

# Black Women and the Politics of Privacy

Carlyn Ferrari, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of English

Seattle University

## Hey everyone-

Hope you're all doing well, I'm writing this to say I'm not going to do any press during Roland Garros. I've often felt that people have no regard for athletes mental health and this rings very true whenever I see a press conference or partake in one. We're often sat there and asked questions that we've been asked multiple times before or asked questions that bring doubt into our minds and I'm just not going to subject myself to people that doubt me. I've watched many clips of athletes breaking down after a loss in the press room and I know you have as well. I believe that whole situation is kicking a person while they're down and I don't understand the reasoning behind it. Me not doing press is nothing personal to the tournament and a couple journalists have interviewed me since I was young so I have a friendly relationship with most of them. However, if the organizations think that they can just keep saying, "do press or you're gonna be fined", and continue to ignore the mental health of the athletes that are the centerpiece of their cooperation then I just gotta laugh. Anyways, I hope the considerable amount that I get fined for this will go towards a mental health charity.

xoxo 🍷❤️

## Simone Biles

“We also have to focus on ourselves, because at the end of the day we're human, too, We have to protect our mind and our body, rather than just go out there and do what the world wants us to do.”



Anne Spencer  
(1882 – 1975)

Anne Spencer

“I have nothing new finished, but I have  
‘leventy-leven bits of paper stuck in so many  
different places that promise something if I  
ever get at them.”

# Anne Spencer manuscript

copy, I found  
I had one part of me  
in Va  
To present Mississippi  
Daniel had his reputation  
faded  
Jesus Christ would not  
save <sup>his</sup> from jackals  
Only the innocent are beyond fear  
Sin sets up its own Ty (image)  
Men should not peer at God with what  
they can do  
The heart of the body <sup>is</sup> <sup>its</sup> <sup>own</sup> <sup>element</sup> <sup>forever</sup>  
Soul is the  
very last <sup>under</sup> <sup>divine</sup> <sup>itself</sup>  
Love

No.

Moya Bailey

Misogynoir  
(Misogyny + Noir)

The specific kind of oppression  
that Black women experience.



# Public Displays of Privacy

# Paul Laurence Dunbar “We Wear the Mask”

We wear the mask that grins and lies,  
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—  
This debt we pay to human guile;  
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,  
And mouth with myriad subtleties.  
Why should the world be over-wise,  
In counting all our tears and sighs?  
Nay, let them only see us, while  
    We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries  
To thee from tortured souls arise.  
We sing, but oh the clay is vile  
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;  
But let the world dream otherwise,  
    We wear the mask!

Darlene Clark Hine

## Cultures of Dissemblance

“...it was imperative that they collectively create alternative self-images and shield from scrutiny these private, empowering definitions of self. A secret, undisclosed persona allowed the individual Black woman to function, to work effectively as a domestic in white households, to bear and rear children, to endure the frustration-born violence of frequently under- or unemployed mates, to support churches, to found institutions, and to engage in social service activities, all while living within a clearly hostile white, patriarchal, middle-class America (916).”

Kevin Quashie

“Quiet is the expressiveness of the inner, unable to be expressed fully but nonetheless articulate and informing of one’s humanity. As a concept, it helps us explore black subjectivity from beyond the boundaries of public expressiveness.”

Dorothy Roberts

“The essence of Black women’s experience during slavery was the brutal denial of autonomy over reproduction.”

Jennifer L. Morgan

“African women’s ‘unwomanly’ behavior evoked an immutable distance between Europe and Africa on which the development of racial slavery depended.”

# Hortense Spillers

“Let’s face it. I am a marked woman, but not everybody knows my name. ... My country needs me, and if I were not here, I would have to be invented.”

Saartjie  
Bartmaan  
(1789-1815)





Millie and  
Christine McKoy  
(1851-1912)



Sojourner Truth  
(c. 1797 -1883)



Audre Lorde

*“Overextending myself is not stretching myself. I had to accept how difficult it is to monitor the difference. Necessary for me as cutting down on sugar. Crucial. Physically. Psychically. Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.”*

Anne Spencer

“I have nothing new finished, but I have  
‘leventy-leven bits of paper stuck in so many  
different places that promise something if I  
ever get at them.”

I have nothing new finished *for you*.

# Anne Spencer Home (2016)

“I have nothing new finished, but I have ‘leventy-leven bits of paper stuck in so many different places that promise something if I ever get at them.”



You don't deserve this part of me.  
I owe you nothing.

If Black women are saying they are in pain,  
when are we going to start believing them?



Thank you!