

The Fantasy of “Home”: Locating Dislocation, Loss, and Silence.

Roksana Badruddoja

CONTACT:

Roksana Badruddoja, Manhattan College, Bronx, NY.
roksana.badrudjoja@manhattan.edu.

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ABSTRACT

The meaning(s) of “home” are once again a robust conversation in the American national landscape as we continue to struggle over postcolonial empire-inspired borders. As a queer Person of Color, Woman of Color, and Mother of Color in the U.S.; an American offspring of Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant parents; and a professor of social inequalities, I am particularly concerned about thinking through neoliberal anti-liberatory U.S. racialization projects and the notion of “home” or what I call the “neoliberal home.” I concern myself with diverse languages, images, myths, and rituals through which “home” is represented and constituted, and from the dispatches of racialized traumas, I am prompted to ask haunting questions: *Where is home, what does it mean, and is there really “no place like home?”* In this autoethnographic womanist narrative, I forefront how I (personally) and we (collectively) struggle over meaning, memory, and knowledge-production of “home” and I offer a practice of hegemonic interruption or “embodied tender rage.”

I. No Place Like Home? [racialization.spectacle.liberation]

I begin by inviting my readers to squarely root themselves in land acknowledgement. The modern identity “American” as a subject of citizenship is predicated on conquest, the erasure of indigenous histories and cultures and the desecration and pirating of indigenous lands known as Turtle, Serpent, and Heart Islands (the Aboriginal Creation Story of the lands that are now known as North America). Consequently, I embark on curating an ontology of “home” by living on stolen land—Millwood/Chappaqua, NY—where a Black Lives Matter sign is burned on a muggy COVID summer August night. I write, in (American) English, from the territory of Munsee Lenape of the Lenape people and their endangered Munsee (Hulunixsuwaakan) language. We identify as “American” by rendering indigenous communities non-existent as if nothing existed before the arrival of conquest, and this country has created institutions (and strategies and technologies) to render Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) invisible. With deep reverence for BIPOC liberation(s), I ask us to engage with deliberate land acknowledgment and immerse ourselves in the following intertwined intentions: to get in our bodies, grapple with what it means to be colonized, and interrupt oppression. I blow on my conch shell to summon Mother Yemaya. I howl like a wolf to call on Ma Bhümi. I remember my own ancestors. I acknowledge that I sit on native water and land nourished by stolen and slaughtered lives and their descendants remain here.

Being, Home and World

The meaning(s) of “home” are once again a robust conversation in the American national landscape as we continue to struggle over

postcolonial empire-inspired borders. As a critical race feminist, I have immersed myself in the stories of detained children separated from their parents and as a cross-cultural and interfaith urban shamanic practitioner, I have been energetically tending to the (racialized) *traumas* of over 2000 separated families (i.e., “shamanism without borders”) under the Trump administration. Here, in the context of racialized oppression(s) and trauma(s), where a “border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge” (Anzaldúa 1987, p. 3), I am prompted to contend with the following haunting questions: *Where is home, what does it mean, and is there really “no place like home?”*

As a queer Person of Color, Woman of Color, and Mother of Color in the U.S.; an American offspring of Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant parents; and a professor of social inequalities, I am particularly concerned about thinking through neoliberal anti-liberatory U.S. racialization projects and the notion of “home” or what I call the “neoliberal home”, a moral colonial-imperial-capitalistic economy of worthiness and desirability. Like Anzaldúa (1987), I concern myself with diverse languages, images, myths, and rituals through which “home” is represented and constituted for BIPOC folx.

With a pixie buzz cut, one of my diasporic respondents—Rupa—in *National (un)belonging: Bengali American women on imagining and contesting culture and identity* (Accepted) shares:

Yeah, I was born here [the U.S.], but I don't have that draw; that pull is not the same. I currently embody everything that the majority of, at least eligible, voters hate. I am queer, Muslim, and brown. Of course, I come back to my senses ... The last time I went to Bangladesh, I remember on Eid, I was decked out ... in a sari and my cousin put her wedding jewelry all over me ... We took rickshaws to [a] khalá's [maternal aunt] house ... and on the way all the men in the

street were coming up to the rickshaw and leering in my face, [asking], “Cheley na mey?” [Boy or girl?] and they were mean ... I am “Othered” in that way. (p. 160)

Rupa vocalizes the physical and sexual imagery that accompanies what it means to be both an American woman and a Bangladeshi woman; standards she is far from. Like Polanyi’s (1944) “double movement”, while Rupa’s diasporic movements are about privilege, her transnational travels are certainly not about freedom. Rupa struggles in “both homes.” Mohanty (1993) writes, “Notions of home...are located within a deeply political space, where racialization and gender and class relations and histories become the prism through which [to understand] ... the meanings attached to home...” (p. 353), Segura and Zavella (2008) find “feelings that one is neither from ‘here’ nor from ‘there,’ not home anywhere” (p. 540), and Puar (1994a) suggests “‘home’ is neither a ‘natural’ space, nor is it nation-friendly” (p. 76–77). I breathe in the meanings of Mohanty, Segura and Zavella, and Puar’s words through Rupa’s experiences and I learn we—BIPOC folk—are multiply positioned diasporic subjects and “home” is shifting through classed, raced, sexed, and gendered national negotiations.

Womanist Autoethnography

In this autoethnographic womanist narrative—The Fantasy of “Home”: Locating Dislocation, Loss, and Silence—I forefront how I (personally) and we (collectively) struggle over meaning, memory, and knowledge-production of “home.” Anzaldúa (1987) writes, “A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitant” (p. 3). And so, from the dispatches of racialized (gendered, sexed,

classed, and nationalized) traumas, I ask, how are the dislocated silenced? How can we speak up to recover unrecognized or suppressed aspects of our experiences of “home?” What do we have to say? And how can our silenced voices be located and inserted into a story in which we have a fuller role to play (locally, nationally, and globally)? Transparently, my concern is with lost voices and what those voices have not been able to say about the meanings of “home” and I offer a practice of hegemonic interruption or “embodied tender rage.”

I accomplish this project methodologically by marking autoethnographic studies as an invaluable practice of womanist epistemology. Here, as a critical race theorist and womanist ethnographer, I find it imperative to be concerned with the ethics of autoethnographic work and to deal with the problems related to (auto)ethnographic projects. I ask, what is (auto)ethnographic work and what does it do to us (Pławski et al., 2018)?

I rely on De la Garza’s (2004) conceptualization of autoethnographic text: “the intentional storytelling of culture through the lenses of one’s own life” (p. 8). I take De la Garza’s words to dispel the myth of autoethnography as the narcissistic study of oneself and absent of analytic method in developing cultural text. Next, I draw on Estés’ (1995) declaration: by denying women’s emotions, we attack her fundamental power—her senses (insight, hunches and intuitions). I argue women’s emotions are a form of valuable knowledge-production in rupturing hegemonies and I insist we return to women’s emotions and the act of writing itself as testimony and living proof of history. Finally, I situate my work in Black Feminist Autoethnography (BFA) (Griffin, 2012). Griffin (2012) shows me a theoretical and methodological pathway in which I, as an academic of color (I am the only tenured woman, full professor, and WOC faculty in my home department), can “critically narrate the pride and pain” of WOChood and use anger as a productive

force for resistance and liberatory and life-affirming work. BFA robustly helps me to self-reflexively explore and problematize oppressions omnipresent in my everyday experiences as an “outsider within” (Collins, 1986). My theoretical and methodological agenda is *restorative*, and to mark ethnographic studies of our own lives—cultural text where stories are written and told—as an invaluable practice of epistemology.

Yet, it is irresponsible to assume that autoethnography, even when it serves to unravel hegemonies and rewrite the fragmented self, is transparent in its application. While ethnographic writing can rapidly undo invisible forms of authorities (Clough, 1998) and create space to “talk back” (hooks, 1989) to systemic oppressions, we cannot assume autoethnography is transparent in its application. Kabeer (2000) remarks, “what people need and want, how they define their identities and their interests, partly reflect their own individual histories and subjectivities, but are also significantly and systematically influenced by the norms and values of the societies to which they belong” (p. 328). Indeed, aspects of power or interpretation can be missed, elided, or erased. I engage in this discussion in this work to undo the unspoken and reflexively foreground my own experiences as an academic who is an upper class WOC while recognizing the different experiences of working class WOC.

More precisely, for many contemporary American descendants of the Indian subcontinent, hegemonic “home” has been imagined and constructed through the Kennedy-Johnson era’s modern post-colonial Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, which wielded an American racialized myth: the identity “South Asian” infused with the trope of the model minority (Badrudjoja, 2013). Hence, while the ontological condition of leaving home/loss of home allows im/migrant subjects to remake commonalities through the “uncommon estrangement of migration” and, subsequently, the

possibility of creating lived diasporic communities (Ahmed, 1999), my intention is not to romanticize and endorse a sentimentality of diasporic identities. Not all diasporic subjects in the U.S. are on the same footing and many contribute to transnational hate politics, rendering others (literally) homeless. As a point of consideration, we can connect U.S. racist imaginaries, violent bordering, and displacement practices to transatlantic Hindu American nationalism á la Modi/Trump. My informants—straight, Hindu Indian, and American-born women—in *National (un)belonging* (Accepted) voice (across class) a post-colonial familial rule in marriage partner selection: no black or Muslim men. Clearly, diaspora cannot be uncritically used to connote otherness and solidarity; it can and does reproduce and reinscribe oppressive discourses of race, class, sex, gender, and nationalism in contemporary America (Muñoz and Maldonado, 2012).

Drawing on the ethics of autoethnographic work, I turn my attention to the ideologically thick concept of “home” as a rhetorical point of context, and the political work I promise to perform is to unravel the structured vulnerabilities that deprive BIPOC folx the “safety” associated with this fluid social “space.” What I hope to suggest is “home” cannot be written as simply a *fixed place* and *safe space* because “home” is about ongoing *dis/placement*.

II. Where is Home? [racialization:estrangement]

The day they killed Martin

we could not return to New York City
our visiting senior class stuck in Huntsville
streets blazed with suffering in that small

Alabama town
 in the dull shroud of morning
 the whole world went crazy
 devouring whatever light
 that lit our half-cracked windows.

-*Devouring the light*, 1968

In the excerpt above, poetess Boyce-Taylor (2017) invokes both personal and communal racialized traumas—unseen/unheard/silenced/ignored/murdered. My twenty years of anti-oppression/anti-colonial/BIPOC liberation work to create “safe spaces” as a human, person, woman, mother, community advocate, teacher/mentor, scholar/researcher, and an academic has left me *weary*. And as a priestess/witch/curandera/shamanic and akashic practitioner, my experiences with gender, racial (read as color blind), class, sexual and national oppression-blind spiritual communities leave me *parched*. Khuankaew, founder of the *International Women’s Partnership for Peace and Justice* argues, “...most teachings we have...from the Buddhist monks were anti-women. ... [W]e have all learned that, as women, we cannot gain enlightenment. ... [P]atriarchal Buddhist institutions and teachings have become one of the main root causes of oppression, particularly against women, transgendered people, the disabled, and other marginalized groups. We badly need feminist Buddhist scholars... who empower women and marginalized people” (Dwyer, 2019). Khuankaew and Boyce-Taylor conjure my experiences of being silenced as a Person of Color, Woman of Color, and Mother of Color and as an Academic of Color. The invisibilities have left me disconnected and hurting inside (Lorde, 1994). I am a (post-)colonial subject—“homeless.”

Being at Home

Grappling with potent stress, overwhelm and fatigue—trauma—from present-day complicities and historic violence(s), I step forward to clarify a topography of the neoliberal U.S. version of “home/lessness” or the “neoliberal home.” I infuse “home/lessness” with that which is rotten (anti-liberatory): race (white supremacy), class (predatory corporate capitalism), gender (male supremacy), (forced) im/migration, and (American Christian) nationalism/national identity, which include additional supremacies from heterosexism to the “western” *Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* model. That is, the neoliberal American construction of “home” creates meanings through and about race/racism, class/classism, gender/misogyny and sexism, sexuality, national identity and diasporic movement/im-migration (Brah, 1996; Webster, 1998). Here, my journey as a WOC and my theoretical and methodological situation in a critical race theory framework points me to lucidly see the ways in which majoritarian narratives portray indigenous, Black and communities of color as (culturally) deficient (Muñoz and Maldonado, 2012). The ideas and images of the “neoliberal home” is a significant construction of race, gender, class, sexuality, etc. through the lens of American nationalism á la white supremacy. Indeed, “home” is a common metaphor for a racialized, gendered, sexualized, and classed nation (Webster, 1998). In this way, the U.S. imagination of “home” is through an Orientalist phantasmatic lens weaponizing race, class, gender, sexuality, mental health, able- and aged embodiments, im/migration, religion, and nationalism, and this is an imperial/empire, colonial, anti-black and anti-liberatory nation-building project of personal, historical, generational, and collective oppressions, terrors, and traumas for BI-POC folx.

In interrupting oppression, I draw on the proliferation of feminist writings about the meanings of “home” in the social sciences to facilitate this womanist autoethnographic conversation about my experiences and meaning-making of “home/lessness” and my crafting—the counterstory/resistance—of “being at home.” The consensus in feminist social scientific literature is that “home” is a multidimensional and diverse concept and it is often contradictory in meaning(s) (Mallett, 2004). Feminist empirical and theoretical literature sustains “home” as a place(s), space(s), feeling(s) and/or practice(s) or an active way of being in this world (Mallett, 2004) and “being, home, and world” are informed by race, gender, class, im/migration, and nationalism (Ahmed, 1999).

The literature prompts me to squarely situate my work in black diasporic womanist liberation and I serve to disrupt and complicate the notion of what “home” means from the narrative of “being at home” (Ahmed, 1999) as a WOC. My (re-)configuration of “home”, which is about the condition of “estrangement” (Ahmed, 1999) for me, is a counter storytelling and story that creates space for exposing and resisting hegemonic narratives of “home” (Muñoz and Maldonado, 2012). I find De la Garza’s (2004) connection between autoethnography and cultural texts useful: “Our epistemology, the way in which we know, can evolve through a conscious reconstruction of our experiential base, inviting deeper wisdoms available through willing embodied engagement with the... phenomena, we are seeking to understand” (p. 7). I take this to mean we learn through a process of surrendering to what we do *not* know, and we welcome alternative wisdoms. De la Garza skillfully guides me to consider “patterns of estrangement” (Ahmed, 1999) that petition personal, historical, generational/ancestral, and collective/communal trauma determination for BIPOC folx in order to mediate/transmute experiences and meanings of “being, home and world”

(Ahmed, 1999). In other words, I intentionally and deliberately reflect on the politics and meanings “the home” by raising issues inherent in the complex notion of “home”: the significance of power(s), space(s) and place(s) and the signification of white supremacy.

“Eat, Pray, Love”

The colonial project of the “white imagination” (hooks, 1992) of “home” (à la sanctuary, spirituality, and love) stretched out in popular Oprah-endorsed American novels like *Eat, Pray, Love* (2007) summon to me nightmares: cultural appropriation, neoliberal capitalism, and invisibility of marginalized peoples. The “eat, pray, love” search for “home” model is terrifying and one that effaces the specificities of how travel (racialized, classed, sexualized, gendered, and nationalized) between the “Global North” and “Global South” is constructed through laboriously and deliberately guarded and surveilled nation-state borders and citizenship. In this model, the search for “home” is tethered to “finding oneself” (spiritual awakening) via transatlantic travels—which requires unsurveilled mobility across nation-state boundaries—between the “West”, e.g., America, England, and Canada, to the “East”, e.g., India, Tibet, and Nepal. And in the white imagination, the travels to find oneself often includes an egg hunt to locate love and an orgasmic cup of coffee as confirmations of finding “home”/enlightenment. The tropes of Orientalism are clear. Said (1979) writes,

[Orientalism is] ... an area of concern defined by travelers, commercial enterprises, governments, military expeditions, readers of novels and accounts of exotic adventure, natural historians, and pilgrims to whom the Orient is a specific kind of knowledge about specific places, people, and civilizations. (p. 203)

Poet Blanco (1998) inserts the colonial history of sugar and coffee in the Orientalist legacy:

*... assembled for a standing breakfast of nostalgia,
of tastes that swirl with the delicacy of memories
in these forty-cent cups of brown sugar histories,
in the swirling froth of café-con-leche, que será
- Contemplations at the virgin de la Caridad Cafetería, Inc.*

Border-control and population protection policies (invoking national security á la paternalism) profoundly impact the mobility (and freedom) of travel—i.e., lack thereof—for many American diasporic subjects. The historic xenophobic tenor of contemporary American Trumpian immigration policies (Wadhia, 2019) subjects many to profiling and travel “functions as a threat to certain homes while becoming the construct of home for certain Others” (Puar 1994a, 76-77). Blanco (1998) sings,

*... with the palms of this exotic confusion;
que será, that I too should be a question,
que será, what have I seen, what do I know—
culture of café and loss, this place I call home.*

The discourse of finding “home”/Self/spirituality/love bracketed with travel while drinking sweetened coffee in “authentic” local cafés is the legacy of the white traveler on vacation—luxury, leisure, and privilege (Puar, 1994b)—and it is informed by the modern “western” (e.g., American) technology of citizenship (Badruddoja, Accepted).

I name the interest in traveling and immersing in “Other” cultures for the advancement of spiritual awakening/finding Self and “home” as beyond cultural appropriation; it is the epitome of racialized sexual violence of lands, foods, cultures, and peoples. The neoliberal (white)

traveler lives in ashrams, studies with gurus, and serves in Mother Teresa Anbu Illam (orphanage) and the immersion in “Other” cultures and teachings—often indigenous—will not be used to unlearn racism in their diurnal lives. In *Black looks: Race and representation*, hooks (1992) writes, “While it has become ‘cool’ for white folks to hang out with black people and express pleasure in black culture, most white people do not feel that this pleasure should be linked to unlearning racism” (p. 17). Rather, the nourishing sweet and buttery cardamom and clove infused chai graciously offered during luminous clementine sunrises by sherpas in the chilly hills of Kathmandu is trademarked—®—as *Bulletproof* and the fizzy liquid energy concoction conceived by tuk-tuk drivers during the dark and frenetic night hours in Bangkok as *Red Bull*. The legacy of the white (read as “western”) traveling subject is deeply embedded in a bounded and guarded violent colonial national identity, (re-)produced.

Undoubtedly, the colonial hegemony of the neoliberal empire-inspired American “home” is constructed as an essential foundation of established social order and as a source of valued and protected identity (Wardhaugh, 1999)—white supremacy. As I contend with the anti-liberatory phenomenology of “home,” I am forced to dispatch my embodiment(s) with alienation(s) as an “unaccommodated woman,” a gender renegade who has been rejected by traditional domestic familial structures (Wardhaugh, 1999). Meaning, we BIPOC folx must contend with “home/lessness” or “homeless-at-home” as women who experience abuse, violence, and the suppression of self within the domestic home (Wardhaugh, 1999). Below, I examine being “homeless” by succinctly exploring my body and the spaces and places I occupy as a pregnant WOC (while my experiences of womanhood overlap with pregnancies which intersect with motherhood, I do not serve to conflate the identity “woman” with pregnancy and/or motherhood).

“What to Expect When You Are Expecting”

The demons of colonial sexual racism from the near past visit me: A (white) midwife *scolds* me, “If you don’t have time to have sex, then what makes you think you have time to take care of another child!” Ginsburg and Rapp’s (1995) notion of “stratified reproduction” is apt: “Some categories of people are empowered to nurture and reproduce, while others are disempowered” (p. 3). My own unschooling from the eerie *What to Expect When You Are Expecting* (1984) unfolded during potentially life-threatening risks to my own life and the life that resided within me during my first “high-risk” and traumatic pregnancy seventeen years ago. (I experienced a debilitating pregnancy related genetic complication in all four of my pregnancies that resulted in one live birth, a daughter whom I am currently raising and nurturing.) My ER visits and hospitalizations were informed by neglect, dismissal, and inadequate care. I was left alone for hours while experiencing rectal impaction and bleeding from a torn rectum. I was perilously dehydrated, and I requested targeted clinical interventions, e.g. I begged to be given fluids. The nursing staff angrily expressed, “being pregnant is normal... stop being a drama queen” and physicians infantilized me berating, “If you don’t stop throwing up, then that means you don’t want your baby.” My psychiatric evaluation, to which I did *not* consent, from a hospital with a nationally leading obstetrics department read “narcissistic and immature” and “patient should put up child for adoption.” Bridges (2011), author of *Reproducing Race*, vividly expounds, “pregnancy engages racial discourses to such a dramatic extent that pregnancy can be described as a racially salient event. ... That white women are largely exempt for the discourses that censure and condemn their reproduction *on the basis of their race* increases the racial salience of the event of pregnancy” (p. 10). I was condescendingly,

harmfully and inhumanely silenced by biomedical professionals every time, e.g. “You’re a scientist?/You have a Ph.D./You’re a doctor?” and “Are you sure you are happy to be pregnant?” My point is, Black, Indigenous, and Women of Color are rendered as an “epistemically disadvantaged identity” (Tuana, 2006).

The saliva in my fiery volcano mouth is brewing with the acidic taste of bitter because my body and the bodies of “Others” are under constant surveillance by “controlling images” (Collins, 1991; Badruddoja, 2016). The sexualized and racialized pathological biomedical discourse of my pregnant body of color is informed by “epistemic violence”—the routine silencing of marginalized peoples (Spivak, 1998): the white midwife and medical staff rendered me as “not knowing” (Tuana, 2006, p. 13). The larger implication of epistemic violence is that BIPOC folx “disappear,” our knowledges and histories eliminated. (Black feminist scholars are far too familiar with practices of epistemic violence. Harris-Perry (2013) in *Sister citizen* describes the construction of the “aggressive” black woman who is criticized for her unwillingness to protect and take care of people threatened by her non-conformity. I find myself in a similar position in my classrooms, e.g., “professor hates white people,” “Dr. Badruddoja teaches her opinion,” and “she is the anti-Christ.”) Specifically, reproductive epistemic violence heinously impacts both infant and maternal health and mortality rates in BIPOC communities. Dotson (2011) identifies a type of testimonial oppression here: testimonial quieting—a “speaker needs an audience to identify, or at least recognize, her as a knower in order to offer testimony” (p. 242). My testimonial quieting occurs when “an audience”—biomedical personnel—“fails to identify a speaker”—me—“as a knower” (p. 242)! I am (epistemically) *displaced* by the colonial/imperial project of (reproductive) sexual racism and I succumb to the *production* of my pregnant body of color as unruly.

III. In Search of Home [spectacle:tender rage]

How I navigate the reductive meaning of the “neoliberal home” and my essentialized place in the world as a queer Bangladeshi Muslim American Person of Color, Woman of Color, Mother of Color, and Scholar of Color has led me on a path of living and exploring (state-sanctioned) terror. Grewal (1994) contends hegemonic discourses of this nation use racist images... as a formative structure of citizenship (p. 70). The abyssal pain I feel about “home”—what it is and where it is, if anywhere—is informed by my intersectional oppressions in an American nationalistic context (Badruddoja, Accepted). Grewal teaches me racist images are absorbed into economic and racialized structures of the nation-state, U.S. imperial history and militarism, and the globalization of capital and labor. *I am devastated by my colonization* (I grieve the lives of BIPOC folk slaughtered for over four hundred years). *I cannot breathe at times* (R.I.P. Eric Garner). Piper (1991), in “Passing for White, Passing for Black”, pens:

The most famous and highly respected member of the faculty observed me for awhile from a distance and then came forward. Without introduction or preamble he said to me with a triumphant smirk, “Miss Piper, you’re about as black as I am.” ... in social situations...insults take longer to make themselves felt. The meaning of the words simply don’t register right away, particularly if the person who utters them is smiling. ... What I felt was numb, and then shocked and terrified, disoriented... Later those feelings turned into wrenching grief and anger... (p. 1)

hooks (1992) commits to equally razor-sharp words in “Loving Blackness”:

It has taken our collective oppressors centuries to teach Africans to hate themselves. Global white supremacy is very real and ancient. Not a single African in America was ever supposed to survive. Slavery, institutional racism, constant media attacks, incessant eurocentric imagery were all designed to deliberately destroy us. (p. 10)

Meaning, like Piper and hooks, I am not yet a survivor of hatred, erasure, and systemic oppression (Manuel, 2015). Foucault (1990) argues that modern discourses that formalize knowledge also regulate and control our experiences. Hence, I arrive at a raw and bleeding conclusion: I am unable to coherently articulate any (adequate) responses to questions of “home.” I tussle to respond satisfactorily because the meanings are often embedded in the construction of “home” as a “situated, fixed, safe sphere, with ties to place” (Puar 1994a, p. 75).

Multicultural models in the U.S. assume assimilation as the benchmark, linking “home” to a single spatial location or a monolithic, linear notion of home (Gillis, 1997). The question of “home” is embedded in the genealogy of “western” imperialism, i.e., borders/control/surveillance, which conceptualize “home” as a single space. My wounds prevent me from fully and rhythmically interacting with people every day (Manuel, 2015) and constituting “home” as a situated, fixed, and safe space. As a result, I continue this womanist autoethnography by *tending to my colonization*. I tend to my wounds by asking, “What stories do I want to tell about myself?” I learn from my woundedness that how I negotiate “home” is prompted by the ways in which this country has created institutions, strategies, and technologies to render BIPOC folx invisible and is situated in the ways in which I resist sexual racism, every day.

Grandmother Truth Raging

Warrior Goddess Sojourner Truth sits next to me one shimmery evening to offer her angular shoulder. I weep, soaking her white-yellow cotton blouse. I achingly ask her, “Mother, how can I reconcile my enduring experiences of racialized and sexualized traumas while holding tenderness for those who serve positions of domination?” Grandmother Truth parts her precise lips to smile. She puts my face in her scaly heart-shaped palms to tenderly lift my drenched chin. She looks at me with ardent eyes, “Granddaughter, reconciliation itself is oppression!” Grandmother Truth vanishes.

Synchronicity! Later that evening, sitting in my Gmail Inbox is Grandmother Truth’s impromptu speech that she delivered in 1851 at the Women’s Convention in Akron, Ohio, “*Ain’t I A Woman?*”, alongside an e-mail from a cherished collegiate-level student, a WOC:

Dear Dr. Badruddoja, I...want to thank you for everything you’ve taught in this class. Everything! Thank you for being the courageous woman that you are because you have been such a role model to me. [W]atching you speak gives me the courage to speak to others. I don’t know how long it would have taken for my silence to be broken if I hadn’t taken this class. A few things that you said today really got me thinking about my own resistance to this class. I was open to the material, but I wasn’t open to accepting and absorbing that information so that I could relay it to others because that would have just made my experience...so much more real. It would have forced me to break my silence. And everything that I was afraid of came true and my silence is being broken right now. ... I thought that incident demeaned me. I thought that incident defined me. It

doesn't. I realize that now. And I feel the rage that you feel. ... I have this rage...[f]or me [and] [f]or humanity. ... I don't even know how to close this letter. The only thing I can think of saying is, I love you!

I understood. My student brings “Truth” to the forefront for me: RAGE. I teach with Rage. I write with Rage. I speak with Rage. I learn with Rage. I advocate with Rage. I live with Rage. Rage is my experience of “home”/“being at home”/“being, home and world”!

The rage (à la hooks) I carry inside me for myself and for my BIPOC students who are marginalized on their college campus burst out of me, peppery red-orange-yellow-white flames of intensity, and I think deeply about what it might mean for me to be a healing justice warrior in my classrooms and on my campus at large. I engage my collegiate-level students with the social scientific study of social inequalities—contemporary sexual and racial violence, trauma, and healing justice in the U.S.—to teach a larger life lesson: *there is no way out of engaging with our physical world* (I have tried).

Embodied Tender Rage

I rely on Manuel's (2015) conceptualization of “tenderness” to sojourn in rage and be in this world. Manuel imagines “tender” not in a “soft and gentle way.” She means “tender in a raw sense” (p. 16): “This tenderness is of a wounded nature. We are all sore from the hatred. Our tenderness is our aching, sensitivity, and ultimately our vulnerability” (p. 16). Manuel's vision of tenderness makes it possible to name our experiences of hatred, abuse, discrimination, and oppression to open into compassion. She breaks silence:

When I contemplated being tender in this way, I realized that it did not equal quiescence. It did not mean fiery emotions would disappear. It did not render it acceptable that anyone could hurt or abuse life. Tenderness does not erase the inequities we face in our relative and tangible world. ... I say that complete tenderness is an experience of life that trusts the fluidity of our life energy and its extension into those around us. On the way of tenderness we allow rage and anger to flow in and out again, in and out again, instead of holding on to it as proof of being human. (p. 29)

Through “tender” exploration of the U.S., as a colonized space predicated on conquest (stealing and slaughtering), I encourage my students to face their own fears and vulnerabilities. I call this practice of interruption “embodied tender rage.” Embodied tender rage brings light to how we negotiate material power, how we respond to life events and how we make choices (Myss, 2003). Through my overt and transparent teachings about sexual racism and interlinking forms of oppression in the U.S., I strive to teach my students how to practice inclusivity via self-responsibility (accountability) via self-love, aspects of embodied tender rage. In stepping forward towards self-responsibility and self-love, we must become conscious of ourselves, conscious of our virtues and more so, conscious of our demons/shadows (Myss, 2003). hooks (1992) is invaluable here:

Collectively, black people and our allies in struggle are empowered when we practice self-love as a revolutionary intervention that undermines the practices of domination. Loving blackness as political resistance transforms our ways of looking and being, and thus creates the conditions necessary for us to move against the forces of domination and death and reclaim black life...[we] break through the walls of denial which hide the depth of black self-hatred, inner anguish, and unreconciled pain. (p. 12)

Hooks teaches me the process of rupturing oppression requires viscerally contending with the realities of embodied terror. As a reverend who is a black lesbian woman, Manuel writes, “[M]y awakening came within racist, sexist, and homophobic environments” (p. 7). I learn “home” is *not* about transcending embodiments of oppression. Rather, giving voice to our oppressions is a primary act of love and it is part and parcel of the making of “home.”

While there is no straight line of progress from Seneca Falls to Selma to Stonewall, *The Combahee River Collective Statement* (1979) offers us a blueprint on how we can engage with the realities of raced, classed, gendered, sexed, cultured, migratory, dis/abled, and national embodiments. Section three, paragraph five of *The Combahee River Collective Statement* (1977) is apropos. The last sentence is: “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.” Borrowing Lorde’s (1994) words, I take this to mean, “It is not our difference that divides us.” The embodied difference is the path to oneness, or what Manuel calls “multiplicity of oneness” (p. 33): “When we speak of race, sexuality, and gender... *we speak of all of us*, not just ‘those people’ over there ... Inclusivity lies at the heart of understanding multiplicity in oneness as a way of tenderness” (p. 4).

In this way, “home” stories need not be limited to loss and/or starting anew. Mankekar (1994) foregrounds how diasporic subjects negotiate defining “home” by acknowledging the engagements, connections, and continuities between “discontinuous spaces” or “cultural bifocality” (p. 351). An emphasis on continuities and connections makes room for (re-)creation of aspects of “home” à *la mestiza*. Anzaldúa (1987) writes, “The new mestizo... not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns ambivalence into something else” (p. 101). That is, the project of “home” can be seen as (re-)assertions of identity—acts of choice in the face of constraints. I

translate this to mean “home” is the site of everyday lived experience—via race, class, gender, sexuality, national identity, etc.—which includes both the embodiments of warm glowing intimate belonging and intense fight, flight or freeze alienation.

Our politics as BIPOC folx are radically tethered to our existence, identities, and communities. Our existence in the context of (state-sanctioned) violence is an act of political resistance. By deliberately loving everything about ourselves that we were taught to hate, diurnally, we take part in embodied tender rage. Our participation in embodiment resistance empowers us to ragefully and tenderly interface with forms of oppression. Intersectional feminists scream the acknowledgment of difference, honoring the lived discursive experiences—praxis intersectionality—of oppression. And so too, the ill-informed neoliberal American construction of “home” must acknowledge the body and the manifestation of embodied social inequalities. By sharing our expressions of pain, grief, and anger—trauma stories—BIPOC folx expose to others how to acknowledge embodied difference and by extension, how to honor all life that is in the world.

The most sacred act we can engage in is to practice embodiment and remain connected to our human journey on Mother Earth. I encourage us to steep ourselves in the everyday reality of our lives versus living outside of it. *My Embodied Tender Rage is my Healing. My Embodied Tender Rage is my Home.*

IV. (Re-)Writing Home [liberation:embodied difference]

Plainly, I am prompted to confront the terrifying realities of white supremacy, male supremacy, predatory corporate capitalism, heterosexist supremacy, ableism (including mental and emotional health), ageism and the list of -isms continue as my journey “home.”

Rohr (2011) argues dislocation is a blessed disruption—“holy trouble”—that tilts us towards tenderness, grace and invaluable growth; it is an invitation into intimacy with reality that can only be entered on our knees. I understand this to mean, *vulnerability transforms us*. (I take a moment here to connect to the sacred ancestral healing spirit of abolitionist Grandmother Harriet Tubman by nodding to *Harriet’s Apothecary* and the *Tubman House*.)

Grandmother Truth makes it known to me that oppression and tenderness are not necessarily at odds with one another. Rohr (2011) names the state of brokenness and luminosity as “bright sadness” and Manuel (2015) remarks, “tension is our most sacred time” (p. 9). Meaning, the seemingly dualistic contrast is a necessary tool of spiritual maturity. The question of reconciliation is not the right question or the answer then. Piper (1991) writes,

...encounters with white racism, there are at least two directions in which one’s reactions can take one here. One can react defensively and angrily, and distill the encounter into slow-burning fuel for one’s racist stereotypes. Or one can detach oneself emotionally and distance oneself physically from the aggressors, from the perspective of which their personal flaws and failures of vision, insight and sensitivity loom larger, making it easier to forgive them for their human imperfections but harder to relate to them as equals. Neither reaction is fully adequate to the situation... (p. 7)

The question is, can we walk with the challenges of oppression and terror with devoted honor and integrity (Manuel, 2015)? Can we trust with unwavering faith that what happens, i.e., trauma, is the path to “home?”

I ask the question and a thin, silky dragonfly visits me through one of the white paned windows in my kitchen. She brings me the

medicine of challenging old flight patterns in the underbelly of contested feminisms in the U.S. In *No más bebés* (2015), the strategies and technologies that were used in a hospital in East Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s to coerce Mexican women into tubal ligations (racialized sexual violence) teach us the differences in reproductive politics between white women and Chicanas (and other WOC). (I honor the women who came forward in the litigation—*Consuelo Hermosillo, Gaudalupe Acosta, Estela Benavides, Maria Figueroa, Georgina Hernandez, Dolores Madrigal, Elena Orozco, Jovita Rivers and Maria Hurtado.*)

Fanon (1986) is no stranger to the role of violence in historical change and Foucault (1980) ignites the productive elements of repressive aspects of powers: “What makes power hold good... that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse” (p. 119). Co-creating self-definition is frequently informed by perceived exaggerated differences. Our white feminist sisters summon for us Black, Indigenous, and Women of Color what we absolutely do not want in our lives—gender essentialism—and that which we desperately need—“loving blackness.” “I needed to lose you to love me... I needed to lose you to find me” (Gomez, 2019). Our white feminist sisters hold a mirror up for us so that we may see our raw, bloody, and open wounds, and I learn from my Chicana sisters I am not someone who needs to be managed/to be dealt with. I am a descendent of colonial subjects and they leave me with the following legacy: my marginalized identities are my grace notes.

In this autoethnographic womanist narrative, I breathe life into the terrors of the neoliberal American production of “home” and I insist “home” must be re-written as non-linear and have an existence independent of spatial arrangements (Gillis, 1997). I argue “home” is represented with diverse languages, images, myths, and rituals

and is constituted through a set of cultural practices, i.e., oppression, resistance, and healing. We must include stories of multiplicity and difference in the collective imagination of “home” to not only awaken terror, but to also create expansion for that which is lacking or absent in our culture, trauma knowledge. Khuankaew (Dwyer, 2019) expresses,

When I began to teach trauma healing to Thai nurses and psychologists...I realized that they had learned very little about trauma...since most hospitals are led by male doctors who never learn about [these kinds] of trauma, they either are against or are not supportive of feminist counseling knowledge ... [W]hen trauma is caused by sexual violence and other forms of oppression”, there remains “no knowledge or skills to support” us.

Armed with a multiracial and intersectional feminist agenda of theorizing, I am prompted to think, every day, about how vulnerability is imagined, the practices of solidarity and what it means to be of service to the marginalized.

My walk through oppression, domination, and control are the widest pathways in which I engage in my journey of “home.” Manuel (2015) writes, “The challenges of race, sexuality, and gender are the very things that the spiritual path to awakening requires us to tend to as aspirations of peace” (p. 6). And so, I take up space. I take up time. I listen to Des’ree’s (1994) “You Gotta Be”:

You gotta be bad, you gotta be bold
You gotta be wiser, you gotta be hard
You gotta be tough, you gotta be stronger
You gotta be cool, you gotta be calm

*You gotta stay together
All I know, all I know, love will save the day*

I spill myself to occupy all there is to fill to recognize and give voice to my wounds and grieve what I have lost due to systemic state sanctions violence and oppression (Manuel, 2015, p. 80). Anzaldúa (1987) accesses “knowing”: “Every increment of consciousness, every step forward is *travesia*, a crossing. ... ‘Knowing’ is painful because after ‘it’ happens I can’t stay in the sample place and be comfortable. I am no longer the same person I was before” (p. 48). Hence, I learn to *not* turn away from the lived experiences of oppression. My ancestral Mothers teach me my journey with terror and oppression squarely puts me on the path of love and home. My queer embodiment *is* my path to continually and fluidly (re-)writing and (re-)constructing “home.”

In ending, I write today with a sense of devastating urgency fueled by a ferocious and unwavering commitment to healing justice. I write to make contemporary social inequalities and the voices of marginalized Others as relevant and puissant sites of thinking to address social problems in the modern world. Anzaldúa (1987) writes, “Knowledge makes me more aware, it makes me more conscious” (p. 48). Mesmerized by Anzaldúa (1987), I use my citizenship, class, and academic privileges to call out classist, sexist, racist and nationalist rhetoric, policies and imaginations and affirm my loyalty to inequities that impact the lives of the marginalized. “So let go; And jump in; Oh well, whatcha waiting for; It’s all right; Cause there’s beauty in the breakdown” (Frou, 2002). I participate in creating a canon that we may be able to find guidance or points of contestation in telling our (dis)located stories of “home.”

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