



Redefining Representation

Black Trans and Queer Women's Digital Media Production

Moya Bailey

Abstract: This article explores Black trans and queer women's use of digital media platforms to create alternate representations of themselves through a process that addresses health and healing beyond the purview of the biomedical industrial complex. These activities include trans women of color using Twitter to build networks of support and masculine of center people creating their own digital health zine, two projects that value the propagation of crowd-sourced knowledge and the creation of images that subvert dominant representations of their communities. I argue that this process of redefining representation interrupts the normative standards of bodily representation and health presented in popular and medical culture. My research connects the messages within the seemingly objective realm of biomedicine to the social contexts in which they emerge and are shared. By highlighting two examples where I see these connections being made, I shift attention to the images deployed to redefine representations within these liminal communities.

Keywords: Black women, digital media, queer, trans, twitter

In an online video chat with other trans women who had read her memoir, writer and trans advocate Janet Mock discussed her decision to call her book *Redefining Realness: My Journey to Womanhood*. She says, "I felt like I needed an action, so the act of redefining *realness* ... allowed me to share the very complicated nuanced idea of trans girls of color" ("Conversation with Janet Mock" 2014). She articulates her desire to use language that signals the transgender community, citing *realness* as an homage to the 1981 film *Paris Is Burning* that first made trans women of color visible to a mainstream audience. For Mock, redefining *realness* involves her documentation of her own transformation into the person she is today, but also her creation of a touchstone for other trans women of color on their own journeys, and the healing that came through the process of writing her book. Mock's narration of her own

story marks a practice of Black queer and trans women's media production that can challenge problematic mainstream representations of marginalized communities.

Mock's redefinition of realness for herself reflects the ways that other queer and trans people of color redefine representations through their own creative processes. Building on queer of color media production and artistic movements from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, younger voices are creating innovative web series, visibility projects, and funding initiatives that reimagine mainstream narratives about their identities. The survival of ball scene imagery through these decades to the present via VHS tapes and now YouTube videos, and the successful crowdsourced campaign to turn *Pariah* (2011) into a feature-length film, are evidence of queer of color media products enabled by digital technologies. Queer web shows like "Between Women" and "Skye's the Limit" not only create representations that speak to the subjectivity of these marginalized communities but also redefine the imagined audience as those very communities themselves. Digital media makers can be less concerned with creating content that reaches privileged out-group members and create content that is for their own networks. This work is less about creating positive or respectable images that would appeal to normative impulses, but rather a means for creating networks and representations that promote healing for the audience and those making the content.

This article explores Black trans and queer women's use of digital media platforms to create new and alternate representations of themselves through a process that addresses health and healing beyond the purview of the biomedical industrial complex. These activities include trans women of color using Twitter to build networks of support and masculine of center people creating their own digital health zine, both processes that value crowd sourced knowledge and the creation of images that subvert dominant representations of their communities. The creation of the hashtag #girlslikeus and the Brown Boi Health Guide are but two examples of how Black queer and trans women use digital media to turn scraps into something precious ("A Herstory of the #BlackLives-Matter" 2014). Like chitterlings, the discarded pig intestines of the Internet, can be reworked into a delicacy. While few would deny the popularity of social media sites, their significance as digital media platforms for activism is only beginning to be understood. YouTube, Twitter, and Tumblr, are being marshaled to build networks of information and support that impact health and well-being beyond the established biomedical infrastructure.

At its core my research is about the surviving and thriving of gender marginalized Black people in a country and on land that has traditionally understood the importance of their health through the capitalistic frame of worth and labor. Beyond this Marxist critique, I build on the affective turn in queer and feminist theory to ask about the value of Black life outside an ableist capitalis-

tic framework that relies on seeing bodies as commodities and how—in what ways and through which venues—do Black people articulate the necessity of their lives beyond mere survival? The creation of digital networks and images that are primarily intended for communities of origin are two ways I see Black people asserting their significance outside of commoditized survival-oriented citizenship. I see the representations being created by marginalized communities directly challenging depictions in mainstream and medical media that circumscribe life and health in ways that affirm an implicit white thin cis male able body as the norm. In queer feminist studies, theorists like Jose Muñoz (1999), Kara Keeling (2007), and Tavio N’Yongo (2013) have worked to show the power of queer of color cultural production in shifting our attention away from mainstream representation to the representations people create for themselves. This project builds on these conversations by addressing not so much the content as the process through which the content comes to be as its own form of critical queer feminist praxis. The process by which these new screen images are created is a significant element in engendering healthier outcomes for Black queer and trans women. With the advent of multiple social media forums more people have access to tools that allow them to create and share representations of themselves. I argue that this process of redefining representation challenges the normative standards of bodily representation and health presented in popular and medical culture. My research connects the messages within the seemingly objective realm of biomedicine to the social contexts in which they emerge and are shared. By highlighting two examples where I see these connections being made, I shift attention to the images deployed to redefine representations within these liminal communities.

On #girlslikeus

Twitter and Tumblr are two of these platforms that have facilitated organizing and exchange for Black trans women who might not otherwise be able to connect. According to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 78 percent of all 2013 homicides committed within the LGBT community had a Black victim. In addition, 67 percent of transgender women murdered were women of color. The brutal murder of Melony Smith, a trans woman of color in Los Angeles shocked her community. Initial reporting from Benjamin Day of the *San Valley Tribune* misgendered her and used her birth name in an article that detailed her death, completely obscuring her identity (Day and Tribune 2013). Day’s treatment of Smith is so common among news outlets that several LGBT organizations have issued guidelines to journalists to try to ensure more sensitive reporting (jonathanyantz 2011). Day was contacted by Smith’s friends, who encouraged him to rewrite his story.¹ Writer and activist Lexi Cannes used Tumblr to amplify Smith’s story, creating an image of her on her site the Guerrilla Angel Report where she documents trans women in the news.

Cannes corrected many of the problems with Day's article through her created image. Her image identifies Smith by name in direct contrast to the initial article detailing her murder. Cannes's image also follows the convention of popular memes on social media sites by deploying a black background and large white text. The image highlights the violent way Smith was killed and juxtaposes that brutal act with a flattering portrait of Smith emphasizing her subjectivity as a demure and pretty woman. This image of Smith questions the motivations behind Smith's murder. Furthermore, this photograph of Smith appears to be a selfie, a picture she took herself as her shoulder is slightly raised to provide the proper angle. By selecting an image that Smith may have taken herself, Cannes does not participate in the practices of many journalists who have chosen to feature images supplied by unsupportive relatives or co-workers or photographs available in the public sphere. Rather, Cannes's image is one emphasizing Smith's self identification. As well, the text of Cannes's image connects Smith's murder to that of another trans woman of color beaten to death in Baton Rouge the week before, tracing a pattern of nationwide violence. By claiming Smith as a trans woman connected to other trans women, Cannes articulates the ways in which Smith's identity locates her murder as part of a systematic violence that people should recognize. Friends of Smith used the micro lending platform Give Forward to raise money for the funeral expenses, a process made visible via the twitter hashtag #girlslikeus.

While the direct action response to coverage of Melony Smith's murder represents a particular example of redefining representation, the work of Janet Mock around the rights and recognition of trans women online has garnered her increasing visibility in larger contexts. In 2012, she created the hashtag #girlslikeus to support the efforts of Jenna Talackova to compete in the Miss Universe Pageant after being excluded because she was trans. Mock's initial use of the hashtag was followed by many retweets and uses in other circumstances ("Why I Started" 2012). For example, while the mainstream media maligned Lorena Escalera, a trans woman of color murdered by being set on fire in her New York apartment, feminist and queer publications carried #girlslikeus and Escalera's story to a wider and more empathetic audience (Johnson n.d.). The use of the hashtag for both experiences reflects its legibility with regard to individual and mass situations. As well, since trans women deploy the hashtag #girlslikeus in discussions of specific desires to transition, the banality of everyday living and dreams of success, as well as the more general threats and realities of the violence related to being outed in unsafe situations, it crosses strict lines separating private and public spheres and concerns. Furthermore, because trans women generally are not born into families where conversations regarding their health and social needs are addressed—unlike with other types of difference, such as race—the use of such hashtags as #girlslikeus allows for a network where this information can be dispensed, even with anonymity. In

addition, transitioning “vlogs” or video logs identified with the #girlslikeus hashtag uploaded to YouTube provide recommendations for specific trans friendly doctors and depictions of the bodily changes experienced during transitioning (Dane 2013; Raun 2012). Where the medical community has been slow to acknowledge the growing demand for transition services and publically accessible transition documents, transwomen are using such online networks to get what they need from receptive providers. By distributing this information via the hashtag #girlslikeus on Twitter, YouTube, and various weblogs, Mock has developed a new media network through which a message generally reserved for members of the transgender community can reach beyond its immediate context (see Figure 1).²

That reach marks the difference of the hashtag’s redefinition. To assess who has been using the hashtag, I culled more than 11,000 tweets from a ten percent sample of twitter activity. I utilized the visualization software Gephi—an open source platform that visually renders the connections between data points—to chart the network of people using #girlslikeus. Because Gephi also

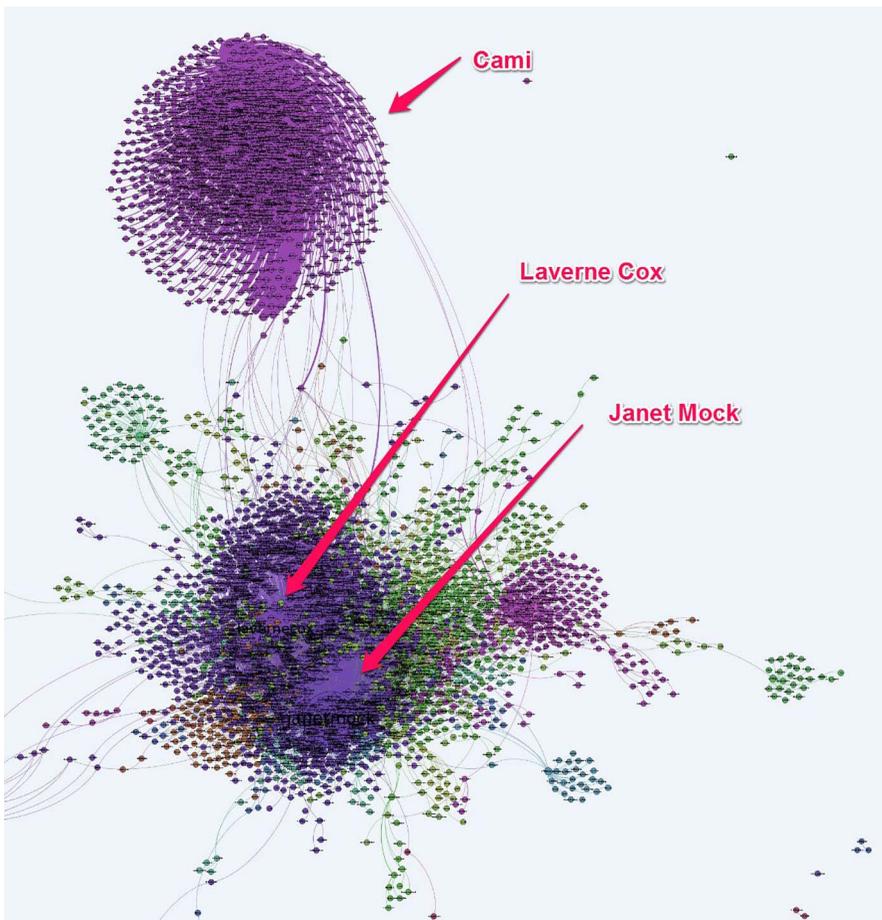


Figure 1. Gephi Visualization of #girlslikeus Twitter users

generates nodes that correlate with the number of interactions between Twitter users and their proximity to other users, I was able to determine the primary users of the hashtag #girlslikeus and their levels of interconnection. It is not surprising that Janet Mock and her friend Laverne Cox, actress on the Netflix hit series *Orange Is the New Black* (2013-) are primary users of the hashtag. Their twitter handles appear with the greatest frequency in the corpus of tweets after one other user. Cami, a self-described “politically incorrect conservative t girl” has her own network of followers who do not interact with Mock or Cox. Gephi reveals the network to which Cami is central. The visualization shows no overlap between Cami, Mock, and Cox. Additionally, the types of conversations Cami and her followers have harbor a different set of keywords than does that of Mock and Cox. Thus, it is clear that the use of the hashtag does not mark one network. Although Mock and Cox are central to the conversation many people are having in relation to the hashtag, they are not in conversation with Cami or her followers. This is an important distinction because it suggests that the networks being built around #girlslikeus are along lines of affinity and not only ones of identity—along lines of sympathy, attraction, or felt kinship rather than simply sameness. In addition, while Cami’s followers mostly talk to her, the people connected to Mock and Cox talk to both of them but to other users as well. Thus, the Mock/Cox conversation represents a group of users who have interactions across the network not only with the two of them. Here, #girlslikeus has become intersubjective and tends toward decentralization.

Though it tends toward this decentralization, it is significant to note that #girlslikeus—even in the Mock/Cox permutation—remains predominantly a bounded community that refers to trans women first and forecloses any attempt to exclude trans women from the category. Rather than invoking cis women as the reference point of its discussions, the #girlslikeus network focuses on trans women and places trans women’s experiences at the center of the conversation. Thus, #girlslikeus does not function necessarily like other markers of Black struggles at self-representation. For instance, the iconic Freedom Struggle era images of Black Memphis sanitation workers holding placards that read “I AM A MAN” were an attempt to reach the people who did not hold that truth to be self-evident.

Historian Steve Estes (2005), writes that the phrase “I AM A MAN” “represents a demand for recognition and respect of Black manhood and Black humanity” in the face of a white supremacist paternalism in southern mayoral politics. This marked a shift from the abolition era question of “Am I not a man and a brother?” and Sojourner Truth’s question, “Ain’t I a woman?” that fully brings Black women’s marginalization into view. The evolution from question to declaration is significant but so too is the turn away from a white authorial gaze to which such inquisitions and demands are made. The conversations tagged with #girlslikeus are most often between trans women and about issues

that concern the community. While they echo the declarative voice of earlier civil rights statements, they also eschew the call for outside recognition.

On Freeing Ourselves

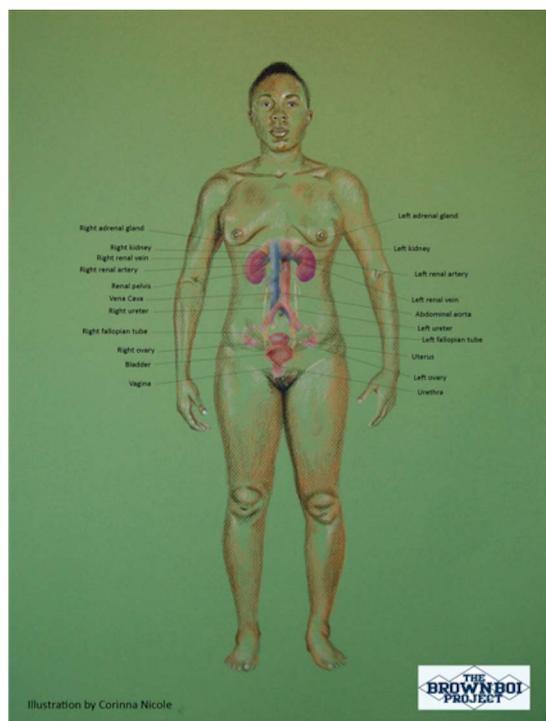
I shift now to talk more explicitly about how digital media created by gender marginalized people of color does not only avoid such calls for recognition but directly challenges the biomedical industrial complex that regulates representations of healthy bodies. The Brown Boi Project “is a community of masculine of center womyn, men, two-spirit people, transmen, and our allies committed to transforming our privilege of masculinity, gender, and race into tools for achieving Racial and Gender Justice.”³ They set out to create a health guide that would help brown bois advocate for better health outcomes for themselves when interacting with health care providers, friends, and family. Aptly titled *Freeing Ourselves: A Guide to Health and Self Love*, the digital zine makes clear connections between health and social well-being. The six chapters of the guide provide an introductory look at different components of health, beginning with spiritual, mental, and emotional health, aspects Western medicine tends to neglect or bracket as separate from physical health. Additional chapters provide an overview of health concerns specific to “masculine of center” (MOC) folks including “holistic care through gender transition” and issues of body taboo in relation to menstruation, pregnancy, and sex (Brown Boi Project 2012). The narratives of self-identified brown bois discussing their own journeys and processes around health are a critically unique feature within medical media production. It is in these personal accounts that readers see the intersectional nature of health, such as the ways in which structural forms of oppression like queer hatred, racism, and other forms of discrimination impact people’s health on all levels. The photography and illustrations in the digital book are critical as well. Non-normative bodies of various races and shades help to provide a much-needed shift in the way patient bodies are represented. The images do important work that troubles the types of illustrations that are found in medical texts. Thus, like #girlslikeus, *Freeing Ourselves* combines narrative, image, and information that alters how gender marginalized people of color might see themselves.

For many masculine people of color, developing a positive body image can be a challenge. In a culture that imagines men and women’s bodies as having different desirable characteristics—characteristics often associated with the bodies of white people—it may be a struggle to find representations of bodies that actually look like yours. *Freeing Ourselves* hosts both diagrams and photographs of bodies that are not normally legible as exemplars of health. In the pages of the digital zine, several images challenge representations of healthy bodies. One drawing provides both a lateral and diagram view of trans masculine anatomy. Top surgery scars are visible as well as hairy legs in stirrups.

These details provide a new way for recognizing bodies that do not conform to societal expectations. Western science proposes a dichotomous and streamlined relationship between sex, gender, and, ultimately, sexuality. The prevailing biomedical logic acknowledges two discrete sexes in the human species, bifurcating human sex into male and female in medical texts. Chromosomes and hormones dictate certain patterns of maturation that impact the body and manifest as secondary sex characteristics, such as breast tissue, muscle mass, and facial hair, which are then associated with behaviors that are codified as gender. The zine troubles these conceptions by providing representations of gendered bodies where the assumptions about anatomy and secondary sex characteristics do not hold. For example, another set of drawings by the artist Corinna Nichole (Figures 2 and 3) provides markedly different depictions of masculine people of color that interrupt the implicit standard white-cis-thin-bodied male at the center of most medical texts. Here Nichole renders two figures that are clearly people of color, so marked by their skin color and hair, which do not fit traditional depictions in terms of their size or height as well. These interruptions in standard representation intervene in a social constructed narrative of what a healthy body looks like. By providing these illustrations the Brown Boi project offers the possibility of redefining what a healthy body looks like, at least to followers within its particular network.

Within the zine, the colorful spreads offer additional resources directing readers to websites providing more information on diverse topics not always

Figures 2 and 3
Source: Corinna Nichole, *Brown Boi Project*



in compliance with mainstream health models. In this way, it both expands the variety of models and the nodes of the network in the conversation. In a spread entitled “Self-Care: Bacterial Vaginosis and Probiotics,” writers discuss the difference between “good” and “bad” bacteria in genitals. Then they offer non-medical interventions for achieving a healthy bacterial balance, such as recommending using probiotics and making dietary changes. This information is presented alongside images of more masculine presenting Black people with the quote, “The more power you have over what happens with your body the more likely you are to have power in every other aspect of your life” (Brown Boi Project 2012). In this way, the zine invokes thinking through health holistically, linking how we take care of our bodies to how we take care of other aspects of our lives as well.

Some notions of health and wellness are aesthetically derived. The Western medical tradition, like Western culture, relies heavily on visual information as a means of assessment (Gilman 1995; Jenks 1995; Jones 2010; Pauwels 2006; Shteir and Lightman 2006). Much work in the area of disability studies addresses the aesthetic dimensions of medical intervention and how medicine works to make bodies fit social expectations of apparent completeness rather than attending to matters of function for people on the spectrum of bodily variation (Bell 2011; Campbell 2009; Davis 2013; Garland-Thomson 1996; Linton, 1998; McRuer 2006; Siebers 2008; Snyder et al. 2002; Tobin Siebers 2010). Medical historian Sander Gilman describes this situation when he writes, “the equation of beauty with health and ugliness with illness is fundamental in the Western understanding of the body” (Gilman 1995: 93). This preoccupation with a certain “beauty” inevitably invokes hierarchies of race, ability, wholeness, and other visible markers of bodily difference, which are, in turn, then biomedically validated as legitimate indicators of health. *Freeing Ourselves* disrupts the traditional alignment of beauty with health by representing bodies that are otherwise pathologized because of their divergence from an implicit standard again challenging conceptions of medicine, health, and embodiment.

In addition, the zine also challenges the health care system deployed to enforce the normalcy of these preconceived conceptions. The system, while ardent in expressing a need for cultural competency in medicine, still fundamentally understands and measures the body in terms of a set point of *normalcy*, which it then uses to discipline and treat all bodies (Foucault 1977). One can trace the migration of *normal* from a statistics concept connected to a mathematical bell curve to actual people, with scientists claiming that society could rid itself of undesirables, the people at the bottom of the extremes of the curve (Kline 2005; Lombardo 2011). These discourses of the *normal body* travel from science to society, reinforcing medicalized knowledge that is already culturally produced. Biomedical science is endowed with a unique authority that belies its production. For example, *normal* and *healthy* are discursively represented

through images of white body forms. *Health* in health textbooks reflects white young and slim bodies, where “the healthy person is young, slim, white, physically abled, physically active, and apparently comfortable financially” (Ellsworth and Whatley 1990: 121). The fact that these images are staged, framed, choreographed, and otherwise produced is obscured by their location within biomedical texts. These photographs and other types of medical media reflect and project an image of health that real patient bodies are measured against. They provide a visual narrative, a story that shapes perceptions of health and illness (Sandell et al. 2010: 23). Against these productions, the images in *Freeing Ourselves* provide examples of healthy bodies that do not fit the standard representations found in medical texts. The authors/producers consciously change the frame of the network by using photographs, drawings, and paintings that trouble the way that medicalized bodies are represented, creating a new network of meaning and significance for their community.

Representations as Health Praxis

Media representations influence how different marginalized groups are perceived in society; this coupled with the medical establishment’s deeply embedded beliefs about the marginalized body has meant a history of slow progress in ameliorating health care disparities. *Cultural competence*, *cultural proficiency*, and *cultural brokerage* are all terms used by health care professionals to describe the skills, sensitivities, and knowledges necessary to treat diverse patient populations and name some of the significant areas in which medical professionals have attempted to redress the issue of disparate outcomes across the axis of race (Betancourt et al. 2003; Brannigan 2012; Burchum 2002; Koehn and Swick 2006; Kosoko-Lasaki et al. 2009). However, issues of cultural competency and of access do not fully explain the differences in health outcomes for white and Black women (Parham and Hicks 2005). The realities of Black queer and trans women’s health are particularly stark. According to the Black Women’s Health Project, “the largest factor in determining the health of lesbian and bisexual women is the tendency to avoid regular health check-ups either because women think they don’t need them or because they are uncomfortable with the medical help they have received.” Similarly, the National Center for Transgender Equality has found that “one in three transgender people, and 48% of transgender men, have delayed or avoided preventive health care such as pelvic exams or STI screening out of fear of discrimination or disrespect.” These conscious decisions to opt out of care are what sociologist Ruha Benjamin (2014) calls “informed refusals,” moments where marginalized patients make choices to follow their own thinking rather than that of health care providers. If Black queer and trans women do make it to the doctor, their fears of discrimination are often validated. In a 2004 study, researchers identified nine ways that providers contributed to disparities in care. These included unintentionally re-

lying on stereotypes about racial groups, particularly when pressed for time; believing stereotypes about “out-group members”; and unconsciously behaving in ways that confirmed stereotypes (Burgess et al. 2004). Because medical encounters occur so quickly, doctors often rely on implicit assumptions about patients when making care decisions, making mass media representations of marginalized groups particularly dangerous.

In addition to biomedical health concerns, Black queer and trans women negotiate a unique threat to life as those multiply marginalized by gender, race, and sexuality, compounded by the disproportionate amounts of violence their communities face. In March 2014, Crystal Jackson and her partner Britany Cosby were murdered by Cosby’s father because he did not support their lesbian relationship. On December 6, 2014, Keyomi Johnson became the thirteenth trans woman of color killed in the United States that year. As an African American trans woman, Johnson was seven times more likely to come to this violent end than their white trans sisters. The murders of Black trans women are a serious sociocultural health problem, one that deserves the attention and resources of a biomedical intervention without the medicalization that treats these deaths as individual instances of violence. They require a rethinking of the networks of communities as well as the networks of health care. The murders of Black trans women do not illicit the same outcry within our communities as the deaths of other Black people at the hands of state. Trayvon Martin, Jonathan Ferrell, Rekia Boyd and more recently, John Crawford, Mike Brown, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice are just a few of the names of people killed for their presumed criminality despite little if any evidence to corroborate these suspicions, other than their blackness (“Family Demanding Answers” 2014; “Ferguson, Missouri Community Furious” 2014; “Jonathan Ferrell” 2013; Park et al. 2012; Queally 2014; “Rekia Boyd Family” 2013). As queer feminist theorist Cathy Cohen has illustrated, these deaths of ostensibly healthy cis straight subjects, still necessitate queer theoretical attention. In her lecture “#DoBlackLivesMatter? From Michael Brown to CeCe McDonald,” Cohen makes an important connection between the violence trans women of color face and young Black life lost too soon. She discusses the need to recognize the ways in which the state makes all of these Black people queer subjects, subject to multiple networks in need of redefinition. She argues,

For me the death of Michael brown is deeply connected to the killing of Sakia Gunn and the attack on and incarceration of Cece McDonald, not because of his sexual practice or his identity or his performance but instead because Michael Brown, CeCe McDonald as well as other young folks of color operate in the world as queer subjects, the targets of racial normalizing projects intent on pathologizing across the dimensions of race, class, gender, and sexuality, while normalizing their degradation

until it becomes what we expect, the norm, until it becomes something we no longer see or pay attention to. ("2014 Annual Kessler Lecture" 2014)

Like Cohen, I see the ubiquity of Black murders and assaults queering those it touches. The representations of Black boys and of Black queer and trans women devalue their survival. The visible markers of difference written onto and into the bodies, clothes, and mannerisms of these queered subjects make them targets for violence and injuries that are often ignored. As the title of Cohen's talk suggests, there is a question about whether all Black lives matter and to whom. The work of Janet Mock and the hashtag #girlslikeus, the Brown Boi Project and *Freeing Ourselves*, Cathy Cohen and #doblacklivesmatter, and my critical work with regard to these projects seek to move us to the ways that Black lives and Black embodiment matter within and without the networks in which they circulate.

All these deaths disturb me and motivate my research questions with regard to the surviving and thriving of marginalized groups. For minoritarian subjects, especially, health and representation are directly linked as perpetuated images and understandings elevate the risk at which these bodies are put. How can we talk about disparities within health care without acknowledging these increased risks to racially and gender marginalized people, without discussing how the dynamics of these representations elevate the risk of these people experiencing violent and fatal injuries? The nihilism and sense of hopelessness that these fatal health outcomes engender is actively abated through what Cornell West calls a "politics of conversion." As West articulates, "black nihilism is not overcome by arguments and analyses; it is tamed by love and care" (West 1994). In this context, love and care can manifest as societal regard for Black life and health but, more significantly, affirm the self within a nation state that does not.

In our digital age, young people are utilizing the Internet to redefine representation in a way that responds to this lack of love and care. I understand Black and other marginalized groups' production of media as a similar act of self-preservation and one of health praxis that is not centered on appeals to a majority audience. The creation of media by minoritarian subjects about themselves and for themselves can be a liberatory act. These acts of image redefinition actually engender different outcomes for marginalized groups, and the processes by which they are created build networks of resilience that far outlive the relevant content. The examples of trans women of color's digital activism and the Brown Boi health guide demonstrate the power of digital media to redefine representations of marginalized groups. As well, they show their ability to impact a white supremacist, heterosexist, and trans misogynist media culture without that being their primary goal. The practices of reclaiming the

screens of our computers and phones with content are not simply about creating new representations but is a practice of self-preservation and health promotion through the networks of digital media. This media, while often celebrated for its rehabilitated images, is not often interrogated as processes that support the development of community and individual health strategies. Trans women of color are not simply naming the violence they experience but are building networks of support and recognition for their work that help them create safer environments in which to live and communicate. Brown Bois are not simply representing themselves as potential patients but as agential subjects who can collectively work towards the health of their community through shared stories and images.

For Black queer and trans women's health care disparities to be ameliorated, society as we know it has to change. As the Combahee River Collective Statement articulates, "If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression." Creating these conditions requires work towards the freedom the Collective articulates and requires action beyond the current purview of the medical industrial complex. As Black women and other gender and sexually marginalized groups of color work toward freedom, sophisticated critiques of popular media have shifted to include the production of the images and subsequent networks that support the changes we wish to see.

Moya Bailey is a postdoctoral scholar of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Digital Humanities at Northeastern University where she focuses on marginalized groups' use of digital media to promote social justice as acts of self-affirmation and health promotion. She is interested in how race, gender, and sexuality are represented in media and medicine.

Notes

¹ I choose not to rehearse Day's language or provide screen shots of Day's original article so as not to rehearse the injury of the original story.

² Because of space constraints here, I cannot say more about how this tweeting is affecting behavior as well as creating awareness.

³ "Brown Boi Project," <http://www.brownboiproject.org>.

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