INVISIBILITY, DISAPPEARANCE AND RECLAMATION: A SOCIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE LOCATION(S) OF ABORIGINAL AND AFRICAN WOMEN IN CANADA

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
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Abstract

This thesis focuses on issues of the growing level of violence that continues to be leveled at two groups of women in Canada; Aboriginal women and African Canadian women. I propose that a combination of State racism, sexism, colonialism, poverty and societal indifference are responsible for the marginalization and oppression that both these groups of women are facing in Canada today. I will make use of three key tenets of sociological discourse that are built on the theoretical frameworks of anti-colonial, Indigenous and Black Feminism. These frameworks describe ways in which the interlocking systems of oppression maintain a Eurocentric, colonial hegemony that continues to perpetuate violence against Aboriginal and African Canadian women. This comparative approach opens an investigative lens into the ways that ideologies (including cultural representations in the media) demean both Aboriginal and African Canadian women.
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Dedication

I am dedicating my thesis to the Aboriginal women and African Canadian women who have suffered, and continue to suffer sexualized and racialized violence in Turtle Island. This is also to keep the memory of the Missing and Murdered women alive and it is my hope that we will continue to lend our voices to those who have been rendered voiceless because of their gender, race and class.
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Proposal and Introduction

In the last three decades at least five hundred Aboriginal women have disappeared from major Canadian cities. Canada, with very little concern among law enforcement officials or politicians to draw the dots between the occurrences or to show care as a society for the traumatic impact this has had and continues to have on Aboriginal communities (Razack, 2002; Smith, 2005). The analysis of the possible systemic causes of these disappearances is important to the struggle by Aboriginal women in Canada to organize for social change and to understand is the reason for such a minimal response to what are most likely disappearances that are the outcome of violence, primarily sex violence and homicide.

This thesis will discuss issues marginality of women from two communities in Canada: Aboriginal and Afro-Canadian. I will use the terms “Native”, “Aboriginal” and “Indigenous” intermittently as well as “Black Canadian”, “African Canadian” and “Afro-Canadian”. In particular I will explore gendered violence with particular reference to interpersonal violence: - violence directed against the community and the institutionalization of norms or structures in society that lead to violence. These intersecting aspects of violence include citizenship rights, historical institutional beliefs and practices, cultural imagery, education, the ugly face of racism and colonialism, and the systemic problems of the criminal justice system’s dual binary of over-policing of and lacklustre response to violence against Aboriginal women and Black women (Balfour and Comack et. al., 2006).

Violence is considered or defined, as a physical and/or psychological attack upon women that in its action and effects, diminishes their full and equal fundamental rights, individually and collectively, in relation to men (McGillivray & Comaskey, 1999; Adelberg
and Currie, et. al. 1993; Smith, 2005). This lack of full equality with regard to basic human rights has a greater impact on poor women, especially non-white, ones when compared to the relatively more privileged white, middle class (often but not exclusively liberal feminist) women, whom, indigenous and black feminist activists note may in their desire to ‘help’ Black and Aboriginal women, reinscribe tropes of individuality which can be deemed colonial in nature, dismissive or lacking in understanding of alternative feminist epistemologies (McIntosh, 1988; Hooks, 1981, Mohanty, 2003, Anzaldua, 1995; Collins, 2000; Wane, 2008; Mithlo, 2009). This complex set of problems will be explored as a consequence of patriarchal structures that intersect with racism and colonial attitudes and class hierarchies, historically and currently. The thesis will examine the causes, perpetuation, and possible solutions to violence against women when violence is defined, therefore, as a societal and collective, rather than merely an individual problem facing women in Aboriginal, Black Diaspora and Afro Canadian communities.

In order to examine the concept of violence against women, the historical development and institutionalization of race and gender oppression in Canada, intertwined with oppressive class discrimination, will be discussed. The thesis is that these factors: racism, colonialism, sexism, and socioeconomic disparities all impact individual and collective social position, with oppressive inequalities in power dynamics creating a context for violence, and for gendered violence, which is the particular focus of this thesis.

Historical and contemporary forms of colonization and imperialism, causative factors in the marginalization of native and black peoples in Canadian history and in the modern global patriarchal capitalist state system will be explored as preconditions for and context of gender violence (Smith, 2005; Miller, 1996; Fanon, 1967; Said, 1982; Spivak, 1979;
Mohanty, 2003; Dei, 2000). Particularly, in a contemporary context, neo-liberal government philosophies operative in Canada and in emerging globalization, compound what this thesis refers to as problems of invisibility. Invisibility can be defined as the lack of voice, presence, autonomy and equality of some people (groups) in society, with an emphasis in this thesis on black and native women’s invisibility as ‘subjects’ of their own life in the context of their own understanding(s) of community (Collins, 2000; hooks, 2003, Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003; McGillivray & Comaskey, 1999; Bobb-Smith, 2003; Spivak, 1979; King, 1988; McIntosh, 1988; Smith, 2002). Invisibility privileges white male power, in the present and historically. Normalization of violence against African women in the Diaspora, and institutionalization of ‘normalizing’ violence supported by the Canadian Indian Act, link the oppressive colonial and sexist historical past to the pervasive inequalities still currently prevalent (Friesen & Friesen, 2008; LaPrairie, 1993; Smith, 2005; Razack, 2002; Collins, 2000)

Correlations between the continuation of exploitation and violence against native and Black women in the current neo-liberal democratic Canadian state will be investigated as the problem of how invisibility and disappearance are manifested, a central goal of this thesis. Invisibility is understood as more than an individual problem. It is a discussion of how individuals of identifiable, marginalized groups become caught in a systemic eradication of their basic human rights through oppression, a complex of discriminations which normalize or deny the seriousness of gender-violence (Smith, 2005; Razack et. al., 2002).

In considering violence, the intersection of the multiple structures of oppression facing Aboriginal women (which include the education system, colonized community governance and power structures created through the Indian Act, and the wider popular
culture of sexism and racism, such as stereotypical media representations) will be compared to parallel structures of oppression facing Black women. In both communities, it is argued that the degree of marginalization, particularly, the socio-economic position of individuals, may exacerbate violence. Perceptions that non-white women (Indigenous and African Diaspora) are somehow deserving of violence, for example through links of poverty, sex work, drug addiction, and historic stereotypes that encourage violence, will be demonstrated to be related to state structures of inclusion or exclusion of people labelled as other or deviant, a complex problem relating to inequalities and power dynamics in society (Said, 1982; Dei, 2000; Collins, 2000; Smith, 2002; Mohanty, 2003).

Sociological conflict discourses are built upon theoretical foundations. Anti-racist sociology, anti-colonial struggles, the various lenses of feminism (liberal to radical, socialist to 2nd wave and beyond, in particular Afrocentric womanist feminism and Indigenous women’s theory and praxis) all contribute to understanding how racism, sexism and class oppression interweave to maintain capitalist-patriarchal hegemony, while also pointing to possibilities for active community based resistance (Collins, 2000; Mohanty, 2003; hooks, 1981/2003; Smith, 2002; Smith, 2005; Allen, 1998; Anzaldua, 1995; Narayan, 2008; Spivak, 1979, Said, 1982). Theories and discourses can help frame an understanding of the violence faced by Aboriginal women and Black women in Canada in their ongoing lived reality, contributing to a specific reading of terms such as disappearance and invisibility. Through comparison, this thesis aims to achieve a clearer understanding of how these varied and multiple oppressions intersect, why oppression leads to violence, as well as how gender violence can be opposed.
Aboriginal Women

Aboriginal women face multiple levels of oppression. The primary location of oppression emerges from an ongoing history of colonialism, which contains, as a component, the introduction of patriarchal sexual relations of exploitation into what were more egalitarian gendered social relations which pre-existed European-Native contact (Mithlo, 2009; Grounds, Tinker & Wilkins, et. al., 2003; Friesen & Friesen, 2008). Contemporary issues of Aboriginal rights, in particular rights to self determination (government) and healing paradigms (elder circles, indigenous education) based on the animation of traditional native culture: (language, folklore, spirituality), are of the utmost importance to healing the impacts of what is defined by many Aboriginal scholars and activists in North America as historical and contemporary cultural genocide against Indigenous peoples in North America (Smith, 2005; Allen, 1998; Mithlo, 2009; Valaskakis, 2005). Cultural genocide and the specific way in which violence against native women is a tactic of these intentions has been documented in recent years by authors such as Miller (1996) Haig-Brown (1998), Smith (2005) and numerous other scholars and activists whose writings will be examined throughout this thesis.

Aboriginal Canadians, both on and off reserve, and increasingly in “slums” of urban Canada, are struggling to define their own nations’ present, past, and future. Aboriginal people in Canada are coping with a huge number of intersecting problems from overall poverty and its effects on youth, to drug and alcohol addiction, under or unemployment, high levels of male and female incarceration in the criminal justice system, and domestic violence, creating a social crisis of epidemic proportions (Friesen and Friesen, 2008; LaPrairie, 1993; Restoule, 2009).
The need to understand and confront the impact of white European patriarchy’s impact on gender relations within native communities and between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal Canadians, has been and continues to be critical to addressing all problems facing Aboriginal communities and individuals (Smith, 2002). L. Smith notes that gender violence is a particularly virulent way to construct and impose cultural and physical genocide (Smith, 2005). However it would be wrong to disavow the perspective of Aboriginal women artists and authors, who, as Mithlo suggests, still link women’s agency in Aboriginal communities within a context that may pre-date European incursion and continue in a variety of forms despite the deforming elements of colonialism that challenge Aboriginal community relations. Mithlo (2009) quotes:

“Joy Harjo and Susan Williams writing on American Indian feminism: "In recognition of the importance of women in sustaining tribal cultures, community takes precedence over individual women's rights yet conversely there are no human rights until femaleness is respected and venerated" (Williams and Harjo 1998, 198-99). These interpretations of gender as an integral component of community, inextricable from consideration of other cultural values, echoes the concerns of second-wave women of color feminists (Womanists) who advanced intersectionality as a theoretical methodology” (Mithlo: 15)

Such a positional politics enables one to conceive of an Indigenous feminist response to gender violence that is inclusive rather than exclusive and does not stem from theory/practice binaries which are problematic to both Indigenous and Black Afrocentric feminism(s), because of the links between individuality, colonialism and masculinist patriarchal ideologies (Collins, 2000; Hooks, 1981; Allen, 2008).

**Gender Oppression, Patriarchy, and Aboriginal Women’s Invisibility**

Sexism shapes and deforms human experience in powerfully negative and unfortunately uniform as well as unique ways. Core problems of gender discrimination
continue to face all women in Canadian society, no matter their social position. For example, recent reports in the *Globe and Mail* newspaper reveal that women’s wages in Canada remain, at best, still only 66% of those of men in comparable jobs despite a significant number of women graduating with higher marks than men from Canada’s high schools and higher education institutions. Sexist and patriarchal ideology structures the experiences of all women in Canada. Both inside Aboriginal communities in Canada as well as in the general shape of patriarchal democratic capitalism in Canada, sexism impacts the life experience of women, albeit in very different ways (Collins, 2000; Mohanty, 2003, Wane, 2002).

The historical impacts of patriarchy upon Aboriginal people, as Smith (2005) contends, creates a context for general cultural violence against them, and leads to widespread or systemic sexist abuse of Aboriginal women by white people and unfortunately a core of criminalized, stigmatized Aboriginal men. It also magnifies and multiplies some Aboriginal women’s experience of gender violence in specific ways (LaPrairie, 1993; Restoule, 2009). However, this cannot and does not detract from the more communal response to issues of violence, which focus on the community, rather than merely tensions in male/female relationships. This characterizes feminisms in communities where both men and women face systemic discrimination together (Mithlo, 2009; Collins, 2000; Mohanty, 2003). Alternative models of feminism, different from mainstream feminism, (seen as a set of concept that are European and white), positionally, are therefore less relevant to white mainstream women, and create feminist tensions around the issues of invisibility and voice. Alternative feminist epistemologies, non-Western (to some extent) paradigms employed by women inside the context of their community’s overall struggles, are utilized by Aboriginal Indigenous thinkers to challenge gender oppression inside capitalism and ongoing colonialist
hegemony. The challenges facing the black Diaspora feminist community, equally, are found in Afrocentric womanist praxis (Mithlo: 16-17; Mohanty, 2003; Wane, 2002; Collins, 2000; Hooks, 2003).

The problems of invisibility and isolation faced by immigrant Black women from many parts of the world, the problems of patriarchal power imbalance in the Black communities of Canada, and the historical issues of the race discrimination combined with the glass ceiling (in employment) limiting Black women’s ability to achieve economic or career parity with white women, are forms of colonization (Calliste & Dei, 2000). They combine to produce psychological trauma, and are examples of a type of violence that is caused by capitalism in its national and transnational forms. Black women, like Aboriginal women, embrace elements of feminism while also being aware of the necessity of forging alliances with men in their respective and diverse communities, due to the complex nature of oppression facing marginalized, often stigmatized groups despite the current aims and claims of a universal meritocratic equality promised through democratic multiculturalism or the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, enshrined in Canada in the 1980s (Wane, 2002; Collins, 2000; Hooks, 1981; Calliste & Dei, 2000; Mohanty, 2002).

In both Black and Aboriginal women’s lives, scarring, negative, demeaning cultural representations of dirty, sexually available, lazy people or overbearing, primitive but heroic martyrdom pervade the interior and exterior psychological terrain (Valaskakis, 2005; Gilman, 2002; Smith, 2002; Smith, 2005; Francis, 1992; Dua, 2004). This was an area first explored by anti-colonial psychoanalytic activist Franz Fanon, an intellectual born in Martinique. While Fanon’s work is hardly woman centric or feminist, with his work’s focus on the problems of the black male in relation to white society, the work paves the way for more
contemporary anti-racist, feminist analysis of the impact of demeaning images of women upon the way they are positioned in society (Razack, 2002; Smith, 2002; Collins, 2000; Hooks, 2003). Stereotypes demean and degrade, challenging the ability of, or right to, a full lived reality of individuals, transforming them into templates: two dimensional projections of fears and fantasies of white men (and women) that are hallmarks of both racism and sexism (Fanon, 1967; Henry & Tator, 2002; Hooks, 1981). By exploring these cultural representations, this thesis attempts to link how racist images provide what can be called almost ‘a green light’ for sexual violence against those defined, demeaned and degraded. This is also done through spatial organization that is hierarchal in our societies providing, as Razack asserts, the spatial grounds or locations for violence: margins of society, highways, slum areas, inner-cities, ‘racialized neighbourhoods’, reserve lands and so on (Razack, 2002).

The State and Systemic Gender Oppression

When considering the oppression of Aboriginal women in Canada or the conditions of life through the wide range of cultural backgrounds, national origins and ethnicities of Black Diaspora women in Canada, it is important to examine a wider scope of women’s oppression not only in Canada but in the current emerging global context (Wood, 2002; Mohanty, 2002; Hemmons, 1996; Morris, 2003, Anaya, 2003). If the experience of native women will expose us, through analysis, to underlying systemic aspects of race, class and gender oppression, it is therefore imperative to understand how the Canadian government, as a state apparatus, has colluded (nowadays and in the historically past) in the sexist exploitation of Aboriginal women and women of African descent through capitalism and colonialism (Friesen & Friesen, 2008; Boyko, 2000; Razack et. al, 2002; Wane, 2002; Bobb-Smith, 2003; Miller, 1996; Smith, 2005).
This systemic discrimination has been historically, and continues to be, organized primarily through the Indian Affairs Department’s historic policies, the criminal-justice system (including police and courts), the educational system and media sources, the immigration policies, and neo-liberal transnational capital and its impact (in the form of neo-colonialism) on the lives of Black women, in Canada and around the world. The lack of interest to investigate the disappearance of Aboriginal women by local police and the RCMP, is well documented (Amnesty International, 2009 www.Amnesty.org ). Even the United Nations has drawn attention to the paucity of concern of the Canadian state to investigate the crimes against native women (and the Aboriginal nations) throughout Canada. This thesis asks a fundamental question: How do we account for this neglect and the ongoing systemic nature of oppression that is a breeding ground for violence in a so-called democratic society which espouses belief in both individual and collective rights, in law, right of person and property? What is the nature of violence faced by Black women in Canada; how are their voices, as in academia, silenced or how do they become animated? The following section provides an analysis of the historical experiences of Black women in Canadian context and the ways in which they have struggled to survive and ultimately thrive in an environment that continues to render them marginal.

**Black Women’s Experiences**

In comparing Aboriginal women’s experience of violence to that of Back women, the experiences of African Canadian women,(both those who are descendents of Black families arrived in Canada during the period of the American revolution, to first generation immigrants and refugee women), this thesis suggests the need for an analysis that extends to a wide historical lens: for example, the experiences of Black women in the Afro-Canadian
community, such as the problem of work permits and lack of rights of domestic workers from the Caribbean in the 1950s-1980s (Calliste, 2000; Elabor-Idemudia, 2000; Wane, 2002).

Lived experience, as established over generations, creates responses and attitudes to ongoing racist oppression of all Afro-Canadian peoples, of the women in the communities struggling at the grassroots level and in the universities to bring attention to causes of discrimination, barriers to full equality, and the correlation between sexism, race discrimination, class position and experiences of trauma and violence (Smith, 2002, Collins, 2000; Hooks, 2003; Wane, 2002). This includes pondering the nature of second class citizenship status of Black women in Canada, historically, and the problems of invisibility of ‘visible minorities’ within the larger framework of white skin privilege, race, class and the designation, ethnicity.

Notisha Massaquoi (2007) reminds us that:

“A discussion that reflects the realities of Black women in Canada must be grounded in the specific materiality of Black women’s lives, while acknowledging uprooting, movement, and reconstitution, and interrogating the dominant and racialized and gendered discourse of the Canadian nation.” (Massaquoi: 7)

In many different ways, these issues touch on the core and setting of the current world of African-Canadian women in the context of history. Giving voice to women who appear to have been voiceless is what feminist critic Gayatri Spivak (1988) calls the emergence of the voice of the formerly ‘subaltern’; those who were without voice, those from a class that had no access to speech or writing, within the colonialist framework.

Sherene Razack (2002) argues that we live in a ‘white settler society’, a society where barriers, inclusion/exclusion systems revolve around a foundational myth that Canada is a society for white people who are ‘superior’ by nature of their skin colour. This is the perpetuation of the Eurocentric domination of the world in the period of colonialism, slavery,
imperialism and what Said (1982) calls Orientalism. England for example was made wealthy
during was made wealthy through the exploitation of non-white people, either through
slavery or through, indenture. Racism and gender oppression helped to contextualize and
defend the systemic brutal mistreatment of entire peoples and nations. These problems find
their echoes in a contemporary continuation of the ‘white settler’ schema, despite surface
perceptions that we have ‘moved beyond’ such overt racism in the Canadian national
experience (Razack, 2002).

African-American women, as bell hooks (2003) maintains, are constantly facing the
problems that stem from low self-esteem issues, even in the so-called post segregation, post
civil rights era. Lack of voice or limited voice will be discussed and considered within the
umbrella of radical sociological feminist discussions such as Spivak’s (1979) concept of the
subaltern and the speaking subaltern. This is a concept that women are not, or have not been
able to; yet obviously need to speak for themselves, from their subject position, and their
contextual position within a complex of identity positions in our complex modern society.
Likewise, Barbara Smith (1977) discusses the need to “think and write out of her own
identity…” which includes a spiritual voice of herstory. (Smith: 2308) bell hooks writes of
yearning as “the word that best describes a common psychological state shared by many of
us, cutting across boundaries of race, class, gender, and sexual practice.” (Hooks: 2481) She
argues that within Black American culture

“a critique of essentialism…allows us to affirm multiple black identities, varied black
experience. It also challenges colonial imperialist paradigms of black identity which
represent blackness one-dimensionally in ways that reinforce and sustain white
supremacy.” (Hooks: 2482)

The telling of their stories, sharing their experiences and the passing down of ancestral
knowledges is part of revitalizing and reclaiming of the herstories.
In addition an anti-racist historical and sociological lens will contest the construction of inequalities of race and the problems of cultural genocide that began in the era of slavery and colonialism (Smith, 2005). There are two interweaving and separate strands that, together, shed more light on larger problems. Collins (2000) a black Afrocentric feminist explores the importance of family, community, lived experience in defining the world as it is and what needs to change. Like Hooks, she does not believe that change can come only through rarefied academic discourse, but has to connect to the lives of ordinary women and their lived experience and wisdom, coping strategies and means of counter-hegemonic resistance. Her view is that the partial voice or view, specific to one group, is part of a more systemic layering of multiple points of oppression and possible entry points to resistance. Thus, African-Canadian and Aboriginal women can learn from each other, through each other’s experience, in dialogue. It is in this spirit of inquiry and comparison that this thesis proposes discussing invisibility and violence and disappearance as it relates to Aboriginal women and Black women in Canada. I hope to engage in a process that reveals how a mixture of theory, information and awareness of grassroots community based activism can alter society to the need for change and can be the catalyst to bring about an end to systemic, perhaps even sanctioned violence against Aboriginal and Black women in Canada. Education has always been one of the key methods of social control, and continues to be a site of opposition and contestation (Hooks, 1996; Collins, 2000; Smith, 2002; Fanon, 1967). For this reason, examining how education impacts or creates contexts for sexual violence is important and will be addressed in the following section.
Education

The residential school system in Canada was intentionally designed by the government and the church to eradicate and exterminate Aboriginal people in Canada. Through the aid from the Church, the Canadian government established first in the 19th century and later in the early 20th century, industrial and residential schools. These schools separated Aboriginal children from their families. The goal was assimilationist: to wipe out, if possible, all traces of Aboriginal cultural and spiritual traditions by forcing the children to speak English learn trades and become Christians. As Stout and Kipling (2003) write the schools enrolled a vast majority of Aboriginal children, but the educational attainment was never much above Grade 8. (Stout and Kipling: 29) The spiritual and cultural destruction of Aboriginal peoples by the residential school programs has been likened by Miller (1996) to cultural genocide. The contemporary 21st century struggles to heal the wounds of the past therefore have to regard the impact of Canada’s racist systematic attempt to destroy Aboriginal societies as part of the process of healing. Traditional aboriginal education was

“devoid of coercion and routine and respected the giver and the receiver. The acquisition of vocational and life skills was based on observation and emulation and was carried out in a context without institutional structure and that blended education and play.” (Schissel and Wotherspoon, 2003: 40)

As the authors note this is in direct contradiction to the educational system, which Graveline also asserts is based on routine, conformity, is fragmented and regimented, hierarchical.

Discussing the Canadian policy of assimilation through education, Miller contends that by 1945 the clearly stated goals of the Canadian government were,

“The peaceful elimination of Indians’ sense of identity as Aboriginal people and their integration into the general citizenry” which “would eventually end any need for Indian agents, farm instructors, financial assistance, residential schools and other
Thus, the residential school experience which deformed generations of Aboriginal people, individually and in terms of fragmentation of community, points to the means through which white dominant society creates separate spatial and social divisions that shore up racist thinking, racist institutions, gender discrimination and violence, employment divisions, and class separations (Miller, 1996; Haig-Brown, 2008).

The negative impact of residential schools on Aboriginal identity across generations, from self-esteem issues to family structure has been widely discussed in recent years (Miller, 1996; Smith, 2005; Haig-Brown, 1995; Ing, 2006). A front page newspaper article in Toronto’s Globe and Mail published on May 24, 2010, tells a story of detailed ongoing investigations into the residential schools which used to operate in Canada. The article asserts that at least 20% of the violence in those schools, as evident from witnesses coming before the committee to decide on economic redress, were examples of Aboriginal-on-Aboriginal violence occurring among the children. It can be argued, this is another example of the media propensity to ‘talk about’ or ‘talk for’ Hooks has commented on a similar situation in the U.S with the media representations of the state of the Black community in the U.S. The Globe and Mail piece is a descriptive article by a white reporter telling the Canadian public through the main national newspaper of the country that generations of Aboriginal children, many who now are deceased adults, brutalized each other at least 1/5 as much as they were brutalized and traumatized by the Church teachers and the policies of the Indian Affairs ministry which ran and legislated the program of ‘cultural genocide’ (Miller, 1996). Such stories isolate larger issues out of context and participate in the ongoing demeaning and
disregarding of Black or Aboriginal peoples’ responses or telling of their own personal and collective histories (Henry & Tator, 2002).

Anti-racist education theory (Dei, 2000) is one of the emergent fields through which discussion of the pedagogy or discourses of the ‘normative’ positive, white scientific world view, is subject to deconstruction (Collins, 2000; Smith, 2002). The residential schools were zones of separation and of gender violence, as were the slave plantations and the Jim Crow segregation system, the black inner city slums, the native reserves, the run-down urban areas where First Nations peoples live. Canada, while separate from the U.S. through sovereignty and various differences in social and economic ideologies, presents variants of the same problems found in U.S. society through its history, from limited education, employment and immigration options for peoples of the African diaspora and native peoples to violent disappearances and cultural invisibility of marginalized, stigmatized women.

The echoing legacy of both imperialist scientific racism and colonialist attempts to civilize and define non-white people, as Said (1982) notes in Orientalism, continues to be an issue in the maintaining of centrality of the white male Eurocentric voice, whether in the university (Collins, 2000) or in the degree of seemingly sanctioned sexual violence against poor native and Black women in our various communities. Said’s basic concepts can be applied to and aid in the understanding of the status of Black and Aboriginal women in the contexts of the problems of marginalization, construction and reproduction of feelings of otherness and inferiority, speaking on behalf of. These ideas and concepts, were first explored in depth by Fanon (1963, 1967) where interiorized feelings of race-inferiority demean the self and problematize identity and agency, not in individual ways (of the personality) but sociologically – how individuals live within, conscious or not, as Goffmann
(1963) contends the larger social nexus of imposed, institutionalized identities based on hierarchy and division.

**Media/ Cultural Stereotypes**

Speaking on behalf of, defining, organizing, explaining, and describing; these are all linked aspects of the perpetuation of media stereotypes, institutions of mass media which spread racist and sexist lies that become accepted as social norms. Barthes (1982) refers to this as the “myths” of social norms. This is the problem of the “othering” process, defining and naming (a white skin privilege or right to demean others?) which leads to sexist stereotypes and as Razack and Smith contends, gender violence. Education systems utilize, for much of Canadian history, the racist, classist and sexist texts that “other” and marginalize non-white Canadians. For each group, there is a different set of stereotypes that demean and degrade its women, contributing to a climate where violence against women becomes more permissible outside of and even within the marginalized oppressed communities (Smith, 2005, Valaskakis, 2005).

Hegemony is a term developed by Marxist cultural analyst Gramsci who lived in Italy during the era of Fascism in the 1920s and 1930s. His work refers to ways that the elites dominate not only through brute power but through compliance via culture institutions, when compliance is not rationally or obvious in the best interests of those who seem to be complying. The theory shows links between education, media, political institutions, individual opinion. Yet, while such power is pervasive, it is not necessarily, as Foucault contends top down in nature, either. As Foucault (1979) argues throughout his body of writings, power is diffuse and assumes form within each and every human relation and institution. But power also gives rise, as Spivak also maintains, to oppositional emergent
resistance. Reception theory (Fiske, 1992) notes that people can and do reflect, upon and analyze their life situation from their position. This corresponds to the work of many black and native authors whose analysis/view of dominant society and the reasons for violence against women in society shows the ability to deconstruct the myths via the channels of brave resistance emerging from lived experience. This thesis therefore explores invisibility and disappearance, sexual violence, as descriptive and causal but also as changeable and a site of resistance.

The Global Lens

Today it can be argued there are pervasive links between neo-liberal globalization and the rise of international sexual violence. How does a micro approach to violence – a single case, a particular instance – relate to more macro templates through which to understand ongoing gender violence?

It is important to describe, think, analyze and reflect in ways that do not lead to reinscribing of essentialist categories or divisions which white capitalist patriarchal hegemony has employed to maintain hierarchies and divisions that incur violence (Dei, 2000). The comparative approaches taken in this thesis will open an investigative lens on the ways that ideology (including cultural representations in the media) demeans Aboriginal and Black women, and what the links are between ideology and institutions. How are institutional frames reproduced in the streets, communities, families, schools, lives of women of women, named as or defined as belonging to black or native identity? How are they resisted?

To not fall into overarching categorizing (i.e. all Black women and all Aboriginal women experience the world the same way), is an important undergird or foundation (Collins, 2000). Universality of such type is a sociological and human impossibility (Collins,
What can be asserted is that, while there will be trends or similarities on the one hand, there are significant differences on the other. This is due to a wealth of notable variables including the specific impact of social position, history, location, socio-economic status, environment, personality, class, age, sexual orientation, views on the problems and solutions to issues of personal and community growth, access to spirituality and so on.

**The Disappeared, Violence, Space and Citizenship**

The UN has declared in recent years as a result of Indigenous advocacy drawing attention to the treatment of Aboriginal women in Canada, that Canada is not properly looking into and addressing with vigour and real concern the cases of hundreds of disappeared native women (Amnesty International.org, 2010). Aboriginal women in Canada have been disappearing from their families and communities for decades. Emergent social groups, local and national women’s community organizations have arisen to draw attention to the memory of those disappeared as well as to demand response, justice and an end to such violence. The discussion of the meaning and ongoing problem of white skin privilege (Razack, 2005; Hooks, 1996; Smith, 2002) as it relates to the seeming lack of concern in our society to address violence against native women and black women will be a major component to understanding and linking the problems of violence to the problems of the state and its various institutions.

**Framing Questions**

To conclude this introduction, the thesis will therefore propose and attempt to answer a number of questions that can be raised to address and account for the intricate intersections that produce, reproduce, and permit violence. How do cycles of poverty and the denial of both male and female agency among the majority of Aboriginal people in Canada contribute
to the ongoing cycle of domestic abuse and violence in native communities? Are there any correlations that exist between Aboriginal experiences and African-American or Afro-Canadian experiences with regard to the intersection of gender oppression, racism, poverty and cycles of violence? How is violence ‘different’ or unique in various communities, raising the problem of hierarchies of concern versus expansion of degree of violence where more marginalization exists? What happens to people in what can be deemed broken and abandoned communities? Why do such communities exist? Are they products of constructed spatial marginalization? (Razack, et. al.: 2005). Why is it Aboriginal women, in particular, who are disappearing in Canada? Does lack of concern for the disappeared rest in, or reflect, the intersection of racism, gender and class oppression that organizes and structures the patriarchal, capitalist system? How does it do this? What are the current strategies to overcome the violence and the trauma, complicated in a large part because of the problems of invisibility and marginality in a sexist, racist, colonial, classist society?

A broader question to consider is what does it mean to be a citizen: for Aboriginal people, for Black people, for Aboriginal and black women, for all people in a democratic nation-state? The thesis shall include therefore a degree of discussion of the nature of and rights of citizenship in the modern liberal democratic state. Does democracy and equality extend to each and every individual equally, or not? If not, what are the causes or reasons for the differences that exist? What are basic fundamental human rights and if racism, sexism, classism exist, if violence permeates the lives of many living at what one can call the margins of dominant society? What does this tell us about our society and the manner in which the state (and its citizenry) or institutions respond to the problems of violence, such as, the subject of this inquiry, the disappearances of native women and violence faced by Black
women? What does it mean to be invisible, marginal, visible, disappeared, silenced, oppressed, to experience violence as part of daily life and as part of an historical understanding of one’s location in the social structures, the national order of a discriminatory, hierarchical society structured on various schema of oppression: race, class, gender?

**Summations and Synthesis**

The historical understanding of oppression in the mid 20\(^{th}\) century emerges in black anti-colonial literature such as the French psychoanalytic Martinique theorist Frantz Fanon and his exploration into the ways that cultural imperialism and the hegemony of the white skin deform both Black and white experience (Fanon, 1963; 1967). Anti-racist literature will be paralleled to and compared with historical and contemporary accounts of resistance of Aboriginal people, as individuals, as families and as communities. A key problem identified in both sets of analysis is that the education system and other societal institutions contain or adhere to power in ways that define, intrude, confine and marginalize. From the residential schools, which in the realm of ‘education’, clearly show the state’s positioning of native people into locations of inferiority within a complex social and politically structured hierarchy, to power invested in hierarchies maintaining male white domination over non-white, non-male peoples in Black-white dynamics built upon race/ethnicity, the impact on girls and women is serious, profound and ongoing. How can Black or Aboriginal male writings (which may contain elements of European influenced sexism) be transformed by Black and Aboriginal women into more woman-centred healing paradigms that force men to address their collusion in the white hegemonic power structure (Hooks, 2003)? This is one of
the final, and perhaps most needed questions to be addressed in a discussion of systemic and individualized violence against Aboriginal women, lack women, in our society.

Why is it that some peoples in our societies are not included as citizens in the normative categories of entitlement and rights while others are? How has a hierarchy emerged in the Aboriginal community which favours middle class Aboriginal male leaders over women, and what are the parallels between this and the position of women in African-Canadian (and American) communities? Gender violence, can be defined as physical and emotional, producing fear, low-self esteem, danger, difficulties with intimacy, threat from strangers, actual brutal physical attack, domestic and stranger.

Violence against women is always seemingly one of the clearest ways in which the perpetuation of all forms of colonial oppression becomes manifest (Smith, 2005). Extremes of violence, such as the disappearance of Aboriginal women in Canada, domestic violence, and other forms of sexual violence against women, both in their own communities and in the context of the wider society, is one of the clearest indications of the nature of and depth of the racist and sexist state and its various systemic operational apparatus that maintains oppression (Smith, 2005; Razack et. al. 2002). What goal or outcome does oppression serve, but to increase corporate profits and limit privileges to only certain sectors of the population, while keeping others marginalized, scared, compliant? This references a link back to slavery, slavery to racism, racism to economics, social control mechanisms to police and projection of fantasies to maintain the illusion of white superiority, order, and good governance. This is a cycle that Razack (2002) calls “white settler society” and its implications tend to the marginalization and disregard of violence in Aboriginal women and to some extent Black women’s lives today in Canada.
One can postulate if middle class white teenage girls or young women in their
twenties in affluent areas of North Vancouver, to give an example, were routinely
disappearing, there would be a huge and complex investigation to solve these crimes, or if
they are not crimes, to uncover the reasons for the disappearances. But this is not true in the
response to disappearances of women from the native communities of East Vancouver, or
Saskatoon, nor Winnipeg, nor small towns in Quebec and so on.

The objective of this thesis is to tie all of these various strands together in a way that
creates a juxtaposition of theory and empiricism with a view to attempt a systematic
deconstruction of the Canadian state’s fundamental and possibly wilful blindness to ongoing
exploitation of Aboriginal women, and the continuation of conditions of violence facing
Black women, however similarly or differently manifested. It proposes that the changes that
need to happen will engage Aboriginal women and African Diaspora women themselves,
through collective response, fostering voice and community. I will suggest that this is already
underway, and explore when and how the Canadian state (at every level of jurisdiction from
urban to national) will be compelled to respond to the ongoing perpetuation of crimes against
humanity against a group of its citizens, including the land’s original citizens, its Aboriginal
peoples. To fully comprehend this, the comparative exploration of why gendered violence
exists against Black women and native women, and how this intersects with other aspects
such as class, needs be examined. The rising violence against Black women as a result of
neo-liberal globalization is interwoven into the experience of Black women and Aboriginal
women as the entire concept of ‘disappearing’ and ‘invincibility’ within the nation- states
and its false claims of meritocracy and social justice for all citizens is an underlying trope of
problem.
How will the subaltern begin to speak, and when speaking what forms will this take and how can it directly and positively impact the state’s lacklustre response to ongoing violence against the most marginalized of citizens? This leads this thesis away from simply isolating a problem or describing a single type of oppression. Can native communities continue to wait for the appropriate response from police, courts, governments, larger community concern? What are the possible ways to address the problems of disappearance? What has been achieved to date in communities to combat ongoing violence? If the state does thrive on exploitation, power imbalances and hierarchies, how will it transform or be transformed? What steps need to be taken at the personal and community levels? What role can or does anti-racist, anti-colonial, Afrocentric feminist theory and practice play in proposing outcomes? What kind of soul searching needs to be undertaken by the Native community itself and who is raising the issues in this period of ongoing crisis? How can or does one group, Black women activists and theorists in the U.S. or Canada, impact or join in coalition effectively with native women? In this age of globalization and its negative neoliberal connotations, is there an alternative form of globalization and social organizing to protect Black and indigenous women (as two groups of those who are being exploited through gender exploitation and gender violence) from human trafficking, negative sexual stereotyping, local and foreign expressions of violence against women, including murder and traumatizing (Mohanty, 2002; Hemmons, 1996; Collins, 2000; Smith, 2005)? The answers appear to lie in the close analysis of forms of violence, sexual violence, both historical and current, and understanding violence to be much more than incidents of single criminal individuals taking away the rights of other equally situated individuals, but instead a set of complex intertwined historical and contemporary problems that relate to gender violence in
general and to sexual violence assuming particular complex forms that also require awareness of race and class issues.

**Roadmap/Chapter Breakdown**

This thesis will cover a number of issues interweaving themes throughout each chapter, building towards a complex woven document of correlations. Each chapter will include or synthesize a number of strands of research conducted by experts in their fields to help to reveal the links between Aboriginal women’s experience in Canada and multiple fields of oppression.

Chapter One, which follows below, is a general extensive literature overview of key theories that lay the foundation or groundwork for the more detailed inquiries of Native women’s and African-Canadian women’s experience of violence in Canada. The literature review includes examining specificities relating to production of violence through state discourses and institutions in both Black and Aboriginal people’s lives as noted in scholarly books and articles. There are numerous strategic theories that both propose a materialist and cultural reading of patriarchal, capitalist society as well as envision ways to oppose or challenge society through emergent voices or movements themselves based upon foundations of critique, including 19th century Marxism and its 20th century revisions and offspring. The literature review looks at leading experts, historically, such as Fanon (1960s) and Said (1970s) to more recent theorists, in particular female scholars that are anti-racist and feminist (Collins, 2000; Wane, 2002, Hooks, 1980s-1990s; Smith, 2002, Smith, 2005) to get an understanding of the field of conflict-sociology, enabling the discussion of the meaning of invisibility and disappearance as it relates to violence against Aboriginal and Black women possible and understandable.
Theories of race and gender oppression, historically, and in the present, are key to this literature review. These are anti-colonial discourse, anti-racist theory and feminist theory, with an emphasis on indigenous and Afrocentric feminism that challenges in its arguments aspects of 2nd wave mainstream feminist discourse. From the time of slavery and the development of pseudo-scientific theories of race in the 19th century to justify economic exploitation of African people and/or the creation of representations demeaning Aboriginal and Black women, to the problems of Eurocentrism and the limits of democratic citizenship as it has been impacting Aboriginal people, the theory of white skin privilege, which can be discussed either through anti-racist or anti-colonial pedagogy, is key to exploring ways in which race and gender oppression relate to and contribute to the intersections between domestic violence, patriarchy, hierarchies of socioeconomic status, gender oppression and racism. Links between hierarchical oppressive capitalist patriarchy and its institutions, from the education system to the criminal justice system to mass media, as discussed by Frantz Fanon (1967) and more recently by Andrea Smith (2002) Linda Smith (2005) George J. Sefa Dei (2000) Sherene Razack (2002), bell hooks (2003) and many other theorists will provide the foundation of the literature review, followed by recent discussion in scholarly articles and books that build earlier work in these conceptual and empirical areas, revealing new directions and dimensions in the field of inquiry of violence, gender, the state. The review section undergirds the thesis that invisibility and disappearance are systematically linked in numerous ways.

The second chapter, entitled “Identity, Representation, Otherness, Colonialism and “White Settler Society” will build upon the literature review and compare black and Indigenous theories, such as the work of Patricia Collins (2000) discussing how racism and
violence are connected to institutions, from education to media, but also how these new theories propose possibilities of community and resistance. It will also explore how out of oppression, emerges, as the title suggests, methods to resist and refocus. Understanding how ‘white settler society”, a concept of Sherene Razack (2002) implicates the construction of a context for violence, and how the Eurocentric project of colonialism and nation building leads to violent assimilation/exclusion control of non-white ‘others’ will be discussed in this chapter. The comparison of Black and Aboriginal women’s historical experiences is in relation to forms of enshrining oppression: from low paying jobs to demeaning sexual imagery that undermines women’s sense of freedom, autonomy or equality (with men or with white women).

Chapter three, “Women as “Other” in History; Representations” will explore, in greater detail, representations of black and native women in the formation of stereotypes in North American culture. It will focus on the matter of the disappeared as well as the general status of Native and black people, as marginalized “others” in the dominant white power society of North America, examining cultural tropes that negate and demean women.

Chapter four, “Erasure, Violence, Otherness, and Disappearing” explores the relationship between violence, invisibility, and struggles to construct an anti-violence movement. Both chapter three and four examine various institutions and concepts, from criminal justice, to spatial geography and racism, education institutions, cultural images and stereotypes. Chapter four will also explore the context of organizational grassroots movements to demand action on the part of the police, court systems and government. This is a step in the realization that the state itself turns against the marginalized and oppressed, and rationally or not, always has imposed limits to the concept of equality and citizenship for
native women through the Indian Act and many other institutional barriers, and in the case of black women through employment ceilings, immigration restrictions and other barriers.

Why are women being murdered or disappearing? How do theorist/activists like Sherene Razack or Andrea Smith account for the seeming acceptance of these disappearances and what this might tell us about the way native women are discriminated against in specific ways in Canada? In relation to this chapter’s concerns, a further discussion of the problems of violence against women within the Aboriginal communities of Canada (both reserve and urban) and the violence against native women by white men, and the reasons for, and response to each, will be explored and discussed. The chapter will also look at the responsibility of the Indian Act, in its evolution, to perpetuating state violence against Aboriginal women.

Chapter five, “Healing: The Subaltern. Complex Issues of Community, Education, Violence, Resistance” is a comprehensive look at possibilities of the subaltern or oppositional women’s voice, the emergence of women’s academic and activist responses, in Black and Aboriginal communities. It will include an analysis of academia, a critique of erasure and marginalization, a discussion of Black and Aboriginal women’s healing modalities and philosophies of alternative epistemologies used to confront violence, whether personal or systemic, The chapter will also define community in ways that depart from Western-capitalist individualism.

Chapter six, “Connecting the Dots: Violence, Silence, the State” will extend this thesis’s discussion or range of analysis outward to the comparison of the experience of Black women in Canada and internationally, historically and in the context of the migration and displacement of women occurring in globalization, a process that is currently ongoing. The
goal is to raise comparisons to native women’s experiences of violence and disappearing, to
discuss how concepts of citizenship are limited by stigma, stereotypes, inclusion/exclusion,
sanctioned violence and under-concern for the problems Black women face in their
communities and in the larger society. Anti-racist, anti-colonial theory that includes a
woman-centric element proposes that there are links between globalization, neo-liberalism,
capitalism and an increase in violence against Black women around the world. However,
over-policing of Black men and Indigenous men is another component of the violence that
women in their communities must deal with. For example, the lack of ability to express
masculinist ideas of gender superiority which become internalized in Afro-Canadian and
Black Diaspora immigrant men often transforms into violence against Black women. The
multicultural state may encourage black men to seek training but Black women are more
employable, often leading to violence and intimate partner conflicts.

Isolation of black immigrant women, fear, language deficit, as well as ongoing
pervasive tropes of Black female hypersexuality (which is a 19th century, or earlier, projected
conception of the female Other) undermine Black women’s fundamental rights and
autonomy of person. This creates a context for sexual violence, which can be exacerbated by
socio-economic status, and extends the violence out of the Black community into black-white
and other dynamics that produce sexual violence, i.e. sex trafficking, poverty and
prostitution, drug addiction, AIDS, stigmatization and violence and so on. Similarly,
Indigenous women activists’ sense of their belonging (with men) in specific locational,
geographic/spiritual communities is disrupted by violence but also may be a modality for
healing intracommunity gender violence (Mithlo, 2009; Grounds, Tinker & Wilkins, et. al.,
2003).
A short overview of Black women’s experience of violence, what Razack calls gendered racial violence, will be a component of this chapter, the goal being to begin the process of revealing parallels and differences in the experience of two communities of women (though not in an essentialist way) as there is no single Aboriginal or Black community or female position (Mohanty, 2003; Collins, 2000). In their experience of, and resistance to, male violence, as well as the differences in black and indigenous feminism(s) from that of white liberal feminism or white radical feminism, which does not understand the complex matrix, as Collins (2000) calls it, womanist struggle is inclusive and contains links to collective community struggles with men.

The root causes of gendered violence, the chapter shows, resides in patriarchal capitalism and the production and reproduction of offensive and demeaning images (historically in media and in education,) alongside economic and social exploitation that resonates within the nation state and outwards to the world. This chapter will discuss these issues in light of the work of authors such as Fanon, Said, Hooks, Wane and others. Each chapter in ways touches upon the international order; the nature of citizenship, borders, inclusion/exclusion and the discussion is continued through the end of the sixth chapter. This brings the thesis to its difficult conclusions, a summation chapter which ties together all the strands from imperialism, neo-colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, race oppression and their intersections that produce contexts for the continued marginalization of; and conditions, for continued violence against Aboriginal and Black women. The constant need for persuasive analysis and action by indigenous communities and African Diaspora women, emerging out of their own experience and communities, to struggle against all forms of violence, shows the links between the local, the regional, the nation and the international.
As stated in the introduction, citizenship may be a concept fraught with contradictions. Where does equality of all begin and where are the flaws in the concept of meritocracy and fundamental human rights in democratic societies. How does the Canadian Indian Act contradict full equality of citizens? What are the unfortunate consequences of the historical cultural genocide, against Aboriginal peoples, on Aboriginal communities today and their own struggles, as communities, with current issues of belonging or alienation? How does this link to violence, in Canada and around the world, given the rise in gendered violence built atop a confluence of factors – from traditional patriarchal cultures to the impact of European education (in colonialism) upon both African and First Nations women. The inclusion/exclusion process and the position or role of women in this is shown to be racialized, gendered, and based in class divisions. This is the contention of this working thesis, with all of its strands together that reveal the crisis and, dilemma facing society.

If citizenship defines the level of rights of individuals and groups, how do race, class and gender oppression produce the tropes of invisibility and attendant problems of disappearance? The thesis, in conclusion, attempts a synthesis of the history, theory and practices today, hopefully pointing to what needed future research and study and action can enhance current dialogue and struggle. How are struggles by women at the grassroots level of community activism creating a context for challenging white patriarchal capitalist hegemony, in the context of alliances and theoretical analysis? What are the implications of a detailed, critical analysis of male power dynamics within the leadership of ‘minority’ communities and struggles for equality? How have these struggles or movements for change altered (or not) the position of women in Aboriginal and Black communities? What accounts for the growing level of violence and the increase in the disappearance of native women in a self-
conscious multicultural society? Can globalization offer an alternative structure of organization to the neo-liberal corporate transnational system which is built upon the type of oppression which has its heritage or legacy, one could argue, in colonial slavery and the attempted 19th century destruction/assimilation of Aboriginal cultures throughout North America?

The overall goal of the thesis is the demarcation and analysis of invisibility and disappearance of Aboriginal women, and violence against Black women within the context of their own communities and the Canadian state, its institutions and apparatuses, including the education, media, and the criminal justice system. What are the modalities of healing that have been shown to be positive and, as goals, provide incentive to further investigation into solving the problems of missing Aboriginal women in Canada? How to combat the structural dynamics that maintain and reinforce inequalities of race, class, and gender and their intersections in the contemporary, multicultural, neo-liberal Canadian state, a state now participating as a key player in the G8 as part of the transnational globalization process, a process that seems to only increase marginalization of the least protected, young Black and Aboriginal women? It is an ongoing set of transformations and increase in extremes of wealth and poverty that seems to increase the levels of (and disturbing continued acceptance of) gender violence in a post-feminist era. These contextual questions raise the concern to study and analyze a particular understanding of violence, an understanding, which in totality forms the questions and leads to the inquiries that constitute the thesis’ in-depth analysis of a complex conceptual field.
Chapter One:
Literature Review:
Anti-Racist, Indigenous, Anti-Colonial, Black Feminist Theory, Feminist Gender Theory and Their Relationship to Discussions of Invisibility, Disappearance and Violence Against Women

In the next few pages, a literature review will lay out the context for the problems of a more detailed discussion of violence against women in the indigenous and African Diaspora communities. This review will focus on some of the main themes necessary to comprehend the twin problems of invisibility and disappearance which form the focus of this entire thesis; in particular the problem of lack of a comprehensive response to the tragedy and crime of hundreds of disappeared Aboriginal women in Canada. As Cunliffe and Cameron (2007) write “Aboriginal women’s experiences of violence are largely excluded from the realm of institutional concern” (Cunliffe & Cameron: 2). In order for this thesis to proceed from macro to micro concerns, or vice versa, what causes and sustains invisibility (or what can be called a distorted visibility) – the precursor or context in which trauma, violence and disappearance occur – will be discussed.

Key areas in the scholarly literature note the necessity of analyzing and understanding (a) the organization and impact of colonialism on its subjects, and (b) the economic basis of and cultural components of exploitation. Several key interpretations explore the oppressive organization of societies at the intersection of race and gender oppression, which increases divisiveness, and also increases the profitability of patriarchal Eurocentric capitalism (Wood, 2003). More specifically, reviewing the literature in this field at the macro level reveals the mechanisms of historical and cultural genocide towards African and Indigenous peoples by the European/North American metropolis (Fanon, 1967; Calliste & Dei, 2000). Out of the
intersection of theory and praxis potentially emerges a discourse that can encourage agency, activism and healing (Collins, 2000; Mohanty, 2002; Wane, 2002; Hooks, 1981/2003). A variety of lenses will be investigated and applied: anti-racist and indigenous theory, feminist theory, and anti-colonial theory in particular. This will include looking at the intersections between them.

In discussing Black life in America in the 21st century, bell hooks (2003) notes that the mainstream media has recently pronounced a failure of black people to seize the promise or “offering” of civil rights that would allow African-Americans to integrate with mainstream white America into a general culture celebrating mass consumerism and expansive capitalist wealth acquisition (Hooks, 2003: ix). She expresses her outrage at the way black people can be ‘talked about’ in the media, creating or perpetuating colonial-style Eurocentric ideologies that produce erasure and/or voicelessness and distort identity. In part this is a continuation of tropes of essentialism and the process of ‘othering’. In her essay “The Oppositional Gaze” Hooks discusses the historical process through which black children and adults were denied the right to ‘see’ (Hooks, 1992: 115). In feminist theory, the ‘gaze’ is male (Mulvey, 1988). Combine in anti-racism theory, which examines the white skin privilege (accorded to men and women) (Razack, 2002; hooks, 1992; Sefa Dei, 1996; Smith, 2005) and the ‘Othering’ process can be shown to include a crushing inability to vocalize – to give voice to.

The work of Spivak (1979) is concerned with the establishing of the speaking subaltern; the subaltern is the previously voiceless colonial ‘othered’; the subaltern can be male or female, but in Spivak’s theory the denial of voice to the female subaltern (marginalized, constructed, gazed on, spoken about and for) hopefully can be eradicated. The idea in communications theory, in particular reception theory (Fiske, 1992), provides one
lens or context in sociology for rethinking the possibility for resistance through positionality, conceptualized as active rather than passive reception. Fiske, (in the same vein as Hooks), though from the position of a white male, speaks of the possibilities of oppositional readings of mainstream media texts. Aboriginal authors’ study of Aboriginal stereotypes in the media is one such practice that can help understand the creation (historically and continuing in the present) for a numbing of the moral and ethical judgement respecting violence against Aboriginal (or African-American) women (Francis, 1992; Henry & Tator, 2002; Valaskakis, 2009, Allen,1998).

In a similar context, but slightly tangentially, one can argue that the emergence of women’s activism at the grassroots community level in Canada through such mechanisms as the healing or activist circle, presents a possibility of the subaltern discovering ways to ‘speak’; a continuation of an always ever-present oppositional stance; resistance by Aboriginal people to the destruction of their language, culture, spiritual traditions, and families (Haig-Brown, 1995; Valaskakis, 2009, Wane, 2008, Hylton et. al., 1999). Though for generations this has been dormant or muted, it has not ‘not’ existed; it assumed particular forms of individual, familial or community protest such as running away from the residential schools or continuation of banned spiritual ceremonies (Miller, 1996, Chrisjohn & Young, 2006). Today more widespread appearance of oral stories about abuse, violence, resistance, spiritual responses to cultural genocide by Aboriginal women (and male) authors for their own people (as well as a general, wider Canadian audience) is a step towards the bearing of witness to the crimes of the past and the struggles for local, regional, national and international human rights and redress of the wrongs of colonialism (Allen, 1998; Anzaldua, 1999; A. Smith, 2005; Sefa Dei, et al. 2000).
There are many theorists who explore the intersection of use of economic and cultural violence as mechanisms of control to ensure the development of colonial systems. In the 1950s, Memmi (1957), concerned with the impact of colonialism on Black people throughout the Diaspora wrote “Today, the economic motives of colonial undertakings are revealed by every historian of colonialism. The cultural and moral mission of the colonizer, even in the beginning, is no longer tenable” (Memmi: 3.). Anti-colonialism and what is now called post-colonial studies began to emerge in more concentrated and profound way beginning at the end of the 2nd world war, a time period which also brought about the emergence and triumph of many anti-colonial independence struggles/movements in the ‘developing world’. The Black power movement in the U.S. and the beginnings of Aboriginal rights discussions in Canada are two responses to a time period (the 1960s) when there was an emergence of much social unrest and demand for transformational change. Discussions of the role of the state, citizenship and the criminal-justice system in perpetuating inequalities in so-called liberal states has become an important strand emerging out of new-left struggles in the 1960s (McGillivray & Comaskey, 1999; Venne 1998; LaPrairie, 1993). As Bannerji (2000) writes of the implications of silence, “The repressed returns, as it were, in court cases, in refugee and immigration hearings, in women’s shelters, changing individual and private instances into examples of public and collective lives” (Bannerji: 153). This reveals both distinct as well as common links between Black and Aboriginal communities’ experience of, and resistance to, oppression.

Today, discussions of the impact of the destruction of the family (not as a universal template but as a variety of specific family forms in specific communities, whether African-American or Aboriginal), and the struggles to reclaim positive visions of family, motherhood
and healing, of intracommunity relations, are intersecting with larger discussions of international global capitalism, violence, human rights, national and international law regimes (Valaskakis et al, 2009; Amnesty International, 2002; Smith, 20005; Lavel-Harvard and Lavell, 2006; Bannerji, 2000; Anaya, 2003; Mohanty, 2002). A lot of this new work mixes theory and praxis discussions of history, politics and community oral stories as a way to ground and contextualize the theory (Collins, 2000).

Work on the continual problems of Aboriginal domestic violence as an outcome and continuation of colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy are examined by many authors including McGillivray and Comaskey (1999); Proulx and Perrault (2000); Haig-Brown (1995). This work emerges from individuals and organizations, such as the Indian Law Resource Center in Washington D.C. (2003) and is the subject of essays in many anthologies whether feminist, criminologist, anti-colonial, indigenous, anti-racist in focus. The writings of Flanagan (2008) and Macklem (2001) represent two of the recent discussions of Aboriginal rights, the Canadian Constitution, the meaning of citizenship and how ongoing pervasive violence in the criminal justice system must lead back to the ongoing interrogation of and dissection of white power, imperialism, the attempted destruction or cultural genocide of Aboriginal peoples. In much contemporary literature, the intersections of multiple sites of oppression and the linking of a variety of lenses are becoming more forcefully integrated out of once separate strands and discourses be they rudimentary or complex Marxist materialist economic/culture theories, feminism, anti-colonial theory, anti-race theory (Hemmons, 1996; Calliste & Dei, 2000; Grounds, Tinker and Wilkins, et. al., 2003; Mohanty, 2002).

The early writings of anti-colonial activists did not perhaps anticipate the perpetuation of colonialism by new or other means than the direct or indirect rules that had
defined the Eurocentric colonial project since the time of Columbus. However, Franz Fanon, a very important early African theorist, combining political, cultural and psychoanalytic perspectives to understand the deforming power of colonialism, remains a valuable theorist to read for his powerful insights into the internalization of negativity that colonialism orchestrates by marginalizing and denying the equality or value of the colonized in relation to the ‘superior’ European culture: education, justice system, literature, technology and so on. Fanon’s work combines anti-colonial theory with an understanding of the Marxist philosophy of estrangement and alienation combined with psychoanalytic tropes to explore the way that racism makes the black person turn into a self-hating, self-loathing ‘object’ who cannot remove “himself” from his fundamental ontological problem of being: black skin colour and its universal devaluation in both the colony and the capitalist imperial metropolis. He describes, for example in *Black Skins, White Masks*, the overawed African intellectual colonial individual enslaved by his sense of inferiority and the superiority of all things European and White. This is, as Fanon suggests, a disease of mind and spirit and is a mode of social and psychological disorientation and disorganization that has to be resisted.

One of Fanon’s insights is that dialectically racism infects and deforms not only the oppressed but the oppressor as well. In discussing Algeria in *A Dying Colonialism* he writes “the French language, the language of the occupier, was given the role of Logos, with ontological implications within Algerian society” (Fanon, 1959: 91). Resistance, as he notes, where and when it emerged, in part emerged with understanding of the necessity of resisting through and with the Arabic language (Fanon: 91). One of the other insights that a reader comes across in his writings is his understanding of the way in which European culture
insidiously mutates or transforms the colonized and oppressed into acceptance; resistance and alienation give way to feelings of “support and protection” (Fanon: 90).

But in a sense this is valid only to a point; to a particular historical juncture that now has been passed or surpassed, at least to a large extent in consciousness. Another of his interrogations is in the links between race hatred and projections of infantile or neurotic psychoanalytic (unconscious) sexual material by white people onto black men (and conceivably women) though his focus is on the black male, seen as brute and sexual competitor (Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks*, 1967). This is valuable or important in the sense that feminist theory (particularly radical, literary and psychoanalytic) sought to explore or understand links between sexual fantasy, projection, othering and perpetuation of masculinist, heterosexist and patriarchal ideologies and violence against women (Irigaray, 1982; Cixous, 2005).

In a broad theoretical sense, drawing from interdisciplinary strands, a discussion of how hegemony is established and maintained emerges from the early theory and the current work of authors such as Patricia Collins (2000) that combine theory and praxis. How is it that those who are oppressed may come to identify with the culture of the oppressor? Hegemony originally is a concept of Gramsci, an Italian Marxist who attempted to understand why Italian peasants and working class people accepted and embraced the Fascist totalitarian state apparatus whose interests were in reality diametrically opposed to their own. Discussions of the ways that the status quo can overwhelm through the normative ideological construction of the ruling elite, is another key theme in much cultural Frankfort School Marxist writings, feminist and anti-racist theories and anti-colonial discourse. It is a key component of the
writings of Barthes and of Foucault as well as Said, who investigate meaning and power in texts and institutions in the West that organize power through discourses.

Edward Said, a Palestinian, Western-based, post-colonial thinker, developed and expanded a theory out of the term “Orientalism” (1982). His work explores the process through which Western academics and intellectuals defined and codified ‘the Orient’ through powerful discourses that exoticized the “East” while at the same time demeaning the ‘Orient’; denying agency, voice, a separate and equal world view to anyone that was/is not European and white. As Memmi asserts, colonialism also is a process where local elites are manufactured through the education system. Local elites are groomed to play the intermediary role on behalf of the colonial overlords: they assume European or White values and police their own populations on behalf of the metropolis while the metropolis enables this small class to manage the society and to gain wealth at the expense of the impoverished, oppressed majority.

In his discussions on how colonialism operates as a system, Memmi writes of the economic dualities that undergird the system, speaking of the position of the ruling elite or the normative universal ‘man’ accorded citizenship’s protections.

“He finds himself on one side of a scale, the other side of which bears the colonized Man. If his living standards are high, it is because those of the colonized are low; if he can benefit from plentiful and undemanding labor and servants, it is because the colonized can be exploited at will and are not protected by the laws of the colony; if he can easily obtain administrative positions, it is because they are reserved for him and the colonized are excluded from them; the more freely he Breathes, the more the colonized are choked” (Memmi: 8).

In this one short passage there are many themes that all link together, that weave into a totalizing system. These themes do not just apply to the past, a past now eradicated in colonial settings in the Caribbean or Central America. Instead, each of these strands
continues to inform and structure the experience of life for many people living in North America (and around the world). The dualities, high and low, reveal the fundamental brutality of capitalism, patriarchy and racism; three intersecting oppressive regimes that are intertwined and work on sets of imperial, colonial, hierarchical denials and mystifications (Wood, 2003; Mohanty, 2002; Hemmons, 1996; Wane, 2002; Smith, 2002).

Historically, Aboriginal people have not protected by laws in the same way as other Canadians. Aboriginal people are and / have been colonized wards of the state through Canada’s Indian Act and Indian Affairs Department (Miller, 1996; Razack, 2002; Thobani, 2007). This raises the entire issue of what citizenship entails and means in North American democratic states. How is hierarchy pursued; what does inequality really mean in the context of racialized, gendered patriarchal capitalist states in the context of rights discourse?

Aboriginal people face higher rates of poverty under unemployment compared to other people in Canada. They also tend to live in communities plagued by domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction, suicide and hopelessness (McGillivray & Comaskey, 1999; Maidment, 2006). The exploitation of some, which involves physical and psychological violence, does in fact elevate the status and life chances of those who do not have to live at the very precarious margins, yet as Fanon’s insights prove; this exploitation demeans and deforms everyone (Fanon, 1967, 22).

As Razack (2002) L. Smith (2005) and A. Smith (2002), Collins (2000) and Hooks (1981; 2003) all expose in their respective writings on white privilege, cultural genocide, and multiple exploitation of African and Aboriginal women, the Black and Aboriginal person, embedded in culture, with hope for some access to alternative epistemologies and unique, diverse metaphysical understandings, is still primarily in terms of (bodies) stories of
colonization, and has been so for centuries. This exploitation and cultural genocide should be traced to Eurocentric imperialism and slavery (for Africans in the Diaspora today), or, for Aboriginal peoples, from the initial European-Aboriginal contact, also a process that began colonization. Colonialism, as an historical process, lead to colour hierarchies and alternatively Creole and Afro-American resistance, as well as to decimation of traditional native people’s cultures, societies, worldviews, and cosmologies in the name of Eurocentric superiority, as well as community resistance (Mithlo, 2009). Tropes of white, first world European superiority continues to the present, notably in the systemic violence of the new globalization process (Wood, 2003; Mohanty, 2002, Hemmons, 1996; Razack, 2000; Reynolds, 2007; Peterson and Runyan, 2010).

The lack of laws to protect women from violence within the global capitalist hegemony is in fact part of globalization’s mode of operation and organization: from sexual exploitation and criminalization of women in the developing world to violence against black and Aboriginal women in Canada (Smith, 2005; Reynolds, 2007; Sharma, 2005). Critical feminist race studies examine specific micro examples and macro trends, national and international, which expose the failures of justice systems and the aims of restorative justice (Balfour, 2008). As Paterson (2009) writes in Canada there has historical “systemic and structural bases of abuse” continue to exist and there is feeling in the criminal justice system that “there is a tendency to hold abused women accountable for their situation” (Paterson, www.straight.com/article-298015:1; Maidment, 2006).

As Fanon’s early anti-colonial work evokes, oppression works at both the macro (institutional) and at the micro (individual) level simultaneously. One does not want to essentialize oppression or reproduce victim tropes in the process, but at the same time, in
exploring and understanding how colonialism (in its current contemporary guises) is maintained and remains operative, one has to investigate where or why there is a continuation of silence, of erasure, of invisibility or distorted visibility, of disappearance. Sharma (2005) writing from a global context, discusses how anti-trafficking and anti-terror protocols, often supported unwittingly by white feminist activists, serves different purposes (for the state) than may be intended by well-meaning white liberal feminists. Seeing women in the developing world as victims in need of protection, in the process denying that their migration (even illegal) acts as a means to their agency, serves police and surveillance systems, serves the neo-liberal process that creates us/them binaries that Sharma writes about. This creates, for poor women, a system akin to “global apartheid” (Sharma: 89).

Why are Aboriginal women disappearing and why is the Canadian criminal justice system doing little to discover the reasons? Why do Aboriginal women and poor black women bear the brunt of patriarchal violence, both in domestic enclosures and in the cultural imaginary; in sexual exploitation and threat of violence, in lives notable for their level of trauma but also of resistance; in the problematic position of criminalization of poverty (Maidment, 2006)? Women, who are marginalized, deemed undeserving of equality (poor Aboriginal women, many African, immigrant and refugee women to Canada) due to drug addiction, prostitution as a means for survival, because of their need of welfare or mental health service. These women become invisible as they are stigmatized. This is as Sharma writes and as Maidment’s thesis contends, the process through which a criminalization of poverty and criminalization of poor non-white women occurs in Canada and around the world (Maidment, 2006; Sharma: 89-90).
As Sharma writes anti-trafficking, creates us/them boundaries, with citizenship and equality rights not extended to women who are deemed ‘victims’ of male violence and/or sex-trafficking. Certainly, as the literature in general shows, demonizing non-white women and marking them as “Other”, inferior, non-assimilatable, all fit components of the historical matrix of racism, sexism and colonialism (Collins, 2000). As Maidment notes in the case of Aboriginal women who enter the Canadian Corrections system as inmates, Corrections is often the last place they end up after years of struggling in their communities. The women are often ‘victims’ of systemic discrimination and poverty’s nexus of oppression: difficulty finding housing, supporting oneself and children, getting help for emotional or physical health problems, suffering from alienation from family, with a history of abuse from child welfare system to the intimate partner or stranger violence faced by adults.

Criminalization occurs in the context of survival (such as working as a prostitute, an economic necessity) as does disappearance (Maidment, 2006). The state systems, programs, institutions do not aim to help women help themselves, but instead criminalize and blame them. This is part of a neo-liberal framework that denies any social responsibility on the part of authorities, agencies, bureaucracies, government programs for individual problems (Maidment, 2006). As Reynolds (2008) in exploring globalization and criminalization of women suggests, there is an increase, around the world in the rise of number of non-white women convicted of crimes as the prison-building apparatus itself expands along with the low-wages that come to the developing world as part of the globalization process (Reynolds: 73).
Writing of imperialism and the struggle against it, L. Smith contends the necessity of:

“…dialogue across the boundaries of oppositions…we constantly collide with the dominant views while we are attempting to transform our lives on a larger scale than our own localized circumstances. This means struggling to make sense of our own world while also attempting to transform what counts as important in the world of the powerful. Part of the exercise is about recovering our own stories of the past. This is inextricably bound to a recovery of our language and epistemological foundations” (Smith: 39).

Indigenous people must not, as she argues, reject the West totally or attempt (impossibly) to return to some romantic notion of a traditional past that would in fact be reified and only built upon white myths; erasure of living, contemporary indigenous peoples cultures, which is what happens in the kind of stereotypical tropes of the idealized Native found in North American popular culture (Francis, 1992).

In addition, as Razack (2000) suggests transnational feminism is hopeful for coalition building but also contains the contradictions of global capitalist exploitation, the powerful urge of the West to come to ‘save’ the “developing world”. She writes, “Gayatri Spivak conveys some of the bodies, sites and events on my mind when I think transnationally. She describes transnationalism as: “Eurocentric migration, labour export both male and female, border crossings, the seeking of political asylum, and the haunting in-place uprooting of ‘comfort women’ in Asia and Africa” (Razack: 40-41). If a refugee hearing is an ordered, authoritative space, then the refugee woman is a representative of what our society conceives as “the disordered, chaotic…racialized” other (Razack: 41).
Representations

Francis’s work explores and deconstructs the idea of the “Noble Savage” the “vanishing Indian”, the “squaw” both in the elevated, Pocahontas Princess guise, or in the degraded, sexualized white male projection. To what extent do these stereotypes contribute to the normalizing of violence against the most unprotected of citizens, the invisible and the disappeared? Contemporary literature looks at the institutionalization of racism and sexism and its mechanisms for the continued attempt to complete the ongoing process of genocide (Smith, 2005).

Women in both the Black Diaspora and the Aboriginal communities of Canada and the U.S. have had to fight against and counter a long historical legacy of sexist representations of women: elevating and demeaning, sexualized and defined. As Smith writes, semantic representations codify what is legitimately ‘indigenous’ and problematically can ‘essentialize’ identities whether in a biological context, or as ‘group’ identities (L. Smith: 74). However, at the same time, “faith”, as bell hooks understands it, or “spirituality,” as it is discussed in healing circles by indigenous women activists, is a key and important conceptual frame through which to challenge colonialism, with its legacy of superiority of the European Christian church and Eurocentric culture (Smith: 74; Lavell-Harvard and Lavell, 2006; Anzaldua, 1999). As Smith writes, “The values, attitudes, concepts and language, embedded in beliefs about spirituality represent, in many cases, the clearest contrast and mark of difference between indigenous peoples and the West” (Smith: 74). The awareness, study and discussion of the historical position of women in black culture and/or in Aboriginal societies can act, equally, as a foil to the sexist, patriarchal ideas about black and Aboriginal women that have seeped into not only the mainstream culture but also the black

**Feminisms**

As some Black and Indigenous women activists argue, white feminism often creates a barrier to their total participation through the structure of a ‘universal’ white middle class feminist agenda that is predominantly anti-male, but also victimizes and demeans non-white women. In the case of Black and Aboriginal women, there is a definite community or group consciousness – the Black man and the Aboriginal man are exploited and while there is violence against Black and Aboriginal women from Black and Aboriginal men, seeing this violence only in the context of patriarchy, under-complicates a more complex set of problems and struggles that need to be addressed (Hooks, 2003; Mohanty, 2002; Allen, 2008). For these reasons, Black and Aboriginal women theorists and activists embrace portions of white feminism but contextualize this within their own community experiences, leading to separate and specific analyses within a more generalized umbrella framework of women’s rights issues (Collins, 2000). In other words, race and ethnicity cannot be separated out from gender very easily. Nor is there a desire to participate in such a feminism, because alternative epistemologies (Collins, 2000) are based upon the nature of awareness of links between historic colonial oppression and various forms of genocide practiced against both Black and Aboriginal nations/communities from slavery to the reserve system to the residential school and segregation to the neo-liberal present.

**Invisibility**

As bell hooks argues, with reference to pronouncements on ‘where’ the Black community is today in the white mainstream press, if there is nothing more to ‘say’ about
Black people in America this does nothing but reflect upon the continuation of a general dismissal of Black culture, community, voice and agency, because black people remain primarily an underclass: “gone, no longer there to be looked at, gazed upon, or talked about”. (Hooks: ix). As she argues, erasure of a people leads to a fundamental loss of sense of necessity of elite accountability to address root causes and historical reasons for ongoing oppression. A marked lack of lack of self-esteem still plagues African-Americans. This, hooks asserts, even includes African-Americans now firmly located economically and professionally in the middle class, performing at a high standard vis-a-vis other American middle class professionals, who still feel a ‘need’ to prove their equality and worth. As she notes, unfortunately, this is another manifestation of racism, sexism or the intersection of both: a self-immolation, self-hatred, depression, suicide attempts, self-directed violence (Hooks, 2003).

The criminal-justice system in Canada, to give an example, contends that needs, when they become assessed as risks (in the case of female prisoners), are signs of deviance in Aboriginal women and reveal lack of ability to ‘change’ criminal behaviour (Restoule, 2009: 268). Self-harming, a strategy of Aboriginal women in prison to cope with stress, sadness, loneliness, is linked in studies to prior abuse, either in childhood or adult sexual abuse (Monture-Angus, 2000: 56-57). As she writes, “the individualized nature of law obscures systemic and structural factors” (Monture-Angus: 57). This leads to a lack of understanding, an invisibility which denies women their equality even in the limited rights (if any) that a prisoner can expect (Monture-Angus, 2000).
Patriarchy

The problems that Black women face regarding violence in their communities and in the wider mainstream culture has parallels in the violence that Aboriginal women face in urban and reserve settings. The high percentage of Aboriginal women incarcerated in relation to their numbers in general in the Canadian population is matched by the increasing numbers of Black women also finding themselves imprisoned for various offences, often defensive with regard to the structural oppression they face in their daily lives (Hayman, 2006). If 3% of all women in Canada are Aboriginal women, 74% of women in prison in Canada are Aboriginal people (Hannah-Moffat & Shaw, 2000). As Venne (1998) writes, Aboriginal women, as a result of the structure of the Indian Affairs Department and the various historical revisions to the Aboriginal Acts, have been oppressed institutionally via debates about their ‘status’. Gender violence in oppressed, impoverished communities on reserves and in urban cities like East Vancouver and Winnipeg results from women’s shifting official status or denial of status. This shows how laws and institutions frame gender oppression and Aboriginal women’s relations to white society, with legislation and policy impeding healing in the indigenous communities. Robert Picton has been sentenced for his murders of many Aboriginal women from the Vancouver area, yet Aboriginal women in Vancouver East and other areas of B.C. (and across Canada) argue rightly that he is not the sole cause of native women’s disappearances. Larger investigations of violence against Aboriginal women across Canada and in B.C. are needed, and women march and organize to make their community’s pain real to the rest of Canadians (Culhane, 2003).

As both Hooks and some Indigenous feminist writers contend, Black men and Aboriginal men unfortunately buy into or are ‘tricked’ by the consumer, macho, patriarchal
capitalist culture even though there is fundamentally no place for Black or Native men in that society, except at very bottom rungs of the socio-economic ladder (Hooks, 2003; Allen, 2008). As some argue, native leaders, primarily men, now involved in the struggle for self-government in Canada, in many ways act like the colonized elites described by Fanon and Memmi or Said – they personally get rich and powerful and find power in the attention they receive from white people, which only indicates their level of spiritual self-immolation and the degree to which native communities, which rely on a sharing of male and female power, traditionally, are destroyed by ongoing colonialism (Flanagan, 2008; Fiske and George, 2007; Mithlo, 2006).

**Rights and Governance**

To date, solutions, whether civil rights in the U.S. or increase devolving of power and responsibility for Aboriginal people in Canada to the Aboriginal administrative organizations at the band level, have not healed the pain and trauma of the past. In part, this has to do with the structural economic and cultural oppression which Black and Aboriginal people have to continually struggle against despite so-called transformations in American or Canadian societies. An analysis of history and its impact on the present is a key theme in a range of scholarly works. These writings which have begun, in recent decades to propose that without presenting an analysis of the past the fundamental rights of Indigenous people or the Black underclass in the U.S. will remain marginalized, subaltern, and ignored.

The stories of history, collective and personal, general and specific, have to be continually told and revisited as a component in the struggle for healing and for justice. Establishing agency and voice in respective oppressed communities: whether African American, Afro-Canadian Diaspora, North American native peoples, requires specific, local,
regional, national and global analyses to produce the context for healing. Healing will emerge through study and reflection, through oral histories, through artistic and political analyses and organizing, through community-based struggle, through painful and direct examination of and focus on the structural, systemic devaluing of large numbers of ‘citizens’ supposedly equal but in fact empirically unequal in the national and global imaginary (Sefa Dei, 1996; hooks, 2003; Razack, Miller, 1996; Collins, 2000, Smith, 2002).

The exploitation of the disenfranchised and displaced has made it historically much easier to carry out the capitalist agenda. Wood (2003) contends that individual and collective violence is orchestrated by global capitalism (Wood, 2003). bell hooks writes, “Black children will continue to suffer assaults on their self concept if there are no enlightened witnesses who intervene and lay the groundwork for self-esteem to flourish” (Hooks: 199). While Marx and Engels focused on class divisions and economic and cultural exploitation of workers, concluding one of the intra-working class divisions lay in the division of gendered labour in the family, they did not focus on the problem of the division of ‘man’ into racial categories; they did not translate their concepts of alienation, exploitation and estrangement of man in an anti-racist, anti-colonial context.

In fact, original Marxism may have exacerbated or reproduced ideas of the “Orient” as somehow backwards, as not following the inevitable need to progress through structural stages to reach capitalism, needed to prepare for emergence of ‘class consciousness’. The work towards delineating a wider field of understanding the true dynamics and nature of conflict (which includes anti-race and anti-colonial discourses as well as Indigenous, class analysis and gender analyses) has been diverse, fragmented and cumulative; a process of a
century and a half of actual historical struggle and increasingly sophisticated theoretical analysis at many varied points of intersection.

This literature review has touched upon the major strands that lead from the macro to the micro levels of analysis and from the micro to the macro analysis of violence against native and Black women. This review of literature can help us understand or lead to further exploration of the thesis of this essay: how does invisibility or distorted visibility lead to disappearance and what are the links between invisibility and gendered violence? The next few chapters of the thesis will focus on the problem of Aboriginal women in Canada, comparing their experiences of violence and/or disappearance to that of African Diaspora women. Under globalization, Black women and Indigenous women are facing an increase of violence, trauma, and backlash against rights equality in Canada and around the world.

The following chapters will draw from the theorists discussed above as well as writers who are working in the same frameworks or using similar lenses to understand racism, gender exploitation, and the failures of the criminal justice system to protect and grant equality of citizenship to those marginalized under patriarchal capitalism. This is the confluence of the multiple oppressions that black women and native women in North America and around the world face daily demonstrating links between violence and colonialism, cultural genocide and patriarchy, trauma, violence and capitalism. Out of reflecting, sifting, examining the evidence lies the possibility of emergence of the speaking subaltern, with resistance possible in the healing circles of restorative justice, the repudiation of sexist/racist images, and the hopes and idealism of truly enshrining basic tenets of international human rights for all women in the context of their communities.
Chapter Two:
“Identity, Representation, Otherness, Colonialism and “White Settler Society”

Aboriginal women are developing specific activist strategies to overcome the legacies of colonialism and the impact of racism and gender oppression, all intersecting components of Eurocentrism. The decoding of colonial history and the discussion of racist tropes that demean Aboriginal women and African women in the Diaspora are two intersecting strategies of scholars and community activists over the past two to three decades. Understanding and accounting for marginality, invisibility and disappearance by getting a better appreciation of how the modern state and cultural normative institutions constructs us/Them binaries is key to anti-racist, anti-colonial and anti-patriarchal strategies.

White Settler Society and Violence Against Women

Razack (2002) defines North American society as a ‘white settler society’ (Razack: 2). This is an ideological construction which proclaims that European settlers to Canada (and other nations) peacefully settled previously so-called empty territories, now claimed in the name of European science, rationality, civilization and progress (Razack: 2). The concept that entire nations did not exist nor have legitimacy is the problematic reality of ‘white settler ideology’. Whether African kingdoms (with millions entering the new world as slaves to work on industrial plantations in the Caribbean and the Americas) or Indigenous nations with complex, sophisticated cultures and allegiances spread across what would later become the U.S. and, in the north, Canada, the realities of alternative civilizations to that of European white society, are negated. Superior technology and weaponry and a disregard for the environment evident in emerging industrial capitalism intertwined with visions of the
trueness and singularity of Christianity and the ‘right’ to exploit other peoples, non-white peoples and their resources, have created the context of historical racism and new forms of class division and gender discrimination that have characterized modernism.

**Violence and legalism.**

Razack’s writing on the social nature of space shows how law, European law, democratic law participates in the creation and maintenance of the mythic white settler concept, a concept that separates white people from ‘inferior’ others; the others with whose labour Europeans built their wealth and conquered the world. The legal doctrine “terra nullis” which means “empty, uninhabited lands” becomes codified in the liberal democratic system (Razack: 3). “…Already inhabited nations were simply legally deemed to be uninhabited if the people were not Christian, not agricultural, not commercial, not ‘sufficiently evolved’ or simply in the way.” (Razack: 3). The white myth of dominating and controlling space by claiming it, naming it, developing resources and populating land undermines any other alternative histories claims or relationships to nature. Hence a colonial social construction, an ideology that institutionalizes racism through erasure and denial, through the disappearance of any history that does not fit this dominating trope, comes to dominate and become normalized (Razack: 3-4).

As Linda Smith (2005) shows the exploitation of land and resources includes mistreatment of the women associated with those marginalized, erased land/meanings, needing to be destroyed to obtain or gain property rights over the “other”. Men assume a patriarchal right/superiority over women (women as property) even in white society (historically). This is extended and expanded to the equation of Black and Aboriginal bodies, especially women. The body of a woman is equated with nature, which is inferior, a resource,
something natural, primitive, to be controlled, destroyed and used. This is how white settler society, through associations, intellectual, economic, cultural, religious, social, organizes and enshrines sexism and violence against women.

**Binary Bodies/ Social Position**

The historical and contemporary outcome of such processes is “the policing of bodies of colour” (Razack: 4). To ‘unmap’ is to ‘denaturalize geography” and undo “the colonial mastery that maps and concrete spaces provide” (Razack: 5). As Razack remarks, “When police drop Aboriginal people outside the city limits leaving them to freeze to death, or stop young Black men on the streets or in malls….we experience the spatiality of the racial order in which we live” (Razack: 6).

As McGrath and Stevenson (1996) write, recent social constructionist discourses deconstruct binary paradigms central to Eurocentrism. The problem with entrenched binaries is that they can also unfortunately and easily collapse into essentialism, the adoption of colonial language and colonial structures and thinking that perpetuates rather than creates space for emerging voices, for the speaking subaltern. In the 1990s there was a very intense debate among feminists, centered on the idea that non-Aboriginal scholars writing about colonialism are merely reproducing colonial tropes – that tales of oppression and victimization rather than the aboriginal-lived response to colonial government policies reinscribe colonial mindsets (McGrath & Stevenson: 38). Discovering ways to move beyond this re-inscribing of rigid boundaries so that dialogue and collaborative work can explore the various intersections between race, colonialism, segmented labour, gender inequality and systemic institutional violence, is a 21st century imperative.
Writers critical of the 1980s-1990s liberal anti-violence movement, a white feminist movement that looks to the police and criminal justice system to solve problems of gender and race violence, are forgetting that historical foundational violence against non-white people normalized white settler entitlement. As Razack forcefully asserts, “white settler society….origins lie in the dispossession and near extermination of Indigenous populations by the conquering Europeans” (Razack: 1).

**Representations and Colonialism**

Representations of Aboriginal women and Black women swung between good/bad tropes, but in essence both were negative and all were examples of appropriation and stereotypical image production meant to demean women; to subject them to and normalize violence of various kinds against them. Ramirez (2004) writes that violence against Aboriginal women includes the stereotypical representations produced in European/North American white culture that participates in demeaning them, thus making violence possible (Ramirez: 103). She writes of the “American Indian Holocaust” (Ramirez: 103). The terms ‘holocaust’ and ‘genocide’ although they may appear overly harsh or strong to white people, increasingly are used by both men and women in Aboriginal histories/discourses to categorize what happened to their ancestors and their cultures at the hands of white institutions, including government and church (Miller, 1996; Smith, 2005; McGrath & Stevenson, 1996). Similar terms or usages of ‘holocaust’ and ‘genocide’ explain the oppressive policies towards Black peoples in the Diaspora beginning with imperial industrial slavery (Collins, 2000).
**Black Women, Stereotypes, Struggles**

Stereotypes of black and native women are pervasive in North American popular culture. As Collins writes, “Portraying African-American women as stereotypical mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot mommas, helps justify U.S. Black women’s oppression” (Collins: 69). The struggle for black women’s cultural, political and economic equality is based in part on struggling against the continued pervasiveness of these negative images (Collins: 69). Collins, quoting Hazel Carby, notes that dominating stereotypes are meant “Not to reflect or represent a reality but to function as a disguise, or mystification, of objective social relations (1987, 22)” (Collins: 69). The point being made is that such stereotypes normalize or naturalize “social injustice” (Collins: 69). This makes it easier to deny Black (and Aboriginal) women equality and justice. In Calliste’s (2000) study of black nurses and black railroad porters in Canada from the 1940s to the 1970s, the author finds a mix of use of stereotypical representations and gate-keeping job discrimination policies and practices. These involve both private and public sector rules and laws and customs and are based on normative accepted ‘othering’ of Black people that stretches back to stereotypes that were employed to justify the appropriateness of Europeans transforming African people into slaves.

She shows how immigration authorities contributed to creating and maintaining Canada’s segmented labour market (Calliste: 150).

“The manner in which they were incorporated into the labour market – as free immigrant labour with citizenship rights, or unfree migrant labour – were structured by a dialectic of economic, political and ideological relations (the demand of employers for cheap labour and the state’s desire to exclude Blacks as permanent settlers)” (Calliste: 150).
A similar study examining the experience of Black immigrant looking for work in Toronto in the 1990s confirms the arc of gatekeeping, devaluation and stereotypical representations that denies often highly qualified educated women from a variety of nations, their equality in Canada (Elabor-Idemudia, 2002).

Canada may acknowledge (to some extent) its failings in the distant past – the result of overt racist settlement policies – but since the introduction of multiculturalism in the 1980s, Canadian official ideology denies the continuation or perpetuation of a stratified society based on race, class, and gender. Yet, statistics and oral stories show pervasive patterns across these two historical periods. African immigrant women to Canada today arrive mainly through a family class provision. But this gives men control over their wives for up to ten years due to the provision that the women are not allowed to work. Additionally African women often do not speak English or French and as they are not seen as in need of learning either language for purposes of employment or skill upgrading. They remain marginalized and isolated within their immigrant communities, often victims of male rage and violence, the outcome of lack of status of the men in Canada and the coping strategies they have or do not have (Elabor-Idemudia: 90-92).

Significantly, in an historical and comparative analytical frame, all African people are designated as “African”. What is not of concern to the Canadian state or society is the diversity of linguistic, cultural, national, educational experiences of individual women and women and men within varied, diverse communities of origin. This is another way in which identity is erased or marginalized by the Canadian state and culture (Elabor-Idemudia: 92). What she calls a kind of infantilism takes place; women immigrants, even if they have advanced university degrees, are seen more as children than as adult women (Elabor-
Idemudia: 92). When work is obtainable, statistics show “a bi-modal pattern of employment with over-representation of immigrant women in the manufacturing and service sectors in comparison to Canadian-born women” (Elabor-Idemudia: 93).

**Colonialism and Essentialism**

Not only are these parallels with early 20th century experience of Black immigrants to Canada, but also with the First Nations’ experience of having their individual nations devalued and denied, named ‘Indians’ and clumped together as all being the same, essentialized into an “other” category of peoples who ‘once existed’ in Canada. In his seminal writings on the power and impact of colonialism on black people in Africa, Frantz Fanon reflected on how white skin privilege denies equality to black people because everything ‘black’ is negatively associated at the linguistic level, whereas everything white is elevated and made the template for the norm of citizenship, equality, intelligence, decency, civilization (Fanon, 1963). In Canada, this translates into “Canadian experience only” in employment that acts as a gate-keeping mechanism, deskillling non-white immigrants arriving in Canada who arrive to find a segmented, racist, sexist society of embedded oppression.

**More on Othering/Binaries and Violence**

In a sophisticated dialectical argument, Collins discusses how the “othering” of people at the margins of society acts as a means for those who are categorizing to gain power from the very act of “othering” (Collins: 70). Collins writes that the “other” becomes of central importance in maintaining the centre because “individuals who stand at the margins of society clarify its boundaries” (Collins: 70). This is similar to Fanon’s earlier anti-colonial discourse exploring the poisonous dialectic established in colonial societies, where all are
essentially deformed by racism and colonialism, both in the colony and the metropolis. Binaries fuel the Eurocentric intellectual, philosophical, scientific rational system. These include “white/Black, male/female, reason/emotion, culture/nature, fact/opinion, mind/body, and subject/object” (Collins: 70). As McGrath and Stevenson suggest, binaries get entrenched even in oppositional political struggle, creating a weave of interconnected problems in need of clarification and sorting out – the goal of social construction and self-reflexive educational discourses and grassroots activism for change (Smith, 2002; Hooks, 1992; Calliste & Dei, 1999; Cornet, 2007; Mohanty, 2003).

As Collins writes, objectification is central to patriarchal, capitalist relations, the materialization of and despiritualization of the world for the purpose of control and exploitation by white Europeans / North American white culture (Collins: 70-71). The constant fear is the encroaching of the primitive on the civilized, i.e. white. Women are associated in binary thinking with nature, the primitive, ‘the Other’ (Collins: 71). Within this there are segmented hierarchies. In other words, class, gender, and race intersect – poor Black women and Aboriginal women will find themselves at the very bottom of these binary hierarchies, subject to the most demeaning stereotypes that prop up the so-called superiority of white male normalcy (Collins: 71).

Aboriginal Othering

Smith (2005) elaborates upon this concept in her discussion of theorist Ann Stoler’s work, showing the links between binary categories, inclusion and exclusion: “in the modern state it is the constant purification and elimination of racialized enemies within the state that ensures the growth of the national body” (Smith: 8-9). The state’s entire construction, its intricate mechanisms and institutions, all revolve around this basic desire to include some
and exclude others. If Aboriginal people are ‘absent’ then they are ‘vanishing’; hence all exploitation and conquest of land, historically, has been justified (Smith: 9).

Violence against black women and against native women is therefore directly related to colonialism and the images created to maintain colonial hierarchies in monarchical and emerging democratic states, and from history into present circumstances. Canada’s dealings with Aboriginal nations changed from the colonial period to the post-Confederation period and finally in the 1980s after Canada developed its own Constitution and Charter, but in none of these periods was much gain accomplished by Aboriginal people without, as in most recent decades, heightened struggle (Cornet: 148). The same is found, as Calliste notes, in the anti-racist struggles of Black nurses relegated to lowest paying jobs within the profession, while at the same time demeaned through representations of being too loud, aggressive and not as ‘smart’ as white women nurses (Calliste: 144).
Chapter Three:
Women as “Other” in History; Representations

The specific forms of exploitation faced by Aboriginal women lie in the designation of Aboriginal peoples as officially ‘Other’; wards of the state, from Confederation onwards, in need of civilizing and assimilation through what Foucault would call the discipline of moral regulation. This involved denial of their world views, cosmologies, language, cultural, political and economic traditions, national differences. As Cornet writes

“Assignment to a racial category other than “white” often triggered some form of legal disadvantage such as barriers to voting rights, immigration or certain kinds of employment…the racialization of First Nations people through the Indian Act began to eclipse the Crown’s recognition of Indigenous nations and the treaties the Crown had entered into with them” (Cornet: 150).

McGrath and Stevenson write that in Canada missionaries were the main impetus for the “ideological rationale for the subjugation of Aboriginal peoples, they had direct input into the development of federal Indian policies” (McGrath & Stevenson: 39). Soon after Confederation (1867) the Indian Affairs Department of Canada was established. As McGrath and Stevenson write

“The authority under which the federal government based its coercive powers was the 1867 British North America Act (BNAA). Section 91(24) of the BNAA gave the federal government of Canada exclusive jurisdiction over "Indians, and Lands reserved for Indians." (McGrath & Stevenson: 40)

A year after Confederation, the Indian Affairs Department was organized. Eight years later, the Indian Act “extended the powers of the state and imposed more stringent regulations affecting all aspects of Indian life and Indian land management.” (McGrath & Stevenson: 40).
Control of Aboriginal, People, Control of Aboriginal Women = Violence

The Canadian state codified racism in law via the controlling of Aboriginal people: where they would live, how they would be ‘educated’, the inability to (in the main) rise above the most impoverished economic status. The main focus of government and church-derived policies was a focus on Aboriginal women, introducing a long history of what McGrath and Stevenson write is a

“process of statutory female subjugation…as new regulations were passed which discriminately undermined the traditional roles, authorities, and autonomy of Aboriginal regulations that directly affected Aboriginal women” (McGrath & Stevenson: 40).

Colonialism perpetrated the deconstruction of strong, vibrant native national cultures, cultures which often included a more equal or even matriarchal kinship structure and human economic relations based on philosophies of reciprocity. The new structures of forced assimilation replaced native diversity with European ideas of superiority, of male superiority over women, of white over Aboriginal, hierarchies that became incorporated into Aboriginal culture through white colonial domination (McGrath & Stevenson, 1996; Cornet, 2007; Smith, 2005).

As Mohawk (2003) writes the story of the Iroquois is of a Confederacy of Aboriginal nation which until the 19th century was a gynocracy (Mohawk: 20). He mentions that Indigenous feminist Paula Gunn writes of how an emerging patriarchal leader, Handsome Lake, “advocated that young women ‘cleave’ to their husbands rather than to their mothers and that they abandon the clan mother-controlled longhouse in favour of a patriarchal, nuclear family arrangement” (Mohawk: 21). Prior to his ‘rise’ to power, Iroquois law stated that “Women were to be considered the progenitors of the nation, owning the land and the
soil” (Mohawk: 21). This shift to patriarchy on the part of the Seneca and other nations is, as Mohawk writes, a key topic for discussion among indigenous feminist and native historians of the past two decades. A combination of Quaker religious influence and American government manipulation of Handsome Lake and his followers, were instrumental in breaking in the power or equality of Aboriginal women, destroying traditional Aboriginal culture and cosmology (Mohawk: 21-22)

Mohawk adds to this debate by challenging much of the scholarship, arguing that in fact Handsome Lake’s teachings were pro-woman and pro-longhouse, and that the imperialism of American colonialism in active destruction of Aboriginal cultures and usurping of territories was more destructive to gender relations in Aboriginal societies than has previously been considered (Mohawk: 30-32). Much of the writing of feminist historians, who are examining white culture’s representations of Black and Indigenous women in the 18th and 19th century, correspond to Mohawk’s contention that the threat to gynocracy, however much it actually existed, came more from white European Americans than from inside Aboriginal cultures.

Sexualized Aboriginal Women’s Representations

As Ramirez writes, early colonial art in the U.S. represented the conquest of America by white Europeans depicted as a domination of a white man over an Aboriginal woman (Ramirez: 103). In one iconic white male art work, a naked Indian woman is resting in a hammock, beckoning a white soldier to a sexual tryst symbolic of the white process of civilization, of taking over and conquering (Ramirez: 103). This is one form of (idealized) sexualized relationship between white men and Aboriginal women, where the Aboriginal women were portrayed as princesses or, as Gail Valaskakis writes, “historical images of
Indians as passive extensions of the land or obstacles to its development” (Valaskakis: 125). This is also an example of the Pocahontas “princess” motif, and shows how this motif plays into white settler culture tropes – the willing turning over of land to the white man as a kind of romantic love, a symbol of collective cooperation between all.

Another trope however, one that is a binary of the first, undermines the romantic and replaces it with the more realistic European feelings towards Aboriginal people, in particular Aboriginal women. This is the image of the dirty native woman, the squaw, juxtaposed on the clean white civilized woman/ respectable middle class Northern European people.

“Eurocentric tales described Aboriginal Americans in racialized terms as polluted and dirty, which encouraged violence against Aboriginal women” (Ramirez: 104). A 1855, novel by a second-rate yet popular white author living in California, Hilton Helper, described Aboriginal people as “wrapped in filthy rags, with their persons unwashed, hair uncombed and swarming with vermin….loitering about kitchens and slaughter-houses waiting to seize upon and devour like hungry wolves such offal or garbage as may be thrown to them” (Ramirez: 104). This was not a singular case of overt racism, but part of a growing national imaginary.

Smith notes that a campaign for the Ivory Soap product in the late 1880s, manufactured by Proctor & Gamble, now a corporate multinational giant, sold soap by exploiting and demeaning native women (Smith: 9). This disturbing poem contained the lines “From moon to moon unwashed we went/but IVORY SOAP came like a ray/Of light across our darkened way/And now we’re civil, kind and good/And keep the laws as people should” (Smith: 9). The idea that Aboriginal identity could be washed away, that skin colour is a sign or marker of inherent inferiority reveals colonialism and racism’s intersection at its most bare
and venal. This also parallels Fanon’s discussion of the inability of a Black person from ever separating themselves from their imposed upon inferiority when inferiority is based upon skin colour itself (Fanon, *White Skin, Black Masks*, 1967).

The treatment of children by nuns and church teachers in ‘residential schools’ parallels the myth in the advertising – Aboriginal people can be ‘changed’ by cleansing them of their culture and their difference. Mistreatment of the most brutal kind has been documented by generations of survivors of the schools, from needles stuck in tongues of children ‘caught’ speaking their Aboriginal language, to brutal scrubblings and beatings (Miller, 1996). Violence and self-hatred, suicide, self-defeating behaviours, aggression and addiction were outcomes of generations of mistreatment as were estrangement of self from cultural and community identity.

Added to this, as Smith explores, is enforced sterilization of generations of native women and the environmental destruction of Aboriginal lands through legislation that allowed companies to deposit nuclear and other wastes in or near reserve lands throughout North America (Smith, 2005). As Smith writes, at all levels, from the personal defilement of the human body to the defilement of the land, are genocide, holocaust and violence. In this context, how could it not be that individual and collective violence against young native women in the past few decades (and much earlier) would exist? It is also not surprising that the discernible, troubling lack of adequate police and government response to this epidemic of disappearances would be the norm.

*More on White Settler Society: Spatial Racism and Representation: The Black Experience*

Unfortunately attitudes found represented in the fiction by the Californian author or the brutal experience of native people and black people in a highly racialized U.S. society
have historically been prevalent in Canadian white settler society. One only has to think of
the establishment of Chinatown in Vancouver or cities in the U.S. like San Francisco, or
geographic segregated zones for immigrants where unrepentant, unassimilable Asians were
described in novels and newspapers as filthy and evil (Schick, 2002) to see how racism
operates to spatially and socially erase or contain. Similarly, black people after slavery were
forced to live throughout the U.S. first in the segregated South, and later in ‘slums’ in
Northern cities when they were migrating in search of work after the collapse of hand-cotton
industrial labour. In parts of Canada, particularly in Nova Scotia, such as in what is called the
urban slum area, Africville, in Halifax, conditions of life lived in segregation from whites,
and working as indenture labour were common Afro-Canadian experiences.

Historically, Black women immigrants could only come to Canada, and often only for
limited periods on work permits, if they were willing to work as domestics (Castagna & Dei,
2000: 33). Black people first came to Canada in the 18th century as slave-servants (Castagna
and Dei: 33). Toronto Black activists in the early the 20th century were struggling
unsuccessfully to prevent the racist Hollywood film, Birth of a Nation, which elevated the
racist Klu Klux Klan to heroic status, from being shown in Canada (Castagna & Dei: 34).
Tarzan, a popular fictional character in early 20th century Canada enshrined ideas of white
superiority and radiant white femininity, as opposed to savage black African men and women
(Castagna & Dei: 34).

These facts from history reveal the dimensions of spatial and cultural social
configuration that normalize and reinforce tropes of white purity and white privilege
(Razack, 2002; Nelson, 2002). Though anti-Black racism was not as institutionally pervasive
in Canada as in the U.S., especially the U.S. South, racism against Black people in Canada,
as Castagna and Dei assert, has an equally long history, from spatial Othering to stereotypical misrepresentation, to more recently overpolicing, underpolicing, gatekeeping, and other forms of institutional Othering and exclusion.

Until the 1950s, the best employment black men could hope for was work as porters on the railways (Calliste, 2000). Henry, Tator, Mattis and Rees (2000) provide other examples of Canadian official anti-Black racism. Immigration of Black people to the Prairies, at a time when immigration was being encouraged, is documented in government reports of the early 20th century (Henry, Tator, Mattis and Rees: 71). Black men were deemed “unmanly” which was necessary for survival and success in building the new “Canada”. One of those who believed this was J.S. Woodsworth, a founding member of the CCF, later the NDP party. (Henry, Tator, Mattis and Rees: 71). Throughout Canada, especially in Nova Scotia “Racial discrimination continued to be evident in the schools, government, the workplace, residential housing and elsewhere” (Henry, Tator, Mattis and Rees: 72).

Segregation existed in Montreal, as evident in a case where a black patron unable to drink in a restaurant took his case all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada at the onset of World War II. The court ruled “racial discrimination was legally enforceable” (Henry, Tator, Mattis and Rees: 72). Black women, as Castagna and Dei also noted, worked for white women as domestics, often only through limited time work-permits, separated from family causing disruption to them and their children, a situation which continued into the 1970s at the very least (Razack, 2002). Studies of black women domestics working in exploitative, often violent conditions with few rights have been published to reveal Canada’s racist legacy (Silvera, 1988). Henry, Tator, Mattis and Rees’ discussion of the strong links between Britain and Canada and the U.S. and Canada demonstrates how imperial, colonial mass racialized
images (produced widely in the powerful media industries of America) influenced and shaped perceptions of African Diaspora people in the small, mainly white society of Canada, a society which only embraced multiculturalism, officially, in the 1980s.

**Race, Violence, Residential Schools**

Aboriginal people could hope for even less. Subjected as children to the regimentation of the industrial and residential schools, generations of Aboriginal families were torn apart, leading to long-term problems such as inability to establish intimate familial relationships, alienation from one’s culture, homelessness, and poverty (Miller, 1996). Problematized child rearing practices, stress, trauma, and lack of self esteem in an economy which denied Aboriginal people the right to decent wage labour all became aspects of Aboriginal experience. Aboriginal oral histories are now replacing or competing with white accounts (even those which take an anti-colonial view) and are challenges to ideas of Aboriginal as victims (McGrath & Stevenson: 38).

**Using Space to Construct the “Other”**

Razack writes that theorist Henri Lefebvre noted that ‘abstract space’ such as buildings, streets or neighbourhoods or parks take on social meaning when decisions made about who can use what space and when (Razack: 8-9) are common social occurrences. For example she cites how “the padlocked park produced as illegitimate the homeless who might use the park to sleep” while the community group of white homeowners living around the park who voted to introduced the padlock are acting like white settlers, keeping out and in the process defining the ‘other’; the excluded, marginalized, less than equal citizen (Razack: 9-10). This is actual and metaphoric ‘othering,’ as are the reserve system, the representation of native people in slums, the perception of lack of control or discipline of Aboriginal youth,
the segregation of black people, the denial of equality of jobs, living conditions, education and wages; the negative imposed upon sexualized representations of Black and Aboriginal women. Ownership exists outside the self and collectivity; representation is a sign of trauma, violence, dehumanization, criminalization motifs.

**Subjected Violated Bodies: Aboriginal Women, African Women**

All of the propositions to demean and destroy “Others” were a way, as Collins and many other writers suggest, to elevate the white mainstream ideologically and materially, creating an economic and social bureaucratic hierarchy (Razack: 9) while ensuring a large body of non-white, poor labourers to do the most unwanted of jobs the economy required in order to grow, expand and thrive. While demeaned and separated, the poor, morally regulated, act as well psychically as the boundary outside of the bourgeois state, with the bourgeois personality (white male iconic) belonging to the state in a series of codified gendered relationships (Razack: 11).

Foucault, as Razack writes, was clear in showing how bourgeois society introduces regulation of bodies “subjected and practiced bodies”, “docile bodies” (Razack: 11). These are micro processes, part of a larger power dynamic based in inequalities, policed through “Timetables, specific, repeated movements, continual examinations, penalties for lateness, absences, inattention” (Razack: 11). The school becomes one of these key institutions used to ‘break’ Aboriginal culture and to force assimilation through moral regulation and discipline. Christian education or lack of education for black children (in the U.S) is another form of discipline.
But as Hooks and other anti-racist scholars maintain, no matter how deep segregation, othering, or racism go, there always forms of resistance, cultural retention, different ways of seeing and imagining (McGrath & Stevenson: 38).

**Space, Segregation, Othering, Violence: The Intersections**

While all non-white women and men have historically lived within the normalizing of racist and sexist stereotypes, it is Aboriginal women and Black women who have faced violence as an institutional practice of colonial patriarchy most completely. Black and Aboriginal women have had to deal with violence from men with whom they are in intimate relationships, other men from their own communities, as well as from white men. Colonialism leads to stereotypical normalization of externalized and internalized myths of the princess and the squaw, the mammy and the insatiable black woman: sexually available, promiscuous, and in all demeaning stereotypes, typified as being “dirty”.

As Smith notes, early colonial settlers regarded Aboriginal people as descendents of Canaanites, a tribe of sexually promiscuous perverted people destroyed by God at Sodom (Smith: 10). Drawing a direct connection between Aboriginal women and sex workers, Smith shows how in the popular imaginary, both groups of women are not deserving of justice when and if they are raped by men because they are somehow conceived of as morally inferior, not to be believed or trusted (Smith: 10). This is a denial of ‘bodily integrity’ and of rights of equality and citizenship accorded to all other women. (Smith: 10). Aboriginal sex workers, many of whom are among the disappeared in Canada, face a complex oppression, and a denial of legal and human rights, though as McGrath and Stevenson write, Aboriginal women find it demeaning (as do Black women) to be ‘talked about’, and have their ‘cases’ discussed by white women who want to consider social justice issues ‘from above’ and from
the comfortable position of white skin privilege (McGrath and Stevenson, 1996; L. Smith, 2002).

**Lesser Than and Cultural Genocide**

As Ramirez notes, genocide and Holocaust are easier to carry out if one denies humanity to those who are to be the victims of collective racism. By demonizing Aboriginal people in California historically (to continue with this one example) through books, journals and newspaper reports, Aboriginal people were dehumanized, encouraging their elimination (Ramirez: 104-105). If a people are somehow less than human, and may even pose a ‘threat’ of contamination to the survival of those included within the concept of universal brotherhood and citizenship, then eliminating them becomes not only easy to achieve but even warranted – a sign of desire to protect the safety of ‘the good’ of the mainstream and normal (i.e. white). In this way Holocausts are not limited to one historical time or event, but to any situation where one people seeks to estrange, confine, and eliminate another on the basis of their ‘Otherness’.

Ramirez writes that in the 19th century the ‘war’ between whites and “Indians” was justified in white people’s minds; the elimination of the “ugly” “less than fully human” Indian was almost a necessity to ensure a safe, peaceful, prosperous and harmonious white world (Ramirez: 105). In our own globalizing time, as Sharma demonstrates, the ‘excluded’ are those profiled as ‘possibly terrorist’ or described as ‘trafficked’ women, problematic and trying to get into ‘our’ countries through complicity, through illegal means (Sharma, 2005). As Sharma writes, in the 1980s, “the Anti-trafficking campaigns within Canada (and the United States) emerged…as the permanence of non Whites in these societies was being attacked and as governments in the relatively affluent global North began to implement more
restrictive immigration policies” (Sharma: 73). Women at the margins, forced there by globalization itself, were being punished, denied entry, demeaned, criminalized, and facing an increase of violence and invisibility of their actual needs, aims, goals, circumstances (Sharma: 73-74).
These varied historical and continuing representations and lived realities, and their normalizing impact, demeaning native women and Diaspora Black women, could be a causal and contributing factor in the murder of Aboriginal women disappearing by the hundreds in Canada and internationally and the lack of follow up investigation by the authorities. These same factors are responsible for the lack of concern for conditions of violence lived as reality by poor Black women.

The links between disappearance, invisibility and lack of equality are clearly shown in the analysis of the theory of black and native scholars. In discussing how one art exhibition on Indian Women’s Holocaust, curated by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal activists, contributes to challenging ages-old, but still active stereotypes, Ramirez writes that the goal of activist transformation and healing is “Linked to learning about indigenous women’s history and experience and to inserting a gendered analysis into images that were drawn through a white, masculinist lens” (Ramirez: 106). To this one could add that negative, “Othering” images of Aboriginal(and Black women) are also sometimes the ‘work’ of white women, something which Black feminists like bell hooks and Patricia Collins explicitly note in their writings on Black struggles for equality and against violence. White skin privilege is something that all white people, men and women, have to come to terms with in self-reflexive praxis (Smith, 2002; McIntosh, 1988).
Violence, Antiviolence

Antiviolence feminists struggle against violence faced by women, but their campaigns, unfortunately, do not often or always include non-white women, nor does their analysis fully recognize the complexities of gender oppression, race and colonialism. Andrea Smith (2005) shows the complexity of the problems facing Black and Aboriginal women in their struggles against sexual violence. According to her, “…the remedies for addressing sexual and domestic violence utilized by the antiviolence movement have proven to be generally inadequate for addressing the problems of gender violence in general, but particularly for addressing violence against women of color” (Smith: 1).

Smith contends that sexual violence is an institutional tool; that as a result individual rapes or disappearances of women of color should not be examined as individual acts of violence, but rather as collectively sanctioned, historically organized acts of oppression, where colonialism in part operates as a method of utilizing violence to achieve the racist, sexist aims (Smith: 1-3). As she puts it, “Sexual violence is a tool by which certain people become marked as inherently ‘rapable’” (Smith: 3). Her view is that the violence which took place in the residential schools, state-run and church-administered facilities of cultural genocide, has impacted the rise of level of violence against Aboriginal women in their own communities (Smith: 3). At the state level, she discusses sanctioned sterilization policies that are a form of reproductive violence and genocide; a state-sanctioned sexual violence imposed against the will of women to have right to reproductive self-determination (Smith: 4). If such policies have been sanctioned by the state (in the U.S. and Canada) then individual rape and murder cannot be understood outside of more systemic parameters (Smith: 4-5). Related to this the discussions in feminist criminology of the criminalization of poverty and the over
incarceration of Aboriginal and Black women in Canada speaks a well to sanctioned, racialized violence (Maidment, 2006; Hayman, 2006).

One of Smith’s most intense arguments rests in the problematic nature of an antiviolence movement that is basically liberal in its orientation. How, she asks, can anti-violence activists believe that the same state that has sanctioned violence against women, in various forms, would be the location to turn to in expectation of a concerted effort to end such violence? Similarly, how can feminists, as Hannah-Moffat (2001) notes, expect that the feel-good ethic of caring feminism strategies would be adopted wholeheartedly by the Corrections establishment in its treatment of Aboriginal and Black women (with respect) in prisons? In contrast, Hannah-Moffat notes that therapy has become one of the ways through which discipline and labelling of deviance and otherness persists in criminalizing behaviours that are not going to be understood in the context they should: how the legacy of racism and sexual violence impacts the reasons why Aboriginal and Black women, especially the most marginalized, are committing crimes after being largely victims of a racist system that has committed violence upon them since they were children.

Smith, in a similar vein, pointing out the problems of liberal feminism that reifies actual women’s own agency writes that “the antiviolence movement has relied on a racist and colonial criminal legal system to stop domestic and sexual violence with insufficient attention to how this system oppresses communities of color” (Smith: 5). For women of colour, the historical denigration of their bodies leads to low-self esteem (hooks, 2003; Smith: 12). Just as Fanon described low-self esteem of the intellectual but colonized black male, Smith writes of how colonization through abuse of the “other” body leads to “internalized self-hatred” (Smith: 12).
Smith notes her work as an anti-violence counsellor has enabled her to see how rape and violence against one’s person often leads to wishes that one was not ‘as one is’ – meaning, a Aboriginal woman who faces violence. The Aboriginal woman begins to feel if she were not “Indian”, than this wouldn’t have happened to her (Smith: 4) This is the direct opposite of paradigms needed for healing, renewal, spiritual and cultural celebration. It is what creates what Smith refers to as “Aboriginal people’s internalization of the genocidal project through self-destruction” (Smith: 12). This creates a terrible looping effect: white society can blame Aboriginal people individually and collectively for their ‘flaws’: alcoholism, violence, drug addiction, under/un employment, homelessness, Aboriginal women’s resorting to prostitution for income and so on. Through this, the colonial genocide project continues to be realized even as the state bargains with native leaders for steps towards treaty resolutions, self government and reintegration of native curriculum into Canadian schools. One can argue this represents the hypocrisy and bad-faith of the state and its representatives such as Ontario Finance Minister, Jim Flaherty who argued that by cutting funding to Aboriginal people health care spending could help ‘real Canadians’ (Smith: 12).

Gail Valaskakis (2008) discusses the two competing equally objectified stereotypes of native women: Pocahontas and the ugly squaw (Valaskakis: 134). Both are stories of white men interacting with 1) the idealized princess who invites the white to conquer 2) the ugly deformed sexualized demon creature whose worth lies only in exploiting her in more obvious ways that link sex and violence (Valaskakis: 134). Valaskakis maintains that the merging of the two stereotypes occurs, creating the most destructive stereotype: the beautiful, desired, ugly, sexualized female “other” (Valaskakis: 135). In the late 19th century “Indians were ...relegated to the poverty and pain of reservations, but whimsical and woeful images of
women became frontier tropes that “reinforced the belief that the best Indian was the historical Indian (Francis 1992: 176)” (Valaskakis: 136). The idea of Indians belonging to the past or that of Black people not seizing the opportunities whites have provided them are two ways to maintain white hegemony in times of political and social protest.

As Valaskakis writes, continuing to quote from historian Daniel Francis (1992), Indian princesses in highly romanticized and sexualized fantasies became selling points for marketing the American west as “alluring, unoccupied, available and now open to railroad travel” (Valaskakis: 136). The Disney film Pocahontas from the 1990s and even the most recent sci-fi blockbuster Avatar (about a primitive race of indigenous peoples on a far away planet) employ stereotypical tropes that magnify the noble savage/sexual princess motif opening up ways for the white man to commune with the ‘natural’ world. This fantasy world, which makes women’s identities problematic, is at odds with the realities. “Aboriginal women have always been clan mothers, care-givers, educators, and energizers in Aboriginal communities, and their economic visibility and political presence has grown significantly since the 1960s” (Valaskakis: 143).

**The Indian Act, Transformations and New Violence**

As Valaskakis writes, until 1985 when changes to the Indian Act altered women’s provisional band status in Canada, a woman’s ‘Aboriginal’ status was dependent upon whom she was married to. According to the Indian Act, Aboriginal women who married non-Aboriginal men lost or gave up their band status (Valaskakis: 143). But the changes to the Indian Act in Bill-31 did not completely right the wrongs; instead, the children of women who had formerly lost their band status now had to prove that their children’s father was of Aboriginal status or the child would not gain status (Fiske and George, 2007: 53). The
authors rightly contend this caused new sources of trauma and government continued
colonial intrusion into women’s lives.

It also appears, upon analysis, to punish women for not declaring the paternity of their
children, but more importantly cutting down the future size of particularly smaller bands of
Aboriginal people (Fiske & George: 54). Fiske and George maintain this is another instance
of the “state delegitimizing established forms of family, kin, and identity” that “law remakes
identity” (Fiske & George: 70). In what ways, if any therefore, do so called reforms actually
create positive change, change that will nurture aboriginal collective identity and
maintenance of the important familial and kinship ties that characterize women’s agency in
Aboriginal affairs, whether as a reanimation of older traditional ideas or as a continuity
despite decades of oppressive gender discrimination? As Fiske and George write, demand for
paternity disclosure leads to ripples of trauma that will be felt for generations, as
grandmothers will be deprived (as were mothers and grandmothers in the past) of clear
familial relationships with their children and grandchildren on their own terms (Fiske &
George: 70).

Violence, disappearance and invisibility, as theorists claim, are not singular, personal
events but systemic occurrences. Similarly, the forcing of Aboriginal women serving
sentences in federal or provincial jails to travel hundreds of miles from their homes (children,
partners, friends) creates more trauma and hopelessness for women, who despite only
committing what statistically are less serious crimes than men do, are punished as harshly as
men are in a system that does not seem to be able to differentiate between criminal acts,
motivations and contexts for ‘crime’, as discussed in the field of critical feminist criminology
(Hayman, 2006; Hannah-Moffat and Shaw, 2000; Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Maidment, 2006).

As Valaskakis writes, Aboriginal women, but also Aboriginal men, have been subalterns to white men and women appropriating Aboriginal voices in white fantasies, from romantic to horrific, for centuries. Healing culture today is the culture of Aboriginal people in various arts – literature, visual art, performance, oral story telling – retelling old stories and drawing lines between their contemporary situation and the historic past (Valaskakis 143-146). What become difficult to disentangle are the contradictory skeins of women’s traditional role in Aboriginal cultures with the Eurocentric romanticized tropes. As Valaskakis writes, “the physiological and social roles that constitute women as “the heart of the nation” support the ideology that constructs both the romanticized image of nature’s pristine beauty, the Indian princess, and her earthly breast-of-burden sister, the squaw” (Valaskakis: 146-147). The difficulty is that in Aboriginal culture, nature and culture are intertwined and women are repositories of knowledge, history, memory and spirituality (Allen, 1998; Mithlo, 2009).

Separating out essentialism, romanticism and active engagement of contemporary women with the complex issues they face in their lives is one of the key areas of Aboriginal women’s contemporary theory and praxis (Valaskakis: 147). She writes

“The spiritual and natural encode the power and practice of Mohawk clan mothers, Ojibway Odgichidawque, urban drum groups and contemporary healing circles. In the cultural and political struggle of contested identities, the unity of culture and nature is expressed in transforming stories of Indian experience and the spiritualized land that position the meaning and purpose of practice” (Valaskakis: 147).
The oral histories of the experience of life in residential schools, the stories of domestic violence and imprisonment, the activist narratives of life in East Vancouver and prairie cities – all these contribute to deepening the process of linking the past into present, the present into the past.

In Andrea Smith’s connections between women, nature, exploitation, reproductive rights, violence and destruction of the land can be understood the kind of complex redefinitions and speaking-subaltern positioning that reimagine the links between “history, culture and power” (Valaskakis: 148; Smith, 2005). As Valaskakis writes, “It is the negotiation of relations of power – hierarchical, conflictual and communal – expressed in contested ideologies and identity that both cut through and knit together Aboriginal communities in their struggle with domination and resistance” (Valaskakis: 148). Aboriginal men’s power versus the power and rights of native women, the type of future that native government is meant to engender, whether progressive or hierarchical is one area of contestation. Aboriginal men and Aboriginal women share in their collective struggle against the colonial legacy and forge alternative possibilities within the continued oppression of Aboriginal people in North America and of Indigenous peoples around the world.

_Cultural Voices_

Valaskakis writes of the once silenced Aboriginal women, now emergent voices that “shatter the silence of the past, expressing real experiences and imaginary tales that challenge and recast the old narratives of dominance” (Valaskakis: 149). She also writes, as does Hooks of times when Black women and white women, native women and white women shared resources, knowledge, caregiving (Aboriginal women as free women, Black women as servants and slaves) (Hooks, 1992; Valaskakis, 2005). These paradigms of memory and
difference, of voicelessness and voice are contextualized in struggles over the direction of
“literature and art, land and resources, reservation and Aboriginal
rights…factionalism….threats and promises” existing inside diverse native communities
(Valaskakis: 149) and in the difference and separateness of Black women’s speech and
experience, ways of looking, seeing, receiving and interpreting (Hooks, 166; Collins, 2000).

Among the voices raised and the issues that Aboriginal women must struggle with,
key to Canadian Aboriginal women’s experience today, is the problematic meaning of lack of
concern among authorities (the state, the criminal justice system including the police
services) to address the plight of the disappeared and the ongoing pervasive violence, within
Aboriginal communities and between native women and white men that still characterizes
Aboriginal women’s experience in Canada. This is the reality juxtaposed to the “images of
Aboriginal nations frozen in time and history, tribal peoples constructed in silent social
imaginaries” (Valaskakis: 128). This is the reality that unfortunately exists out of those silent,
subaltern, silenced and erased communities and voices, histories and mythologies
cosmological, spiritual, based in reciprocities and living cultural engagements.

**Aboriginal Life Violence Against Women and the Urban Dilemma**

As Benoit, Caroll and Chaudhry (2003) write, the highest proportion of Aboriginal
people in Vancouver live in the East side of downtown, a neighbourhood notorious for its
high levels of health-related other social problems: drug addiction, prostitution, HIV/AIDS
epidemic, alcoholism, unemployment. Many residents of the area live in 12 by 9 Foot.

“slum hotel rooms, which can cost up to 65 percent of a person’s monthly social
assistance money....Such hotels often serve as shooting galleries for drug users, while
‘crack’ cocaine, heroin, and prescription drugs are routinely sold and used only on
the streets” (Benoit, Carroll & Chaudhry: 823).
The authors’ research, which they describe as employing thematic analysis, is meant to give voice to the voiceless, the invisible and abandoned people of the neighbourhood. 40% of the residents of the ‘ghetto’, as the authors describe it, are Aboriginal with a high percentage of the young Aboriginal women addicted to drugs, fleeing domestic violence, working as street prostitutes, and single mothers with up to three or more children (Benoit, Carroll & Chaudhry: 824).

It is from this one neighbourhood that so many young Aboriginal women have been disappearing. As Dara Culhane (2003) writes, the arrest, trial and conviction of pig farmer Robert Picton was a long-delayed but needed response by police and the criminal justice system to begin to act on the problem of brutal violence against marginalized women living in what may be one of the poorest neighbourhoods in North America (Culhane: 598). Sadly, while it is primarily aboriginal women who have been ‘disappearing’ from East Vancouver, when the mass media turned the trial of Picton into a media sensation, a focus on a pretty white female victim of Picton’s denied erased the trauma that Aboriginal women face on a daily basis (Culhane: 598-599).

According to Culhane there is almost an exoticization process at work in the way that downtown East Vancouver is depicted in the mass media, from television programs to news reports (Culhane: 595). As Razack would contend, this is an example of what she calls the spatial, geographical divides that mark respectable white middle class society from the transgressive zones where Aboriginal and other struggling ‘minorities’ are living (Razack, 2002).

Benoit, Carroll and Chaudhry write of the various health-clinics and women’s groups who work in the streets of East Vancouver to try to improve the lives of the women living
there. Struggles by Aboriginal women’s organizations in the area are focussed on the need for “increasing access to culturally suitable and appropriate health care and social services” for Aboriginal women (Benoit, Carroll & Chaudhry: 822). A health clinic, VNHS, funded by the province and non-profit groups, serves the entire population of the area, whereas the original goal was to open at least one Aboriginal-woman’s health care centre staffed by aboriginal doctors, social workers, and run by elders (which, in Vancouver, means any Aboriginal man or woman who has made it past 45 years of age and has somehow overcome drugs, alcohol and possibly even violent aggressive behaviour patterns) (Benoit, Carroll & Chaudhry: 824; Culhane: 603).

As Culhane puts it to overcome the stereotypes of exoticism attached to suffering and poverty, what is needed are “Indigenous explanations of addiction in Aboriginal women’s lives” (Culhane: 601). Aboriginal women who tell their own stories, either in an oral form or in creative expressive means, through various arts and crafts native women who become involved in grassroots healing, learning of Aboriginal languages and/or spiritual healing practices such as the healing circle, are the emerging speaking subalterns, who have historically been named, silenced, erased.

They are speaking up and speaking out about the women who are disappearing, about the indifference on the part of police, government, and white people generally; they are demanding respect including decent housing, health care, access to training and employment opportunities. They make their presence known in a variety of ways that are challenging mainstream, white rational scientific epistemologies, attempting to replace “the corrosive effects of poverty and economic marginalization” with marching, singing, talking, healing circles, volunteering in their community (Culhane: 600). Culhane describes the downtown
East side of Vancouver as an area that mainstream health care and police services refer to as “a containment zone”, an area for policing and surveillance of an enclosed and largely socially abandoned community. The very presence of this zone of the ‘other’ contributes to maintaining white privilege and power, and provides a focus for the counter-hegemonic struggles of the women involved in “developing spaces for …drop in centres, social housing, shelters, and transition houses…safe from public and private violence” (Culhane: 599).

**Epistemologies of Resistance: Black Women**

Patricia Collins, discussing Black feminism, notes that is based on an epistemological system which is different from mainstream white academic scientific positivism. Key aspects of this epistemological shift lie in the recognizing that it is in community, not in abstract extrapolations, wherein the gift of communication, interaction and wisdom lies. A key point she makes, as a Black woman feminist academic, is that the university academy proposes that if one is a ‘minority’ one has to adhere to the epistemology of the mainstream in order to be invited in and to have one’s work acknowledged and sanctioned. This is an act of gatekeeping and denial, of erasure, silencing and making invisible an alternative system of knowing, being, and relating, that informs Black women’s activism and dialogue.

Collins suggests that among Black women, an ethic of caring, which has roots in African culture as well as the Black church in the Diaspora, is an essential component in an alternative way of seeing, knowing, relating and making sense of people in interaction in the world (Collins: 264). Black men have been inundated, she argues, in deeply unfortunate ways, by “abstract, unemotional notions of masculinity imposed on them” (Collins: 264). bell hooks similarly characterizes the struggles which Black men have to confront in their aims to
assert a damaged masculinity, that she contends, has its roots in the confusion that white masculinist ideology imposes upon Black men (Books, 2003).

What is observable by Black women is the “binary that separates emotion from intellect” that exists in mainstream white positivism (Collins: 263). Black people, men and women, believe not in conformity and uniformity but in a profound individualism that is also collectively expressive. Noting philosophical African humanism, she writes that “each individual is thought to be a unique expression of a common spirit, power, or energy inherent in all life” (Collins: 263). As a metaphor, she evokes Black women’s art of quilting – the use of vivid strong and bold colours juxtaposed next to each other; the awareness of “individual differences not as detracting from each piece but as enriching the whole quilt” (Collins: 263). This is also similar to the self-expression but also the collective nature of jazz, and of call-and-response song, chant, poetry, dance, drumming and so on (Collins: 266-267).

The beautiful point that Collins is making is that aspect of life cannot be separated out from another, or should not be, in an African epistemology. Academic Black feminists should apply this spiritual, life affirming philosophy to any qualitative or quantitative study they undertake in the area of academic research. But this alternative way of seeing or knowing is denied and demeaned in/by the mainstream white male dominated professorial academy. Potently, the threads, roots, tendrils and links between one problem and another criss-cross and intersect: like jazz, like quilting, like self-reflexive, social constructionist African womanist thinking like the refusal – in Collins, in bell hooks, in the writings of poets like June Jordan or Toni Morrison. This is a community-based philosophy that refuses to make a distinction between educated Back women and working class Black women lacking
the financial or social ability to obtain degrees and learn the positivist, rational white abstract languages that one is supposed to learn to speak and use as proof of superiority over others.

As Collins deftly writes, citing anthropologist and storyteller Zora Neale Hurston, who was part of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s and documented segregated communities in the South’s folklore, and quoting from Tate,

“with many women writers, relationships within family, community, between men and women, and among women – from slavery narratives by black women writers on – are treated as complex and significant relationships – whereas with many men the significant relationships are those that involve confrontations – relationships outside the family and community” (Tate, 1983: 92). In Hurston’s writings the oral storyteller, the academic, the artist and womanist activist come together, showing how dialogue, call and response, community and family are the basis of deciding the ethical truth of “knowledge claims” (Collins: 262).

There is, neither in Hurston nor in Collins herself, as Alice Walker asserts (quoted in Collins) a separating of self from common people (Collins: 267). This separation does not exist, either, in the self-help, faith-based alternative-praxis of bell hooks’ cultural writings.

The significant point of all of this, as Collins writes, what is represented and is made evident and manifest through alternative epistemologies, is that their mere existence represents a challenge to the white hegemony and privilege, whether in the academy in the social sciences in the educational or criminal justice institutions. Collins maintains whether in the laws and governments and the ideologies and stereotypes that shape and demean, “If the epistemology used to validate knowledge comes into question, then all prior knowledge claims validated under the dominant model become suspect” (Collins: 271). In this fact lie the opportunities for resistance and for new forms of dialogue (between Black women and Aboriginal women).
Intersections and Comparisons Between Two Communities

The ideologies of princess/squaw which demean native women, and the stereotypes, as Collins discusses and addresses in her book of mammies, matriarchs and evil Black women that infect American and European culture since slavery days (Collins, 2000) are common shared negative representations. While white academics may create quantifiable data to prove that Black or Aboriginal women are harmful to themselves and self-destructive or deserving of their marginalized place in society, alternative feminist epistemologies help everyone to see otherwise, from white academics (professors and students open to self-reflexive practice) to men and women in the reserves and urban neighbourhoods where people of native nations live, to the African-American and Afro-Canadian men and women in Scarborough, Etobicoke, Vancouver, downtown Toronto, Los Angeles, Bed-Sty, London or Halifax.

This other way of knowing has its basis in the realities of lived lives, what Collins refers to as “the dynamics of intersecting oppressions” and out of that “wisdom…essential to U.S. Black women’s survival” (Collins: 257).


This wisdom Collins refers to lies as it does in the Aboriginal women’s activist grassroots movement against violence as well as in the African Diaspora women’s daily struggles. These alternative epistemologies; not one, but many, diverse, useful, real and represent the construction of consciousness that emerges, as Collins writes, to break through its status as “subjugated knowledge” (Collins: 253). This alternative epistemology, in African culture and in Aboriginal culture comes out of “music, literature, daily conversations, and
everyday behaviour…” (Collins: 251). From the oral storytelling, the Aboriginal women’s shelters, the Aboriginal healing circles, the anti-violence marches, and the insistence upon indigenous knowledge challenging white privilege and white excluding, binary, constructed institutions, come the (re)-emerging consciousness; the bringing of buried histories to light, the reanimation of spiritual traditions, the struggle for social justice, healing and empowerment – all necessary on a theoretical and activist level. The intertwining mesh challenges white skin privilege and the demeaning stereotypes that infect and negatively impact all non-white peoples in specific ways the various divide-and-conquer strategies of capitalist patriarchal colonialism and its embeddedness in institutions of power.

As Collins notes, there is not “one” alternative epistemology, there is no new elevation of a single perspective over others to reassert some new binary hierarchies or oppositions; instead, all

“groups with distinctive standpoints, with each group using the epistemological approaches growing from its unique standpoint, becomes the most “objective “ truths. Each group speaks from its own standpoint and shares its own partial, situated knowledge…Each group becomes better able to consider other groups’ standpoints without relinquishing the uniqueness of its own standpoint or suppressing other groups’ partial perspectives” (Collins: 270).

The anti-violence movement, therefore, can embrace a combined vision, a realization of shared and different manifestations of oppression, and modes of healing and possibilities for change. This precludes the possibility of the emergence of what Spivak calls the ‘speaking subaltern’. The powerful alternative epistemologies counter the invisibility and disappearance of hundreds of native women in Canada; the disappearance and invisibility of diverse women from around the world (black in skin colour) as globalization and violence together encroach upon fundamental human rights. They also counter the denial of rights to
citizenship by the liberal state Wisdom of elders and activists, of everyday life of indigenous women and Black women – out of these struggles and hopes and dreams, emerges the speaking wise opposition to white hegemony and masculinist ideologies; ideologies and institutions that trade in erasure, trust in destruction, embellish and hide holocausts.

Njoki Wane (2008) argues that “indigenous knowledge is a living experience….informed by ancestral voices” (Wane: 184). Anti-colonial resistance is about linking the past to the presents using a method the theorist calls “fluidity” (Wane: 184). Though writing of the African indigenous experience, the ideas can be transposed to the lived experience of indigenous peoples of Canada who had their land and culture taken from them by many methods from “genocide and rewriting history to denying their existence, devaluing their knowledges, and debasing their cultural beliefs and practices” (Wane: 183-184).

Like Collins, Wane is concerned with colonial education and dominant pedagogies and the ways in which they have historically been and continue to be, resisted as a part of anti-colonial struggles (Wane: 184). She positions herself as “an African woman caught between a European education system and a traditional knowledge base” (Wane: 184). Like the experience of generations of Aboriginal people in Canada, Wane, growing up in British ruled colonial Kenya, was educated to believe that English culture and language was superior to her own culture and language, and opened the doors to “economic advancement, individual attainment…political power….self government…self advancement” (Wane: 184). Ironically, as Miller (1996) and other writers of Aboriginal experience have noted, despite attempts to destroy Aboriginal people’s autonomy, tradition and culture, the residential schools created rebels and educated Aboriginal children, at least some, to be the leaders of self-government movements and revival of Aboriginal traditions.
Like Fanon, Wane notes the impact that European colonialism has upon the colonized African who, educated in the English or French metropolitan system, where the ‘canon’ of great English (or French) authors replaces African Indigenous culture. The student is confused about his or her identity to the point where an alienation occurs from those who are not fluid in understanding European classics and European fashion and values (Wane: 185). As Fanon has noted however, when the African student finally goes to the metropolis they are faced with the realities that race or skin colour acts as a biological and psychological barrier to full acceptance.

The outcome historically has been self-alienation and a kind of permanent liminal disjuncture, one that is also notably described by native women and men who discuss the feeling of not wanting to be Aboriginal, and not being able to embrace fully or be accepted into mainstream white society. For women, the gender divide, the sexual tropes that demean women in general, are magnified when race hatred is added as another component in the complexities of oppression.

However, as Wane writes, for all the insights of the generation of African anti-colonial writers that includes Fanon, a patriarchal white masculinist aspect undermines a full anti-colonial perspective or understanding that values and includes the views of women; their voices were excluded or marginalized by African anti-colonial intellectuals as much as native women’s voices have been excluded by powerful native American anti-colonial leaders (i.e. A.I.M - America Indian Movement in the U.S. to give one example) (Allen, 1996). Another issue, as discussed in this paper is the almost-collusion between Aboriginal men and the Canadian government through the demeaning of Aboriginal women’s status via the state intrusion into women’s reproductive history and status in recent changes to the Indian Act.
As Smith writes, the importance is in recognizing, in the First Nations communities, the impact of patriarchy/capitalism/colonialism on male and female relations. This is another way in which the past and present are in a constant dialogue or dialectic, even if it is to some extent about negative elements of male/female relationships within First Aboriginal communities that have to be addressed before emancipatory liberation for the Aboriginal peoples will become more of a truly comprehensive lived reality. The fact is, as Wane and other writers such as bell hooks note, Black women have been at the forefront of anti-colonial, anti-racist practices through their interrogations of colonialism and its impact on their communities (Wane: 186). This has taken many forms, including literature and community (family) dialogue (Collins, 2000). But, it has been subsumed under the often group/nationalist/masculinist perspective of Black and Aboriginal male leadership, where women are supposed to not discuss gender violence in their communities, under the excuse that this somehow is a betrayal of Black/Aboriginal men. The impact of colonialism, as has been discussed, therefore, deforms even as emancipatory struggles are ongoing. This reveals, as well, a continuation of the binary us/them motifs that position white male hegemonic epistemologies and their re-assertion of colonial tropes and modes of backlash and institutional dehumanization of ‘the other’.

When Wane writes, “African women are the guardians of traditional knowledge and leaders in resistance struggles. Women’s art of traditional teaching through storytelling, riddles, proverbs and idioms is as ancient as the people themselves” (Wane: 186), a similar statement could be made about the position of native women in Canadian and U.S. culture. As Wane shows, capitalism, as well as colonialism, alters the structure and meaning of indigenous societies by introducing different value structures (Wane: 186). She writes of the
dragging of traditional communities into “the dominant capitalist system” (Wane: 186). This repositions both men and women and creates the context of the hegemonic order (Wane: 186). Women, in African cultures and in Aboriginal cultures, are and have been “guardians of traditional knowledge and leaders in resistance struggles” (Wane: 186). It is, for example, Indigenous women in Western Canada who are bringing to world attention the problem of the lack of care on the part of the state for the fate of those women who are disappearing by the hundreds, creating new trauma for native families and Aboriginal communities. It is Aboriginal women who create organizations that march to draw attention to the disappeared, and it is native women who open the shelters and education centres in urban areas like East Vancouver, to help bring about healing through traditional education and spirituality (Haig-Brown, 1995).

Haig-Brown explores the power of ethnography in her study of an activist sociology based in adult education for native women in East Vancouver. She writes that, “Epistemologically, ethnography claims that knowledge, while always tenuous, is best established …through conducting research with people in their everyday settings. As people interact, they create their social realities” (Haig-Brown: 15). This is different from the distanced, rational scientific social observer role of much traditional sociology that rejects the qualitative, reflexive and interactive models which emerge out of the epistemologies of women positioned from their own cultural perspective, such as Black or Aboriginal women. As she states, her critical practice is one

“opposed to logical-positivism – the notion that it is possible to have objective, value-free knowledge. Critical ethnography exists in relation to what has been variously called a Western, European, White, bourgeois, rational, male ideology, and it is espoused by people who are struggling to democratize the business of creating knowledge” (Haig-Brown: 15).
“Heteroglossia” a notion of Bakhtin, is a research method where the multiple voices of the study ‘participants’ influence and alter the outcome of the study; hence the sociology of a radical ethnographic study is not to ‘study’ the ‘other’ but to be inclusive and act as a change agent, where the community one is working with (a collective of individual voices) creates a transformation (Haig-Brown: 16).

The relationships of power that exist in any micro setting are reflections of the macro struggles, with Foucault and Spivak two theorists aware of the necessity of continually asking questions rather than providing fixed, set answers that form a ‘master narrative’ (Haig-Brown: 16). As the author explains, “Power relations are integral to struggle between First Nations and non-Aboriginal society as well as among First Nations peoples themselves” (Haig-Brown: 16). She writes, “Foucault’s attention to disqualified, subjugated knowledges and their concern with ‘a historical knowledge of struggles’ is a clearly political project directed at transforming domains of acceptable academic discourse” (Haig-Brown: 17).

In her use of highly abstract thinking and theory one could argue Haig-Brown is utilizing the language of the academy to undermine its hegemony over control of knowledge; employing oppositional educational methods and activist praxis in a downtown Vancouver women’s centre for Aboriginal women. In the process participating in the juggling act Collins so deftly describes as that between western epistemologies and Black feminist or Aboriginal feminist epistemologies of feeling, care, ethics, emotion and community. This is the ongoing discussion, first in the Marxist theories of counter-hegemony proposed by Gramsci, in the Marxist/Deconstructionist feminist anti-colonial theory of subaltern power in Spivak’s writings, and the Foucaultian perspective that “power is also pleasure and
resistance” that wherever there is power, again to refer to Gramsci “there is a possibility of resistance” (Haig-Brown: 17).

Describing an Aboriginal school where debates about common language use (Cree) or diversity of language instruction are part of what she terms the positive ongoing contradictions of struggle to build community, Haig-Brown notes how inferiority can be built into the Aboriginal student body. Many students who attend the school feel that if they got in then the school must not be that good, or they turn to non-native teachers to ask questions instead of to the Aboriginal teachers, because non-Aboriginal must ‘know more’ (Haig-Brown: 250). This is the legacy of fighting against the colonialism that produced the residential schools.

One of the women teachers who had been educated at a residential school stated that the school produced in her very negative feelings towards her family and towards herself. “I started seeing some of my brothers and sisters as ugly-looking because they were Indian….When I got to grade 8 I was so ashamed to be Indian…” (Haig-Brown: 251). Many of the feminist theorists, Black and Aboriginal women, are working in and through the education system, whether adult education or university, because it is one of the main sites of reclamation and of struggle. Drawing attention to the problematic nature of white positivism and the standard ‘objective, it is as it is epistemology’ in order to propose changes that are fundamentally strategies of resistance, can help to undo or transform the self-hatred and demeaning of one’s own culture and self that persists among Black and Aboriginal people. This educational colonization can contribute to internalizing feelings of worthlessness among women who are victims of or witnesses to violence, who still struggle with feelings of invisibility and powerlessness, or are full of ongoing questions about why they feel as they
do about themselves and their communities, feelings which, as Hooks explains, are often negative and self-denying (Hooks, 2003).
Sherene Razack states that hegemonic ideas of Canadian North purity, emerging out of the white settler myth, demand the erasure of Aboriginal people’s knowledge and history to perpetuate the self-image of the nation of its basic tenable goodness (Razack: 23). Because of what happened in history, “legislation and policies designed to effect their total disappearance as peoples”, it became necessary to deny Aboriginal people their diversity of voice and their place in the hegemonic nationalist discourse, “Canada” (Razack: 23-24). As she writes, echoing Collins, “A crucial part of the silencing of Indigenous voices is the demand that Indigenous scholars attempting to write about their histories conform to academic discourses that have already staked a claim to expertise …” (Razack: 24). These discourses are the historical and anthropological writings of ‘white experts’ (Razack: 24). The outcome is a racist literature of “stick figures: noble savages, proud or wily, inevitably primitive” (Razack: 24). This ‘canon’ cannot be ignored, but has to be addressed: that in-between place, again, that Collins, Wane and others note is at the problematic heart of academia in the Diaspora and the west.

Can this possibly account for the reasons for ignoring the complex problems that Aboriginal women in their communities, families, spiritual traditions – face and the reason for ignoring the plight of the disappeared? Are the criminal cases and the criminal justice system’s processes of continuing ‘erasure’ the systemic underpinnings of invisibility, stereotype and disappearance, a way to contribute to what Razack notes as the ‘white settler myth’? What would be involved in acknowledging the authenticity of different, diverse
epistemologies that challenge the academy’s white positivism and secure a critique of liberal half-measures that keep the neo-liberal agendas that strip people of hope? What would happen if the various institutions of the state, or spiralling out in micro systems of power, faced their privilege, their denials, their fundamental structures of colonial, patriarchal, racist organization?

How would the anti-violence movement be able to move out of an enclosed liberal reading of slow change to improve the conditions that are the product of generations of patriarchal hate? How does the nation begin to listen to alternative voices: oral histories, grassroots understandings, diverse and partial perspectives? These are the questions to be taken up in the remainder of this thesis – beginning with a more thorough look at the disappeared women and the various responses to their plight and to the collective trauma. As well, relating the specific systemic disappearances and gender violence to the problem of increasing violence as a result of globalization, will be a way to compare and synthesize national and local Aboriginal and Black women’s struggles with discussions of the state/global violence towards Black and Indigenous women, internationally.

The Complex Spaces (Racialized and Sexual Violence) Canada and Globalization

Paula Gunn Allen an Aboriginal rights activist, novelist, poet, essayist and professor living in the U.S. succinctly and poetically demarcates the boundaries between inclusion and exclusion in the liberal state.

“If an issue concerned native people or women, men, and queers of color, neither the academy nor the intelligentsia at large would have a word to say. We are las disappearadas (and desperadas). We are for the most part invisible, labelled “marginal”, the “poor” the “victims” or we are seen as exotica…helpless, hopeless, inadequate, incompetent, much in need of white champions and saviors, dependent upon an uncaring state for every shred of personal and community dignity we might hope to enjoy” (Allen, 1998: 164).
One is either rejected or alternatively romanticized, two forms of “othering”. In her estimation the new and persistent challenge to the white male academy and the liberal state are the border/crossers. These are artists and intellectuals, such as Collins, Hooks, and many others, who live through “multiplicity, aesthetic largeness, dizzying class-crossing from the fields to the salons, from the factories to the academy, or from galleries and groves of academe to the neighbourhoods and reservations” (Allen: 166). This ability, which does characterize an emergent community of young scholars and literary (or other artistic) multifaceted identity crossers, however, is limited to some who still have to speak on behalf of others – the problem that Collin identifies in her writing on the boundaries of inclusion/exclusion.

As Sherene Razack clearly articulates, “space is racialized” and it is also gendered and classed. Canada’s Prairie Provinces Manitoba and Saskatchewan, between them, have the highest numbers of incarcerated Aboriginal men and women. Statistically, Aboriginal women are unequally represented within Canada’s prison population at rates even higher than those of Aboriginal men. The figures for both men and women hover around 50-90% of adult prison populations even though Aboriginal peoples only represented 6-8% of Canada’s population (Razack: 133). The urban centres, Winnipeg, Regina and Saskatoon, are locations of the highest percentage of in-migration from reserves (Razack: 132). Women represent the highest percentage (58%) “relocating to the city for a variety of reasons, including loss of tribal status, violence, and lack of housing and employment” (Razack: 132). The cities are harsh environments for Aboriginal women (and men) with high levels of poverty and unemployment. In Regina “81 per cent of Aboriginal households live in poverty and the high-school drop-out rate for Aboriginal children is 90 per cent” (Razack: 133). For Razack
the statistics and the realities confirm the continuation of colonialism against Aboriginal people despite any statements to the contrary on the part of the Canadian state. As Patricia Monture (2006) writes, the entire concept of native self-governance, now promoted openly by the Federal government as a goal/solution to meet Aboriginal people’s collective grievances is a kind of double-speak. As she contends, due to the Indian Act and the history of Aboriginal people’s mistreatment in Canada, “our nations no longer remain significantly organized in this political way” (Monture: 329). Colonial policies undermined any sense of separate nations, and “fragmented and re-structured Aboriginal governing structures” (Monture: 329). She notes that a 1999 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples completely erased any mention of the term colonialism (Monture: 329).

Historically, as Monture writes, many Aboriginal nations in Canada were based on matrilineal power structures, with women central to Aboriginal governance, including social justice issues (Monture: 330). Colonialism altered and erased these traditional patterns of governance in favour of the elevation of men to positions of power in the band-council system that is part of the Indian Act and funding policies. The negative relationship between these transformations and rise in violence against women in Aboriginal communities has been written about and documented extensively in recent years (Monture: 330). Considering the high numbers of Aboriginal men and women in Canadian prisons, and the lack of Aboriginal solutions to problems of crime and violence, which should be part of national self-governance, the denial of colonialism by the Canadian state (nationally and provincially as well as in local metropolis) remains a disturbing fact.

In an article on the censoring of a Aboriginal MP in Manitoba, Oscar Lathlin, a Cree member of parliament who spoke of racism when discussing the Manitoba’ governments
denial of Aboriginal grievances in over 100 specific areas of concern, links between racism, colonialism and violence are again made manifest. As A. Smith writes, violence against women and the ongoing cultural genocide in the U.S. can be seen in the intersection of intimate violence and environmental degradation of Aboriginal lands (Smith, 2005). Between Razack’s discussion of spatial boundaries, when writing of the murder of Pamela George and Sheila Gill’s (2002) look at the reasons why Lathlin’s use of the word “racism” was struck from the Manitoba Legislature, the thesis proposed by Smith regarding the extent of violence against Aboriginal women is given clarity and additional proof.

The nature of the liberal democratic state is to abstract what it means to belong, to be a citizen and what one’s rights are as an individual. This abstraction relates to the white epistemologies that Collins critiques. Gill notes that “the liberal democratic nation spaces…are conceived of as spaces inhabited by abstract individuals who are equal in the eyes of the law” (Gill: 165). However, ‘sameness’ ignores the realities of diversity and of unequal treatment of non-white people, which is the construction of racism through colonialism. Lathlin, who moves between the worlds Allen describes of reservation and House of Representatives, discussed, in parliament why he characterized Manitoba’s policies as ‘racist’ citing his experiences of racism “in the school, in the workplace, on a reserve” (Gill: 165). However, the secular state denies that there can be alternative or oppositional epistemologies or communities of understanding. The state operates through a “totalizing project of colonialism” which “segregates racialized speech, spaces and bodies, and effectively locates oppositional agency outside legal and cultural protections of full personhood” (Gill: 162).
It is semantically, epistemologically impossible for most white people as individuals and embedded in their institutions to understand or conceive of racial oppression as a lived reality by those who face racism on an ongoing daily basis. It is a kind of blind spot built into the structures of society, the invisibility, or wilful naivety of white privilege, though McIntosh, for example, attempts to figure out what white privilege may actually exist of on a daily basis. As Gill writes, law itself sanctions this wilful disregard by creating “racial social hierarchy” through, in the case of Lathlin and the Manitoba Legislature, denying or “ruling violent histories of Aboriginal dispossession as being out of order and irrelevant” (Gill: 159).

This occurred because the Conservative PM, Gary Filmon and many members of his cabinet and parliament (party and opposition) were appalled to be labelled racist due to the MP’s citing of the numerous ways in which Aboriginal peoples were systemically discriminated against by government policies in Manitoba, such as, to give two examples – violence against women and violence against Aboriginal lands through flooding of aboriginal territories in the North to build hydro electric projects (Gill, 2002). This also reveals how male and female activists in Aboriginal communities may, male and female, be very cogently aware of the commonalities and need for community sense of belonging, rather than individual or gender conflict perspectives alone.

From social acts can emerge theory, or theory can reveal empirically. Gill notes how “The production of bounded spaces of difference within and without the nation-space normalizes the aggressive policing of borders, and the punishment of bodies ruled “out of place” (Gill: 167). Historically racism and genocide have proceeded from such binaries of exclusion and inclusion – those who belong and are protected by the State, those who are excluded and deemed a threat to the state’s (and its citizens’) survival. This involves
projection of all negative, ‘dirty’, ‘other’ tropes upon those excluded and eliminated – the
mammies, nasty Black women, squaws, and so on. Today it is the dispossessed around the
world seeking employment and immigration opportunities as the globalizing neo-liberal
agenda increases criminalization of poverty through displacement (Reynolds, 2009).

As Gill writes, Edward Said recognized that ‘land’ and ‘territory’ are often at the
roots of colonialism and racism, with imperialism structured around “who owned the land,
who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it Back, and who now
plans its future” (Gill: 167). As Razack notes, current Federal Liberal Leader Michael
Ignatieff, considered to be a left-leaning liberal democratic intellectual, in his 2000 Massey
Lecture address, denied the right of Aboriginal leaders to speak of a cultural genocide against
native peoples. He participates through this gap in his understanding in the white settler
fantasy of the peaceful settlement and cooperative handing over of territory by Native people
to the superior technological and intellectual European; what can also be construed as the
privileged, now deeply internalized Canadian Pocahontas fantasy (Razack: 2).

Spaces and violence coexist in the national-imaginary of good/evil, safe/unsafe.
Aboriginal people, Aboriginal women, inhabit the space of “other”: the slums, the zones of
prostitution, and the realms of violence, where space is not only geographical but defines
bodies. As A. Smith shows, the violence done to Aboriginal people, to Aboriginal land and
Aboriginal bodies coalesces into the ongoing colonial discourse that “indicates the success of
sexual violence…in destroying the perceived humanity of Aboriginal peoples” (Smith: 12).
Self hatred and self destructive behaviours internalize genocide policies (Smith: 12).
Aboriginal women who survive domestic violence or random sexual violence, when
reporting crimes to police, are often met (in Canada) with a relatively high degree of
indifference. Smith notes that, among police, the Aboriginal community, the aboriginal body is “culturally violent” in its essence. This is the magnification and elaboration of old colonialist, racist tropes as this paper has discussed in chapters above. The case of Pamela George, one of the Aboriginal women who were brutally murdered, reveals many of these intersecting problems. It is a significant case because the perpetrators were apprehended and did go to trial; something that cannot be said in the case of most of the hundreds of disappeared Aboriginal women whose fate is unknown.

Basically Pamela George did not exist in the public imaginary or the criminal justice system as a human being entitled to basic fundamental human rights to safety over her person. Instead, she is labelled as “Aboriginal” and “prostitute” and “drug addict” (Razack, 2002). Her murderers were two white middle class male university student athletes, Steven Kummerfield and Alex Ternowetsky, who picked George up in an area of Regina called “the Stroll”, a zone of Aboriginal prostitution in an inner city neighbourhood considered the “rough part of town” (Razack: 126-127).

Razack traces the journey of the murderers from their protected white space of privilege into the “degenerate space and back again…an adventure” (Razack: 127). This is the adventure of white men proving their power, domination and control over women and over protected social space by transgressing or ‘slumming’ as it is also called. The area of “the Stroll” is over -policed, one of the neighbourhoods where Aboriginal people migrate to from reserves, and one of the sites where Aboriginal people get into trouble and enter the criminal justice system and the prison system (Razack: 127) As Razack writes, during the trial against the two young men, George was not a full human being but instead “abstracted
from her history and remained for the court only an Aboriginal woman working as a prostitute” (Razack: 126).

The silence around the social reasons why areas like “the Stroll” exist, and the ideology that enables white men to believe they have the right to enter such neighbourhoods, drunk, to perpetrate violence against Aboriginal women, violence which acts as some kind of bonding ritual or rite of passage into full white manhood and white privileged citizenship is deafening. It is the silence and erasure similar to the striking from the record of the grievances of Aboriginal people brought to Parliament by their elected representative. As Razack notes, the killing of Pamela George is one of the modern re-enactments of the original “material (theft of the land) and symbolic (who is entitled to it) processes …” (Razack: 129). The contemporary “segregation of urban space replaces …earlier spatial practices: slum administration replaces colonial administration” (Razack: 129). The “other” is contained and policed geographically, spatially, empirically and symbolically. “Reserves remain lands administered by the Indian Act, while city slums are regulated through a variety of municipal laws” (Razack: 129).

As Razack argues the colonialization and containment of native people in the 19th century lead heavily to the restructuring of women’s lives. Legal regulations denied Aboriginal women the right or ability to leave reserves without pass cards (a form of apartheid). The Aboriginal woman, as discussed above, became the “squaw” or the idealized, “princess”. Poverty and increasing despair due to government oppression were blamed on Aboriginal people’s primitiveness and less than human ability to be part of the higher white people’s world. Aboriginal women were deemed, by government as “dissolute” while Aboriginal men were characterized as “lazy” (Razack: 130). The misuse of power on the part
of white men, who through the Indian Act, managed and controlled Aboriginal women is notable for its level of violence. Razack describes the prevalence of beatings, requests of sexual favour and murders of Aboriginal people by mounted police (Razack: 131). Murders of Aboriginal women forced for economic reasons to work as prostitutes, as early as the 19th century, were well documented in the Prairies; white men were charged, and in the rare case when they were, sentences were either lenient or the perpetrators were freed because the victims were only “Aboriginal prostitutes” (Razack: 131).

The conditions Aboriginal women faced in the 19th century are not much different from what they endure in the late 20th century and early 21st century in the Canadian prairies (Razack: 134). She states that, “the typical offender is also the typical victim: a young Aboriginal woman…” in a community where there are also “high rates of suicide” and “collective anguish” (Razack: 134). One Aboriginal women, who once worked as a prostitute in downtown Regina describes “how men from high-class communities go downtown to look for Aboriginal kids to rape and assault, knowing that the Aboriginal kids who survived would not talk” (Razack: 135).

The murder of Helen Betty Osborne in 1971, a young Aboriginal university student walking alone at night in The Pas, Manitoba, is one of the many horrifying stories of racialized violence of white men proving their masculinity and their belonging within white society, by raping and killing Aboriginal women, an official judicial inquiry deemed that the men who killed Osborne “seemed to be operating on the assumption that Aboriginal women were promiscuous and open to enticement through alcohol or violence” (Razack: 135). Similarly, the two wealthy, privileged young drunken men who murdered Pamela George
acted on similar assumptions, assumptions they were known to have previously bragged about with friends and even among family members.

The night of the murder the two men, after hours of drinking, met to go to “The Stroll” to pick up an Aboriginal woman to have sex with and then beat up. In our society and in the culture of sports and masculinity, “the definition of a real man is someone who sexually harms women” (Razack: 137). Because George, and many other women who disappear are working as prostitutes, the law is more lenient on the offenders because the violence that occurs is deemed to exist inside an agreed upon contract arrangement – the woman selling her ‘sexual’ services (Razack: 137). To ‘find’ an Aboriginal woman to assault, one has to go to a specific spatial location. This is marked out, demarcated, known, which creates, as Razack contends, the “space of prostitution” and the “space of license to do as one pleases, regardless of how it affects the personhood of others” (Razack: 137). Under neo-liberal globalization, everything and everyone in the developing world seems to be similarly open to such exploitation through a speeding up of commodification to the point where women, as a collectivity, suffering more poverty and violence, are being exploited in a growing international sex trade, their human and civil rights seemingly outside those of the zones of civilization and inclusion, their sexual exploitation also used as a means to police their ability to enter or leave proscribed zones, nation states, etc (Sharma, 2005; Reynolds, 2008).

The space of otherness is conceived of by police and by media and by the state apparatus as named space, in the case of the Prairies, “Aboriginal space”, a zone of “drugs and prostitution” (Razack: 141). One boy hid in the car while the other enticed George, after which they ‘drove’ to a known spot for prostitution and other sexual activities. The city limits
have often been the site of dumping or leaving Aboriginal men and women, and these occurrences are not just by criminal perpetrators but also part of police actions to “evict Aboriginal people from urban space” (Razack: 143). She describes this as a white cleansing, or to use stronger language, a kind of genocide policy. If the urban is seen as belonging to white people, then to remove aboriginal people from it is to cleanse it and maintain its purity from the ‘other’. “The violence is itself cleansing, enabling white men to triumph over their own internal fears that they may not be men in control” (Razack: 143). The outlying areas close perhaps to the Reserves themselves, are deemed ‘no-man’s land’ where anything can be done, and more safely, out of the realm of the dangerous inner city “Aboriginal” zone of drugs and possibly gangs etc.

As Razack writes,

“During the trial the murder scene and the Stroll were described as spaces somehow innately given to illicit and sexual activity….This degenerate space, into which Kummerfield and Ternowetsky ventured temporarily, was juxtaposed to the spaces of respectability. Each space required a different legal response. In racialized space, violence may occur with impunity. Bodies from respectable spaces may also violate with impunity, particularly if the violence takes place in the racialized spaces of prostitution” (Razack: 143).

This is true in Canada, it is true in the U.S., it is true of the ‘sex tourist destinations” in South-Asia and Africa; it may also be true of prisons, which are locations to erase/disappear Aboriginal women filled with ‘issues’ related to poverty and systemic abuse (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Sexual violence represents one of the ways that the white male gains his status as a citizen of a nation-state that generally protects the man and enables him to have his ‘fun’. In the U.S., historically, black male sexuality was feared and punished, and white men fantasized about sex with available, hypersexualized primitive Black women.
One cannot conclude from this that sentences are not handed down for crimes, where the crimes and violence result in murder, but as Razack notes, the sentences are generally lenient compared to what they should be, because, as in the case of Pamela George she is represented in the court as not a human being, but as an Aboriginal woman who is working as a prostitute and has a drug problem and therefore is highly stigmatized and less-than fully human. The past lack of civil rights of Black people in the U.S. and Canada, the higher number of black and Aboriginal women sentenced and mistreated in prisons in relation to their size in the population, all of the statistics together reveal how white privilege operates in institutions and paves the way for individual white male transgression, often violent, against the demeaned, sexualized “Other”.

In her review of news coverage of crimes against Aboriginal women in the U.S. in the 1990s, A. Smith notes that only those cases where a Aboriginal man has been accused of or convicted of violence against a white woman is there any specific coverage of violent sexual crime (Smith: 26). There is no coverage of Aboriginal women being assaulted, raped or murdered by men. Often the police (and the media) assume the perpetrator of violence against Aboriginal women must be an Aboriginal man. Razack’s essay on Pamela George confirms this: the police did not initially look for two young white men, even though the footwear found near George’s body was obviously expensive, out of the reach of Aboriginal men in “the Stroll” or the reserve. Instead, they focused on native men as well as George’s boy friend, a white man who, due to his incorporation into “the Stroll” culture, reinscribed his identity as ‘Aboriginal’ by association (Razack: 146).

There are times when white men will go to great lengths to disguise their identity or to assert that evil and crime reside, by definition, in others. In one case in the U.S. a white
male pretended to be Aboriginal, including having a tattoo of (AIM)American Indian
Movement inscribed on his arm, and “raped, murdered and mutilated several Indian women in Minneapolis” in the late 1980s (Smith: 26). As Razack argues that Aboriginal women who disappear from communities in Western Canada are assumed to just be ‘transient’, “on the move”, desiring to ‘get lost’; the first response is not that they are in danger or victims of crimes (Razack: 135). This places Aboriginal women ‘outside’ zones of justice and rights accorded to white people.

In the case against the two perpetrators “The defence naturalized the violence by framing it as merely something that happens in prostitution and in those spaces” (Razack: 150). As Smith notes, rape and murder of Aboriginal women in the U.S. were often a way for American military in the emerging West to pass the time. In the U.S. Black men had to be very concerned for much of that nation’s history with being accused of raping or having sexual designs upon white women (Smith: 27). In the last quarter of the 19th century over 10,000 Black men were lynched for supposed “predatory” behaviour towards white women, a social myth to prop up white hegemony and racist superiority (Smith: 27).

Smith, discussing violence against indigenous people outside of the U.S./Canadian state, notes that mass brutality against Aboriginal women in Central and South America (and one could add parts of Africa, including the Congo) takes place routinely. Amnesty International has concluded that “torture against Indigenous people in Latin America is routine, including electric shocks, semi-asphyxiation with plastic bags or by submersion under water, death threats, mock executions, beatings, using sharp objects, sticks, or rifle butts, rape and sexual abuse” (Smith: 27). These crimes are committed by armed forces and paramilitary organizations, often funded by the U.S. government which supports violent
oppressive regimes as part of neo-colonial policies (Smith: 27). Border agents have been
guilty of raping women at the U.S./Mexico border, Aboriginal women have been held by
police and sexually humiliated by Canadian police; video games exist that reproduce racist
historical tropes such as a Custer’s revenge on squaws game (Smith: 27-28). The main reason
for discussing collective masculine violence outside of the boundaries of individual cases of
criminal violence is to see the complex web of relationships that exist in all violence against
Indigenous peoples. The institutionalized racism of the white settler society, the colonial
state, the us/them binaries that define and contain citizenship/other dynamics in modern
states and in the global world system maintain and perpetuate violence as a normal state of
affairs.

We live in societies and a world that is fundamentally numb to the plight of millions
of women and girls facing violence, facing ongoing domestic and stranger violence,
witnessing media images that promote and maintain racist, sexualized stereotypes of black
and Aboriginal women. Is it difficult to understand why violence goes unnoticed; why
women’s complex lives get erased into tropes of naming and excluding, erasing and
disappearance? As Smith writes in the border zones of the U.S./Mexico boundary over 500
Indigenous women have been murdered and mutilated since the early 1990s, with possible
government or military complicity in the brutal rapes and mutilations (Smith: 30). Given this
history why wouldn’t two young and stupid drunken Canadian middle class jocks, out to
prove their masculinity, see their attack upon one Aboriginal woman (a prostitute), as simply
business as usual, as a normal evening’s entertainment, a fun adventure of transgression from
a zone of safety to one of the outer-edges?
In Mexico and the U.S. and in Canada the disappearances and murders of Indigenous women and Black women keep rising, with police often taking the position that if they are Aboriginal or sex workers (or both) then they are inherently rapable and almost, by implication, deserving of what happens to them – some aspect of the natural order of things (Smith: 30). By the 1950s in the U.S defunding of monies to Aboriginal reserves, as part of a plan to resettle Aboriginal people in urban areas left Aboriginal reserves with, in many cases, no police systems at all (Smith: 31). The denial of sovereignty to Aboriginal people, (i.e. internal justice tribunals, justice circles and so on throughout the history of both U.S. and Canadian Aboriginal/government interaction) reveals the colonialism of the reserve system and the criminal justice system’s inability to protect Aboriginal people from violence.

As Smith notes, the denial of right of Aboriginal people to practice their tradition religious ceremonies is the other side of the coin of denial of rights to native people to be free from violence or to receive equal protection under law. If they are to be ‘assimilated” into white urban zones, spaces where native people are still largely unwelcome, then their fate or destiny seems to be predetermined – it will be stories of lives lived where fundamental meaning and recognition of humanity are somehow denied, just as it was (and remains to racists) denied to Black men and Black women. In the U.S. tribal police on reserves are unable to arrest non-Aboriginal who commit crimes, while racism in the non-Aboriginal police forces is rampant in the U.S. (Smith: 33).

The treatment of Black people, who left the South in large numbers to migrate north to inner cities during the 20th century, becoming often permanent underclass torn from their roots, shows the complexities of racism and how it impacts groups differently but with equal traumatic profundity. McGillivray and Comaskey found in a study of Aboriginal women and
domestic violence that lack of police response or pressure from band chiefs to drop charges are frequent occurrences. Canada’s zero tolerance policy against domestic violence is less enforced when Aboriginal women are the victims, while Aboriginal women enter the criminal justice system as offenders for petty crimes such as shoplifting from early adolescence on (McGillivray & Comaskey: 92-112). As Jiwani and Young (2006) found even when investigative reporters attempt to uncover the scandal behind the reality of murdered Aboriginal women in Canada’s inner cities (such as downtown East Vancouver) the stories are full of generalizations and stereotypes, with much coverage devoted to police statements about the ‘transient nature’ of Aboriginal people, and the victim-blaming approach to dealing with the brutal murder of “itinerant workers”, i.e. prostitutes. (Jiwani and Young: 897).

As writers on the high levels of domestic violence in both the African and Indigenous Aboriginal communities in Canada and the U.S. attest, men who grow up in violent families often become batterers, violent abusers (Moore-Foster, 2005; Proulx & Perrault, 2000). Some of the women disappearing may be women murdered by their partners or acquaintances, but this is again a too pervasive stereotype that can easily absolve the state and its institutions from the need to face the realities of the links between institutional racism and sexual violence, and colonialism as an historical and contemporary, ongoing structural phenomena of Canadian society.

The high levels of incarceration of Aboriginal men and the conditions of violence that permeate the correctional facilities where they serve sentences maintain a loop of violence that without spiritual intervention programs, will only maintain the hold of violence in Aboriginal communities. A similar statement can be made about the African Diaspora. As
Moore-Foster writes “African American men encounter multilayered barriers in comprehending rape….a patriarchal perspective of history; confusion over the meaning and use of power; a corroded sense of personal accountability and a debilitating, phallocentric socialization” (Moore-Foster: 345). Moore-Foster, a Black male describing his own experiences witnessing community and police violence in inner-city U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s discusses the need for Black men to re-educate themselves in relation to the way that aggression and masculinity have been inter-inscribed in Black and mainstream white male culture. But he also notes how the neighbourhood he grew up in became more and more decayed and dangerous after a single murder in a park; the outcome was the rise of police surveillance and harassment and the transformation by containment policies of a thriving community in to a crime-ridden zone (Moore-Foster: 345-346). Moore-Foster employs the autobiographical and contextual approach to show how racism produces its nightmares: the overpolicing that transforms people and neighbourhoods in the margins, the demarcated ‘racialized’ zones where individuals and community disappear from consciousness of constituting the fully human replaced by the organized stereotype.

This is a good example of an epistemology that emerges from the experience of everyday living and the reflection of dialogue and call-and-response activism. Proulx and Perrault write of the importance of traditional native healing circles as an alternative to punitive, aggressive policing and incarceration policies that deny Aboriginal men any way to learn about ways to alter their learned behaviour (Proulx & Perrault: 70-71). The authors write “The underlying principle of all teaching circles is the respect for self and all creations” (Proulx & Perrault: 72). According to them community programs in prison and after release that deal with the realities of intergenerational family violence in Aboriginal nations,
necessary to both individual and collective healing Community centres, whether in Regina, Saskatoon, Vancouver East or downtown Toronto are needed resources. They are part of the possible counter-hegemonic response to what Jiwani and Young call mainstream Canada’s enjoyment of a “spectacle of violence” that scares and titillates mass media audiences, observing voyeuristically at a remove the lives of people damaged by a society built upon belonging of some to all rights and excluding of ‘others’ from most or all rights (Jiwani & Young, 2006).

Unfortunately, and disturbingly as Jiwani and Young write, even discussing invisibility and disappearance can re-inscribe the status quo, where “Aboriginality” becomes a sign of “missing and murdered women”, a new demeaning inscription of erasing and fixing the lives of individual women into a new trope of disappearance such as has characterized the way Aboriginal people have been regarded (as a nuisance to eliminate) throughout Canadian history, with media coverage of native people as stereotyped victims or offenders, a sub-component of a master ideological positioning (Jiwani & Young: 910).

As Mithlo writes, a conflict between what she calls elite white feminism (of the 2nd wave) and Indigenous Aboriginal feminism is the appropriation and colonization of Aboriginal women’s problems without regard for Aboriginal women’s own positionality, which often assumes a tribal, local specific identity before, or in opposition to, separations into gender divisions. Such divisions may be nothing but colonial expressions and impositions of European categories on indigenous worldviews, in the first place (Mithlo, 2009). On the other hand insecure attachments, feelings of shame towards self and community, inability to feel satisfaction in intimate relationships, controlling behaviours and a sense of being controlled, violence as a way to maintain or reassert control after being
victimized, are all descriptions of the traumatic impact of violence in the Aboriginal communities and an expression or way that Aboriginal women may address individually their trauma (Proulx & Perrault: 103; Hannah-Moffat, 2001).

The abused and battered, the abuser and the traumatized, in Aboriginal intergenerational communities are often shared positions, the outcome of racist policies that produced the dissociated subject positions beginning with the trauma of residential schools, the lack of housing, respect, social services, employment, cultural acknowledgment and sense of worth (Proulx & Perrault: 102-103). Violence against women takes many forms; there is however, a difference between the violence between men and women who are oppressed and the violence as sense of entitlement that controls; the sense of privileged space, the discourses of normative white privilege, and the problematic of naming and defining that reinscribes violence and otherness.

Writing of Indigenous feminism(s) and the different conceptual fields from or through which native women live their identity, rather than separating out identity from theory, Nancy Mithlo (2009) quotes indigenous feminist activist Rayna Green’s conceptual map to distinguish a uniqueness of indigenous feminist knowledge production that “They do not document change, they make change. Their focus remains on strategies to address problems rather than on the descriptive analysis of problems…” (Green, 1983 in Mithlo, 13). This corresponds, as Mithlo contends, with aspects of Collins’ conception of African women’s sense of community and lived experience, one that refuses to separate intellectually, theory from community, family, extended community, life in the lived moment, and in the context of lived history, place and experiential wisdom (Mithlo: 11).
Conclusion

Historically, during colonization, missionaries played a large role in the beginning of the ‘transformation’ of Aboriginal peoples (Morgan, 2004: 24-25). Ideas of cleanliness and Christianity, instilling of bourgeois values in Aboriginal women, were a key components of the process of colonization of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. A shift in ‘gender identities’ accompanies other aspects of missionary practices (Morgan: 24). Morgan writes that the actual transformations after contact with Europeans, however, are difficult to totally understand or gauge. To what extent, as she writes, the subaltern voice of Aboriginal women in the 19th century will ever be ‘known’ or understood is questionable due to lack of written sources of/by Aboriginal women in early Aboriginal-European contact periods (Morgan: 24).

However, the legacy of the first contact development of a second class status for Aboriginal people, which involves colonial violence towards Aboriginal women is established in the literature, with the problems of history, whether representation or lived experience of abuse, now part of a new set of ‘histories’ challenging the white settler myth. The problems of continuing violence towards Aboriginal women, the extent of its connection to institutional violence which frames and demarcates the boundaries of the liberal state and its notions of citizenship, has been the subject of this thesis, using the lenses through which we can understand and critique global and local oppression. Anti-racist epistemologies, understandings of the social construction of knowledge, race, the problematic nature of normative rationality and science, the impact of a society structured on divisions and hierarchies of class, race and gender, all intersect. Counter-hegemonic, oppositional voices, the emerging subaltern, emerge from the understanding of dialogue, tradition and community towards a goal of healing. This process has begun to be explored and addressed in this thesis.
The dominant representations of Aboriginal women and Black women in Canadian history are degrading and stereotypical; they create invisibility of ‘the real ‘and in its place, tropes of projection that silence and confine spatially and ideologically entire collectivities to racialized violence. As Jiwani and Young write studying the way the disappearance of Aboriginal women is reported on in the Canadian press (in the first 6 years of the 21st century) reveals a continuation of the historical silencing of Aboriginal women as real people; a silence that denies contextualizing the “gendered war” taking place on Canadian streets (Jiwani and Young: 896), and it can be added, around the world in the process of neo-liberal globalization.

Cultural genocide is the term employed by native scholars to explore the historic trauma that generations of Aboriginal people have faced, and the impact of this trauma on self. Black women have faced, in their histories genocide, slavery, indenture, institutional racism, struggles for voice, for self esteem, for building community and introducing alternative Afrocentric epistemologies. The internalized negative monologue of the colonized leaps out in educational settings, and is perpetrated in the criminal justice system’s appropriation of negative stereotypes to use to continually demean.

In Canada, policing is built upon tropes of spatial segregation and notions of exclusion and denial. As Dara Culhane writes, every year the native women of East Vancouver march in a Valentine Day Memorial March (Culhane: 2003). It is a march based on the demand for respect and in opposition to violence of every kind normalized by the Canadian state and the white hegemonic discourses of colonialism. Haig-Brown a non-Aboriginal woman aware of self-reflexive oppositional epistemologies works through her own assumptions in an activist epistemology that proposes an academia that is activist and
inclusive of the subjects of one’s research. This is one method of provoking change and challenging the epistemological categories that police the academy.

Other approaches include Aboriginal healing circles, the recognition of diversity within Aboriginal nations, not the singular ‘native’ that has come to be anthologized by white authors in history books, the ‘sign’ that provides templates through which to dissect the princess/squaw binary. This is the binary that has fuelled male violence and rage; the making of the man through the enactment of ritual violence against “the other”, an historical process of enriching one’s own sense of entitlement and privilege. This is a privilege notable today in the neo-liberal global project that denies rights to non-white women and the impoverished around the world, who enter the ‘West’ if at all, as prostitutes, domestic servants and low-paid exploited wage workers, being paid across the globe far lower wages than those paid to even the poorest of first world employees. The neo-liberal agenda commodifies everything in its path, from land to people. The colonial violence that A. Smith delineates is repeated and reproduced. It is the mode of operations in a world of increasing divides of haves and have-nots a world where social programs are being cut and prisons are being built, the sign of an increasing criminalization of poverty that impacts the most vulnerable, poor Aboriginal and Black women.

The lenses that this essay has employed to examine Black and Aboriginal marginalization, invisibility and disappearance make clear the hegemony of white racist patriarchal capitalist society. This is a society that is built upon layers of exclusion and hierarchies historically built upon colour and race differentiation. It is a society based on exclusion and othering, yet a society of counter-hegemonic emergence, of alternative epistemologies. The denial of the veracity of ethics of caring that permeate Black women and
Black women’s survival and analysis of their daily lives, in the context of the ongoing struggles against oppression, brings to clarity the problems and the possible steps forward.

The fact, as Collins writes, that oppositional epistemologies exist, is a challenge to the hegemony of the white, racist norm. In this very fact, alone, lie a fundamental purpose and a ‘truthful’ perspective – if alternatives exist and challenge, then the ‘centre’ is de-centred.
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