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Embodied Difference: Divergent Bodies In Public Discourse

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Introduction

Approaching the Body through Public-facing Scholarship in Philadelphia

TWO INTERSECTIONAL FEMINISTS IN WEST PHILADELPHIA

As co-editors of *Embodied Difference: Divergent Bodies in Public Discourse* we come together as two women who teach at U.S. institutions of higher education in Greater Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Swarthmore College), and Atlantic City, New Jersey (Stockton University).[1] Each of us engages intersectionality and antiracism through our teaching and research, meaning that we take note of what legal scholar and theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw observes as a "multidimensionality" in our lives as women of color.[2] Following Crenshaw and others, we seek to understand how multiple forms of oppression and discrimination, including, but not limited to racism and sexism, coordinate within configurations that shape our personal realities and structure our perceptions of justice and equality.[3] To do this, we deliberate concerns of privilege and power, asking questions about how policies and practices regulating our everyday lives impact the ways our bodies—our skin colors, voices, genders, and sexualities—are perceived. This book is driven by these questions, and derives from our collaborations across and beyond our institutions to explore with others the causes and consequences of social inequality. Those collaborations and conversations paved the way for this book, and together, as a sociocultural linguist (Jamie A. Thomas) and urban sociologist (Christina Jackson), we envision *Embodied Difference* as a teaching project; one that has helped us unlock compelling intersections in our fields of expertise, and one that can be shared with our students, communities, and colleagues to stimulate further routes of cross-disciplinary insight.

Though we were already friends, having previously met through the post-doctoral fellowship of the Consortium for Faculty Diversity, coordinating and editing *Embodied Difference* has helped us grow in knowledge of our professional strengths and ongoing experiences as scholar-teachers living in West Philadelphia. In completing this project, we have regularly met in coffee shops, parks, and co-working spaces local to the neighborhood community and section of Philadelphia that we both affectionately call "West Philly." By intentionally placing ourselves among the public environs of our neighborhood, and participating in locally-led initiatives such as Camp Sojourner and its annual Sojourner Truth Walk for girls' empowerment (in honor of feminist abolitionist Sojourner Truth),[4] we participate as allies with folks identifying as women, womyn, femmes, trans, men, and queer, who lead through love, hope, and coalition-building. Opportunities like these to collaborate with our neighbors educate us on the expansive possibilities of intersectional feminist politics, temper our fears of the unknown, and remind us of how fitting it is that our project should come together in the city of Philadelphia.

Sitting in our favorite coffee shops and meeting spots like Green Line, Milk n' Honey, The Gold Standard, or Franny Lou's Porch, with laptops open and printed essay drafts ready for review, our conversations have necessarily reflected on how the particular history of our city has significant bearing on our lives as African American women. After all, Philadelphia is the place where the U.S. Declaration of Independence was authored (1776), and the Constitution thereafter (1787). Those early documents, drafted and ratified by an empowered few, outlined the context of struggle for many of our forbearers; women who were barred from reading, writing, and even speaking—all of the activities that are today at the heart of our practice as professors and educators. Famously, freedom fighter Harriet Tubman was one of these women, and used her known status as an illiterate person to her advantage, evading capture while pretending to read a newspaper.

Ms. Tubman (c. 1822–1913) made her first escape from enslavement by reaching Philadelphia in 1849 with help from collaborators in the Underground Railroad. However, after the Fugitive Slave Act became law in 1850, and made Philadelphia no longer safe, she guided escapees further north toward New York and Ontario (Canada). Later in life, she became a champion of women's suffrage, always believing that her role was to organize, collaborate, and resist. Her struggle was made even more challenging by the whippings and other abuse she endured while enslaved, which left her with a severe head wound and recurring episodes of pain and dizzying spells that would sometimes leave her unconscious without warning. Hers is a story that cautions us to remember a time of regular, urgent peril of a different kind in our city. Then, segregation and the spectre of racial slavery reigned as overt

regimes of control, each designed to mark bodies bearing resemblance to Ms. Tubman's as un-women (to borrow the term from Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale)* and un-citizens. At these same intersections of race, sex, class, and (dis)ability is where bodies today remain categorized and judged for their (perceived) differences.

Today, some 170 years after Ms. Tubman's brave journey to Philadelphia, the city's architectural landscape, public monuments, numerous churches, racially integrated trolleys and buses, social movements, and visible signs of urban redevelopment and gentrification are a testament to the enduring legacies of radical insurgents like her, as well as to the structural inequality that nevertheless endures.[5] Where the Declaration of Independence was signed all those years before at Independence Hall, that very location is now adjacent to the permanent resting place of the Liberty Bell in a section of Philadelphia popularly known as "Old City." There, on the corner of Market and Sixth Streets, are two installations memorializing Africans enslaved at-large by way of the Transatlantic (Human) Trade, and specifically by George Washington at his Philadelphia home on that site. As outdoor public monuments managed by the National Park Service, these installations are accessible day and night. One traces the physical, architectural outlines of where Washington's enslaved were made to live on the property, and features video reenactments of these people, including Ona Judge (c. 1773–1848), a woman who managed to escape. The other monument incorporates words, quotations, and symbols from the cultures of present-day Ghana to pay homage to the many people who have perished in Philadelphia, believing in freedom as their human right. As part of this monument, the Adinkra symbol of *sankofa* advises visitors, "Go back to the past, to build the future," while *nkyinkyin* declares, "One must change to survive." The monument also includes the words of Frederick Douglass (c. 1818–1895), excerpted from a speech he gave in Philadelphia in 1862:

> We have sought to bind the chains of slavery on the limbs of the Black man, without thinking that at last we should find the other end of that hateful chain about our own necks.

All those years ago, Mr. Douglass, himself an escapee, cut to the heart of the matter in his assessment of how the imposition of slavery covertly seduces with its power, and succeeds in blinding all to their own enslavement by proxy. In co-editing *Embodied Difference,* we take up Mr. Douglass's intuition by also turning our lens toward the unseen, hoping that our attention to understudied sites of oppression in our present day will prove a fruitful contribution to the broader goal of our collective liberation.

Away from the Liberty Bell and George Washington's historic home, a walk to the west for a distance of eight city blocks will land visitors at City Hall, the world's largest municipal building, and yet another monument to Philadelphia's past. Topping the edifice is a triumphant likeness of William Penn, who founded the city in 1682 after his father was granted lands encompassing present-day Delaware and Pennsylvania by King Charles II. Then, the area was already being occupied by Dutch, Swedish, German, and British settlers, today memorialized through assorted plaques adorning City Hall's exterior. Inside, however, a portion of the building's inner causeway is structurally supported by four peculiar columns.

These are granite columns that adjoin the ceiling by way of the outstretched arms of women and men whose naked torsos are sculpted in support of the building's weight. Though the women are turned partially inward in an apparent shielding of their breasts, their faces and hair textures, musculature, and headdress and headwraps, along with that of their male counterparts, reveal an intentional depiction of Africans, Indigenous peoples, Asians, and Europeans on each separate column. Where this visual symbolism imparts emphasis on the biological traits and cultural styling that regularly distinguish people into divergent groups, it also misleadingly communicates that these groups equally and separately bear the weight and responsibility of Philadelphia's trajectory. Instead, it is more accurate to regard the city as an unequal mosaic of blended co-racial and co-cultural political alliances, of treaties signed and abandoned, promises kept and broken, and futures yet to be charted.

All of this occurred and continues to take place on lands never fully ceded by the Lenape, an Indigenous people alternatively referred to as the Delaware Nation, who were forcibly removed first to Kansas, and Oklahoma afterward, by the U.S. government in the 1860s, and are survivors of genocide and displacement exacted by European colonizers. Sadly, the Susquehanna (Conestoga), and other Indigenous peoples who at times lived in and around the Philadelphia area, were massacred to the point of invisibility, or absorbed by other Indigenous groups elsewhere. Asian American contributions to Philadelphia's history and culture were pointedly impacted by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, signed into law by U.S. President Chester Arthur, which made it illegal for Chinese immigrants to enter the country or become citizens. The Exclusion Act rode a tide of White resentment buoyed by the disappointments of the Gold Rush, the economic downturn of the 1870s, and burgeoning academic theories of selective non-White racial inferiority, including those circulated via Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species*. Though the Exclusion Act was eventually countered by legislation in 1943, the racist slogans looming large in those days have resurfaced in stereotypes of the lat-

est recent arrivals to twenty-first-century America, among them speakers of Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Arabic.

This crucial history notwithstanding, *Embodied Difference* also draws inspiration from Philadelphia's profile as a site of important advances in the fields of both sociology and linguistics. Chief among these is W. E. B. Du Bois's 1899 sociological analysis of urban inequality, published as *The Philadelphia Negro.* The pathbreaking case study established modern sociology by assembling the first systematic, coordinated examination of the health, education, occupations, and social lives of African Americans.[6] Linguistics also received a significant boost in the 1970s ethnographic research of Marjorie Goodwin, who brought attention to the grammar, vocabulary, and speech style of West Philadelphia children in early studies supporting William Labov's affirmations of African American Language as a unique variety of English.[7]

In decades since, cross-pollination in the techniques, approaches, and theories of linguistics, sociology, and anthropology has transformed the way that we understand people in relation to their practices, concerns, and popular beliefs. Dell Hymes (1927–2009) was also especially influential in advocating for interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary studies of society. As a sociolinguist, Dr. Hymes pointed out that forward-thinking interventions require a visioning process that understands freedom as located in the notion of *voice,* where, "One way to think of the society in which one would like to live is to think of the kinds of voices it would have."[8] In assembling a wealth of voices through *Embodied Difference,* we as co-editors have taken up Hymes's challenge, in coordinating a body of research that embraces multiple styles of writing and approaches to description and analysis, in affirmation of the freedom, multiplicity, and resistance that Philadelphia has hosted over the years.

PHILADELPHIA DISCUSSIONS: MORALITY, RACE, AND THE BODY

Though we write from Philadelphia, bodies are the overall theme of this book. We endeavor to understand how our bodies, as we move through the world, gather praise and rejection with regard to the differences between us. Comprised of cells, blood, hearts, brains, skulls, and additional architecture, the intricate insides of our bodies are less visible to us on a daily basis. Therefore, it is often our faces, butts, skin colors, and other more visible attributes that are regularly scrutinized for markers of difference. Filtered through expectations of gender, beauty, intelligence, class, age, and (dis)ability, visible

markers of difference, as captured within the body's biology, behavior, and appearance, can be regarded as *embodied.*

It is among these very intersections and overlaps of biology and society, conformity and resistance, history and herstory, that *Embodied Difference: Divergent Bodies in Public Discourse* hovers with ten chapters by anthropologists, historians, linguists, sociologists, and philosophers, in addition to humanistic scholars of biomedicine, law, literature, and performance. These original contributions have relevance for students and scholars of popular culture, human rights, sociocultural linguistics, urban sociology, physical anthropology, disability studies, bioethics, speculative fiction, genocide studies, early Christian philosophy, gender and sexuality studies, and feminisms.

This book has its origins in a field trip for the freshman seminar taught by one of our co-editing duo (Thomas), on "Languages of Fear, Racism, and Zombies" in Spring 2016. Connecting with local legacies of scientific racism, the seminar course visited the Penn Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology (University of Pennsylvania) with Thomas, where they became acquainted with the Samuel G. Morton Cranial Collection. Tour guide and doctoral student Paul Wolff Mitchell walked the seminar group through the Penn Museum's exhibit on *The Making and Unmaking of Race,* which featured several human skulls measured for racial type by nineteenth-century Philadelphia physician and craniologist Samuel G. Morton.

Closely reviewing physical details of these 200-year-old human crania with the group, Mitchell spoke as an anthropologist, annotating his observations by dissecting overlaps in associated ideas of race, science, and racism. The resulting discussion revealed these concepts remain challenging for undergraduates. This hinted at the potential utility of a follow-up discussion, and led Thomas to organize a panel event before semester's end, with support from the Swarthmore College Department of Linguistics. In organizing the event, Thomas reached out to Jackson, who invited additional colleagues.

Consequently, the afternoon of April 28, 2016, saw anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and philosophers come together with a linguist for an unscripted discussion of how humanity is variously defined and imagined across contexts of everyday life. Entitled "Morality, Race, and the Body," the gathering of seven diverse scholars responded to two open-ended questions:

1. What is human?
2. How do we define the Other?

Because the event touched on so many ways of approaching bodies and embodiment, participants began by describing their disciplinary approaches.

The conversation then graduated into a discussion of participants' specific topics of research, sharing insights that examined processes of dehumanization and Othering, and challenged popular beliefs about what humans do, how humans think, and how humans live. Yvonne Chireau[9] (Religious Studies, Swarthmore College) described bodies and undead imaginings as central to Haitian celebrations of renewal; Christina Jackson (Sociology, Stockton University) spoke of cities as places where bodies become vulnerable to environmental racism and plans for urban redevelopment; Paul Wolff Mitchell (Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania) discussed how race is constructed socially as well as biologically; Jamie A. Thomas (Linguistics, Swarthmore College) spoke on discourses of zombies and afterlives, contemplating the symbolism of the undead, and rationale for cryonic preservation of the body; Krista K. Thomason (Philosophy, Swarthmore College) described how people rationalize acts of murder and genocide towards other people they construct as nonhuman; Jessica Wright (Classics, Princeton University)[10] brought greater context to our discussion, detailing how early Christian thought-leaders fixated on the brain and other bodily organs as predictors of moral and rational behaviors centuries before Western societies shifted to obsessions with race and sex.

After the success of this first public discussion, a follow-up event and book project were planned, with the creation of a Facebook group where video footage of these events was posted along with additional materials. The second of our public discussions was billed as "Part Two," and with Mitchell's help, took place on September 19, 2016, at the Penn Museum with support from the University of Pennsylvania Department of Anthropology. The event featured short presentations by an expanded group of scholars, including Emily August, Laurie Greene[11] (Anthropology, Stockton University), and Barry Furrow (Health Law, Drexel University). Presentations were followed by open dialogue with a diverse audience of students, professors, and local residents. That mode of dialogue strengthened our research by bringing it into contact with the concerns of a broad public, and consequently, we envision this book as a continuing of that discussion. That is to say, this cross-disciplinary project, as an effort in public-facing scholarship, aims to be accessible to a wide audience. These are readers we hope to seduce to consider topics, contexts, and research disciplines they may have never thought particularly noteworthy or eye-catching, but as a result of our efforts, can contemplate as having relevance to their own lives.

That said, the ten unique chapters that make up this volume would not have been possible without the added creativity of additional researchers who have since joined our scholarly network, contributing through expertise

in performance (Kat Richter–Dance, Stockton University; Anthropology, Rowan University), speculative fiction (Dorisa Costello–English Literature and Linguistics, Vilnius University), transfeminism (Ute Bettray–German; Women's and Gender Studies, Lafayette College), and demography (John S. Michael–Penn Museum). As straight and LGBTQ women and men, and as mothers, fathers, and expatriates, contributors comprise an intentionally diverse cross-section of academic ranks—our collective includes graduate students, adjunct and visiting professors, and tenure-track junior and senior professors.

KEY CONCEPTS: SOCIAL NORMS, DEVIANCE, AND RACIALIZATION

In centering this book project around embodiment and dehumanization, we have attempted in each chapter to acknowledge how many of our everyday ideas and popular assumptions about the world around us appear to be normal and unproblematic. We take note of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's theorizing of the concept of *doxa,* which:

> . . . implies the immediate agreement elicited by that which appears self-evident, transparently normal. Indeed doxa is a normalcy in which realization of the norm is so complete that the norm itself, as coercion, simply ceases to exist as such.[12]

This means that the very notion of normalcy signals we may be unaware of the intricate network of social norms that regulate our lives. These are social norms that may encourage us to see each other's differences as a source of hate. Consequently, throughout this book we avoid plying the term "normal" and its opposite "abnormal" as part of our analyses. Instead, we attempt to go deeper, in an effort to understand how some views become empowered as "normative" and mainstream, even as other views make sense to other people. We also pay attention to *normalization,* the process by which certain perspectives, ways of doing things, and ways of reading people become reasonable, typical, expected, and lesser questioned.

Consider, for example, the 2018 removal of two men from a downtown Starbucks coffee shop in Philadelphia. On a Thursday in April, African Americans Rashon Nelson and Dante Robinson, both twenty-three years old, were at the coffee shop waiting for a business partner, and asked to use the restroom before they had purchased anything. After denying their request to use the restroom, an employee also asked them to leave. When the two did not leave, an employee called the police, and their arrest on suspicion of trespassing was captured in videos that have since been viewed millions of times

online.[13] Their videoed arrest by White police officers, just as Mr. Nelson and Mr. Robinson's business partner arrived to the coffee shop, drew widespread condemnation from African Americans and others. Though their arrests were later vacated, the events sparked protests at the physical Starbucks location and calls for a boycott. This led Starbucks to commit to a one-day closure of all of its U.S. locations for a training on racism and bias designed to educate 175,000 employees. A legal settlement was also eventually agreed between Mr. Nelson, Mr. Robinson, and the City of Philadelphia.

Though public apologies were made, along with financial redress, the Philadelphia Starbucks arrest signaled much more than a forgettable moment of censure. The willingness of police to respond to the coffee shop employee's request as though it were reasonable was symptomatic of a society that punitively responds to racial difference, while constructing Black males as dangerous, aggressive, and violent. The public nature of police arrest marks individuals as *deviant* through an "intricate rite of transition" conferring and announcing a "diagnosis" weighted in stigma that reverberates through a community.[14] As one of many social acts that irreversibly mark the body, police arrest serves to reinforce social boundaries that may not be readily visible to us, but nonetheless contribute to the ecosystems of norms and standards that structure our society(ies) and ways of thinking. In this way, the mere presence of police and security staff in certain spaces assists in visibilizing social boundaries, impacting the behaviors of people vulnerably associated through markers of race, sex, and other dimensions of embodied difference.

In other words, the removal of the Philadelphia coffee shop patrons inscribed social boundaries into public space, signaling through its optics that police arrest can be a semiotic process of racial formation, one that makes Black-male-ness into a state of suspicious deviance, with White-male-ness as its opposite.[15] This was also the experience of thirty-seven-year-old bank patron Armstrong Victor in Quebec province in Canada, who was arrested at his place of work after being wrongly accused of theft in 2017. Supported by others who have since described his arrest as an occasion of "banking while Black," Mr. Victor has also shared his own feelings, saying, "I feel like they [law enforcement] play with people's lives," and that he was made to feel like a "detained criminal."[16]

Social scientists recognize these processes of racial formation as *racialization,* whereby physical racial characteristics are aligned with behaviors, both desirable and undesirable.[17] Racial characteristics can be linked to behaviors in ways that seem as outright offensive and obvious as racial slurs, or more subtly, through their association with repeated celebrations of beauty and genius, or suspicions of criminality and deviance. As feminist theorist Audre Lorde (1934–1992) has passionately cautioned:

> Certainly there are very real differences among us of race, age, and sex. But it is not those differences that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences and to examine the distortions that result from our misnaming them and their effects upon human behavior and expectation.[18]

Consequently, we can understand that processes of racialization, together with visible confrontations and language signaling perceived human contrasts, add further complexity to social norms that many of us take for granted. This includes the ways that people are marked as suspicious and deviant, as with the fatal 2012 shooting of sixteen-year-old Jose Antonio Elena Rodriguez by an Arizona-based U.S. Border Patrol agent who shot through the border fence into Nogales, Mexico, to reach his target.[19]

Only two years later, police in the United States shot and killed twelve-year-old Tamir Rice in a public park in Cleveland, Ohio, after emergency operators received calls describing a "guy with a pistol."[20] Brothers Thomas Kanewakeron Gray, nineteen, and Lloyd Skanahwati Gray, seventeen, were removed by police from a campus tour of Colorado State University in 2018 after a parent of another child on the tour called emergency operators with a description of the Mohawk Native American teens, saying, "Their behavior is odd [. . .] They just really stand out."[21] The caller, a White woman of forty-five years, also described the teens' clothing as suspicious, with "weird symbolism or wording," although this was later revealed to correspond with metal bands the two are fans of.[22]

Also in 2018, a woman returning to the United States with her fifteen-year-old daughter was detained at Dallas–Fort Worth airport by a customs official claiming that their different surnames made her a suspected human trafficker. Sylvia Acosta explained to the official that she had chosen not to change her surname after marriage because of having earned her doctorate and establishing her career with her existing name. However, the official responded by telling her that she "should consider changing my name to reflect that I am [my daughter's] mother."[23] Although a U.S. citizen, Acosta feared she could have been separated from her daughter, and later reflected on the ongoing U.S. immigration crisis, saying, "There are 3,000 children separated from their parents here."[24] Acosta and her daughter's experience followed that of another woman, asked by a Southwest Airlines employee at Denver International Airport to prove she was the mother of her biracial son, even as she showed the toddler's passport, with the child's father present. The woman, Lisa Gottlieb, later described her family as a "mixed face family," and acknowledged that while her Whiteness helps her navigate the world feeling largely accepted, the experience reaffirms her belief "that all families—regardless of how 'traditional' they may or may not look—are treated with dignity and respect."[25]

Over and over, these types of incidents and confrontations pointing to people and their embodied differences as non-normative illustrate racializa-

tion and normalization as systemic processes upheld by institutions and interpersonal behaviors. For these reasons, *Embodied Difference* pays particular attention to the processes by which ideas and ideologies expressed throughout the public sphere become part of our received wisdom.

A BOOK IN THREE PARTS

Each contribution to this book acknowledges bodies as sites of contested power. There are many strands of connection across these chapters, and readers may uncover further possible links across these studies. The chapters are organized into three parts, or units themed in reference to aspects, elements, and descriptions of the human body that are often normalized.

Across these chapters and units, we ask:

1. How are processes of normalization and racialization reflected in public discourses on the body?
2. What site-specific social and cultural practices are implicated in the reproduction and hegemony of ideologies of difference?
3. How do contemporary discourses of race reflect historically intersecting subjectivities and processes of meaning-making?

Unit One: The Rational Mind vs. The Criminal Body

As the title of unit 1 suggests, these chapters turn the popular notion of the "Criminal Mind" on its head, to explore how minds, brains, and bodies have been differently constructed as deviant. These contributions draw on perspectives in philosophy to examine the ways perpetrators of murder, genocide, and abuse are variously described in the public sphere as criminal, insane, or justified. First, Krista K. Thomason interrogates the construction of moral distance in the thinking of people who commit acts of murder and genocide (chapter 1). Thomason examines justifications voiced by perpetrators of the 2014 Isla Vista massacre of university students in California, USA, the 1994 killings of Hutu and Tutsi peoples in Rwanda, and murders at the hands of the German military during World War II (1940s). She uses these examples to argue how dehumanization succeeds in actually reminding us that victims are humans, even as it is relied upon as a tool and justification of murder.

Next, Jessica Wright takes readers back to Mediterranean antiquity, to a time when Greek and Roman healers, surgeons, and theologians informed one another's conceptions of disease (chapter 2). Her original translations of Greek and Latin texts uncover how these early explorations of bodies, by

way of their humors and organs, established human rationality through rudimentary comparison with animals. These were early Christian perspectives that today contribute to our focus on the brain as the body's decision-making element, and encourage us to find fault with a perpetrator's brain and biology after they have committed acts of murder.

The third chapter of unit 1 is contributed by Ute Bettray, who explains how popular concepts of transgender bodies are responding to the growing visibility of incarcerated transwomen of color in the U.S. prison-industrial complex (chapter 3). Bettray calls attention to CeCe McDonald's incarceration in a men's prison (2012–2014) and her transformation through reading the philosophical writings of activist Dr. Angela Davis. This account becomes the source of a discussion of transfeminism as amplified by both Davis and McDonald, and its relevance to securing global liberation for all embodiments and permutations of woman.

Unit Two: The Deviant and Undesirable Body

The four chapters of unit 2 examine standards that amplify, measure, and regulate our expectations of human ability and public behavior within Western society(ies). These expectations are shown to be deeply rooted in practices across literature, science, biomedicine, and the law that predicate a person's desirability on their physical shape, appearance, sexuality, and ability to speak for themselves. This second unit of the volume begins with a coauthored study by Paul Wolff Mitchell and John S. Michael, who newly examine archival materials related to the practice of scientific racism in Philadelphia (chapter 4). Together, Mitchell and Michael revisit theories of the biological supremacy of Europeans, and the nineteenth-century scientific data that was used to support these perspectives. Their review of new data on the legacy of Samuel G. Morton confirms that the physician and phrenologist was motivated by pro-slavery impulses in his comparative measurement of human skulls.

The nineteenth century also comes under scrutiny in the chapter by Dorisa Costello, which details the origins of the vampire, with a focus on the land disputes in Ireland that gave rise to bloodsucking and sexual predation as interpretations of the injustice of English settler occupation and inherited wealth (chapter 5). Those disputes defined a woman's worth at the crossroads of race and ethnicity, miscegenation (racial and/or interspecies contamination), patriarchal empire, and sexual desire. After tracing the female vampire to its origins in British-occupied Ireland in the novel *Carmilla* (1871–72), Costello then examines Octavia Butler's *Fledgling* (2005) and its vampire protagonist whose dark skin enables her survival outside during daylight hours. The analysis gathers implications for understanding the reoccurring

symbolism of vampires across popular culture as commentaries on social inequality, from television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer,* to the famed film trilogy *Twilight Saga.*

Christina Jackson follows with a contribution that describes a different sort of occupation—that of corporations and other special interests colluding to exclude low-income residents of color from present-day decision-making on the redevelopment of their urban neighborhoods (chapter 6). Jackson presents San Francisco as a case study, through anecdotes from her participant observations in a section of the city impacted by the closure of a historic U.S. Naval shipyard and its lingering, environmentally toxic footprint. Altogether, her analysis describes the complex reality of the American city, suggesting ways that processes of urban redevelopment can be made more inclusive and responsive to local concerns.

Unit 2 concludes with a close examination of landmark decisions in right-to-die cases that have made their way to U.S. state and federal courts (chapter 7). Barry Furrow's analysis uncovers a pattern in how young White women have become the faces of campaigns for and against physician-assisted suicide in cases where patients have experienced incidents that severely deprived their brains of oxygen, or where the progression of terminal illness is unbearably painful. These are circumstances that typically render patients unable to advocate for themselves. Furrow's legal analysis demonstrates how media circulation of photographic and other images of these women, notably Terri Schiavo (1963–2005), have been powerful in presenting youthful White femininity as precious. A review of these court cases illustrates how racialized imagery of bodies in differing states of wellness serves to galvanize both popular and judicial opinion.

Unit Three: The Beautiful Body and Its Parts

What makes bodies beautiful and perfect? The third and final section of this volume zeroes in on how bodies are scrutinized and dissected on stage, on screen, and in texts, in ways that reproduce narrow standards of beauty, perfection, and femininity. These are norms that govern how we read dancers, medical patients, and scientists as feminine, beautiful, and expected. The three chapters of unit 3 demonstrate how language is a tool in training women's postures, reenacting social violence, and constructing beauty through biomedical intervention. This begins with a contribution by Emily August, who reinterprets Gray's *Anatomy* through its aesthetic portrayal and study of the dissected human body (chapter 8). Originally published in 1858, the textbook remains relevant for its lasting influence over contemporary surgical texts. August's novel examination of the surgical textbook as literature

unearths the cultural forces that shape the biomedical sciences, and which continue to impart a kind of social violence through their static representation and dismemberment of bodies, page by page.

Unit 3 proceeds with insights from dance practitioner and anthropologist Kat Richter, who shares insights from her participant observation in ballet and tap classes (chapter 9). In discussing the ascent of mega-performers Misty Copeland and Michelle Dorrance, Richter interrogates the racial body politics of American dance, and offers an historical review of the cultural pedagogies of these art forms. Altogether, her analysis reveals how regimes of preferred movement hand down expectation and derision, focusing on butts and the positioning of the feet, torso, and arms to conserve perfection and regulate improvisation.

Finally, Jamie A. Thomas looks to the future body and its parts, through linguistic attention to the language and visual imagery of science fiction films that revive severed heads, comatose bodies, and dormant alien life through imagined biotechnologies enacted upon women (chapter 10). Using moments excerpted from *The Brain That Wouldn't Die* (1962), *Passengers* (2016), and *Prometheus* (2012), Thomas analyzes how these narratives center masculine voices in repeated glorification of men as scientists and engineers, with beautiful women as their test subjects. Though these films seduce with a veneer of surgical experimentation, romance, interplanetary travel, and human-alien contact, their storylines are actually reproductions of key Greco-Roman mythologies. Ultimately, these mainstream science fictions constrain public imagining by purposefully failing to envision futures in which women and people of color are not marginalized.

CONCLUSION

As our diverse collection of authors suggests, this book is, above all else, a humble dialogue facilitated by cross-disciplinary teamwork in the Greater Philadelphia area. Assembling first through "Morality, Race, and the Body"—events which overlapped with the 2016 U.S. presidential election cycle, our collaboration has resulted in original contributions that intentionally value women, advocate for historical context, and encourage questioning, discussion, and debate. Being lifelong learners, we gather wisdom from the enduring reflections of educator and philosopher Paulo Freire (1921–1997), who counseled, "Dialogue cannot exist without humility."[26] Having entered into *Embodied Difference* seeking to learn from one another and those around us, we continue to be rewarded through this dialogue, knowing that there is yet more to learn.

Our coming together holds particular value in this current moment, an era in which public discourse is increasingly punctuated by bold falsehoods, misleading statements, and other less obvious antagonisms. Such interruptions devalue truth-seeking and mute historical fact, with a goal of normalizing hate and destabilizing education. However, the way this project began, through a series of unscripted public conversations on intercultural practices, urban realities, legacies of scientific racism, religious beliefs, and imagined futurisms, reasserted the rewards of listening to one another and examining both fact and fiction. Crucially, those conversations also facilitated changes to our ways of thinking, communication, and writing. We are proud these changes are reflected in each of the contributions to this volume, from the ways that authors draw upon history, to their detailing of marginalization, and description of contemporary controversies, social norms, and concerns. These are steps we take as activists, and we now invite you to join us.

NOTES

1. We gratefully acknowledge the helpful feedback we received on earlier drafts of this introduction, from friends, family, and colleagues, including Jessica Wu, Billie Thomas, James Thomas, and Alisha Berry.

2. Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersections of Race and Sex," 139.

3. *Intersectionality* originates with legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term to describe an analytical framework and theoretical approach that deepens the antiracist and freedom-seeking activity of Black feminism. Intersectionality approaches racism, sexism, ageism, classism, and ableism, for example, not as unrelated oppressions, but as coordinated configurations of power that intersect and combine to differently impact the lives of people with multiple demographic characteristics.

4. For more information about the girls' empowerment initiatives of Camp Sojourner and the annual Sojourner Truth Walk through West Philadelphia, please visit the organization's website: http://girlsleadershipcamp.org.

5. In his *There Is a River,* historian Vincent Harding (1981) discusses Philadelphia as simultaneously symbolic of the stubborn social climate in America and the site of radical organizing for equality, including the National Black Convention of 1835: "For many years, when Black people sought to join the July Fourth celebrants at historic Independence Square, they were driven away by the Whites" (p. 118).

6. Aldon Morris, *The Scholar Denied.*

7. Marjorie H. Goodwin, "Conversational Practices in a Peer Group of Urban Black Children."

8. Dell Hymes, *Ethnography, Linguistics, Narrative Inequality,* 64.

9. Though Yvonne Chireau was unable to take part in this book project, we appreciate her insights as part of our inaugural public conversation in 2016.

10. At the time, Jessica Wright had just completed her PhD in classics at Princeton University.

11. Even as Laurie Greene was unable to take part in this book project, we appreciate her insights as part of our latter public conversation in 2016.

12. Pierre Bourdieu, "The Force of Law," 812.

13. Jacey Fortin, "2 Black Men Settle with Starbucks and Philadelphia Over Arrest," *New York Times*.

14. Kai T. Erikson, *Wayward Puritans*.

15. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*.

16. Darya Marchenkova, "Black Man Complains After National Bank Falsely Accuses Him of Theft," *Montreal Gazette*.

17. H. Samy Alim, John R. Rickford, and Arnetha F. Ball (Eds.), *Raciolinguistics*.

18. Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex," 375.

19. Paul Ingram, "U.S. Border Patrol Agent Murdered Mexican Teen in 2012 Shooting: Prosecutor," *Reuters*.

20. Melissa Etehad, "Cleveland Policeman Who Shot Tamir Rice is Fired, But Not Because of the 12-Year-Old's Death," *Los Angeles Times*.

21. Mary Hudetz, "Teens' Experience at Colorado State Shows Campus Reality for Native Americans," *The Denver Post*.

22. Ibid.

23. BBC News, "U.S. Mum and Daughter 'Questioned Over Different Surnames.'"

24. Ibid.

25. Marwa Eltagouri, "A White Woman Was Flying With Her Biracial Son. Southwest Asked for 'Proof' She Was His Mother," *The Washington Post*.

26. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 90.

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