

Black Feminist Rhetorical Praxis:
The Agency of Holistic Black Women in Lauryn Hill's The
Miseducation of Lauryn Hill and Contemporary Works

Alexis McGee – The University of Alabama

Bettina Love – University of Georgia

Billye Sankofa Waters – Northeastern University

Venus Evans-Winters – Illinois State University

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TRACK 4

Black Feminist Rhetorical Praxis: The Agency of Holistic Black Women in Lauryn Hill's *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* and Contemporary Works

Alexis McGee

On April 24, 2016 my sister was in labor for seven hours. I had the privilege to stay in her delivery room for five of those hours. Between my sister's contractions, we had one of the most honest conversations in a long time. After discussing her attempt to have a "natural birth" but later opting for the epidurals to ease her medically-induced contractions, and after eating ice chips and teasing her with food as the baby sister does, we talked about Lauryn Hill, one of the few things we had in common. Both of us are loyal fans. Hill's talent and Black feminist critical consciousness had a history of bringing my sister and I together, either through discussions of lyricism, talent, or spiritual ideologies. However, Hill would soon be a part of our lives in a way I had never predicted: my anticipated nephew was going to be named, Zion.

My sister and I are mixed. We are primarily Black and white, in a general sense. However, when we look closer at our ancestry and culture expressed in our homes, our family often practices remnants of West African, French, German, and Irish traditions. As such, tension has always surrounded who we are and how we constructed our identities. We grew up with a, what some individuals would problematically label, a stereotypically, aggressive, abusive, and (mostly) absent Black father from the South. Alternatively, this means we were primarily raised by a semi-conservative, alcoholic white mother from the rural North whose extended, older generations, and ultra-conservative family were not shy about showing their racial prejudice toward my sister and myself (and on occasions my mother). We were often shunned by family,

called “Oreos” by neighborhood kids, and excluded from self-segregating cliques in school. Growing up away from extended family, we were often isolated from cultural events and communities celebrating similar heritages. We were often relegated to the school-sanctioned, textbook versions of our histories; thus, claiming and reclaiming our cultural differences have been a struggle for both of us.

As a cultural connector, we saw pathways of navigating our identities when we listened to Hill’s musical body of work. Hill’s music continues to bring us, my sister and I, together even as we begin to live wholly different lives, even as we live through similar traumatic and loving moments. “Why Zion?” I asked her after she relaxed from another contraction. She said that she felt like she earned it: “I don’t want him to forget where he came from and that we’re Black too.” This deeply honest response said more about our shared experiences than we had ever before explicitly discussed. We have a complicated relationship, my sister and I, which led us to embracing our race, class, and our womanhood very differently. However, we both see the value in dynamic loving, loving of ourselves and loving of family; for me, I also see the importance of encouraging a strong love of our culture and communities.

As such, Lauryn Hill has been our teacher in many ways. Hill’s music and presence in Hip Hop discourse resonates as our mentor in those awkward “tween” years and beyond. This hardship and praxis of finding agency and self-love is particularly an obstacle, in our case since it is attached to so much violence and negative memories of abuse and separation, because love in its various manifestations can at times be elusive in such oppressive systems like American politics and ideologies. However, like so many of Hill’s audiences and fans can attest (including my sister and myself), we are able to find ourselves and our identities, reflected in her work most

prominently in her debut album *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (Hill, 1998), and more recently, for me, her 2015 song “Black Rage (Sketch).”

I do not divulge my narrative here to enjoy some personal, hedonistic gain but, rather, to assert Lauryn Hill’s music addresses many threshold experiences pulsing at the heart of healing Black communities and understanding Black women’s complex agencies and simultaneous identities, in particular our love of one’s self and our love of shared or communal cultural identities. Lauryn Hill challenges this misidentification and miseducation by expressing a rhetorical evolution of agency through love(s) over the span of *Miseducation* (Hill, 1998) thus building on our navigations and understandings of a multifaceted Black womanhood, or rather female-ness. Often viewing and using Hill’s performances and lyrics as methods of communicating salient identities projects and interprets these manifestations of love and understanding. As such, her debut solo album aligns intersectional methodologies and Black feminist rhetorics to re/construct pathways for recognizing holistic Black female-ness in our everyday lived experiences.

Moreover, Hill asserts all of these pathways of loving throughout her work, which I argue is a rhetorical maneuvering of re/creating agency especially for Black women. Hence, I argue that Hill’s 1998 work in *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* presents a re-education for her audience, specifically addressing the complex continuum of emotions defining Black woman self-hood and agency. In other words, Hill’s debut solo album exemplifies alternative ways of understanding Black women’s agency within and across discourses. This re-education is not solely manifested by producing songs or speaking only to binary motifs regarding love/hate dichotomies. Rather, Hill’s work addresses the complexities of Black women’s agency by marking linguistic navigations that construct a fluid and dynamic Black female-ness, one that is

often intertwined with healing, trauma, reoccurring violence, and love(s) for both Black self/selves and Black communities.

Furthermore, I assert that her music brings many Black women together, as a supportive community, because we are able to see our lives reflected in her music thus recognizing and validating Black women's agency and identity as a fluid third space, enabling a spectrum of navigating for critical self-reflection. This assertion and expression of love(s) explicitly opposes notions of a binary regarding gender roles and is even being taken up by other Hip Hop feminists. Rachel Raimist (2007), for example, asserts, "We push to move beyond the good girl/bad girl dichotomous frames heterosexist society divides us. We must break out of the two camps of video hoes and conscious sisters and show the complicated spaces where we exist. We are multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and a transnational movement of women in hip-hop" (3). Additionally, Marcyliena Morgan (Morgan, 2009a, 2009b) notes the evolution of African American Women's Language (and images of Black women), like we see and hear in *Miseducation*, have historically been distorted and, at times, represented as Black, male thus continuing both the conflation of stereotypes and devaluation of the holistic Black body.

With this in mind, I build on Samuel Perry's (2015) description or use of ekphrasis, a verbal representation of a visual representation like that of Billie Holiday's singing about lynched bodies in "Strange Fruit," in tandem with a musical rememory. These rhetorical functions and Hill's use of African American Women's rhetoric and language (AAWRL), like narrative strategies and loss of third person plural -s, for example, highlight the various rhetorical tools Hill uses to resist oppressive binaries like the good girl/bad girl construction. In conjunction with ekphrasis, I rhetorically evaluate critical rhetoric and cultural standpoints of de/constructed knowledge or understanding of the misidentifications regarding Black female-

ness. These frameworks allow me to disrupt the ways in which we expose and utilize emotions as part of a larger act of rhetorical agency. This illustrates the interconnectedness between phases of emotions, agency, and identities from which to build a methodology and further explore the spectrum of holistic Black female-ness seen in Hill's work.

Intersectionality as Methodology for Agency

Therefore, if we look at "Ex-Factor" (Hill, 1998, track 3) and "Superstar" (Hill, 1998, track 6) as a continuing conversation of dynamic love, we see not only the range of emotion marked by AAWRL exemplifying multiple spaces and experiences of Black women in Black communities. We also see how emotions work on a continuum as a methodology. By this I mean Hill uses expresses experiences and constructions of agency to engage in active intersectionality. Vivian May (2015) suggests viewing intersectionality as a means for achieving an active feminist praxis and method of action that can be implemented or obtained; therefore, one should see active intersectionality "as a set of active and ongoing intellectual and political commitments that are fundamentally oriented toward antistatization and social transformation." May continues, "Intersectionality is an analytical and political orientation that brings together a number of insights and practices developed largely in the context of Black feminist and Women of Color theoretical and political traditions. First, it approaches lived identities as interlaced and systems of oppression as enmeshed and mutually reinforcing." Hill's expressions of experiences resist and call attention to the action that names misrepresentations of Black women's agency in America as part of an emotive response to rhetorical exigencies and critical reflection. Hill's modeling of navigating AAWRL provides us, as rhetorical listeners, with examples of navigating agency within various, and often oppressive, contexts like the heavily-critiqued, male-dominated music industry. As such, Hill's dynamic love through her use and navigation of Black woman's

agency asks us to engage in active intersectionality by means of critical-reflection on multiple levels. This reflection inherently demands us to acknowledge our own politics of language and rhetorics as we re/construct our agencies, by means of utilizing emotion on a continuum, to challenge and resist narrow constructions of Black womanhood across generations.

Correspondingly, the use of a Black feminist lens highlights a methodology active intersectionality as May suggested. This commitment to intersectionality, as a methodology, is seen in Gwendolyn Pough's (2007) chapter, "Hip-Hop Soul Divas and Rap Music: Critiquing the Love That Hate Produced." Pough posits "The dialogue that bell hooks believes makes love possible is the kind of dialogue that I am also searching for, a dialogue that will extend the possibilities of bringing wreck [in support of its destructive abilities; a rhetorical method of disruption; seen as a positive adjective] to a project capable of combating racism, sexism, and homophobia." Pough's (2007) assertion the love not only can be found but is intentionally produced in hip hop music recognizes love as a Bridgeway between critique, context, and agency. Pough continues, "Black feminist criticism, if it goes beyond admonishing rap for its sexist and misogynist lyrics, can aid in starting the dialogue." This twenty-first century Black feminist critique engages in conversations about love, a motif transcending race, gender, class, and generation yet still intimately connects to all aspects of one's identity and agency. Complexities of holistic Black female-ness support Eileen Hayes and Linda Williams' (2007) aim to reveal "[B]lack female gendered experience[s] in music" and the intersections of identity performances that Hill exhibits in her work (Hayes & Williams, 2007; Pough, 2007).

Correspondingly, if we look at Hill's work, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (1998), we see her depictions of holistic Black women's agency take on a multiplicative role, one marking a notable shift in what some critics like Geneva Smitherman's *Word from the Mother* (2006) would

call “conscious hip hop” because of its assertions of agency and emotive responses that coalesce and traverse transnational identities and sociocultural contexts more explicitly. Hill’s work brought (and still brings) attention to the importance of Black culture navigating and re/constructing agencies in the Afro-diaspora. This explicit rhetorical maneuvering demonstrates the ability to hold onto multiple constrictions of agencies which signifies the complexities negotiated while expressing one’s salient identity, particularly in regards to space and time.

Hill’s Navigation of Black Women’s Agency

Part of Hill’s rhetorical navigation of constructing the multilevel agent of change is also giving homage to Black women who came before her. Hill signifies on influential Black women from generations prior like Nina Simone (1958) who she names both indirectly (by way of mentioning a classic Simone cover “Porgy and Bess” (Simone, 1958 side B) and directly in her Fugees (1996) hit “Ready or Not.” This generational methodology is also signified in her single “Doo-Wop (That Thing)” (Hill, 1998, track 5) from *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (1998). This repetition or re-generation of sound, then, recognizes and names the importance of space as a part of one’s agency. She initially aligns her Pan-African identity with Simone’s re/discovery of her deep-rooted love for her communities in “Ready or Not” (Fugees, 1996, track 3) then continues to develop this coalescence or conflation (and thus overlapping) of sound and meaning as part of narrating her complex experiences and identities as a Black woman and for Black women in Hill’s (1998) “Doo Wop.” Hill asserts her agency as one that takes up the charge from generations prior and takes up arms in public and political spheres. Her voice and image were accepted as raw and honest portrayals of everyday lived experiences regardless of the pressure from within the hip hop industry or generational discourse. Like Simone, Hill, too, is compelled

to assert her voice as a disruption in hegemonic structures and as supporting the positive outlook of Blackness, particularly Black female-ness.

Continuing this line of thought of knowledge and self-love, Hill's solo album *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (1998) signified on historical Black literary traditions and works as well. The album title played off of Carter G. Woodson's (2000) influential text *The Miseducation of the Negro* that was first printed in 1933. Recognizing Black women's agency is not only complex and flexible, but it has been misrepresented or misconstrued. Black female-ness as a rhetorical navigation inherently develops as a fluid construction. Thus, the influence of critical reflexivity (both for self and community) was already marked in Hill's music even if you did not hear the tracks on the album. This solo album continued to extend her expression of experience as exhibiting at least one of the grounding tenants of Black feminist epistemologies: critical consciousness-raising. Additionally, the trope from Paul Laurence Dunbar's (Braxton, 1994) work "We Wear the Masks," signifies on the duplicity of "mask(s)" which is also recognized as a concept within W.E.B. Du Bois' (1994) "double consciousness," was not only important in Black intellectual traditions as noted in Hortense Spillers' (2003) work and other movements such as the Black Arts Movement and the Harlem Renaissance, but it was carried through Hill's album as well. However, these notions of masking and double consciousness had already been addressed by Hill's predecessors who used Black feminist thought in addition of Black literary traditions and Black aesthetic traditions. In her speech "We Are All Bound Up Together," Francis Ellen Watkins Harper (Ritchie & Ronald, 2001) stated, "I do not believe that giving the woman the ballot is immediately going to cure all the ills of life. I do not believe that white women are dewdrops just exhaled from the skies. I think that like men they be divided into three classes, the good, the bad, and the indifferent." Hence, like Dunbar, Harper acknowledges that

what people say and what they do are not always one and the same. Hence, part of navigating and re/constructing Black female-ness is in constant motion and always appears different in various situations and embodiments. This negotiation of identity, agency, and space is still being expressed when Hill performs “Doo Wop” (1998).

Bring the past with her, Hill’s music video for “Doo-Wop (That Thing),” a single on the 1998 solo album featured two harmonizing versions of Hill symbolizes the different perspectives of Black womanhood across time and space as well as shifting between internal masks. Here, the images of Hill are starkly different, one hints of days primed for doo-wop, bee-bop, scattin,’ and jazz while the other image resonates with her present-time audience of the 90s; however, both representations caution infatuation, fast living, and resisting respectability politics by wearing short skirts and letting him “hit it.” Although she does limit Black female-ness, here, to a heteronormative relationship, Hill still troubles the “masking” conditions by explicitly acknowledging the contention derived from respectability politics and internalized gate-keeping of the self. Within her caution, she asserts that the attempts to construct identities by means of capitalist, materialist consumption only adds to the harm of developing Black agency for both women and men because judgement becomes clouded and does not acknowledging one’s self-worth apart from tangible objects and societal projections. This form of devaluation, which is being connected to dangerous behavior (albeit problematic and somewhat stereotypical proclamation of respectability politics), is cautioning our temporary safe-havens in false perceptions of love be that with ourselves and/or with others. Her performance and embodiment of multiple versions of love(s) and agency encourage us to find and love ourselves which also requires a balance of love and understanding.

Additionally, other tracks, like her song “To Zion,” in *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (1998, track 4) simultaneously addresses spirituality, motherhood, and respectability politics. In this instance, Zion becomes a metaphorical symbol of her testifying. Describing her subject position, Hill begins to narrate the complexities of love as a Black woman hip hop artist who has a spiritual component of agency. Her “Zion” also symbolizes a Rastafarian method, a spiritual method for liberation (Chevannes, 1994). The priorities of Hill transform and transcend exigencies and evolve into multiple agencies. Hence, she claims this agency rather than have the music industry impose fabricated or stereotyped identities onto her. She decidedly and wholeheartedly envelops herself within this idea of motherhood; thus, she is also showing the growth of Black female-ness in one such instance. In other words, she aims to tell of a different kind of love that is dissimilar to the love of one’s self, dissimilar to the love that she gives her partner, or receives from her partner; this is a love that is spiritual and liberating. This is a love of communities and sharing of life. Her Black feminist epistemologies and methodologies perform and validate her navigation of ideologies and “everyday” life that now also becomes accompanied by representations of religion (and by extension liberation), motherhood, and female-ness. Describing her subject positionality, Hill continues to narrate the complexities of love as a Black woman hip hop artist—from community love, to self-love, to maternal love. She recognizes her “world” as now being (with)in “Zion” signifying the shift from desiring and cautioning material wealth, to conscious health, not always acknowledged or desired in capitalist frameworks, to desiring her “man child.” This act and transformative expression of experience marks a (personal) enlightenment that can be manifested or reflected within many Black women’s lives. This evolution of subject positionality, then, also signifies her liberation, resistance, and multiple agencies because the album, as a whole, takes us through her rhetorical

actions including emotive responses rather than discussing agency and identity as a separate, spontaneous, and/or incongruent acts. In other words, as rhetorical listeners we begin to recognize Hill's language and rhetorics as part of a continuum, one that builds on experience, space, and time, marking her navigation through various manifestations of Black female-ness as inseparable to one another even as those experiences, sounds, and agencies span generations and nations. This song, then, provides a method of acceptance, of love, suggesting a pathway for an exploration of different versions of one's self. Rather than having religion appear for a few bars as support to deconstruct someone's intentions as we saw in her earlier (1996) work like "Ready or Not," here, Hill ties spirituality to love in its many forms of communal and self-recognition of agencies.

Hill's proclamation, validation, and expression of experiences regarding love(s) and motherhood, or the *acts* of love and motherhood, decidedly contradicts the negative stereotypes propagated during the 1990s and driven by Reaganomics: *the welfare queen*. Alexis Pauline Gumbs (2012) addresses this phenomenon as negatively cultivating an image of the Black woman (mother) who is simultaneously hyper-criminalization because of her biolabor, ability to reproduce consumers, her ethnicity and her socioeconomic status. It is in this perversion of an image that "promotes a society where life, food, housing, and education, among other basic needs and rights, are individual problems not community concerns." Hill's performances, thus, speak to the resisting of such narratives. She speaks to the construction of and the dismantling of such dangerous images of Black female-ness, not just in "To Zion" (1998) and "Doo Wop" (1998) but in other singles like "Ex-Factor" and "Black Rage" (2015).

Comparatively, her song "Ex-Factor" explores Black female-ness from the lover's perspective. Like Black female emcees before her such as MC Lyte and Queen Latifah, Hill

employs what Elaine Richardson's (2003) describes as African American female literacy practices particularly storytelling. Hill continues to build on the legacy of Black feminist epistemologies and methodologies just as the skilled women before her. However, in this instance, Hill creates a dialogue between her and the audience by telling the rhetorical contexts and exigencies then asking rhetorical questions such as the infamous how-did-we-end-up-here question. If Hill's (1998) "Ex-Factor" is not a conversation between her and her partner, then it's a carefully constructed conversation that many of us have had with ourselves as we move in and out of relationships, temporary loves, and de/constructions of ourselves in love. As Alesha Washington notes, "the lives of Black women are based around negotiations of creating a self-defined image against an objectified one. The ability to reject an image [or person] that objectifies the person for one that is subjective is known as the legacy of survival. This legacy has been an intricate part of Black women's experiences and history" (Collins, 1990; Washington, 2007). The conversation of love(s) in this song, thus, finds itself in a long sociohistorical context that already demands a reckoning with Black agency. The rhetorical use of the personal "you" and "we" gives this song an intimate feeling. Hill's purposeful de/constructing of boundaries amplifies the vulnerability, a tangent of love, that accompanies the most intimate of relationships. Active intersectional methodology and multiple agencies, seen here in Hill's song, recognizes the work, both internal and external, that allows for more critical exploration of our very ability to accept vulnerability and love as part of our ongoing re/construction of self-identity and communal identity.

Moreover, the love created and invested when engaged in a partnership is simulated in this song thus further promoting the erasure of boundaries between the audience/performer binary, which is driven by love, so that listeners become (1) de/attached to a relationship thus

also become motivated to gain clarity in a way that affords critical self-reflection; (2) that the audience see themselves and their identities reflected in Hill's music which lends itself as a model for re/constructing identity; and (3) acts a primer in which to further engage in deep critical consciousness-raising as an intersectional methodology. Once the audience passes the barrier of the impersonal and recognizes the stages of love in which critical self-reflexivity implicitly follows, Hill pushes these boundaries by reconstructing these very conceptions of agency from different perspectives (i.e. love within a relationship or partnership, love of self and community, and a spiritual love). Furthermore, Hill's African American female literacies emphasize the personal as a political mindset thus also determining Black feminist methodologies. A love between partners is very different, and sometimes violent, as opposed to a love between mother and child; hence, constructing Black female-ness becomes understood as a complex and nuanced variation of agencies and experiences.

Hill continues to build on the legacy of Black feminist epistemologies and methodologies just as the skilled women before her. Hill creates and continues the dialogue between artists before her, herself, and the audience by telling the contexts and complex realities that shift the composites of Black female-ness across generations. Furthermore, Hill's use of African American women's rhetoric emphasizes the personal as a political construction. Hence, constructing Black women's agency is (and has been) a complex and nuanced expression of politics and social justice.

Hill's Move to Heal and Love

The nineteen-nineties saw their share of police brutality, reaching emotional heights with the acquittal of the cops who violently beat Rodney King, for some, and the Watts rebellion, for

others. Similarly, Hill's (2014) "Black Rage" continues this critical critique of the devaluation of Black bodies by continuing her assertion of agencies on multiple levels. She continues to support a love for Black communities with her stand supporting the #BLM movement, a social justice movement organized by Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrisse Cullors with its beginnings on social media to expose injustice and blatant racism and violence upon Black bodies in America and the overwhelming extreme acts of exploitation of Black bodies in America. Thus, as a more recent example, Hill's new release of "Black Rage," continues to deepen our understanding and conversation surrounding these interstitial and threshold expressions of intersectionality and agency two decades later.

Like Audre Lorde (2007), Hill, too, speaks out in anger regarding the lack of love for Black communities and bodies. Her use of anger (both Lorde and Hill) use this pathway as a rhetorical maneuver to address historical complexities and collective memories or narratives of oppression, specifically in the context of American history. In order to heal and initiate love within and across communities, Hill persuades listeners to acknowledge the important and long (and often forgotten history of) healing, resisting, and surviving as individual agents of change and as oppressed communities. Hill rebuilds a dominant narrative (i.e. white suppression as the normative) by implementing African American women's rhetoric and ekphrasis, thus, re-centering the narrative to focus on Black agency. Her new release is set to the melody of "My Favorite Things," a tune made popular by Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music* (1959) although originally composed by Heyward (1925) then produced by Gershwin & Gershwin (1935). The fact that Hill uses "My Favorite Things" as the musical sample for this song is a powerful statement. "My Favorite Things" is still considered a classic film score by the American Film Institute; it is in the top 100 songs of the last 100 years. Hence, this song signifies

America's attitude, culture, and way of life particularly over the past 100 years. Since this song superficially attempts to maintain and uphold innocence (during the scene in which it is performed) indicated by its lists of pleasantries like dewy rose petals and kittens' whiskers, this song also maintains the complicity of the American narrative that excludes Black women's agency Hill's reproduction, contrastively, reciprocates this rhetorical sonic rhetoric.

Moreover, this sonic sampling and confrontation of sociocultural contexts makes a chilling juxtaposition of current conditions in America which encourages us to view her call to action as part of a longer, generational Black feminist praxis that resists (transnational) oppression. This highlighting of verbal and visual disjunctures and fragmentations of Black agency marks the historical methods of attempting to null Black agency, especially Black women's agency. Hence, Hill simultaneously builds on Black music philosophy when she samples this tune, which William Banfield (2010) notes as the sharing of information and ideologies through music discourses. By Hill also invoking or recalling and acknowledging John Coltrane's contribution to American popular culture with his jazz cover of the same tune, Hill explicitly maintains Black agency as an important intersectional methodology. This represents Hill's building of Afrocentric epistemologies as the central component to reorganize narrative methodologies and rhetorics signaling agency on multiple levels across space and time. The original lyrics resonate with Hill's signifying and sampling of a classic Americana sound impressing a discourse of healing upon a collective memory that continues to re/shape identities and agencies within America today. Hill's ekphrasis casts a revisionist counterstory, or counterpublic, to American history that challenges depictions of Black bodies and Black women's agency in America through sound.

Hill implicitly suggests that remembering the love for self and community aids in calming the pain, hurt, fear, and rage because love and knowledge of one's self and communities can aid in resisting oppression and/or heal the body, mind, and spirit. Like Simone and Harper mentioned earlier, Hill is compelled to use her subject position to advocate for the African diaspora and the beauty within these communities. Under contemporary circumstances, Hill continues to voice concerns regarding Black women's agency from many sites thus demonstrating multiple agencies and intersectionality as a methodology and continues to raise concerns about inequalities and injustices in America against Black bodies. As an example, in early 2016, Hill released a schedule of her newest tour. Rather than being centered around a new or anticipated CD release like many recording artists, this tour is centered on the African diaspora and the Black arts which is “intended to celebrate the rich tapestry of artists from the African Diaspora while also illuminating persistent and irrepressible themes... Even if we work independently, we are a resounding collective voice, both reconciling and embracing our relationship to history, our origins, our future and to ourselves” (Hill, 2016).

With this in mind, the representation and identity construction of Women of Color emcees, particularly Black women emcees like Lauryn Hill present crucial information for Black girl literacies, constructions of Black women's agency, and representations of expressive culture. Conversations noted here, I posit, are potentially useful for many interdisciplinary discussions particularly those being carried out in rhetoric, ethnomusicology, education, and women and gender studies. This dynamic continually reproduced Black feminist epistemologies and methodologies shaping rhetorical Black women's agencies demonstrates methods of navigating, constructing, and co-opting power to perform various salient identities and should remain at the forefront to our tasks and conversations at hand.

These legacies of shifting, in this context of Black music, are also always acting as educational tools as a means for critical reflexivity for future female emcee's identity within Hip Hop. Bettina L. Love (2012) suggests, "These artists and their music can give youth multiple perspectives of modern Black America. For example, Lauryn Hill's social justice music mixed with the gritty street sounds of Jay-Z can present a fuller picture of Black America and assist youth in becoming informed critical consumer." Similarly, by arguing the expansion of conversations, methodologies, pedagogies, and outlooks regarding Hip Hop discourse to include historical Black feminist epistemologies and methodologies, as I suggest here, we can continue to view, excavate, archive, and appreciate the multiplicity of holistic Black womanhood in both breadth and depth of emerging fields and disciplines. This extended scope allows us to both challenge normative ways of viewing and doing which means also making space for marginalized individuals, but this alternate scope allows us to also listen to new connections thus bridging global voices and histories, or rather *herstories*.

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