

preface

THIS ISSUE TROUBLES received genealogies about romanticized childhood, from scientific claims about how young girls' bodies should mature, to masculinist rationales for child protection, to sentimental imperialist discourses about education for young women in the Muslim world. It also unsettles conventional histories of modern feminism and black motherhood. The articles offer unflinching critiques of state power and the imbrications of gender, race, and class in the enactment of that power. Carla Rice illuminates how scientific research on puberty suppresses nonnormative sexualities, while Paul M. Renfro takes aim at anxious government masculinity expressed through claims to protect the notion of innocent childhood. Moon Charania and Wendy Simonds extend Renfro's examination of gendered legal governance to an analysis of mandated parenting classes as a form of governmentality designed to produce apologetic citizens, shore up the heteronormative middle-class white family, and portray state interference as benevolent. Molly Geidel highlights the racial and gendered politics of US imperialism by deconstructing sentimental narratives about education for girls in the Muslim world, narratives that gained traction in the so-called war on terror and that deflect Western responsibility for the conditions of these girls' lives. This issue also includes two essays on black maternity. Jennifer C. Nash's review essay explores the concept of black mothering through recent works that take up the maternal as a rich site of theorizing for black women. Erica S. Lawson demonstrates the ways that black women who have lost their children to violence channel their grief into activism that inspires movements. Carol Giardina resituates the birth of the modern

US feminist movement within the working of black women activists for the March on Washington. Justin Louis Mann encourages us raise awareness about white attempts to control public space, while Lana Dee Povitz pays tribute to movement photographer JEB's documentation of political resistance. We round out this issue with poetry by Carolina Hotchandani and Shirley Geok-lin Lim.

The articles on girlhood show how anxiety about young girls, whether scientific or legal or imperialist in origin, facilitates the use of girls' bodies and minds to regulate their sexuality, to shore up patriarchal masculinity, and to assuage an American public about US interventions in the Muslim world. "The Spectacle of the Child Woman: Troubling Girls and the Science of Early Puberty" by Carla Rice charts how the category of "precocious puberty" has been elevated to pathological proportions, with particular concern about disabled and racialized girls' supposedly untimely development. Using "body becoming" and "intra-sectionality" theories, Rice argues that scientific discourse on puberty makes a spectacle of "deviant," early pubescent bodies that, by failing to disentangle sexuality from puberty, makes it difficult for nonnormative sexualities to emerge.

In "Hunting These Predators': The Gender Politics of Child Protection in the Post-9/11 Era," Paul M. Renfro deconstructs the various child protection acts passed under the Bush-Cheney "compassionate conservatism" era. Echoing the scientific research on puberty, these laws posited an innocent childhood—but only for white, middle-class children. They addressed supposed moral threats to heteronormative patriarchal "family values" and claimed to shield children from terrorists, on the one hand, and from "deviants" on the other.

Moon Charania and Wendy Simonds's "Governing the Divorcée: Gender and Sexuality in State-Mandated Parenting Classes" charts the rise of state-mandated parenting classes for divorcing couples. Offering a Foucauldian analysis of the governmentality and biopolitics of these classes, Charania and Simonds argue that these parenting seminars deploy specific forms of knowledge in order to legitimate the normativity of heterosexual marriage, perpetuate the notion that children of divorcing parents are at risk, promote neoliberal concepts of self-improvement and empowerment, and extend state power.

Molly Geidel, in "Building the Counterinsurgent Girl," argues that the iconic Muslim girl morphed in the Western popular imaginary from

victim-in-need-of-saving (the classical Orientalist representation) into a canny counterinsurgency strategy to surveil Middle Eastern and Central Asian communities for anti-Western elements. Geidel traces how counterinsurgency imperatives and girls' education discourses became intertwined while simultaneously eviscerating the idea of women's empowerment, depoliticizing inequality, occluding the horrific destruction of lifeworlds in the war on terror, and also excusing Western audiences from taking responsibility for the conditions of young women's lives.

Jennifer C. Nash reviews four recent books—by Alexis Pauline Gumbs, China Martens, and Mai'a Williams; Sekile Nzinga-Johnson; Laura Briggs; and Julia Oparah and Alicia Bonaparte—that take up black mothering from different perspectives. Given the precarious and heart-wrenching history of black motherhood, it is no wonder that Nash positions the topic as a central investment of black feminist theory and activism. Nash makes clear how expansive the concept of “mothering” is for black people, highlighting moments in these texts that do not assume that mothers are cisgender women and extending the meaning of motherhood and mothering to a range of labors of world-making “in the face of quotidian and spectacular violence.” Nash ends her essay by pointing out that black mothers often become political subjects “through maternity and through maternal practices that are intimate with loss, grief, and death,” suggesting further research on the tendency to see black women's suffering most starkly when grieving others.

Erica S. Lawson's article, “Bereaved Black Mothers and Maternal Activism in the Racial State,” engages these very questions of black maternity and the politics of grief. Lawson examines how some black women whose children have been unjustly and brutally murdered make their grief public in an effort to “take up maternal activism to articulate their own political subjectivity for justice.” Informed by Black feminist praxis, these women mount what Lawson calls a “maternal counterepistemology to racial terror” through their continued push for change.

Carol Giardina accords black women's movements for social change a more central place in US feminist history in “MOW to NOW: Black Feminism Resets the Chronology of the Founding of Modern Feminism.” She argues that black women's organizing against the sexism in the planning of the 1963 March on Washington (MOW) was pivotal to the shift of feminist organizing of the 1960s. Spearheaded by experienced activists such as Dorothy Height, Pauli Murray, and Anna Arnold Hedgeman, black

feminists demanded equal attention to the circumstances of women's lives—especially in the area of wages and employment—in the objectives of the MOW and beyond. Facing down powerful male figures of the black church, they established feminist protest models that they subsequently used to inform the establishment of the National Organization for Women in 1966.

“To See and Be Seen: In Conversation with JEB,” Lana Dee Povitz’s conversation with photographer JEB (Joan E. Biren), shows a different side of movement-building in the United States. From her position as a “white, Jewish, middle-class, antiracist-lesbian-grassroots” activist-artist, JEB has documented women’s and LGBTQ communities since the 1970s. Povitz’s intimate account of their meeting helps us get to know JEB and how her camera was “a barometer of the times.”

Finally, in “What’s Your Emergency?: White Women and the Policing of Public Space,” Justin Louis Mann offers a reading of recent events involving white women calling in false alarms to the police in reaction to black people in public spaces doing everyday things such as having a barbeque. Applying Inderpal Grewal’s analysis of the imperial and imperiled “security state,” Mann discusses the desire of white “securitized femininity” for an “orderly” public space, effectively commenting on the perils of living while black. The essay ends with a suggestion that we take what humor we can from these episodes and embrace the “life-giving” practice of forming (online and social media) communities that practice humorous disavowals of alarmist politics.

Our creative offerings include Carolina Hotchandani’s poems “Achilles Sees Life Leaving from His Heel” and “Wash That Man Right Out of My Hair,” both of which give a haunting portrait of maternity. In her “Cassandra Days: Poems,” Shirley Geok-lin Lim speaks to the current political moment and the relationship between law and the patriarchal state.

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