submit sexually to their masters; slaves had no custodial claims or powers over their children and children inherited no claims or obligations to their parents."[6]

Without marriage or human rights, the female slave is a sexual vessel as well as chattel. There is no patriarchy to protect her unless the master assumes the role of her protector, that is, if she is his concubine and has his children. Her men have no power or status; they are socially dead and thus are unable to come to her aid and protection, unable to father the children they sire. There are no laws to protect her because she has no place in the law.

Furthermore, as subordinate members of patriarchal societies, especially those with slaves and class hierarchy, women become socially relevant solely because of their connections to men. The patriarchy is a worldwide system, in which men are the heads of their households and families and women become socialized and organized into subordinate positions. Patriarchy is a system which requires control of women's fertility and sexuality in monogamous or polygamous marriages and is based upon a sexual division of labor regulated by male chauvinism.

In terms of worldwide historical considerations, the patriarchy at one time was perhaps a humane attempt at an arrangement in which women and children had protection and stability. Under the traditional patriarchy, women at some time during their lives have status, whether as mothers-in-law in Chinese society, as mothers of sons in Masai culture, or as head-wives in the polygamous family of the Yoruba. The patriarchy has persisted and has lasted so long, in part, because women gain from their relationships with men: as daughters, wives, mothers or sisters. In African societies, women had social recognition as members of the society. They had social and political rights and responsibilities. They had the right to join women's societies, which often shared birth control and sexual information. Women's bonding was a recognized part of the society. The men were also in a social relationship to women in which male domination had limits and responsibilities.

The advent of slavery changed these basic relationships because the traditional patriarch, the Black man, lost his status and economic and political power, which included wardship and protection of his women. Both Black man and woman fell under the domination of the racial patriarch, the white man. This fall was disastrous because all women, even those under bondage and racism benefited from being connected to the patriarchy of their own men, no matter how weak or emasculated the status. As a result of these connections, however, women simply were not free beings and equals to men.

Under racism and bondage, Black women lose recognition and status

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6. *Id.* at 6.

as "women." The only "women" are those whose men have ultimate control and domination over people of color. Thus, it becomes understood and axiomatic—to be white and female is to be "woman" and to be white and male is to be "man." Black men and women are neither man nor woman; they are non-beings, e.g., chattel, nigger, underclass.

In the years immediately following the Jamestown settlement, white and Black men and women co-mingled as slaves and servants. Many Blacks, whites and Native Americans were pressed together as unfree laborers with varying statuses. Not all whites were free and not all Blacks were slaves.

> Moreover, those Blacks who were imported before about 1660 were held in various degrees of servitude, most for limited periods and a few for life.[7]

The first legislative enactment making reference to Blacks was a statute in 1639 which stated that:

> All persons except Negroes are to be provided with arms and ammunition or be fined at the pleasure of the governor and council.[8]

In 1665, the first English slave code in New York provided that slavery was for life.[9] By the 1680s when the first major slave codes were issued in Virginia, and Blacks were denied the right to assemble, move freely, or defend themselves, Black skin began to mean perpetual servitude and stigma. The freedom of "free" Blacks was also limited and proscribed.[10]

During this period, the status of unmarried women servants and slaves, and their children, was also the focus of special legislation. Black and white women servants were usually outnumbered by their male counterparts.[11] Interracial sexual relationships, common-law and legal marriages existed along with monogamous marriages among Black servants, slaves and free people. However, the status of the children of bound women, especially of interracial parentage, most concerned the ruling elite.

In 1662, the Virginia legislature penalized the unmarried mother indentured servant by requiring an additional two years of service, regardless of her race.[12] However by the 1690s the treatment of Black and white "unwed" mothers differed. Eventually, Black women slaves or servants

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7. G. Nash, Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America, 149 (1974).

8. A. L. Higginbotham, Jr. In the Matter of Color: Race and the American Legal Process, 32 (1978).

9. R. Hofstadter, America at 1750: A Social Portrait, 111 (1973).

10. Higginbotham, *supra* n.8, at 39-40.

11. Although white women "were almost as numerous as white men" in 18th century Pennsylvania, Virginia and Maryland, the female servant and slave populations were less than their male counterparts. For numbers of slave women *see* Nash *supra* n.7, at 287. Hofstadter, *supra* n.9, at 52.

12. Higginbotham, *supra* n.8, at 42-43.

were not punished for bearing children fathered by white men, while white women servants were punished for bearing children fathered by Black men. "A woman servant who had an illegitimate [sic] child by a black or mulatto was fined 15 pounds and if unable to pay was sold for 5 years after her time of service expired."[13] If the unmarried mother was a free white woman she was also "subject to a 15 pound fine or 5 years of service."[14] In 1664, all marriages between the races were prohibited and interracial couples were banished in 1691 statutes.[15] By 1792, whites were penalized by imprisonment if they married a Black person.[16] But interracial relationships between white men and Black women servants and slaves were commonplace and existed outside the laws.[17]

In fact, English traditional precedent was broken in the 1662 statute which required that "children got by an Englishman upon a Negro woman shall be bound or free according to the condition of the mother."[18] English common law and worldwide patriarchal customs always required that the status of the child follow his father. In order to prevent a free or quasi-free mulatto class from developing, which could undermine slavery, and to assure the maximum profits of a slave labor force, which could so easily reproduce itself, the racial patriarch treated Black women and children as distinct entities. He legally isolated them from Black men and regarded them differently from white women servants.

Because the right of slaves to marry each other or to marry whites was outlawed, Black women were also denied any form of patriarchal protection. Furthermore, all forms of sexual activity between white men and slave women could not be considered rape, because she had no legal choice or voice to not submit. By forcing Black children to follow their mother's status and condition, slave masters could deny any responsibility for paternity, thereby enslaving their own children. In addition, Black men were prevented from assuming any responsibility for the children they sired. By requiring slavery to become the lifelong condition of Black men and women, the position of Black women would almost always be unmarried, raped, enslaved or childbearing. Nearly 100 years before the Revolutionary War, the founding of the American nation and the development of antebellum slavery in the southern United States, the experiences of Black single mothers such as Ann Joice were legislated and codified into American social fabric.

> The story of Ann Joice, a Black woman who was born in Barbados, taken to England as a servant and then falsely sold into slavery in Maryland in the 1670s may have been similar to that of other immigrant women once she became a slave. The Darnall family of Prince George's

13. *Id.* at 45.
14. *Id.* at 45.
15. *Id.* at 44-47.
16. *Id.* at 46.
17. Nash, *supra* n.7, at 281-283.
18. Higginbotham, *supra* n.8, at 43.

> owned Ann Joice. She had seven children with several white men in the 1670s and 1680s; all remained slaves the rest of their lives . . . . Three stayed with her and two were sold to plantations four or five miles away . . . . Peter Harbard, Ann Joice's grandchild was born between 1715 and 1720 . . . . As a child he lived with or very near his grandmother, his father and several paternal uncles and aunts.[19]

Slave Family Life: It Was Never Our Wish To Be Separated

From the beginning, slaves, the socially dead, captive African, men and fathers, women and mothers took in all that the slave master and his hypocritical system put on them: whippings, torture and unrelenting toil. Yet they turned it around to work for themselves and their progeny: language, religion, law, and family became Afro-Americanized tools and weapons which slaves used to hone their humanity. In spite of restrictions on marriage and family, from the beginning slaves constructed both. When they could, they wrote and received love letters from distant "husbands" and "wives." When they could, they traveled long distances to see their families. Children knew their fathers or heard about them from their mothers.

In rejecting and ignoring the negative notions associated with Black single-motherhood, especially the separation of marriage from family, Black women assumed the role of family head. In the absence of spouses and mates, the Black single mother assumed that she and her children were a family. She protected, nurtured and fought for a new kind of family, one which emerged outside the patriarchy of her man yet within the oppressive sphere of the racial patriarch. Her family also developed within a slave community which provided sustenance, love and resistance from the horrors of slavery. The slave community also socialized, protected and reproduced human beings who were born into families and who expected to have families of their own.

> Daphne, the daughter of Nan, was born about 1736 on a large plantation . . . owned by Robert Tyler, Sr.. Until she was two, she lived with her mother, two brothers and two sisters. In 1738, Tyler died and left his slaves to his wife, children and grandchildren. All lived on or near Tyler's farms. Daphne continued to live on the Tyler plantation. . . . From 1736 until 1787, she had six different masters, but she still lived where she was born. Daphne lived with her mother until her mother died and with her ten children until 1779. Children were eventually born to Daphne's daughters; these infants lived with their mothers and near their maternal grandmother. When Robert Tyler III, Robert senior's grandson and Daphne's fifth master, died, in 1779, his will divided Daphne's children and grandchildren between his son and daughter. Daphne was thus separated from her younger children born between

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19. A. Kulikoff, *The Beginnings of the Afro-American Family in Maryland* in G. Nash, The Private Side of American History: Readings in Everyday Life to 1877 (second edition), 134 (1979).

> 1760 and 1772. . . . Daphne continued to live on the same plantation as her four older children and several grandchildren.[20]

Thus, "an intricate extended family of grandmother, sons, daughters, grandchildren, aunts, nephews, uncles, nieces and cousins resided in several households on the Tyler plantation."[21] Though no mention is made of the father or fathers of Daphne's children, slave owners frequently omitted father's names from slave records.[22] At least some of them were probably known and lived in the area, forming an additional part of this integral network of kin. Even without the physical presence of husbands and fathers, Daphne, her mother, siblings and children were still a family.

Many slave owners desired at least one or two female slaves with the fecundity of Daphne and Ann Joice. Some boasted that "a plantation of 50 or 60 persons had been established from the descendents of a single female in the course of the lifetime of the original purchasers."[23] On the Stirling plantation, nearly one in five children born to families that started before 1855, grew up in households headed by women who had all their children by unnamed fathers. Between 1807 and 1855, 55 children were born to 15 unnamed men, slightly more than half were the children of four women, three of them sisters.[24]

Large families met the financial interests of slave masters at the same time that they met the personal needs of slave men and women.[25] Even when large families were begun by a single female, her children formed both two-parent and single-parent families.

The birth register from the Good Hope Plantation in South Carolina, studied by historian Herbert Gutman, revealed important information about the slave family. The register was "an unusual historical document because it listed fathers as well as mothers names and because it covered a lengthy period of time, from 1760 until 1857. From the first to the last recorded slave birth, 175 men, women and children made up the Good Hope slave community. Of these 28 families, all but 5 of them contained a mother, father and their children."[26] Two-parent households usually occurred on large plantations and coexisted with single-parent families.

The birth records also revealed another quite common practice among slaves: prenuptial intercourse and pregnancy. Many young women had children before settling into long-term marriages,[27] a practice common to many pre-industrial societies[28] but one which would cause considerable

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20. *Id.* at 135.
21. *Id.* at 135.
22. H. Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925, 46 (1976).
23. Gutman, *supra* n.22, at 132.
24. *Id.* at 115-116.
25. *Id.* at 75.
26. *Id.* at 46-47.
27. *Id.* at 60-65.
28. *Id.* at 64-65.

alarm and confusion much later, in the 1980s. In some cases a woman had children by one man in her teens, but settled into a long-term marriage with another man and had the rest of her children by him. "The ages of 23 Good Hope. women whose first children were born between 1824 and 1856 had a first child at a median age of 19.6 years (3 were not yet 16, and 14 were between 17 and 20)."[29] The pattern of Good Hope women was similar to that of many slave women who bore a first child at an early age. Prenuptial intercourse, bridal pregnancy and teenage motherhood were frequent aspects of slave family life.

Most young, unmarried slave mothers lived with their families of origin when they could, however.

> "The twenty-one year old Betty and her two year old daughter, Leah, lived with Betty's father, Burge, and his second wife, Rose . . . . The 17 year old Gadsey and her two year old daughter, Betsey, lived with Gadsey's mother, Duck, and her husband, Jake."[30]

However, in spite of Good Hope and other plantations which supported long term and stable two- and one-parent households, family separations were an all too common occurrence which increased the number of single-mother families. This fear of separation was constantly hanging over families. "We have a dread constantly on our minds," one slave lamented, "for we don't know how long master may keep us, nor into whose hands we may fall."[31] Stable marriages and committed relationships were also used by slave masters to keep their slaves obedient. Lewis Clarke, an ex-slave, explained, "if a woman slave had a husband and children, and somebody asked her if she would like her freedom? Would she tell 'em, yes? If she did, she'd be down the river to Louisiana in no time, and her husband and children never know what become of her."[32]

Some slave men left their women and children behind, thus creating Black female heads of families. Henry Bibb, in a letter to his former owner, attributed his flight from home and family to his treatment.

> "To be compelled to stand by and see you whip and slash my wife without mercy when I could afford her no protection, not even by offering myself to suffer the lash in her place, was more than I felt it to be the duty of a slave husband to endure, while the way was open to Canada."[33]

His wife and children undoubtedly continued to endure the whip and hard work without him.

George Pleasant, a hard-working father and husband wrote, "If I live to see Nexct [sic] year I shall have my own time from master by

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29. *Id.* at 50.
30. *Id.* at 50.
31. J. Blassingame, Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews And Autobiographies, 218 (1977).
32. *See id.* at 153.
33. *See id.* at 49.

giving him 100 and twenty dollars a year. . . . I hope with gods [sic] helpe [sic] that I may be abble [sic] to rejoys [sic] with you on the earth."[34] Fathers and husbands worked to purchase themselves from their masters and then to redeem their wives and children from the same servitude. Because they were legally prevented from remaining in slave-holding areas,[35] such free husbands and fathers were separated from their wives and children for long periods of time while they saved money to "buy their families from slavery." They often tried to raise the money with the help of northern abolitionists, though sometimes women and children were separated and sold before the money could be raised.

Black women sadly remained separated from the men they loved. One such wife writes, "I have no news to write you, only the children are all well. I want to see you very much, but am looking forward to the promest [sic] time of your coming. Oh, Dear Dangerfield, com [sic] this fall without fail, mony [sic] or no mony [sic]. I want to see you so much."[36] Many single mothers never saw their husbands and mates again, though they frequently sought to find them after slavery ended. Other Black single mothers were widows such as Phoebe on the Good Hope plantation who "was still living with five of her nine children. Jack had been the father of the first four; Tom the father of the rest."[37]

By the eve of emancipation, the slave community had become a powerful and distinct social construction which had persevered and protected the slave. The slave community, which was often begun with the sexual exploitation of a single young slave woman, was often a network of blood and fictive kin which supported and housed resistance to the slave system. Slaves became, first, the "contraband" of northern armies during the Civil War, and they ultimately insured the Northern victory that ended slavery by withdrawing their labor and person from their southern masters.

Ironically, Black single mothers, as unprotected "non-women" who lived alone, became human beings in their own right and were thus "annulled as woman, that is, as woman in her historical stance of wardship under the entire male hierarchy."[38] Black slave women could "freely" participate with other members of the community in resisting slavery. They could attempt to protect their own children, a role usually reserved solely for the patriarch. For instance, Moses Grandy, an ex-slave, remembered his mother hiding his brothers and sisters in the woods to save them from being sold and fighting back when her young child was about to be sold.[39] When slavery ended, Black mothers who were unmarried, widowed or separated from their mates had become a distinct family

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34. *See id.* at 19.

35. *See* A. Higginbotham, *supra* n.8, at 49.

36. J. Blassingame, *supra* n.31, at 117.

37. H. Gutman, *supra* n.22, at 47.

38. Davis, *Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves*, Black Scholar, Nov.-Dec. 1981, at 7.

39. E. Frazier, Negro Family In The United States 42 (1939).

which complimented and often fostered two-parent households. These families and extended families in turn made it possible for Black single-mother families to survive. Help with childcare and childbearing, emotional support for lonely women, sharing of food and shelter, as well as protection from torture and hard work characterized the mutual support which had developed in slave communities.

These communities persisted in spite of the legal and economic contours of slavery and national politics. The expansion and shift of the slave economy from the upper to the lower South during the early 19th century forcibly separated slave families over long and unsurmountable distances.

> About one in ten men and women born between 1835 and 1845 had experienced a forcible separation by 1864, a percentage sufficiently high to indicate that in the pre-Civil War decades the peculiar institution retained its grimmest quality, the breakup of marriages and the damage thereby inflicted on husbands and wives, parents and children.[40]

Black single-mother families made it possible for slaves to spread family and kinship cultural values in the same way as two-parent families. New fictive kinship relationships among slaves on plantations far from their families of origin helped slaves survive the trauma of separation. Afro-American culture was also spread by slaves who moved into the lower South, thus fostering creation of Blacks as a homogeneous people, not merely diffused slave groupings.[41]

During slavery, the slave and the slave master were in constant struggle: the slave master attempted to restrict the slave, while slaves pressed to expand their rights and opportunities for a free life, which especially included the right to a family within their own communities. They struggled for marriage and families in spite of the pronouncements of a North Carolina Supreme Court Justice, who, writing in 1853, expressed a common opinion:

> Our law requires no solemnity or form in regard to the marriage of slaves, and whether they 'take up' with each other by express permission of their owners, or from a mere impulse of nature, in obedience to the command 'multiply and replenish the earth' cannot, in the contemplation of the law, make any sort of difference.[42]

Justice Taney's decision in the *Dred Scott* case was more to the point and reiterated the social death of slaves, regardless of their efforts to resist:

> We think they are not, and that they are not included, and were not intended to be included, under the word "citizens" in the Constitution, and can, therefore, claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures to citizens of the United States. . . . [T]hat neither the class of persons who had been imported as slaves, nor

40. H. Gutman, *supra* n.22, at 146.
41. *See id.* at 154-55, 165.
42. *See id.* at 52.

their descendants, whether they had become free or not, were then acknowledged as part of the people.[43]

Black Families After Slavery: The Land And Love Unrealized

Slaves fought against the law and the economics of slavery and included themselves as "people" and "citizens." They worked with abolitionists and free brethren and sisters to topple the slave system. Neither war, amendments nor proclamations alone ended slavery. The political mobilizations of abolitionists, the campaigns of Harriet Tubman, John Brown, and other conductors on the underground railroad, the changing national economy, and Black labor's withdrawal from the southern plantations during the war combined to end slavery.[44] The slave family and community which sustained and nurtured the slaves and their progeny helped to prepare the slave for freedom.

After slavery ended, large numbers of the newly-freed people legalized long-term slave unions by marrying. They desired to legalize their families and begin a new self- and community-defined legitimacy. The dislocation and devastation of the war and continued attacks by former masters caused the ex-slaves hardship, but they persevered in creating self-sustaining farm communities based on the labor of family and kin. The slaves hoped Black women would at last be able to care for their husbands and children without having to work outside their own homes and farms.

> Everywhere in slavery's former domain, black families were openly declaring the autonomy they had fought so hard to develop and maintain under the old regime; they were establishing their right to decide who should work and how. Now mothers and wives were often free to give more attention to their own families and work; children could attend the schools now being created at great cost by blacks and their white allies.[45]

Many women did settle into marriages in which men headed their families and households, upholding both African and American patriarchal values about monogamy, sexual modesty and divisions of labor based on gender. However, there were significant numbers of Black female-headed households and Black single mothers. Young Black single mothers remained within the households of their parents, and female-headed households tended to belong to widows or older women who had been separated from their husbands and spouses for long periods.[46]

Values about the negative aspects of childbearing outside marriage

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43. H. Commager, Documents of American History 340-41 (1958).

44. *See generally*, W.E.B. Du Bois, Black Reconstruction (1935) (for information about the impact of Black labor on emancipation) and V. Harding, There Is A River: The Black Struggle For Freedom In America (1981) (for information on Black and white abolitionists).

45. V. Harding, *supra* n.44, at 282.

46. H. Gutman, *supra* n.22, at 444-445.

were in part fostered by the churches and schools established in the Black community.[47] Many ex-slaves wanted to put the horror of sexual abuse against slave women behind them and establish families headed by married couples. Harry McMillan, a former slave said, "They are thought low of by their companions unless they get a husband before the child is born and if they cannot the shame grows until they do get a husband."[48] Conversely, the journalist Nordhoff said, "It was held no shame for a girl to bear a child under any circumstances."[49] Special words described the status of children born prior to or outside of settled unions, namely, "stolen" or "outside" children.[50]

Outright promiscuity was condemned in all Black communities, even though prenuptial intercourse, teenage marriage and pregnancy continued in most. When children were conceived outside of common-law or legal marriages, the mothers and children were stigmatized but rarely ostracized or banished. Women could overcome stigmatization by becoming faithful Christians and church-goers, and faithful and hard working wives. Thus, social stigma against "illegitimacy" co-existed with the social reality of Black single mothers and their families.

Internal community concerns over values and morals as they pertained to single mothers were overshadowed, however, by the political and economic realities of late 19th century Black southern life. The promise of Black enfranchisement, economic self-sufficiency and social equality were eroded by pogrom, lynching and racial violence. These horrors affected many of the very Black men who strove to build their family life on the economic base of private farm ownership. Prosperous, even modest, Black farmers became dangerous Black men in the eyes of the white power structure especially, though not exclusively, in the Black-belt South.

The migrants to Kansas who left the South to improve and protect themselves from pogrom often left in family groups. For those ex-slaves who did not, such as Levi Childs who had lived in Madison Parish, Louisiana, Black single mother families were created: "I have no family along with me; I have a wife and two children down south; I brought my parents with me."[51] James Brown, on the other hand, brought his wife, three orphans, his mother-in-law and five of her six children with him. She had no husband.[52] Women whose husbands were lynched or run out by night riders had to rely upon themselves and kin to help support their families in rural southern Black communities. A letter from Joseph Starks asking the Kansas governor for advice about migration provides a glimpse of those troubled times for Black men and Black women alike.

We want to come out, and have no money hardly. We have to be in

47. *Id.* at 66-67.
48. *Id.* at 45.
49. *Id.* at 66.
50. *Id.* at 73.
51. *Id.* at 434.
52. *Id.* at 435.

> secret or be shot, and [are] not allowed to meet. . . . We have about fifty widows in our band that are workmen and farmers also. The white men here take our wives and daughters and do [with] them as they please, and we are shot if we say anything about it . . . . We are sure to have to leave or to be killed.[53]

By the 1880s, "[w]omen at least forty years old headed a large percentage of father-absent households and subfamilies; many of these had been conventional two-parent households in which the husband had died"[54] [55] (or perhaps was killed or run out of town). Gutman studied four urban and four rural areas and found that 28% of the households and subfamilies in urban areas were headed by women, and, in rural areas, 16% were headed by women. Single women and mothers often moved to urban areas in search of wage-earning work to sustain themselves and their families.

Furthermore, as Black families continued to slip more and more into the mire of peonage and poverty, all family members were needed to work for wages or shares. Economic pressures prevailed over marital custom. In order for families to survive, most Black women went back to work in the fields and kitchens of white men under slave-like economically and sexually exploitative conditions. But the ideology and hope of the Black patriarchy remained, assisted by Calvinistic religious principles spread by Black churches, Black schools and the emerging Black ruling elite. Many extolled the virtues of marital rather than common-law unions, monogamous rather than serial monogamistic relationships, and childbearing after marriage rather than birth outside of marriage. Those who abided by the virtues of monogamous marriage were accorded status and respect. Men who worked to take care of their families and women who were loyal to their men were regarded as the ideal and preferred family. As long as the options for Black women were only patriarchal marriage or severe economic struggle alone, women as well as men strove for the ideal of monogamous marriage, in spite of the forces which hampered them from obtaining it.

The cheap dependable labor of Black women as domestics and busy-season farm hands also motivated local white politicians, police and merchants to prevent, in some cases by statute, Black women from staying home to work on their family farms.[56] Thus, soon after the end of the Civil War, whether married or single, Black women had become wage-earning workers to support the depressed wages of Black men. Black girls were socialized to become mothers, wives and workers, often workers first. By the early 20th century it became evident that rigid sex role divisions would never be realized for large numbers of Black families. Black family

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53. *Id.* at 437.
54. *Id.* at 444.
55. *Id.* at 489.
56. White, *Work or Fight in the South*, in The Voice of Black America: Major Speeches by Negroes in the United States, 724-729 (P. Foner ed. 1972).

members were constantly called upon to adjust and shift to forces stronger than their will, desire, culture and ideology. Family breakups were not merely the mark of chattel slavery, they were the mark of wage slavery and peonage as well.

Yet Black people had become quite adept at making their families and households into havens from oppression. However, they were often havens where male dominance and power relationships also prevailed. Black women were the "slave of a slave" within their marriages. Poor Black men, though oppressed and dominated themselves and dependent upon their women's wages, could also be abusive and brutal toward their wives and children.[57] Black women often looked the other way while their men fathered children by other women. Undoubtedly some Black women also suppressed their own lesbian desires and ignored their husband's homosexual relationships.[58] Abortions, viewed as un-Christian and sinful, were nevertheless performed "underground." Women were often vague about the fathers, birthdates and relationships of some children in the family. Young Black women working in the cities sent many of their "outside children" back home to the rural South or Caribbean to be raised by their kin.

The period of legal segregation lasted nearly a century, from the 1896 "separate but equal" decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson*[59] until the 1954 decision in *Brown v. The Board of Education*,[60] which overturned the 1896 doctrine. During that time, Black people suffered the quasi-free status of all manumitted slaves. Though not designed to include people of color and white women, the American commitment to legal democracy became a powerful weapon in the struggle to end racial segregation in the United States. But this commitment was offset by American color prejudice and racism. Both the commitment and the aversion amplified the movement and the struggles of Black people.

The racism, peonage and pogrom in the South caused Black people to move into urban areas, so that by mid-century the majority of Black people had become urban dwellers. The exodus had become even more poignant because of the low status and wages of Black workers. Black women merely exchanged southern for northern domestic servitude, with some increase in wages and some personal mobility. Black men moved from rural farm work and menial labor to northern menial labor and the

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57. E. Frazier, *supra* n.39. Fictional accounts include A. Walker, The Color Purple (1982).

58. Historic evidence of Black homosexuality and lesbianism is available in several documents in J. Katz, Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the USA (1976). For a biography of a Black gay man, see C. White, The Life and Times of Little Richard (1984). For autobiographies of Black lesbians, see Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology (B. Smith ed. 1983).

59. Documents of American History, *supra* n.43, at 628-630.

60. *Id.* at 605-608.

lowest level of industrialized work, lower than white women or immigrants, both in terms of wages and job security.[61]

The movement of Blacks into urban areas was accompanied by more than poverty and lower caste status, however; a Black cultural renaissance, the strengthening of Black education and religious institutions and the expression of profound political and ideological concerns also emerged. The century began with white social scientists questioning Blacks' humanity; twenty years later whites were dancing to Black music, reading books by Black authors and slowly developing a personal and cultural fascination with Black individuals and expressions, while still maintaining a racist society and protecting white interests.

By the 1920s questions about class solidarity were raised by Black workers in every sector of workers' organizations, from the work place to the unions to the Communist Party. Marcus Garvey assembled the largest group of Blacks ever in one organization to preach Black pride, self-development and racial separation. Meanwhile, other Black leaders, such as A. Philip Randolph and W.E.B. Du Bois, continued to press for civil rights, in spite of lynching and coon shows or class and nationalist movements. But the protests and the writings, and the emergence of a distinct Black culture and sense of peoplehood, often masked the underlying similarities in values, especially family values shared by most Blacks and whites. Puritanical values about sexuality and fornication were backed by references to the Bible. Regular church attendance was an integral part of the Black, as well as the white, experience. It is not clear that Blacks were more immoral or deviant than whites as deviations from these values existed in both communities. Certainly both Blacks and whites at least professed the same basic Protestant religious and spiritual value system, and though Black theologians assert a more liberatory tradition, this difference does not negate the common religious heritage and roots shared by the two groups.

Similarly, Black people lived in family groupings; fell in love, married, and raised children. In fact, Black people extended their family concerns for the future of their own children into an intensive and extensive social movement for welfare, education and other health benefits for children. Both the white and Black communities adhered to rather strict notions of proper sexual conduct. Prostitution in the Black community was confined to areas, or "houses." Young people were warned against associating with "those" women and listening to their music (jazz, blues), though daring men and women frequently did. Also, customers of prostitutes were frequently white men as well as Black men. Homosexuality was taboo and not viewed as a valued social practice in the Black commu-

61. *See generally* F. Henri, Black Migration: Movement North 1900-1920, 132-33 (1975).

nity, though gay men and lesbians were treated individually and often viewed with pity and sympathy, rather than hatred.[62]

But single-motherhood occupied a different place in the Black community than in the white community. It seems that unless they were widowed, white single mothers were viewed as prostitutes and brutally ostracized, which forced these women to seek abortions (frequently performed by Black women), adoptions, relocation, "phony" widowhood, other lies about the paternity of the child, and, undoubtedly, infanticide. But Black single mothers, if they worked hard to provide for their families, were generally accepted into working class communities everywhere, though less accepted in Black middle class communities. Black single mothers were the concern of Black middle class social activists, whose organizations provided childcare, recreation and parenting, especially for the children of working single mothers. Throughout the century ministers, educators and social scientists in the Black community were alarmed and concerned about the growing number of impoverished single mothers and fathers who were absent due to irresponsibility or unemployment.

W.E.B. Du Bois' pioneering work, *The Philadelphia Negro*,[63] and his later work, *The Negro Family*,[64] presented a view of the Black family which still dominates both the social sciences and the popular media. During the early 1900s, Du Bois and other Black sociologists, such as E. Franklin Frazier, wrote about massive Black migration from the rural South into the cities and examined the uprooted and newly-arrived Black city dwellers. They focused on the rate of illegitimacy and the number of female-headed households among this unstable Black group and concluded that conformity to white middle class family norms would eliminate family disorganization.[65] Frazier later asserted that "since these unmarried mothers are part of the great army of poorer migrants who go to the city, they are naturally found in the deteriorated and disorganized section of the Negro community."[66]

These analyses, reflecting both Black patriarchal and white racial standards, viewed the poverty of Black families as due in part to Black problems with acculturating the values and practices of white middle class norms. When he was Assistant Secretary of Labor and Director of the Office of Public Planning and Research, Daniel Patrick Moynihan authored the *Study of the Negro Family: A Case For Social Action*,[67] which continued and further illuminated Frazier's and Du Bois' ideas about the Black family. Moynihan's report merged current sociological research

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62. *See generally* Clarke, *supra* n.58, at 197-209.

63. W.E.B. Du Bois, The Philadelphia Negro (1898).

64. W.E.B. Du Bois, The Negro American Family (1909).

65. Johnson, *Perspectives on Black Family Empirical Research: 1965-1978*, in Black Families (H. Pipes McAdoo ed. 1981).

66. Frazier, *supra* n.39, at 261.

67. L. Rainwater and W. Yancey, The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy (1967).

with the government's need for a national program to address Black inequality and impoverishment and answer increased Black demands for justice and equality during the civil rights movement.[68] The report attempted to demonstrate that the Black family was highly unstable because there were large numbers of female-headed households produced by marital breakup and illegitimacy and because Black women dominated marital life. The problem of "unstable families" in turn was a central feature of the "tangle of pathology" of the urban ghetto, involving problems of delinquency, crime, school dropouts, unemployment and poverty. Moynihan proposed a program which would (1) institutionalize a policy assessment approach to evaluating the effectiveness of public programs in strengthening or weakening the Black family; (2) foster full employment for all Black men, even if it meant decreasing or changing wage earning work for Black women; (3) advocate birth control programs to limit the above average number of Black births; and (4) increase opportunities within the armed forces for Black youth.[69]

Moynihan's report became a controversial centerpiece in both scholarly and political arenas. During 1965-1978, sociologists lined up to either support or reject his claims and his work encouraged and fostered the writing of 500 scholarly articles and dozens of books about the Black family. A year after Moynihan's report, Seymour Parker and Robert Kleiner studied 389 Black mothers raising school-age children and families where the husband or husband-substitute was present and compared them with 115 Black mothers who were unmarried, divorced or separated raising school-age children. They concluded that mothers in broken home situations were apparently "more maladjusted and experience greater frustration than mothers in intact [sic] homes."[70] The study was claimed to be part of the "impressive body of evidence indicating that rather serious personality distortions resulted from the female dominance so prevalent in the Negro subculture."[71]

In 1966 Elizabeth Herzog of the Child Life Studies Branch of the Children's Bureau of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare felt that there was agreement by both sides of the Moynihan controversy that "strong action was urgently needed to increase the proportion of sound, harmonious two-parent homes among low-income Negroes."[72]

Those who supported the view that the Black family was "culturally deviant," ethnocentric, or weak were opposed by those who viewed the

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68. Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, in The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy, 39-124 (L. Rainwater and W. Yancey eds. 1967).

69. *Id.* at 29.

70. Parker and Kleiner, *Characteristics of the Negro Mother in Single-Headed Households*, Journal of Marriage and the Family (1966) at 512.

71. Sheppard and Striner, *Family Structure and Employment Problems*, in The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy at 359-360 (L. Rainwater and W. Yancey eds. 1967).

72. Herzog, *Is There a "Breakdown" of the Negro Family?*, The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy, 352 (L. Rainwater and W. Yancey eds. 1967).

Black family as different but functional. As early as 1968, Billingsley rejected the tangle of pathology perspective of Moynihan and asserted that "we do not view the Negro family as a causal nexus in a 'tangle of pathology' which feeds on itself. Rather, we view the Negro family in theoretical perspective as a subsystem of the larger society. It is, in our view, an absorbing, adaptive, and amazingly resilient mechanism for the socialization of its children as a continuation of its society."[73] Furthermore he defined Black female-headed households as "attenuated nuclear families in which there is "either a father or mother but not both—living together with minor children in the parent's own household with no other persons present."[74] Other sociologists such as Wade Nobles, Joyce Ladner and Robert Hill asserted that Black families have survived because of the support—financial and emotional—of their extended blood and fictive kin. The African-derived extended family network has positively sustained and supported divergent Black family patterns and lifestyles enabling Black female-headed households to be functional and successful.[75]

From 1974 to 1977, a group of Black scholars developed a *Reflective Analysis of Black Family Life* focusing on the socialization of Black families, the impact of the unavailability of maximum resources to Black families and the relationship between resources and socialization.[76] Harriette McAdoo, a member of the group, introduced her book, *Black Families*, by summarizing the 80 years of research on the Black family:

> . . . [A] lack of consensus keeps the field of Black families lively, volatile, and continuously open to new interpretations as new and old data are incorporated by those writing in the field and those of us living it.[77]

An essential factor in developing these new directions for studying the Black family is the incorporation of a feminist analysis which integrates gender, race and class and understands the dynamics of Black female-headed households from the perspectives of the women themselves.

Nearly everyone who has studied and discussed the Black family has focused on its economic destitution and either its lack of or its possession of strong survival and cultural mechanisms. Most have failed to discuss the sexist position and oppression of women within the Black family and community as powerful rationales for marital breakup. Nor have they included the strengths and choices of Black women as factors in creating and sustaining Black single-mother families.

Social Movements And New Racism

During the segregation period, most Black families did adapt to the

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73. A. Billingsley, Black Families in White America 33 (1968).
74. *Id.* at 18.
75. *See generally* Death of White Sociology (J. Ladner ed. 1973).
76. J. Dodson, *Conceptualizations of Black Families*, in Black Families 32-33 (H. Pipes McAdoo ed. 1981).
77. Black Families 16 (H. Pipes McAdoo ed. 1981).

norm of two-parent married families with strong male heads but were still neither equal to whites nor free from oppression. In fact all Black family members regardless of type were attempting to survive the continued terror and subjugation of apartheid in the South and the vicious "ghettoization of Black life" in the North. During the years immediately after WWII, the dismantling of segregation was uppermost in the minds of Black family and community members, especially those who wanted a better life for Black children. Few stopped to demand that those children come only from two-parent homes.

> Looking back then on the movement that produced *Brown*, it seems self-evident that the source of our sacrifice and our determination was our commitment to one another, our ties to one another, our sense of racial kinship that was anchored in, but also transcended, specific ties of blood. We had imperfect but prevailing unity then between young and old, literate and illiterate, lawyer and layman, male and female, preachers and parishoners, fathers and daughters, sons and mothers . . . . It symbolized the determination of one generation that those who were to come after it would not be scarred and stunted by the racism of American society as they had been. People laid down their lives so that black children would not be denied.[78]

The movement for civil rights was an all-embracing Black community effort to change the practices of a society that had long denied them equal access and opportunity. Its original goals were to end legal segregation, provide movement and access to public facilities regardless of race, promote integrated schools and equal employment. The goals were moderate and fell within the existing parameters of the legal system.

The influences of the civil rights movement quickly spread to many other aspects of the society. White women who had participated in the movement unearthed their own history of protest and current personal grievances. This reaction created second wave feminism and a women's movement which attacked women's oppression within the patriarchal family as well as second class citizenry within the larger society. The women's movement pushed for flexible gender roles, shared power relationships and respect for diverse families.[79] Feminists further pointed out that the traditional white nuclear family, the standard against which Black families were being measured, was not an ideal to be emulated because a woman's place within that idealized family was one of abused and dominated appendage to her husband and his property.

Both the civil rights and women's movements demanded jobs to accompany social equality as the economy was simultaneously being transformed from an industrial to a service employment base. The service-based economy increased the employment of women within the economy.

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78. W. Strickland, *Black Education: 25 Years After the Brown Decision*, Black Scholar, Sept.-Oct. 1979, at 4.

79. S. Evans, Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left 51-53, 83-101 (1979).

> In 1940, 70% of the Black females in the nation worked in service occupations, mainly in private households. Black women became cooks and waitresses and by the 1950s were the foundation of the health care system. They also became the clerical base of the federal government.[80]

By 1970, for the first time in 250 years of wage work, Black women were no longer employed predominately as domestic workers or farm laborers. Thirty-two percent were employed as white collar workers and 21% were working in sales and clerical jobs.[81] These social and economic changes accelerated Black women's "de-mammification." "De-mammification" was also accompanied by changes in Black men's and women's consciousness, perceptions and feelings, as Black women moved from the mammy role in private households into clerical and secretarial roles in public corporations and bureaucracies. For many women the consistent meager wage gave them the wherewithal they needed to dissolve unwanted marriages and relationships. Black single-motherhood during the post segregation era made a radical shift: Black women no longer considered themselves primarily tied to their legal or common-law husbands.

The social movements of the 1960s and the "de-mammification" of Black women changed the personal, familial and societal norms, but it did not transform the economy or the political power in the nation. By the 1970s, another social movement gained momentum. Predominately white male, middle class and middle American, it embraced and promoted the traditional values of Puritanism, patriarchy and racial purity of the founding fathers and pushed American nationalism to new heights of militarism and chauvinism. The conservative movement equated the American way of life with two-parent, hard working Christian families. By the election of President Ronald Reagan in 1980, it had gained national authority.

The conservative social movement exacerbated the new racism of the desegregation era. The Black community, which had become a visible stimulus for interpreting social problems and promoting public policies to meet them, became less and less powerful. The civil rights movement had effectively responded to and ended the racism of segregation, lynch mobs and overt hatred. But the new racism was more systematic, subtle and rational. In fact charges of racism were viewed as inaccurate and obsolete. The proponents of the new racism saw economics and motivation, and not color or culture, as the principal reasons for Black inequity. "They don't want to work" was the response to charges of racial discrimination and lack of jobs. "No more handouts" was the answer to demands for increased government spending to help the oppressed. "They have them-

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80. W. Stafford, Up or Down the Ladder, reprint, source unknown.

81. U.S. Department of Commerce—Bureau of the Census, The Social and Economic Status of the Black Population in the United States: An Historical View (1790-1978), 74 (1980).

selves to blame" was the reply to demands for government action on homelessness and destitution.[82]

Under the new racism, ideology replaced sociology and rhetoric replaced economic reality in examining Black people's condition and position. Black single mothers, especially poor teenagers, had become the symbol of all that was wrong with Black people and women and their movements.

The Center of Gravity

> Black female heads accounted for 22% of Black family households in 1960, 28% in 1970, and 43% by 1984. Married couple families had declined from 68% of Black family households in 1970 to 52% in 1984.
>
> During the past 15 years Black family households increased by about 37% (from 4.8 million to 6.6 million), but Black female heads of households more than doubled (1.3 million to 2.9 million).
>
> 84% of the increase in Black families during the 1970-1984 period was accounted for by the increase in Black female heads of families mainly from single, never-married Black females.
>
> These female-headed families have more children under 18 years of age and have available to them significantly less in economic resources than other categories of families, Black or white.

Approximately one third of all Black families were below the poverty threshold of $10,069 (for an urban family of four) in 1984. Seventy percent of all Black families in poverty have a female head and nearly half of all Black children live in these families. Median income in 1983 was $21,840 for married couple Black families, $15,552 for Black male-headed families and $7,999 for Black female-headed families.[83]

In 1986, Black single mother families comprised at least half of the families within the Black community.[84] They are neither evidence of the Black family's disappearance nor the "incubator of the underclass." They are nothing more or less than a family—that unit which takes care of children and feeds, clothes and shelters, a group of human beings. Most Black single mother families are headed by competent but poor working women who became single in diverse and unique ways. Yet there is a "center of gravity" within this group of families, and there are experiences common to nearly all Black women who head their households and raise children.

In 1905, W.E.B. Du Bois wrote:

> It is easy to prove the degradation of thousands of Negroes on the back

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82. For one of the best, recent examples of these public policy ideas see C. Murray, Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950-1980 (1984).

83. P. Wallace, *A Research Agenda on the Economic Status of Black Women*, Review of Black Political Economy, Fall-Winter, 1985-1986, at 294.

84. New York Times, Nov. 4, 1986.

> plantations of Mississippi and the alleys of Washington; it is just as easy to prove the accomplishments of the graduates of Atlanta University or members of St. Thomas Church, Philadelphia. The point is where, between the manifest extremes, lies today, the cultural center of the gravity of the race. It is begging and obscuring this question to harp on ignorance and crime among Negroes as though these were unexpected; or to laud exceptional accomplishments as though it was typical. The real crucial question is: What point has the mass of race reached which can be justly looked upon as the average accomplishments of the group?[85]

For nearly a century the public discourse on Black family life has been filled with distortions and omissions, prejudices and moralism. Though most of the discourse has focused on the "junkies" or "geniuses" of Black life, the lives of most Black men, women and children are quite normal, in spite of poverty, sexism and racism. Because more Black women than white women have headed their households and worked for wages outside of their home, social scientists and policy makers have almost always pointed out the deficiencies of these families by focusing on problem families headed by Black women. Thus, the "center of gravity" of the experiences of Black female-headed households have been neglected.

In order to uncover this center of gravity, new methodologies and sources have to be presented and developed. Previous studies focused on Black single mothers in crises, or on welfare, while the reality is that most Black single mothers have been wage earning workers. Some studies have been concerned with the impact of the absence of biological and social fathers on the children of Black single mothers, while ignoring the fact that most Black single mothers were married and that their children still had contact with their fathers. Many who have studied and talked about these families have failed to discuss the public policies which can improve the quality of lives for the Black single mother and her children.

The following three sections presented in this paper attempt to explore and uncover the center of gravity in the lives of contemporary Black female-headed households. The first section challenges sociological assumptions and viewpoints about Black single mothers by examining the experiences of these women through different perspectives. The second section develops more accurate definitions and descriptions of the diverse kinds of Black single mother families. Finally, the third section presents a public policy agenda for Black single mother families as developed by their organizations.

Family Disorganization

During the 1970s, Lee Rainwater studied low income families in the Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis where half of the families were female-headed and more than half received public assistance as their prin-

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85. W.E.B. Du Bois, On Sociology and the Black Community 201 (D. Green & E. Driver eds. 1978).

cipal income.[86] From the study, Rainwater concluded that households headed by women were disorganized. "Children, grandchildren, friends and neighbors seemed to be constantly visiting and dropping by . . . grandchildren are deposited unannounced."[87] In examining this phenomenon, Rainwater charged, "The openness of the household is, among other things, a reflection of the mother's sense of impotence in the face of the street system."[88] Conversely, Robert Hill, an Urban League researcher, described "doubling up" and informal adoption as sources of support for dislocated family members and a family strength.[89]

It is not clear whether the return of adult children to their mother's house during hard times is evidence of family strength or liability. Giving care to family members is an African and Afro-American derived family tradition demonstrating the primacy of familial bonds over individual privacy. One aspect of evaluating the liability or strength of this tradition is by examining the experience and choice through the eyes of the woman herself.

Like women in the Rainwater study,

> Dee is a single mother in her early 50s who lives in a housing project and has worked in a day care center for about 15 years. She has three adult sons who still live with her, drop by or come to her for support. Her oldest alcoholic son is kept at a distance. Her next son has cancer (in remission), drives a cab for a living and has a woman and child with whom he stays when he is not home with his mother. Her youngest son just completed high school and is looking for a job.[90]

Dee explains her situation: "What am I going to do? It's hard for them to find places of their own to live in. I often want to be alone and travel or go South to be with my mother who's sick . . . but these are my sons. I can't just put them out and stop taking care of them."[91]

Intergenerational Dependency

Rainwater described grandmothers in their late 40s, 50s, and 60s as staying home and holding court for family members, receiving little material support, but receiving a "sense that although life may have passed [them] by, [they are] not completely isolated from it."[92] For decades, however, Black middle-aged women, especially those who headed their households, worked in the marginal or underground sectors of the labor market to supplement public assistance money, even though welfare investigators

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86. Rainwater, *Crucible of Identity: The Negro Lower Class Family*, in Selected Studies in Marriage and The Family 102 (R. Winch & G. Spainer 4th ed. 1974).

87. *Id.* at 136.

88. *Id.* at 136.

89. R. Hill, The Strength of Black Families, 6-8 (1971).

90. B. Omolade, Collected Life Histories of Black Single Mothers (unpublished manuscript).

91. *Id.*

92. Rainwater, *supra* n.86, at 137.

or social scientists were unaware of the supplemental income. The face presented to welfare investigators and social workers has usually been one of exaggerated "helplessness" and "victimization" in order to receive public assistance.

Many "stay at home" women also care for children for pay in their homes; others cook, "do hair" and sew to supplement their Social Security, welfare or other incomes. Some older Black women, long after they have "retired," still do occasional day work; many are still wage earners who entered the job market after being on welfare or being married. "Those Black families that are totally dependent on welfare usually have household heads with severe health disabilities, must provide constant care to someone in ill health, or are not able to obtain assistance in providing care for dependent children."[93]

> Ms. D. is a great-grandmother in her late 50s who works for a governmental agency. She is a former welfare recipient who left welfare when her youngest children were in junior high school. She raised her five daughters and one son in an urban housing project where she still lives with her 10 year old grandson, her 19 year old granddaughter, and her granddaughter's 2 year old son. Her children range in age from 20 to 38 years of age. Her oldest daughter had 5 children when she met her husband and has been married for 4 years. It is her oldest child who lives with Ms. D. Her next daughter is a chronic alcoholic and has been in and out of prison and recovery programs. Ms. D. has custody of her grandson. Her son works at menial jobs and had a drug problem. He now lives with his girlfriend. Another daughter lives out of state, while her youngest daughter lives with her boyfriend and works. They have no children. Ms. D's crowded apartment is a center for her children and grandchildren.[94]

Ms. D. describes her household in the following way:

> Our family is close-knit and all my children are intelligent. In fact, I think one of my daughters turned to alcohol because she was gifted and misplaced in school. Welfare helped me raise my children after my first husband and I broke up. He's still close to me and all the children know him as 'daddy,' although he has another family to take care of. I admit I made mistakes in thinking that I was going to marry the fathers of my last three children. But I don't regret having children and I do feel that welfare should support women like me. As soon as I could, even though I was in my early 40s, I got a job. Now I get a salary and pay taxes like everyone else. I have a right to care for my grandchildren, if I choose to, or if my children can't. They are part of my family."[95]

The "listless" women in Rainwater's study, or the "welfare women" on television news programs are atypical of the past or contemporary lives of most poor Black women. Though both her daughter and granddaughter

93. R. Hill, Economic Policies and Black Progress: Myth and Realities 59-60 (1981).
94. Omolade, *supra* n.90.
95. Omolade, *supra* n.90.

have been on welfare, the experience of Ms. D. is more common than the intergenerational dependency syndrome. Indeed, as Hill reports,

> Only 1/10th of all welfare recipients could be considered as "hard core" or "long term" recipients . . . . [O]ther studies show that about 30% of the new cases leave the welfare rolls within a year and ¾ths of the cases close within 3 years.[96]

Sexual Promiscuity

Rainwater's study observed that "Negro youths" readily referred to women as "that bitch" or "that whore." It then concluded that "all women are essentially the same, all women are legitimate targets, and no girl or woman is expected to be virginal except for reason of lack of opportunity or immaturity."[97] Unfortunately, those "Negro youths" and men merely reflect the institutionalization of sexism in the larger society. Rainwater's observation, however, does not confront the contradictory aspects of chauvinism and sexism which exist between Black men and women since many Black men do want their wives and women to be virgins and regard a strict division between those women who sleep around and those women who "belong" to them. Most Black women are socialized into having rather rigid sexual mores and monogamous relationships with men, especially if they are poor and working class. For instance, a sexually active adult woman like Ms. D., who was a poor and working class woman, desires and believes in a committed relationship with a man. Sexual activity is regular, yet discreet. It is serially monogamous, not promiscuous. To the outside world, she is sleeping around; to herself, she is having a love affair that might lead to a committed live-in or married relationship.

Sexual activity does frequently lead to pregnancy. In Ms. D's case she had six children by three different men, over a twenty year period. As do most Black women who become pregnant, she kept the children. Black women traditionally keep "outside children." Though the Black community stigmatizes and criticizes "out of wedlock childbearing," it does not ostracize the children and their mothers. Additionally, Afro-Christian values do not condone either adoption or abortion as legitimate options. Keeping "outside children" within the Black community is a Black family strength and a viable option. More fundamentally, children are not to be denied a chance to live or be part of a family simply because their mothers are not married to their fathers.

Definitions of Black Single Mothers

> [S]ociologically, marriage and the family are closely related but different

96. Hill, *supra* n.93, at 60.
97. Rainwater, *supra* n.86, at 129.

> institutions; the former regulates the sexual unions of adults, the latter provides the framework within which children are born and reared. Usually marriage legitimizes not just the cohabitation of the parents, but the status of their children.[98]

Motherhood and fatherhood are biological and social terms referring to the status of the gender partners who conceive and nurture a child. Both biological and social parentage can occur outside the institution of marriage. Biological parentage can occur any time after puberty is reached and is separate from social parentage. Every child has a legitimate biological mother and father. Fatherless children are those whose fathers do not live with them not those whose fathers have never existed. Daphne Busby, founder of the Sisterhood of Black Single Mothers asks, "Why should we use terms which completely negate the parent who is present by focusing on someone who is not there." Terms such as "unwed," "fatherless," "broken home" and "illegitimate children" are negative and value-laden concepts which have no place in accurate social scientific studies.

"Household head" refers to those who manage the resources of a home. Except in slave and colonialized societies, singleness was nearly always followed by the social institution of marriage in which a man and woman lived in a joint household, usually headed by the man. Marriage enabled, validated and protected the social concepts of motherhood and fatherhood.

During the last twenty years, "marriage" and "family" have become static definitions, rather than stable institutions. Most adults, Black and white, have been married, single, separated or divorced within one lifetime. Parentage, however, is a more permanent and continuous process in which women and their dependent children become a primary unit which remains intact through the woman's marriage, divorce, love affairs and singleness.

Single motherhood is usually the postmarital stage of a wife's life.[99] Black single mothers are usually women who have been in a common-law or marital relationship with a spouse or mate. They are women whose spouse or mate has either died or from whom they have been divorced or separated. They are also women who have never lived with their child's father, but had "une affaire de la coeur," a love affair, with him.

Widows differ from other Black single mothers in that their separation from their spouse is involuntary and permanent. Children have no further contact with their fathers and wives have none with their husbands. But there are many different kinds of widows. For example,

> M. is almost 60 years old and lived in a married relationship with her husband for nearly 20 years before he died. They raised three children,

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98. Patterson, *supra* n.1, at 187.

99. McGhee, *Profiles of the Black Single Female Headed Household*, in State of Black America 1984, 45 (1984).

two of whom are married and the other divorced. M. is employed and is looking forward to retiring. She is not interested in re-marrying nor is she desirous of a relationship with a man. She says her husband 'was a good man and I don't think I can find another one as good. I have fond memories of a good life with him.'[100]

G's husband of three years was murdered last Thanksgiving. She has a six month old son and a two year old daughter. After his death she had to leave their apartment and move back in with her parents. They help her with the children while she finishes college at night. But she has no money and is so busy with the children and school, that she has had no time to fully mourn and adjust to her husband's death.[101]

Single mothers who have broken up with their legal or common-law spouses and mates usually end live-in relationships because of physical abuse, mental cruelty, financial problems, drug addiction, extra-marital relationships and conflicting goals and values. Many separated single mothers have spouses or mates in prison. Relationships among non-residential fathers and their children tend to be ongoing issues for these women.

C. married in her late teens. She and her husband had one child and moved to another state. He was very active in the church, worked hard and provided for his family. He also had a drinking problem and became abusive and dangerous when he was drunk. After years of such abuse, C. and her daughter left in the middle of the night. She got a job supporting herself and her daughter, but was helped by neighbors and friends. She eventually returned to the city where her mother and siblings lived. She found employment in a bank and then a community organization. Ten years after the birth of her first child she met D. She had a child by him but never lived with him. She did not want to marry him and soon separated from him as well. Both children see their fathers regularly and both fathers provide some child support. In fact the father of her oldest child paid most of his daughter's college expenses.[102]

F. never married either of her 4 children's fathers, but lived with the first for 7 years in what she and her mate regard as marriage. Her other child's father was married and separated when she met him but he repeatedly returned to his wife for the duration of their 7 year relationship. They care about each other and their child, but have ruled out marriage or living together for the foreseeable future.[103]

The fastest growing group of single mothers consists of those who have neither married nor lived with their children's father. Many of these women do not consider the men to be fathers, mates or lovers. They met, had sex, she became pregnant and decided to bear and mother the child.

Those women who live with or have had on-going relationships with

100. Omolade, *supra* n.90.
101. Omolade, *supra* n.90.
102. Omolade, *supra* n.90.
103. Omolade, *supra* n.90.

their child's father are more accurately considered separated women in non-legal unions. There should be a distinction made between women who have or have had an emotional connection to their child's father, whether they have lived together or married, and those women who have little or no contact or emotional attachment. Children whose parents were or had been emotionally involved with each other tend to have connections with their fathers, regardless of the status of either parent.

> P. met her son's father 18 years ago at college. It was her first sexual experience, so she was surprised to discover herself pregnant. The baby's father wanted to marry her, but she saw no point in marrying someone just because she was pregnant. She went home to live with her mother who helped to raise her son. She never thought of keeping regular contact with her child's father.[104]

> V. is a 20 year old mother of a three year old. She met her child's father when she was a junior in high school. He was 35 years old and dated her for 6 months; she had been sexually active since she was 13 years old but had never been pregnant before. Since she loved her baby's father and he talked about marrying her, she got careless. She thought he would be happy about the baby, but he shunned her as soon as he heard about it. She hasn't been able to locate him for custody payments or any other parental obligations. A friend told her she thought he was married.[105]

To society, the two most problematic types of Black single mothers are lesbian mothers and teenage mothers. Both are similarly and negatively viewed because of society's taboos regarding sexuality. Teenagers are biologically capable of conception, but are deemed socially unable to handle parenting. Society (and the Black community) does not want teenagers to be sexually active, not simply because of pregnancy, but also because it is an adult perogative. Moreover, since adolescence is artificially prolonged in this society, teenagers are prevented from becoming economically self-sufficient and are viewed as needing adult and parental supervision until their late teens or early 20s.

At the same time, teenagers are denied access to birth control methods and sex education. The Black community's historical practices of youthful pregnancy and marriage and prenuptial intercourse that were so valued during slavery and segregation have become a deficiency during the post-segregation era. The desegregation era has emphasized middle class values and upward career mobility as the only means to be free from impoverishment. Teen pregnancies and teen marriages are regarded and treated as terminal illnesses, plagues which place Black youth outside the society. To the Black community, schooling and wage work are viewed as the only viable means to prevent teenagers from getting pregnant and the only viable means to help them if they do.

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104. Omolade, *supra* n.90.
105. Omolade, *supra* n.90.

Opportunities to trace the historical experiences of Black lesbians have been limited because of homophobia. Until recently all homosexual activities were seen as abnormal and pathological. Some fathers who have had children with women who are now "out of closet" lesbians have relentlessly pursued legal custody of the children. With the support of the gay and lesbian rights movement, however, more and more of these lesbian mothers are asserting their right to parent from within or without live-in lesbian relationships.

Black lesbians have provided insight into the sexuality of all Black women. Living alone and raising children without men runs counter to patriarchal ideas about women's roles. All single mothers, and especially Black single mothers, represent at least the potential for women's identity to become separate from that dictated by men. Women must become persons in their own right, to be both mother and sexual beings according to their own choices and preferences.

Public Policy: An Agenda For Black Single Mothers

All families, whether headed by a single parent or two parents, whether middle class or poor, need resources and support to be competent and well functioning. Black families do not differ from other families in these respects. Though they have traditionally been poor, for the most part, Black families have been competent and well functioning because of the creative use of resources and the development of vast support systems for family survival. For many Black families, those material resources and support systems remain intact to help teen parents, widows, and elderly relatives. Black families who have attained middle class incomes and lifestyles still use extended family support systems more than do white middle class families.

Black families that are neither middle-class nor connected to supportive blood and fictive kin may turn to community-based social institutions such as churches, self-help organizations and family service agencies. But if none of these options are available to or known by the head of the household, it seems unlikely that the family can survive difficult periods of economic injustice and racial stratification. The rising numbers of homeless families, abused children and parental infanticide clearly demonstrate that those families, however constituted, that do not have material and human help will not survive the negative impact of poverty, discrimination and lack of emotional nurturance. Significant numbers of Black single mothers and their families have "slipped through the cracks" that lie between former and contemporary methods of survival.

In addition, many white middle-class families are in no better shape than are many poor single mother families, in terms of happiness, stability and productivity. While Black single mother families tend to be deprived of material resources that often lead to emotional deprivation and problems, some white two-parent households are emotionally deprived,

which also leads to problems that cannot be solved by material resources alone.

Consequently, a public policy agenda that focuses on marshalling public support and resources for Black single mother families would have positive implications for *all* families. The following components of a public policy agenda for Black single mother families focuses on issues of concern for all families, though the proposals specifically address the needs of Black women.

Housing

Decent and affordable housing is the most essential element in successful family life; "without it you don't have a place to have a family in." Yet the diminishing stock of affordable housing and blatant discrimination against single women and children have created a housing shortage which will have a long-range impact on Black single mother families. Poor women and children are being housed in urban refugee camps called shelters and hotels. Proposals[106] to remedy the housing problems of single mothers include:

1) Removing of all single-parent families from temporary housing into renovated apartments and homes;
2) Using federal, state and local funds to renovate poor housing stock, with incentives to train and hire the unemployed to complete the repairs;
3) Ending specific discrimination against women and children in housing, especially Black women and children through legislation and penalties for discrimination;
4) Making low-cost mortgages available to women who head their households;
5) Making all housing affordable to the poor by decreasing rents through subsidies and tax incentives to landlords.

Healthcare

Many of the nation's 13 million Black women suffer from chronic conditions including high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, arteriosclerosis, kidney disease and diabetes. The mere struggle to provide for one's family causes half of all Black female adults to live in psychological distress.[107] Proposals for improving Black women's health include:

1) Increasing Medicaid-like benefits to women who head households, especially those who work in jobs without health benefits.

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106. All suggested public policy proposals reflect discussions and organizing with Daphne Busby, founder and director of the Sisterhood of Black Single Mothers and Safiya Bandele, director of the Medgar Evers College, Center for Women's Development.

107. Black Women's Health Project, National Women's Health Network Health Fact Sheet on Black Women (Winter 1983).

2) Strengthening and reviewing workplace health and safety legislation for its impact on Black single mothers.
3) Supporting more research on Black women's health issues, with the goal of expanding and improving quality health care.
4) Encouraging the use of health clubs, nutrition centers and recreational facilities, such as the YWCA to enable single mothers to join at minimal reduced rates.

Welfare

Forty-five percent of AFDC recipients are Black; four out of five AFDC families are headed by women and approximately 45 percent of the children on AFDC are eligible because their parents are divorced or separated.[108] Proposals for helping single mothers on welfare include:

1) Raising welfare payments to the poverty line or $10,000 for a family of four.
2) Ending workfare, the practice of forcing welfare recipients to "work off" their checks in below minimum wage, dead-end jobs, and helping women find permanent employment.
3) Providing emergency grants to assist poor families in need, especially in supplying shelter and necessities.

Employment

The average income of Black single mothers is a mere $8,000, which is $2,000 less than the poverty level. Proposals to improve women's wage earning work include:

1) Upgrading the wages of all women workers until it reaches the same amount as male workers through support for equal pay for comparable worth strategies,
2) Expanding full employment legislation and strategies to include Black single mothers,
3) Initiating paid, on-the-job training for Black single mothers,
4) Increasing and expanding unemployment insurance for all family heads.

Childcare

"There is little doubt that the absence of a high quality, coherent and comprehensive day care policy is a key factor in the perpetuation of poverty among women and children."[109] Proposals for improving childcare for single mothers include:

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108. Ruth Sidel, Women and Children: The Plight of Poor Women in Affluent America at 84 (1986).
109. *Id.* at 104.

1) Expanding free public daycare for poor women who work or are unemployed.
2) Expanding after-school and week-end programs for school age children.
3) Initiating creative and educational summer programs for children, especially weekend camps for families.

Alimony and Child Support

"The average annual child support payment in 1981 was $1,640 for Black women." An Urban League study reports that only 10 percent of all Black single mothers in need have received any kind of payment.[110] Proposals to increase the support for single mothers and children include:

1) Increasing efforts to recoup child support from fathers.
2) Educating fathers about their role in helping the mothers who care for their children, including childcare and emotional support.

Spouse Abuse

Spouse abuse is a crime and Black spouse abuse is a Black-on-Black crime. As one of the leading causes of marital separation and divorce, ending Black spouse abuse is critical in resolving contentious relationships between Black men and women. Proposals critical to alleviating spouse abuse of Black women include:

1) Increasing the number of battered women shelters, especially for Black single mothers in the Black community.
2) Mandatory counselling of abusers by Black therapists.

Education: Public Schools

Education is one of the most significant institutions in the lives of Black single women and their families. However, public education has not adequately addressed the needs of children of Black single mothers. Proposals which would help in this area are:

1) General improvement of public education with increased numbers of competent teachers.
2) Special programs to help stem the increasing numbers of Black boys placed in Special Education.
3) More parental involvement programs which reflect single-parent family structures, e.g., Saturday or early morning parent-teacher meetings.

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110. *See generally*, McGhee, State of Black America, 49 (1984).

Teenagers

The high rates of teen pregnancy, unemployment and truancy demand a general improvement of high school programs. Some high schools have already initiated effective programs which meet the needs of today's teenagers.

1) Medical clinics attached to high schools provide general healthcare, birth control and pregnancy counselling.
2) Scholarships and tuition-free college for poor teenagers.
3) More part and full time jobs.
4) Safe, supervised and de-criminalized halfway houses and apartments for homeless teenagers and teen parents.

Education

Black men and women have always viewed education as the key to upward mobility and financial success. The many poor women, especially those who head their households, enrolled in university night classes and community colleges are evidence of the determination of these women.[111] However, successful completion of a college degree still eludes many. The following three programs should be replicated to help Black single mother college students.

1) The Goddard Program makes full time residential college available to low income mothers and children. Students live on campus year round with their older children attending local schools and their younger children in daycare. Dorms become family suites and women continue to receive their Aid to Families with Dependent Children grant.[112]
2) The City College Center For Worker Education makes available a specialized college degree program for working adults by providing flexible evening schedules, individualized counselling and convenient registration procedures as well as financial aid counselling.
3) The Medgar Evers College Center for Women's Development is one of the few women centers in the country established by adult Black women students to meet their personal and academic needs.

Additionally, since lack of financial aid and childcare usually cause poor Black single mothers to drop out of school, tuition abatement programs should be instituted to enable poor Black single mothers to attend college tuition-free and childcare should be provided on campus.[113]

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111. For example, Medgar Evers College, located in Central Brooklyn, New York, the world's second largest Black community, has a student body that is over 75% Black female and 55% single mothers. At the City College Center for Worker Education, The College of New Rochelle, College for Human Resources, and many evening college programs in New York City the typical student is a Black single mother.

112. Goddard Opens Doors for Single Parents, Clockworks at 1 (Spring 1986) (Goddard College, Plainfield, VT).

113. B. Omolade, Black Single Mothers in Higher Education (a research study in

Black Women's Organizations

Since self-help has been the principal way Black people have survived family and personal crises, Black women organizations should be financially endowed and supported. For example, the Sisterhood of Black Single Mothers, a 12-year-old self-help organization, counsels and advocates for Black single mother families. Many of its programs, such as the Fatherhood collective and the Big Sister-Little Sister teen-parenting program, have become models that are emulated and duplicated by other Black self-help efforts across the nation.

Implicit in a public policy program as comprehensive as this one is the assumption that the new racism be repudiated and that economic justice for Black men and women become the centerpiece of the government's domestic spending policies. It assumes that military expenditures will be reduced in the federal budget and that those funds will be spent on developing communities and supporting families. It also assumes that a national mandate for alleviating poverty be uppermost in the efforts of federal, state, and local officials and agencies. Sociologist Ruth Sidel advocates a "new family policy for the United States which would include paid maternity and childcare leave, maternal and child healthcare, children's allowances, a national system of daycare administered locally for all families in need, and aggressive child support programs."[114]

Proposals from Senator Daniel Moynihan to Eleanor Holmes Norton, former director of the EEOC, have emphasized increasing the employment and marriage of Black males as ways of ending the poverty of Black single mothers. Single-parent families are going to continue to increase and will always be a significant part of all family life, however.

Of course, Black men should be fully employed, but that will not solve the problem of Black female impoverishment. For the most part, Black women left their men, not merely because the men were poor, but because they were sexist as well. Employed Black men will not automatically insure that Black women's lives will be improved. These policy makers seem to say that marriage is the Black woman's only hope of escaping poverty. The more appropriate question is whether Black women have a right to head their own households and in so doing, the right to earn the same wages and respect as white male household heads. Or must Black women choose between being a poor single mother or a poor married one?

Poverty is the contemporary form of continuing the social death of Black people that has always been the design of a racist society. To be Black and poor is the current version of being Black and a slave. But being poor, stripped of all its ideological and moralistic veneer, only means that one does not have the resources to meet one's needs. Just as slavery was not a system that could make human beings chattel, poverty is not a condition which makes the poor inhuman.

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preparation).

114. Sidel, *supra* n.108, at 132.

Current social policy perpetuates the deliberate creation of a strata of people—Black men, women and children—who live outside the society of men and women who decide things, allocate resources, make laws, communicate with God, write histories of the past and make plans for the future. The new racism promotes the fabrication of an underclass (or is it a permanent caste) system that masks the displacement of the Black working class or those denied economic enfranchisement within the society. The Reagan administration and the conservative social movement behind it has attempted to return America to whiteness and delusions of rugged individualism with all the macho and racist appeals which support those ideas. Therefore, it might seem farfetched and fanciful for a Black single mother to call for the redistribution of wealth or increased domestic spending to assist families like her own. But a demand that Black single mother families have economic and social justice is long overdue.

In the long history of Black people in this land, we have tried everything: marches, petitions, speeches, nonviolent and violent campaigns. Still social death separates us from the power and wealth we deserve. We might have to try all those things and more, for we remain at the mercy of those who want us to have neither power nor wealth. We've gone around to come around, back to the beginning, where all we have to fall back on are the men and women who love us and nurture and protect us: our families.