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"Want to do something about it?": Black Women's Activism in the Era of the Equal Rights Amendment

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“WANT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?”:

Black Women’s Activism in the Era of the Equal Rights Amendment

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> …with very few exceptions, the women joining NOW today are still white and middle-class….Chapter coordinators said that minority groups did not appear to be interested in joining, even when there was an active recruitment program.[1]
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> "Black women feel resentful that white women are raising issues of oppression, …because black women do not see white women in any kind of classic oppressed position," Mrs. [Eleanor Holmes] Norton said.[2]

White-dominated feminist groups were hard-pressed to build racially diverse organizations in the 1970s. One of those groups was the National Organization for Women (NOW), founded in 1966. Lisa Hammel of the *New York Times* reported on NOW on its tenth birthday, contacting "new members and chapter leaders in 12 areas around the country" to understand their enlistment in the organization. As the quote in the epigraph reads, although NOW attempted to develop its membership among women of color and those with less income, the organization's demographics did not change substantively. Hammel quotes Atlanta NOW's leader: "'We realize that black women have found they have different kinds of problems.'" Neither Hammel nor the Atlanta NOW leader specifies what those "problems" are or how they are different from those white women face.

In "Coalition and Control: Hoosier Feminists and the Equal Rights Amendment," historian Erin M. Kempker demonstrates how the Indiana Women's

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[1] Lisa Hammel, "NOW Still Growing — But It's Still White and Middle-Class…," *New York Times*, January 24, 1976, accessed July 6, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times with Index.

[2] Charlayne Hunter, "Black Members Are Few in Women's Lib Groups," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 21, 1970, accessed July 6, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution.

Political Caucus, one of the groups fighting for the Equal Rights Amendment, failed substantively to involve Black women, as of 1972. The Caucus did not take action to change this, although members of the organization identified the necessity of engagement with non-white women for its success.[3]

Although white-dominated feminist organizations found it difficult to diversify, Black communities embraced the fight against sexism in their own ways. In 1970 and beyond, leading Black newspapers covered feminist issues, including the Equal Rights Amendment, in a generally positive tone.[4] The coverage of feminist issues and the ERA not only suggests but also explicitly confirms Black women's

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[3] Erin M. Kempker, "Coalition and Control: Hoosier Feminists and the Equal Rights Amendment," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 34, no. 2 (2013): 62, accessed July 5, 2017, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=90100341&site=ehost-live.

[4] For example: "Suffragettes To Storm Springfield," *Chicago Defender*, April 25, 1970, accessed December 22, 2016, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; Theresa Fambro Hooks, "SOCIAL WHIRL: Ebony's Helen King To Speak on WTTW's Liberation Panel," *Chicago Defender*, August 24, 1970, accessed December 22, 2016, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "Women make gains on job front," *Chicago Defender*, October 14, 1971, accessed December 22, 2016, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "Feminist Group Offer Question To Officials," *Atlanta Daily World*, August 20, 1972, accessed November 22, 2016, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Atlanta Daily World; "Growing Up Female," *Call and Post*, April 14, 1973, accessed November 21, 2016, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Cleveland Call and Post; "Concerned Women to Discuss Issues," *New Journal and Guide*, October 5, 1974, accessed October 27, 2016, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Norfolk Journal and Guide.

particular interest in these issues.[5] It casts doubt on the assumptions made by predominantly white women's groups of the time that Black women did not regard sexism as a significant issue.

At the same time, some Black women saw fighting racism as their main priority. They did not place overarching importance on fighting sexism. They saw fighting sexism as not the best use of their time. For example, reporter Carolyn Marvin discusses these concerns in an article in the *Atlanta Constitution* in 1971. She observes what one might describe as a focus group at the local YWCA Women's Center and notes how Black women see white women's concerns from a different frame of reference. Marvin writes: "The black women scoffed a little at the idea that comfortable middle-class white women, who may make less than white men but are supported by them, need 'liberation.'"[6] A few years later in Norfolk, Virginia, another YWCA speaker railed against the Equal Rights Amendment. The speaker noted that the Amendment was insufficient because it did not prohibit racism in addition to

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[5] Examples of Black support of the ERA: "Black women," *Chicago Defender*, March 6, 1973, accessed December 22, 2016, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; E. Duke McNeil, "Duke: Women's rights overdue," *Chicago Defender*, June 11, 1974, accessed December 22, 2016, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; Charles E. Price, "Equal Rights, A Time to Act," *Atlanta Daily World*, January 27, 1974, accessed November 22, 2016, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Atlanta Daily World.
Examples of Black women's support of the ERA: Connie Seals, "human relations: Backing ERA 100%," *Chicago Defender*, July 12, 1980, microfilm, p. 24; Verner Reid, "that's my point of view," *Chicago Defender*, June 10, 1982, microfilm, p. 10; Clarissa Myrick, "BLACK WOMEN URGED TO JOIN ERA SUPPORTERS," *Atlanta Daily World*, November 26, 1974, accessed November 22, 2016, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Atlanta Daily World.

[6] Carolyn Marvin, "First Priority — Lib vs. Racism?" *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 28, 1971, accessed July 6, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution.

sexism, and "the most critical cause of stresses and strains on Black women is racism."[7]

In the late 1980s, legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw developed intersectionality theory to explain these two oppressions (sexism and racism) and how they work together to affect Black women in a particular way. Considering discrimination under the law, she argued that analyzing a violation of rights only by the categories of race or sex was insufficient. Black women experience both types of oppression, which are inextricable from each other.[8] Crenshaw discusses three examples of discrimination in which Black women do not achieve justice because they are situated at the *intersection* of the "disadvantage[d]" race and sex.[9] She argues that this is not irrelevant to activism:

> Black women are regarded either as too much like women or Blacks and the compounded nature of their experience is absorbed into the collective experiences of either group or [are regarded] as too different, in which case Black women's Blackness or femaleness sometimes has placed their needs and perspectives at the margin of the feminist and Black liberationist agendas.[10]

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[7] Deborah A. Jones, "Seminar Speaker Says: 'ERA Not Intended for Black Women,'" *New Journal and Guide*, March 8, 1975, accessed October 27, 2016, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Norfolk Journal and Guide.

[8] Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" [hereafter "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex"], *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989), 140, accessed March 16, 2017, HeinOnline.

[9] For the three examples of discrimination: Ibid., 141-50.
Regarding *disadvantage*: Ibid., 145.

[10] Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 150.

Perhaps, Crenshaw's intersectionality theory can be a useful tool to understand why Black feminists did not get involved in white feminist groups. If white feminists were not taking steps to understand the situation of Black women at the intersection of oppressions and address that situation, then there is little wonder that Black women would opt not to get involved. By examining the activities of Black women's organizations of this period, one can see how past activists, specifically those promoting the ERA, could have changed their approach to work with more women across racial lines, support each other's interests, and dismantle oppressions. This paper examines the activities of the Coalition of Concerned Women in the War on Crime, the League of Black Women, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority in the 1970s. Each of these three organizations supported ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.[11]

The Equal Rights Amendment's first section reads, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."[12] Although this amendment to the U.S. Constitution was conceptualized in the 1920s, the ERA was not passed by both the U.S. House and

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[11] "Coalition battles for ERA," *Chicago Defender*, May 8, 1975, accessed December 22, 2016, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "Back rights plank: Women's group urges equality," *Chicago Defender*, March 5, 1973, accessed December 22, 2016, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; Paula Giddings, *In Search of Sisterhood: Delta Sigma Theta and the Challenge of the Black Sorority Movement* (1988; repr., New York: Amistad, 2006), 290.

[12] *Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments of the Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate*, S.J. Res. 61, The "Equal Rights" Amendment, 91st Cong., 2d sess., May 5, 1970, 3.

Senate until 1972.[13] To become part of the Constitution, it then had to be ratified by three-quarters of the states.[14] As early as 1971, the op-ed pages of the Black press included supportive messages on the topic of the ERA, although an infrequent piece in opposition would also appear.[15]

To explore the activities and concerns of Black feminist activists during the time of the campaign for the ERA, I use historical Black newspapers, particularly the *Chicago Defender*, as my main primary source. These publications made by and for Black communities in the United States reveal what events their editors (and, presumably, readers) thought were important, and shed light on issues that newspapers created by and for whites did not address.

COALITION OF CONCERNED WOMEN IN THE WAR ON CRIME

TIRED OF LIVING IN FEAR?
TIRED OF POLICE BRUTALITY?
TIRED OF BEING RIPPED OFF BY THIEVES?

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[13] "Martha Griffiths and the Equal Rights Amendment," National Archives, last modified August 15, 2016, accessed October 20, 2016, https://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/griffiths.

[14] US Constitution, art. 5.

[15] Positive pieces on the ERA include: "GOP Women Take Lead" [editorial], *Atlanta Daily World*, August 5, 1971, accessed November 22, 2016, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Atlanta Daily World; "Black women;" Barbara Novick, "Re: ERA" [Letter to editor], *Chicago Defender*, June 18, 1974, accessed December 22, 2016, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.
Negative pieces on the ERA include: "Equal Rights" [editorial] *Atlanta Daily World*, September 14, 1973, accessed November 22, 2016, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Atlanta Daily World; Joan Solms, "Failure of ERA" [Letter to editor], *Chicago Defender*, July 22, 1978, microfilm, p. 6.

AFRAID TO WALK THE STREETS?
WORRIED ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN'S SAFETY?
WANT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?
BE A VOLUNTEER. JOIN WITH THE COALITION OF CONCERNED WOMEN IN THE WAR ON CRIME.[16]

On March 2, 1974, the Coalition of Concerned Women in the War on Crime first called Chicagoans to action with an ad in the *Chicago Defender*. It urged readers who connected with these frustrations to share their contact information with the Coalition of Concerned Women in the War on Crime (hereafter the Coalition) so they could get involved as volunteers.[17] The *Defender* published the ad (or a version of it) repeatedly to get the attention of its readers.[18]

The Coalition developed from a gathering on January 19, 1974. In response to "two shocking murders within a week," Ethel Payne, the Associate Editor of and columnist for the *Chicago Defender*, urged an audience of Delta Sigma Theta sorors to fight criminal activity and promote safety in their communities.[19] About a month

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[16] "TIRED OF LIVING IN FEAR?…" *Chicago Defender*, March 2, 1974, accessed July 7, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[17] Ibid.

[18] For example: "WAR ON CRIME," *Chicago Defender*, March 5, 1974, accessed July 7, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "WAR ON CRIME," *Chicago Defender*, March 6, 1974, accessed July 7, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "WAR ON CRIME," *Chicago Defender*, March 7, 1974, accessed July 7, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "WAR ON CRIME," *Chicago Defender*, March 9, 1974, accessed July 7, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[19] "Blasts superfly image: Cites anti-crime steps," *Chicago Defender*, January 21, 1974, accessed July 7, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender. A later article attributes the inspiration leading to formation of the Coalition to a February 1974 article by Payne, not a speech, but I cannot find such an article. Connie Seals, "Human relations," *Chicago Defender*, November 16, 1974, accessed June 21, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

later, over three dozen women joined in coalition to take action. Payne, Connie Seals of the Illinois Commission on Human Relations, and Congresswoman Cardiss Collins (D-Chicago) took leadership roles.[20] Other coalition partners included representatives from the Iota Phi Lambda sorority, an organization for college-educated, entrepreneurial Black women; and Kuumba Theater, a Black-focused performing arts group.[21]

The Coalition's "Statement of Purpose" sheds light on their thinking at the time. This declaration, as printed in the March 9, 1974, edition of the *Chicago Defender*, expresses Black women's trepidation in going about their daily lives as crime apparently increases. Further, the group sees its own image in those most at risk: "women and children, especially Blacks, are particularly vulnerable to criminal assault."[22] At the same time that these women feel anxiety over public safety, they are also concerned about the police abusing people in the community.[23] These concerns are heavy topics that could lead to cynicism about crime-fighting. As the Coalition writes: "The chief allies of crime are citizen indifference and unwillingness to become involved. The major thrust, therefore, must be to develop a strategy for

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[20] "Women leaders: Launch fight on crime," *Chicago Defender*, February 25, 1974, accessed June 16, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[21] "Women meet to map strategy for war on crime," *Chicago Defender*, March 2, 1974, accessed June 15, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "Membership," Iota Phi Lambda Sorority, n.d., accessed August 7, 2017, http://www.iota1929.org/membership/; S. Brandi Barnes, "On Stage: Kuumba Theater's comeback," *Chicago Reader*, October 31, 1996, accessed July 7, 2017, https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/on-stage-kuumba-theaters-comeback/Content?oid=891932.

[22] Ethel Payne, "Cartoonist depicts horrors of black-on-black crime," *Chicago Defender*, March 9, 1974, accessed July 7, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[23] Ibid.

overcoming apathy and to arouse public interest and cooperation."[24] Thus, the group took up three main activities: educational efforts to promote public safety for young people and adults, exhortations that women and children not go out alone after dark, and development of a type of neighborhood or community watch.[25]

Members acted quickly to develop a closer rapport with law enforcement. The Coalition met with Police Commissioner James Rochford in early March 1974. The *Chicago Defender* reported that the Coalition provided its suggestions for improving relationships between police and Black Chicagoans, aiming to avoid police abuse, increase constructive conversations across racial lines, and correct the underrepresentation of women and people of color on the force.[26] In August of the same year, the Coalition guided Rochford through the city's West Side to see how the community was dealing with drugs, substandard housing, lack of jobs, and damaged infrastructure.[27] These interactions were similar to "Operation Dialogue," which the *Defender* described as "intended to develop more communication between law enforcement and the residents of the police districts through periodic community forums."[28] After the first official meeting, the *Defender* discussed the give-and-take

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[24] Payne, "Cartoonist depicts horrors of black-on-black crime."

[25] Ibid.

[26] "Listens to women leaders: Rochford pledges action," *Chicago Defender*, March 11, 1974, accessed July 7, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[27] "Rochford tours Westside area," *Chicago Defender*, August 15, 1974, accessed June 21, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "The Rochford Walk," *Chicago Defender*, August 17, 1974, accessed June 21, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[28] "Women, Rochford huddle on crime," *Chicago Defender*, March 6, 1974, accessed June 21, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

between law enforcement and the community at the meeting, including the, apparently contentious, issue of whether citizens must give personal information when telephoning the police.[29]

One of the Coalition's most high-profile actions took place on June 14, 1974, when members put on a downtown rally at Civic Center Plaza.[30] The *Defender* helped mobilize citizens to participate in a meeting leading up to the event and noted when the group received its event permit.[31] The newspaper even attempted to whip up interest through a column, which discussed boxer Muhammad Ali and comedian Dick Gregory's responses to invitations to the event. (Gregory would attend; Ali could not.)[32] The *Defender* did not report the size of the crowd at the event, but the Coalition aimed for up to 10,000 attendees.[33] Notably, after the June 1974 rally, another was planned for the West Side of the city.[34]

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[29] "War on Crime women quiz cops," *Chicago Defender*, April 20, 1974, accessed June 21, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[30] "Rally for War on Crime," *Chicago Defender*, June 17, 1974, accessed June 21, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "Rally shots war on crime," *Chicago Defender*, June 12, 1974, accessed June 21, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[31] "Set briefing for 'war on crime,'" Chicago Defender, May 25, 1974, accessed June 21, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "Charlie Cherokee Says," *Chicago Defender*, June 1, 1974, accessed June 21, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[32] "Charlie Cherokee Says," *Chicago Defender*, June 12, 1974, accessed June 21, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[33] "Charlie Cherokee Says," June 1, 1974.

[34] "Charlie Cherokee Says," *Chicago Defender*, June 26, 1974, accessed June 21, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

Ten months later, in April 1975, the Coalition reached perhaps the pinnacle of its visibility when representatives testified before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime. Gun control was the topic of the hearing, chaired by Congressman John Conyers (D-MI). The Coalition's spokeswomen advocated for "'an immediate passage of federal legislation… that will outlaw the possession of handguns by private citizens, except in cases of extenuating circumstances.'"[35] This followed the Coalition's decision to collaborate with the Committee for Handgun Control in February 1975. The Committee made an effort to "ban…the sale of ammunition," which the Coalition and others supported.[36]

Historian Temma Kaplan offers an idea that may help to explain why the Coalition women decided to take action as a women's group. Kaplan writes about how women in Barcelona in the 1910s were prevented from doing their life-affirming labor to care for loved ones and thus took collective action to make sure they could.[37] The Chicago women of the Coalition were unable to affirm the lives of their families and community under the circumstances. As Kaplan writes of Barcelona: "Networks devoted to preserving life by providing food, clothing and medical care to households became instruments used to transform social life."[38] Much the same pattern emerged

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[35] "To Conyer's [sic] committee: Coalition to demand gun curbs," *Chicago Defender*, April 15, 1975, accessed June 21, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[36] "Women's crime unit joins handgun ban," *Chicago Defender*, February 3, 1975, accessed June 21, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[37] Temma Kaplan, "Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona, 1910-1918," *Signs* 7, no. 3 (Spring 1982): 551, accessed July 25, 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173854.

[38] Ibid.

in Chicago, where women of the Coalition were fighting to keep their neighborhoods safe and their families alive. This is about meeting the basic needs, which the ERA did not directly address. Still, the Coalition endorsed the ERA, and white feminists might have supported the Coalition in order to build stronger relationships and a wider base of activists to fight together for justice for women.

THE LEAGUE OF BLACK WOMEN

Another Chicago organization, the League of Black Women (LBW), preceded the Coalition of Concerned Women in the War on Crime in its founding, but both took action on issues of crime in the early 1970s, sometimes together.

The LBW, formed in early 1971, and was described as an umbrella organization for "members of all other black women's organizations throughout the city and suburbs."[39] Arnita Young Boswell, a professor of social work at the University of Chicago, established the group.[40] She was known for leading women's participation in Martin Luther King's 1966 march for fair housing through Chicago's Marquette Park neighborhood, for her research on "the culturally, educationally, and socially deprived child," and as the first "teacher-social

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[39] "Black women here pay tribute to Langford," *Chicago Defender*, March 11, 1971, accessed June 15, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "Set for Sunday…: 'Black Women' membership meet" [hereafter "Set for Sunday…"], *Chicago Defender*, April 24, 1971, accessed June 15, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[40] Amy E. Nevala, "ARNITA YOUNG BOSWELL, 82; Civil Rights Activist, Social Worker" [hereafter "ARNITA YOUNG BOSWELL, 82"], *Chicago Tribune*, July 11, 2002, accessed July 30, 2017, ProQuest National Newspapers Premier; "Black women here pay tribute to Langford."

worker" of the Chicago public schools.[41] Boswell was a daughter of the black professional class and the sibling of National Urban League head (1961-71) Whitney Young, Jr.[42] The *Defender* called the LBW "a repository for black female consciousness and also…a reservoir for thoughts and actions that are supportive of the fight for liberation by black males."[43] The organization provided a forum for Black women, like Boswell, to develop their beliefs without eschewing their connection to the men in their communities.

In the 1970s, the LBW took on numerous challenges within Chicago communities. It sought to improve health by holding a class to teach women how to check for signs of breast cancer and by petitioning Illinois's governor to prevent the shutdown of a historically black hospital in Chicago.[44] League members offered their support to the elderly, promoted

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[41] Regarding the 1966 civil rights march: Nevala, "ARNITA YOUNG BOSWELL, 82;" Ron Grossman, "Flashback: 50 years ago: MLK's march in Marquette Park turned violent, exposed hate," *Chicago Tribune*, July 28, 2016, accessed August 11, 2017, http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-mlk-king-marquette-park-1966-flashback-perspec-0731-md-20160726-story.html.
Regarding Boswell's education work: Ruth McCoy, "THIS MORNING: Only Teacher Social Worker," *Chicago Defender*, April 8, 1963, accessed July 30, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender. For an example of Boswell's research, see: Arnita Y. Boswell, "Some Special Projects of the Chicago Board of Education," in U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, *Programs for the Educationally Disadvantaged: A Report of a Conference on Teaching Children and Youth Who Are Educationally Disadvantaged: May 21-23, 1962*, *Washington, DC*, Bulletin 1963, No. 17, OE-35044 (1963), 17-27, accessed August 1, 2017, http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED544056.pdf.

[42] Nevala, "ARNITA YOUNG BOSWELL, 82;" "Mission and History," *National Urban League*, n.d., accessed August 1, 2017, http://nul.iamempowered.com/who-we-are/mission-and-history.

[43] "Black women here pay tribute to Langford."

[44] "Cancer detection workshop at you," *Chicago Defender*, November 21, 1974, accessed June 16, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; Lucille Younger, "Renew bid to save Provident Hospital," *Chicago Defender*, April 13, 1972, accessed June 15, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

adoption by black parents, and reached out to black women veterans and active duty military.[45] On the level of public policy, LBW joined with other groups to agitate against budgets intended to slash social services, to oppose racial quotas in housing that kept black people out of neighborhoods, and to urge the Chicago mayor to intervene in a heated situation at an integrated Chicago high school with a history of violent race relations.[46] However, the most clearly gendered issue with which they dealt was rape.

Like American law itself, the LBW regarded rape as a crime that men committed against women. The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) described rape as "[t]he carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and

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[45] "Charlie Cherokee Says," *Chicago Defender*, January 14, 1974, accessed June 16, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "It's 'Find a Home Month,'" *Chicago Defender*, April 30, 1973, accessed June 16, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "What happens to black female vets," *Chicago Defender*, November 19, 1973, accessed June 16, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[46] "March today: Chicagoans salute King," *Chicago Defender*, April 4, 1973, accessed June 16, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "League of Black Women opposes Gov. Ogilvie's welfare cut," *Chicago Defender*, November 6, 1971, accessed June 15, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "Rep. Washington set to fight housing barriers," *Chicago Defender*, August 26, 1974, accessed June 16, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "Meets ad hoc committee: Daley enter Gage furor," *Chicago Defender*, November 21, 1972, accessed June 15, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender. For more on the history of race relations at Gage Park High School, search the *Chicago Defender,* including the following articles: Bill Van Alstine, "Student Violence Grows: Race Riot Flares at Gage Park School: One Stabbed, Four Seized," *Chicago Defender*, February 5, 1966, accessed August 11, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; Betty Washington, "Black Students Boycott Gage Park High: Beating By White Youth Stirs Trouble," *Chicago Defender*, May 25, 1968, accessed August 11, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "Arrest 3 In Gage Park Row: Black, White Pupils Clash," *Chicago Defender*, May 13, 1969, accessed August 11, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; Tony Griggs, "Bus black students home: 26 arrested in Gage Park riot," *Chicago Defender,* November 16, 1972, accessed August 11, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

against her will" --- meaning the victim was always female.[47] This was the legal understanding of rape from 1927 to 2011.[48]

According to UCR statistics, reports of rape increased in Illinois between 1960 and 1975. In 1960, 17.6 rapes were reported per 100,000 people. Ten years later, reports rose to 20.4 per 100,000, and by 1975, the rate was 25.7 per 100,000.[49] Whether the data reflected an actual increase in the violent crime of rape or an increase in reporting, the issue of rape was important to members of the League of Black Women.[50]

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[47] "UCR Offense Definitions," *Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics*, last modified January 26, 2017, accessed August 1, 2017, https://www.ucrdatatool.gov/offenses.cfm.

48 Susan B. Carbon (Office on Violence Against Women), "An Updated Definition of Rape," U.S. Department of Justice, January 6, 2012, accessed July 30, 2017, https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/blog/updated-definition-rape; "UCR Offense Definitions." Note: As Carbon writes, under the law, rape now means: "'[t]he penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.'"

[49] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, *Estimated Crime in Illinois: 1960-1975*, generated by UCR Data Tool, using National Archive of Criminal Justice Data, accessed August 1, 2017, https://www.ucrdatatool.gov/Search/Crime/State/RunCrimeStatebyState.cfm. In comparison, the nation at large also saw an increase in reported rapes, but the nation had a lower rate of 9.6 per 100,000 in 1960.
Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, *Estimated Crime in United States-Total: 1960-1975*, generated by UCR Data Tool, using National Archive of Criminal Justice Data, accessed August 1, 2017, https://www.ucrdatatool.gov/Search/Crime/State/RunCrimeStatebyState.cfm.

[50] At the time, it was known that underreporting of rape was a problem. In the State of Illinois Rape Study Committee's report, the Committee included one approximation: "only one out of every ten rapes is reported." A *Defender* article puts the number of rapes even higher, at only five percent brought to the attention of police. State of Illinois Rape Study Committee, *Report to the House of Representatives and the 78th General Assembly of the State of Illinois* [hereafter *Report to the House*] (Springfield, IL, December 1974), iv; "Women hosts rape confab," *Chicago Defender*, April 22, 1974, accessed June 16, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

LBW members engaged in public education activities to raise awareness of the crime and its relevance to women and girls in Black communities. In November 1973, the group scheduled a discussion at a local community center because rape "has become so common that it merits special attention."[51] The League included on the event's agenda comments from a survivor of rape, people who might work with survivors, and a legislator.[52] A few months later, the LBW organized the "Rally Against Rape" at which the State of Illinois Rape Study Committee, a government body investigating the issue, would listen to rally attendees' concerns.[53]

To judge from its coverage in the *Defender*, the League of Black Women served as an authority on rape. In an article about multiple rapes reported in March 1974, the "Rape Action Project of the League of Black Women" was cited as a source on the concept that rape was underreported.[54] A piece from the League entitled "What to do in case of rape" appeared in March 1975 and offered a list of twenty-one different ways a woman or girl could strike an attempted rapist in order to defend herself.[55] Further, when "W.E.," the writer of a letter to the "ASK ALICE" advice column, said that her daughter's live-in boyfriend had raped one of W.E.'s grandchildren, the columnist replied that she was putting W.E. in touch with the

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[51] "Rape theme of special panel," *Chicago Defender*, November 8, 1973, accessed June 16, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Mara Scudder, "mara's scope," *Chicago Defender*, March 2, 1974, accessed June 15, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[54] Joseph Longmeyer, "Hunt suspects in four rapes," *Chicago Defender*, March 6, 1974, accessed June 16, 1974, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[55] "What to do in case of rape," *Chicago Defender*, March 8, 1975, accessed June 15, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

League of Black Women because of its rape crisis hotline.[56] This project — the South Side Rape Crisis Line — opened in the fall of 1974.[57]

As reported in the *Defender*, one member of the LBW (as well as of the Coalition of Concerned Women in the War on Crime) sought to prevent rape by reforming the images that young people saw in the media. The LBW addressed the politics of representation in other ways too. It hosted "Image awards" in February 1973 to honor figures who "'…personify the League's goal of updating and improving the image of black women and thereby make it possible to strengthen black families and black communities.'"[58] This statement suggests that, in the League's estimation, imagery had the power to make and break communities. As Jalaine May, an educator active in the LBW, observed, "Black females are exhibited as brainless, sexual objects," while others embody the "Pimp, hustler, [and] non-worker." She opined in addition that "so-called black film is one of the major contributors of crime in our inner city today" and called for scrutiny of theaters that do not enforce rating and age limits.[59] According to the *Defender,* May's efforts to reform entertainment media also

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[56] Alice Claire, "ASK ALICE," *Chicago Defender*, November 2, 1974, accessed June 15, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[57] "Charlie Cherokee Says," *Chicago Defender*, October 24, 1974, accessed June 16, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender. At the time, there was at least one other phone number to call as a resource, according to Dawn Rae Flood's history *Rape in Chicago*. Dawn Rae Flood, *Rape in Chicago: Race, Myth, and the Courts* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 134, accessed August 3, 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctt1xchbm.

[58] "Name 'Image' recipients," *Chicago Defender*, February 7, 1973, accessed June 15, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[59] "In appeal to legislature: Teacher fights bad black films," *Chicago Defender*, April 27, 1974, accessed June 15, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

included a visit to Hollywood.[60] Although May's efforts are not addressed directly in the Rape Study Committee's report, perhaps her testimony influenced at least one of the Committee's findings. In its report, the Committee asserted that public funding should be set aside to investigate, among other things, what factors contribute to rape.[61]

The outcome of the Rape Study Committee hearings highlighted by the *Defender* was the public eagerness for "[c]hange in attitudes towards rape both on the part of law enforcement officials and the general public."[62] In the *Defender*, the reporters and writers do not explicitly say that Black women victims of rape are treated differently than white women victims. Columnist Mara Scudder comes close to this, however, when she quotes Arnita Young Boswell: "Rape is a serious crime. Every day thousands of women and girls are sexually assaulted. Black women must be informed and protected. No longer must we tolerate male societies ignoring, condoning and perpetuating the personal inviolation [sic] of women and girls by rape."[63] The only other insinuation of differential treatment of rape victims comes in one of the LBW's appeals for "more women on the police force of Black and Spanish origin."[64]

In the Rape Study Committee's report, the LBW's voice is more clearly heard. The Committee reports: "Most black girls and women, who are usually the targets of rape by men

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[60] "Charlie Cherokee Says," *Chicago Defender*, April 25, 1974, accessed June 16, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[61] State of Illinois Rape Study Committee, *Report to the House*, 45.

[62] "Women hosts rape confab."

[63] Scudder, "mara's scope."

[64] "Women hosts rape confab."

from their own community, have become resigned to rape as what they feel is an unavoidable fact of life."[65] It continues: "They believe that society does not generally regard rape of black women a crime of particular consequence."[66] The witnesses heard by the committee also reported that they were not respected by the police. As the report noted, "Black women complained that generally there was no attempt by the police to protect the victim from undue public attention. They testified that some police purposefully tried to make them feel tainted or guilty of the crime that was committed upon them."[67]

DELTA SIGMA THETA

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, founded in 1913 at Howard University, was another Black women's organization that backed the Equal Rights Amendment but was active around other issues too.[68] Delta Sigma Theta Sorority (later Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.) first formed because, as some early members recalled, an existing sorority on campus did not satisfy their appetite for activism.[69] Well-known members of Delta Sigma Theta have

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[65] State of Illinois Rape Study Committee, *Report to the House*, 10-11.

[66] Ibid., 11.

[67] Ibid., 17.

[68] On Delta Sigma Theta's founding: Giddings, *In Search of Sisterhood, 15*. On support for the ERA: Giddings, *In Search of Sisterhood*, 290; "NATIONAL CLUB NOTES: Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Segma [sic] Theta," *Afro-American*, November 15, 1975, accessed August 7, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Baltimore Afro-American; "6,000 Deltas At 35th New Orleans Convention," *New Journal and Guide*, September 7, 1979, accessed August 7, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Norfolk Journal and Guide.

[69] Giddings, *In Search of Sisterhood*, 49.

included civil rights leader Dorothy Height, singer Roberta Flack, and Congresswoman Barbara Jordan, to name a few.[70]

Since its founding, Delta Sigma Theta has engaged in the public debate on numerous issues. Early members took part in the 1913 march for women's suffrage in Washington, D.C.[71] The organization has provided scholarships for young women to pursue education.[72] It created a National Jobs Project to help get Black women into employment that reflected their capabilities rather than the obstacles they faced in a racist job market.[73] Deltas fought for a federal government response against lynching.[74] They helped activists from the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee pay for school and engaged in many more activities.[75]

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[70] Ibid., 217-221 passim, 110, 264.

[71] Ibid., 57-60 passim.

[72] For example: Ibid., 93, 97, 255.

[73] Ibid., 195-198.

[74] Ibid., 127, 180.

[75] Ibid., 256.

In 1971, Delta Sigma Theta had 50,000 members, one newspaper reported.[76] In 1970s Chicago, Deltas helped prepare students for college, including by offering scholarships.[77] The organization helped raise money for the Chicago branch of the NAACP.[78] It provided a forum for cultural and artistic performance and hosted conversation on civic concerns.[79] Nationally, the sorority continued to take stands on social and political issues. Delta Sigma Theta stood for District of Columbia Home Rule in 1973.[80] The organization joined other groups in coalition asking for a major jobs initiative from President Gerald Ford a year

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[76] "Deltas Elect President At Texas Convention," *New Journal and Guide*, August 21, 1971, accessed July 23, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Norfolk Journal and Guide. Later reports set membership at 60,000 in 1972, 90,000 in 1977, and 100,000 in 1981.

"Charlie Cherokee Says," *Chicago Defender*, August 30, 1972, accessed July 23, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; Elizabeth Murphy Moss, "DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY, INC.: 'An agenda for change,'" *Afro-American*, August 20, 1977, accessed July 23, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Baltimore Afro-American; "Deltas Seek Support And Aiding Families," *Atlanta Daily World*, March 8, 1981, accessed July 23, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Atlanta Daily World.

[77] "Delta Sorority Assists Seniors," *Chicago Defender*, February 21, 1970, accessed August 13, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "Students Tour University," *Chicago Defender*, April 27, 1970, accessed August 13, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; Theresa Fambro Hooks, "TEESEE'S TOWN," *Chicago Defender*, May 6, 1975, accessed August 13, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[78] Doris E. Saunders, "SOCIAL WHIRL: Women Score NAACP Success At 30th Tea," *Chicago Defender*, April 7, 1970, accessed August 13, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "NAACP Tea, 'Black-Beautiful History,' Provides Memorial Setting," *Chicago Defender*, April 11, 1970, accessed August 13, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[79] "A tribute," *Chicago Defender*, May 15, 1971, accessed August 13, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "Deltas hold political forum," *Chicago Defender*, February 9, 1974, accessed August 13, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "Prison reform: Malcolm X topic," *Chicago Defender*, March 11, 1972, accessed July 23, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[80] Mamie L. Robinson, "Women in Politics: 53 National Organizations Support Home Rule for District of Columbia," *Philadelphia Tribune*, September 29, 1973, accessed July 23, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Philadelphia Tribune.

later.[81] In 1977, members jointly stood up for affirmative action by contributing to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, as it fought the Bakke Case at the Supreme Court.[82]

In August 1971, at Delta Sigma Theta Sorority's convention in Houston, Texas, perhaps the hottest issue was busing for the desegregation of public schools. A few months after the Burger Court found busing constitutional, President Richard Nixon threatened government employees who would spend tax dollars for this Court-approved purpose.[83] Several newspaper articles shared Delta Sigma Theta's disagreement with the President on this issue.[84] However, also at this convention, U.S. Deputy Attorney General Richard Kleindienst publicized a federal grant of half a million dollars for women's rehabilitation after prison. Delta Sigma Theta and the United Church of Christ would be involved in the project funded by this grant.[85]

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[81] "Leaders request parley with Ford on job issue," *Chicago Defender*, August 12, 1974, accessed July 23, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

[82] Moss, "DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY, INC.: 'An agenda for change.'"

[83] "Supreme Court Upholds Busing," *Call and Post*, May 1, 1971, accessed August 6, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Cleveland Call and Post; Helen Thomas, "BUSING, A LAST RESORT[,] WARNS PRESIDENT NIXON," *Atlanta Daily World*, August 13, 1971, accessed August 6, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Atlanta Daily World; "BUSING CONTROVERSY: Nixon Undermines Efforts For School Desegregation," *Call and Post*, August 21, 1971, accessed August 6, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Cleveland Call and Post. For more information about the desegregation ruling: *Swann et al. v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education et al*, 402 US 1 (1971)

[84] "Deltas Elect President At Texas Convention;" "Angry Deltas slap Nixon," *Chicago Defender*, August 23, 1971, accessed July 23, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; "A Woman's Wrath…: Deltas Blast Nixon's Busing Stand," *Call and Post*, September 4, 1971, accessed July 23, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Cleveland Call and Post; "Deltas blast President on busing stand," *Afro-American*, September 11, 1971, accessed August 6, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Baltimore Afro-American.

[85] "Deltas Elect President At Texas Convention."

By January 1972, the funding was sent to One America, a black-led consulting business created by Elaine B. Jenkins.[86] Jenkins helped found and served as the first president of the Beta Phi Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta in Denver, Colorado, in 1939.[87] She became deeply involved in the Republican party and was a contact of the Nixon White House.[88] Jenkins worked with others on the Nixon's Committee to Re-elect the President (CREEP) program to engage with Black communities in 1972.[89]

The project to help women with reentry has not been well studied since, nor did it get much media coverage at the time.[90] However, we do know that in its beginning stages, it was intended to last 1.5 years and to serve 300 women in federal, state and local prisons.[91] Two-thirds of those served would live in the Alderson Federal Reformatory (now known as FPC

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[86] "Rehab Offered Female Prisoners," *Call and Post*, January 8, 1972, accessed July 25, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Cleveland Call and Post.

[87] "History," Denver Alumnae Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., n.d., accessed August 6, 2017, http://denverdeltas.org/about-us/history/.

[88] Claudia Levy, "Elaine Jenkins, Educator, Business Consultant, Dies," *Washington Post*, September 21, 1999, accessed August 5, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1999/09/21/elaine-jenkins-educator-business-consultant-dies/e014d274-c7da-41e0-a873-daa9e6aade0f/?utm_term=.c6962ff6363b.

[89] Devin Fergus, "Black Power, Soft Power: Floyd McKissick, Soul City, and the Death of Moderate Black Republicanism," *Journal of Policy History* 22, no. 2 (2010): 158, accessed August 5, 2017, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898030610000023.

[90] A June 1974 report on women in the criminal justice system wrote about the program, but it did not provide substantial information about the program beyond what was published in the newspaper articles discussed in this paper. The report indicates that the rehabilitation program continued beyond 1.5 years but without the involvement of Delta Sigma Theta. Further research is needed to learn about the results of the project and to determine if and how Delta involvement shaped the next phase of the project; District of Columbia Commission on the Status of Women, *From Convict to Citizen: Programs for the Woman Offender*, by Virginia A. McArthur (Washington, DC, June 1974), 17, accessed July 27, 2017, http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED096430.pdf.

[91] "Rehab Offered Female Prisoners."

Alderson) in West Virginia with the remainder in other "state and local institutions."[92] One report said that the program covered 14 cities, while another said 22 cities.[93]

For those served by the program while incarcerated, the *Call and Post* indicated that volunteers, who included Delta Sigma Theta members, would assist with figuring out child care, job placement, and if they should apply to school and for funding.[94] The project's leaders in Atlanta sought the generosity of organizations that could hire, provide shelter for, and teach participants.[95]

According to the *Call and Post* in January 1972, "[a]pproximately 100 volunteer counselors…will be provided by the United Church of Christ and the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority."[96] A few months later, the *Atlanta Daily World* wrote about its city's Deltas being among those volunteers. A few individuals were "planning a training session to prepare the Atlanta Delta volunteer [to] do a most needed job."[97] In July 1972, the *Atlanta Daily World* reported on a training in communication by Mr. Claude Hurst of Frontiers Unlimited, another

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[92] "Rehab Offered Female Prisoners."

[93] "for and about women: Delta program has helped ex-offenders, warden says," *Afro-American*, October 14, 1972, accessed August 6, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Baltimore Afro-American; District of Columbia Commission on the Status of Women, *From Convict to Citizen*, 17.

[94] "Rehab Offered Female Prisoners."

[95] "Atlanta Deltas Help Female Offenders Regain Confidence," *Atlanta Daily World*, May 19, 1972, accessed July 25, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Atlanta Daily World.

[96] "Rehab Offered Female Prisoners."

[97] "Atlanta Deltas Help Female Offenders Regain Confidence."

black-led consulting business.[98] In addition to helping newly-released women with interpersonal relations and problem-solving, the Deltas also helped collect items, like furnishings and clothes, that the women would require as they got their lives started again.[99]

The program had a positive reception in Baltimore. At the behest of the One America program, representatives of community organizations, educational institutions, government, and a prisoner group met there in October 1972 to discuss how communities could help people leaving incarceration. The warden at Alderson spoke of the success of local ex-offenders. The newspaper reported: "With the assistance of local volunteers, ten women have been returned to the mainstream of life in the Maryland area."[100] In Baltimore, as in Atlanta, the Deltas encouraged the participation of "more volunteers."[101]

In December 1972, Attorney General Kleindienst praised the program in a speech to Black judges. Although it had been less than a year since the program had been launched, he expressed his pleasure at minimal recidivism.[102]

As social scientist Laurence French has noted, interest in women offenders grew, perhaps because of the feminist movement, with growth in the percentage of female inmates

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[98] "Deltas' Prison Rehabilitation Project Aids Female Offenders," *Atlanta Daily World*, July 23, 1972, accessed July 25, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Atlanta Daily World; "HEW employee contracts for private consulting firm," *Afro-American*, October 11, 1969, accessed August 6, 2017, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Baltimore Afro-American.

[99] "Deltas' Prison Rehabilitation Project Aids Female Offenders."

[100] "for and about women: Delta program has helped ex-offenders, warden says."

[101] "for and about women: Delta program has helped ex-offenders, warden says."

[102] Richard G. Kleindienst, "The New Approach to Corrections," (speech, Washington, DC, December 4, 1972), 10, accessed July 29, 2017, https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/ag/legacy/2011/08/23/12-04-1972.pdf.

between 1960 and 1974.[103] As a result, the experience of the disproportionately Black and impoverished women behind bars was exposed, French reported.[104] These women were susceptible to sexual abuse and the prison taking advantage of them as laborers.[105] French sees a masculinist power structure in the justice system that is a factor in women's oppression in prison and "the mainly ineffective rehabilitation, resocialization, and reintegration programs for female offenders."[106] Although French published his research a few years after Delta Sigma Theta's involvement in women's rehabilitation, one can imagine members of the sorority observed the increase in incarcerated women during the same period, were aware of the maltreatment of prisoners, and felt compelled to get involved. As an organization of women leaders, they may have felt empowered to bring their own perspective to the process of rehabilitation.

CONCLUSION

While supporting the Equal Rights Amendment, Black women activists did not focus their efforts solely on ratification of the ERA. They also championed other issues that hit close to home. The Coalition of Concerned Women in the War on Crime fought for public safety and for protection by as well as from law enforcement. The League of Black Women homed in on the issue of rape in Black communities. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority worked on

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[103] Laurence French, "The Incarcerated Black Female: The Case of Social Double Jeopardy," *Journal of Black Studies* 8, no. 3 (March 1978), 323, 322, accessed July 27, 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2783646.

[104] Ibid., 323.

[105] Ibid., 324-5.

[106] Ibid., 335.

women's reentry into communities after prison. During the campaign for the ERA in the 1970s, white feminists that questioned the dedication of Black feminists in the fight against sexism should have looked more closely at how Black women's groups prioritized their issues of concern. White feminists could have identified areas of common interest and pinpointed ways to avoid sidelining Black women's concerns.

Today, white-dominated feminist organizations must take an intersectional approach and understand how women of color, but in this case particularly, Black women, are affected by public policy and private actions. One way to learn about the issues that drive many Black women activists is to pay attention to Black Lives Matter (BLM), a multi-issue movement launched by three Black women activists, Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrisse Cullors.[107] BLM sees the intersections across not only race and gender but also across race and class, immigration status, ability, and age, to name a few.[108]

In the forty-five years since the campaign for the ERA began in the states, feminism writ large has not addressed the issues found at the intersection of race and gender.[109] However, white feminists and white-dominated feminist organizations have the opportunity now and must take it in order to make substantive change. Instead of making assumptions

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[107] "A HerStory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement," Black Lives Matter, n.d., August 13, 2017, http://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/.

[108] "Guiding Principles: We Affirm That All Black Lives Matter," Black Lives Matter, n.d., August 13, 2017, http://blacklivesmatter.com/guiding-principles/.

[109] The responses to the 2017 Women's March on Washington provide examples of this challenge: Karen Grigsby Bates, "Intersectional Feminism: Representation in Saturday's Women's Marches," *National Public Radio*, January 21, 2017, accessed August 14, 2017, http://www.npr.org/2017/01/21/510986874/intersectional-feminism-representation-in-saturdays-womens-marches; Vanessa Willoughby, "Signs at the Women's March on Washington Called Out White Feminism," *Teen Vogue*, January 23, 2017, accessed August 14, 2017, http://www.teenvogue.com/story/signs-at-the-womens-march-on-washington-called-out-white-feminism.

about what issues are important to Black women, white feminists must build relationships with and provide support to Black women activists. They can start by paying attention to Black Lives Matter and local activism found at the intersection of race and gender. Collaboration across race and gender lines can only lead to justice in the long-run. As Black Lives Matter says, "When Black people get free, everybody gets free."[110]

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[110] "A HerStory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement."

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Amendments of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate. S.J. Res. 61. The "Equal Rights" Amendment. 91st Cong., 2d sess., May 5-7, 1970.

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