



**RECLAIMING MY**  
*Voice.*

By Lerima Guadeloupe

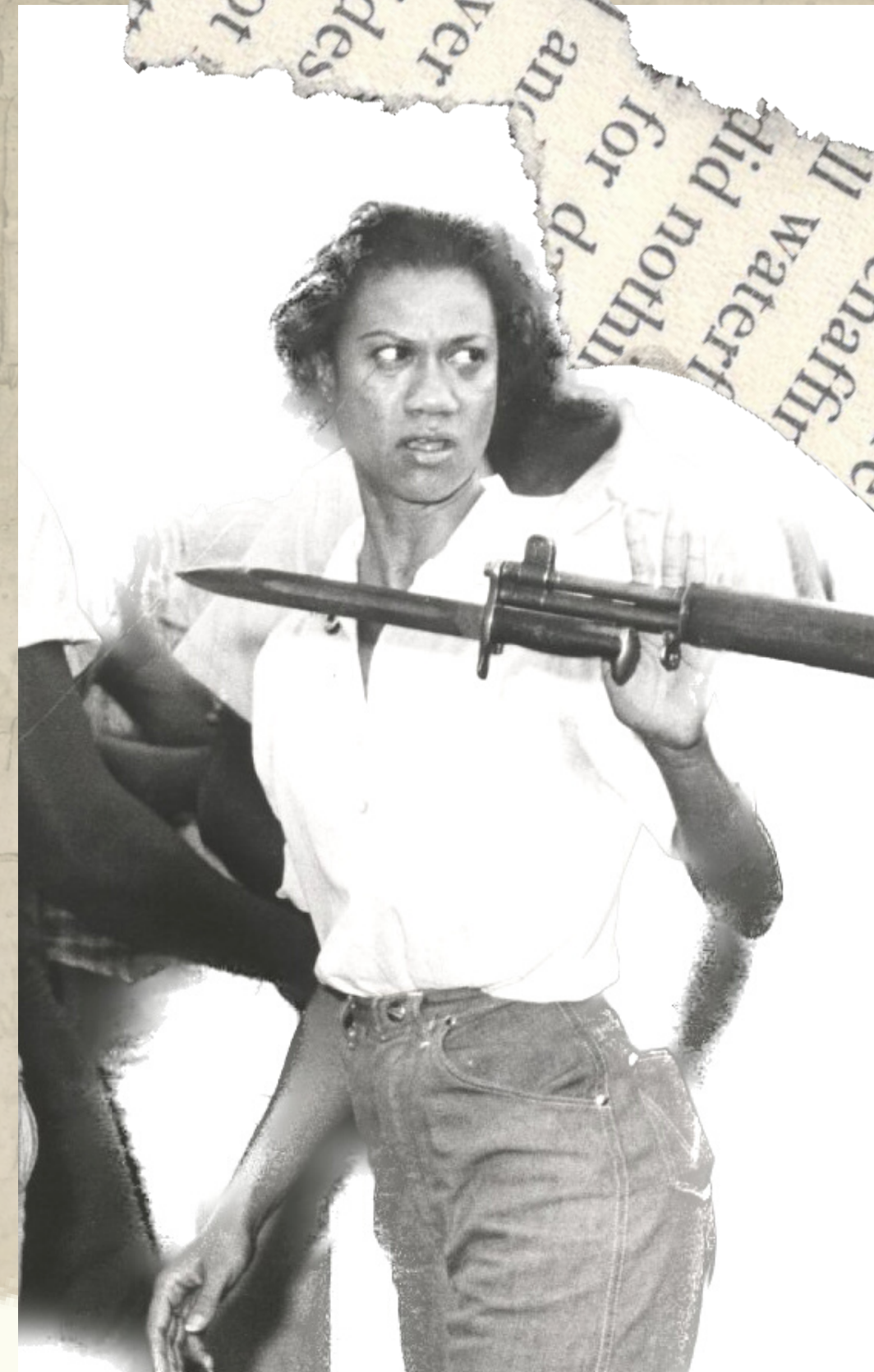






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# Introduction

"the most unprotected person in America is the Black woman" -Malcolm X

I approached this project as a love letter to Black women

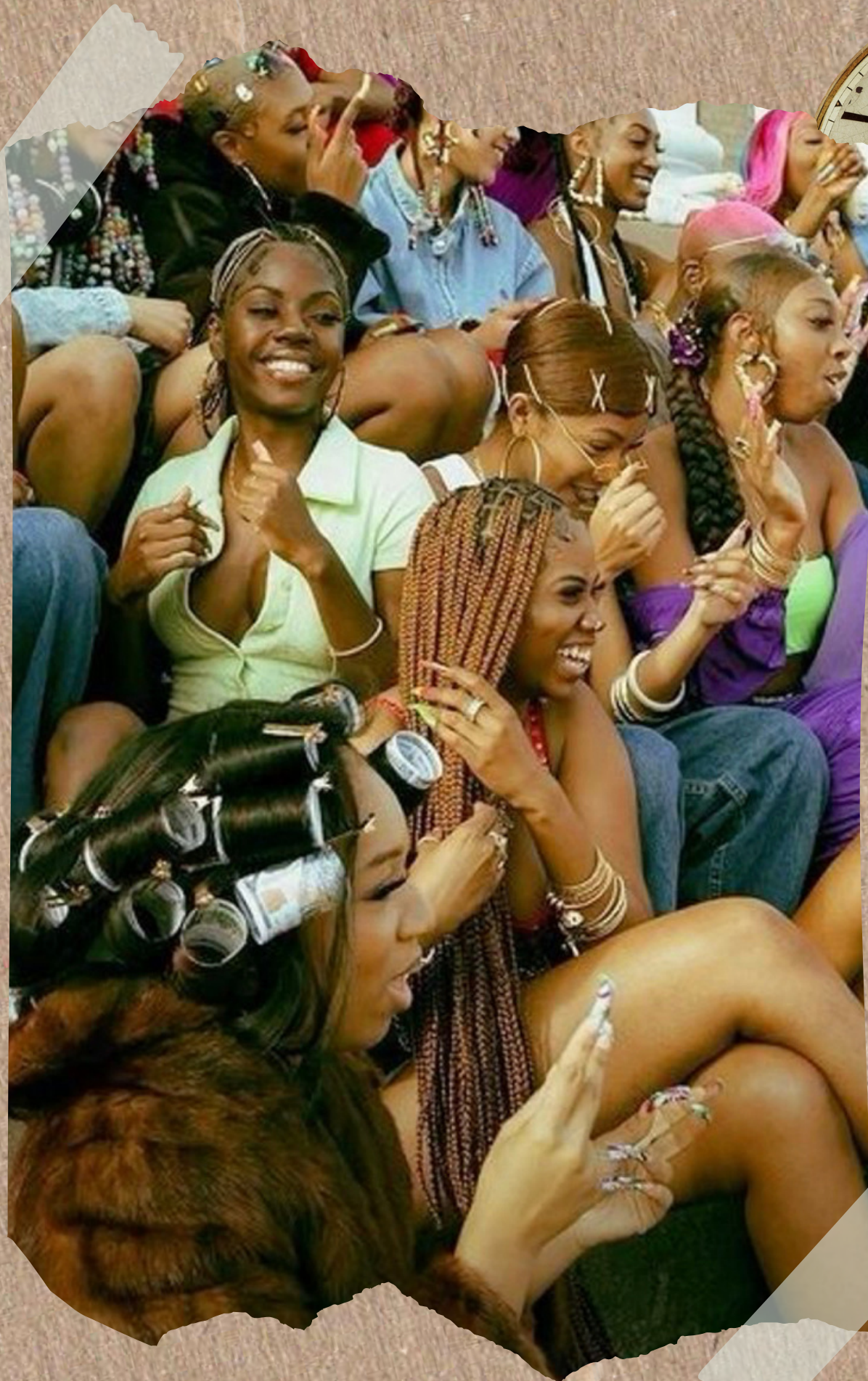
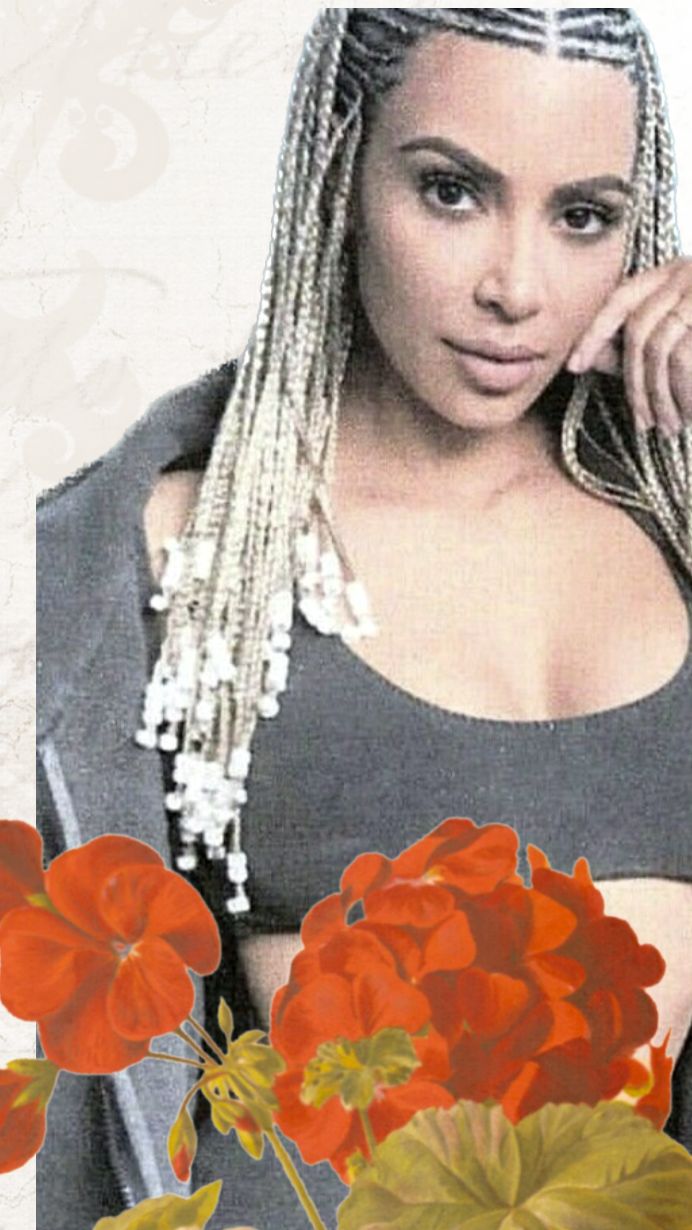
It begins with a seeing, a tracking of moments where we were there

Yet our presence, our contributions, our voices were hidden.

This undertaking outgrew my intentions of written affection

And now stands as a shout of existence

Proof of life, and kick, a punch against appropriation and oppression.

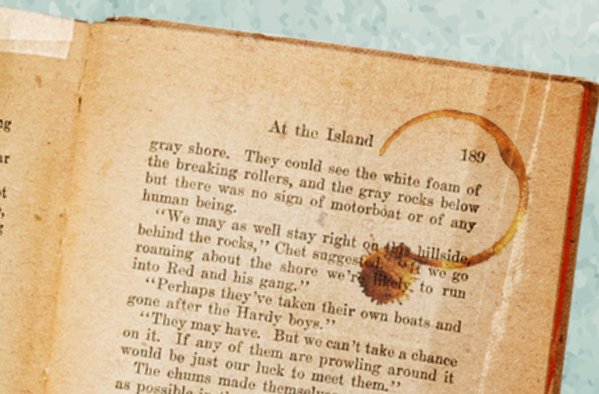




# Tone Policing



*You talking to me?  
Yea, no I'm not listening  
but please continue*





# But When They Do it...

Armed with chalk I begin to stencil #BLM onto the front facing wall of my home. She approaches slowly, and sweetly asks why I am defacing private property. I respond, just as sweetly that I am in fact am the private owner of this private property, so I am free to do adorn it however I wish. She counters that she actually knows the true owners, personally and that she will be contacting the police swiftly to prevent me from further damaging private property. Confusedly, I look up at her, I look up at my home???? Then I am transported from San Francisco to Central Park NYC. There I stand binoculars in hand ready for my soothing hobby of bird watching. But there is a dog, unleashed and coming this way??? "Excuse me miss, could you leash your dog? If you are in The Ramble, your dog needs to be leashed." I thought my request was made quite politely and there's no need to shout after all its just us. But she responds that she's going to call 911 and tell them that there's an Africa-American man threatening my life. WTF??? And she, does it?!!!! Confusedly I look around because where am I, what world am I living in? I spin around and now I'm in front of the lobby of my apartment building. I wait for the white lady to move out of the way so I can enter, but wait... she isn't passing by, she is blocking me??? "Excuse me, I am trying to get by" I say. She refuses to move and instead demands that I tell her what unit I live in. I edge past her, but she follows me, demanding to know who I am here to see. She follows me to my apartment, sees me enter key in hand, and still calls the cops. Confusedly I look around, thinking where on earth am I?! Oh that's right, America.





# *Spiritual Bypassing*

*Mute my voice citing  
Spirituality  
Permission to be angry*

My skin color is not an attack.  
My vernacular is not an attack.  
The way I dress is not an attack.  
My hair texture is not an attack.  
My approach is not an attack.  
My response is not an attack.

You attacked, with your microaggressions.

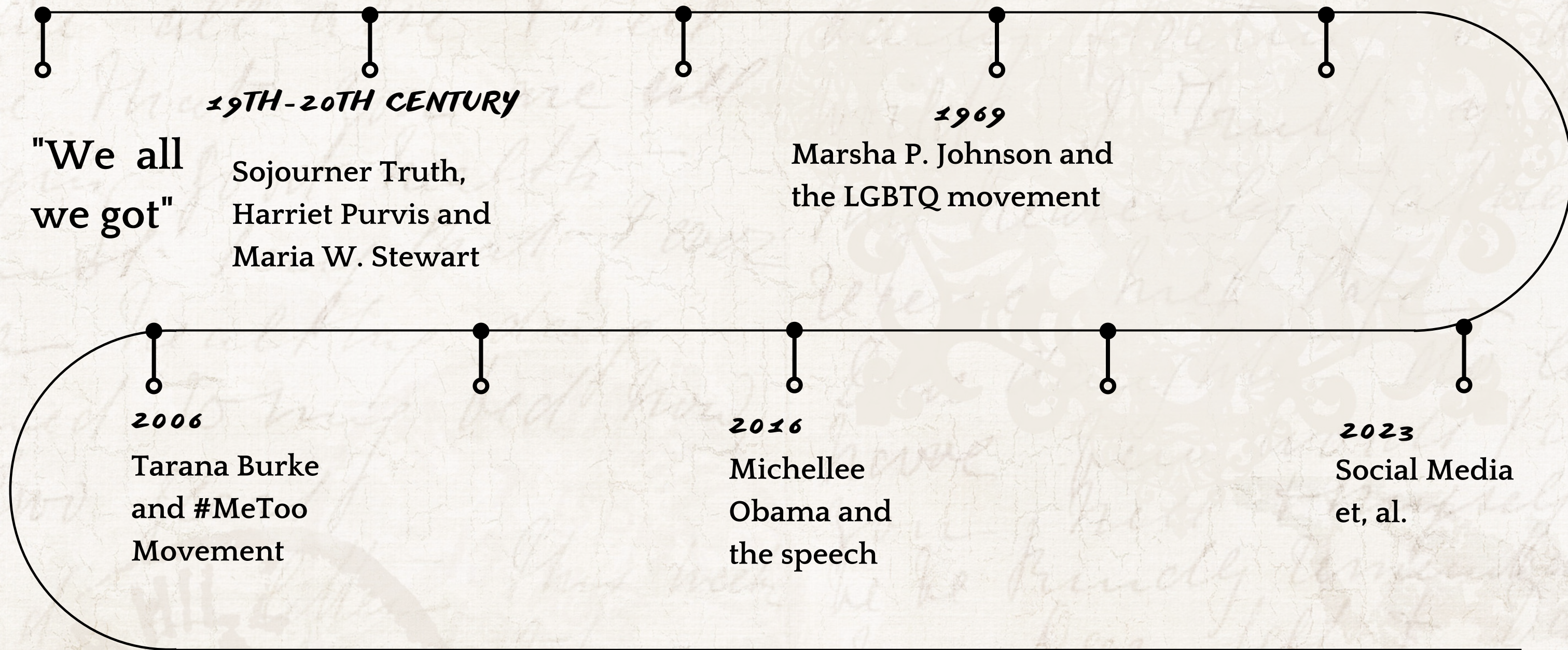
You attacked, with discrimination.

You attacked when you credited my anger to my person, rather than the inciting situation of having to deal with your oppression, your devaluation of my feelings and your absolute fragility in the face of that anger. SMH



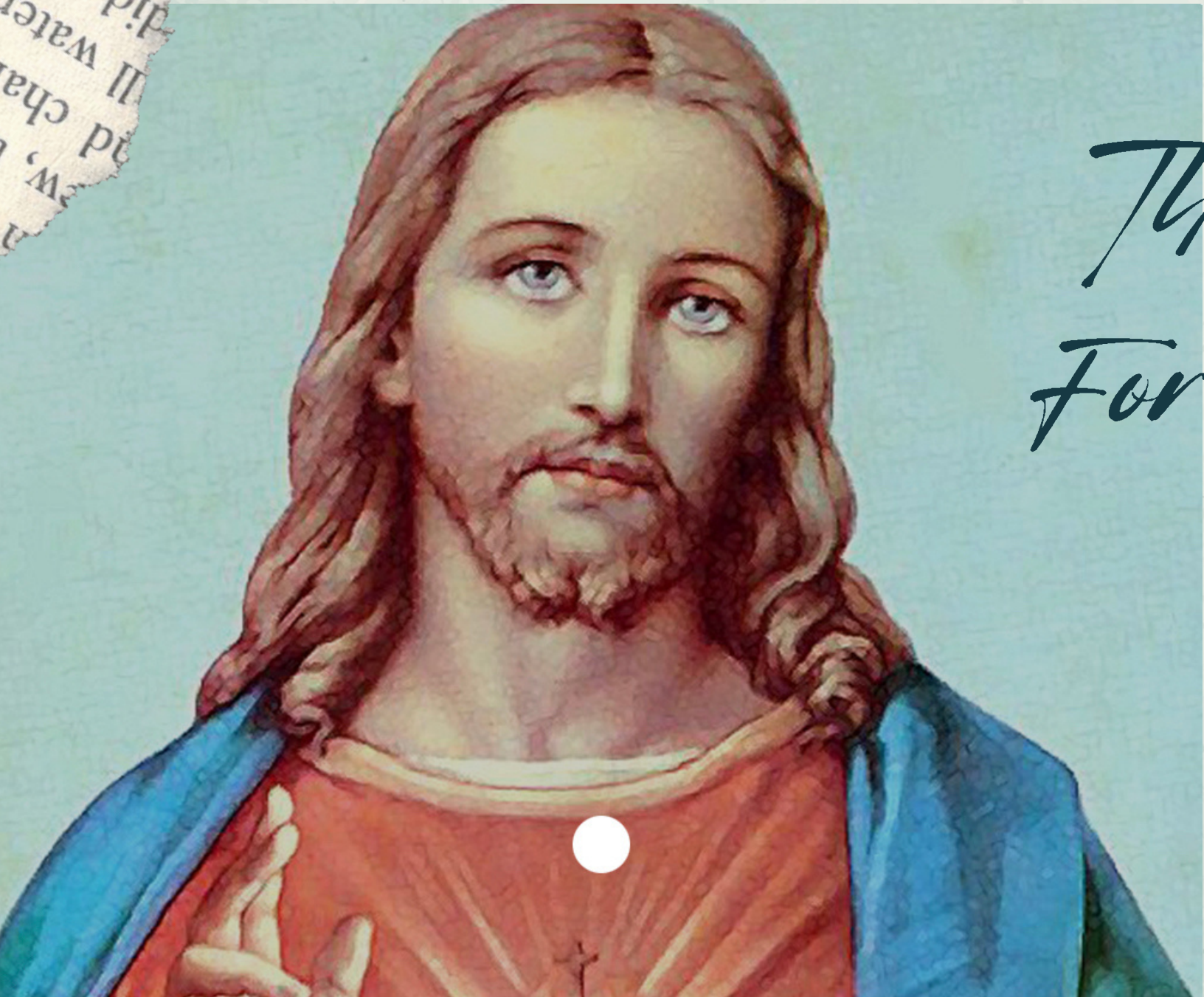


# Timeline





# White Savior Complex



Thank you White Jesus  
For sending us white people  
To save us from us





...ever and or nothing  
...a knot  
...besides  
...poor Rat  
...e cam  
...e d  
...he d  
...rim d  
...sha



# Silencer

A silencer works by trapping and slowing down gas that is being quickly released as the firearm is discharged.

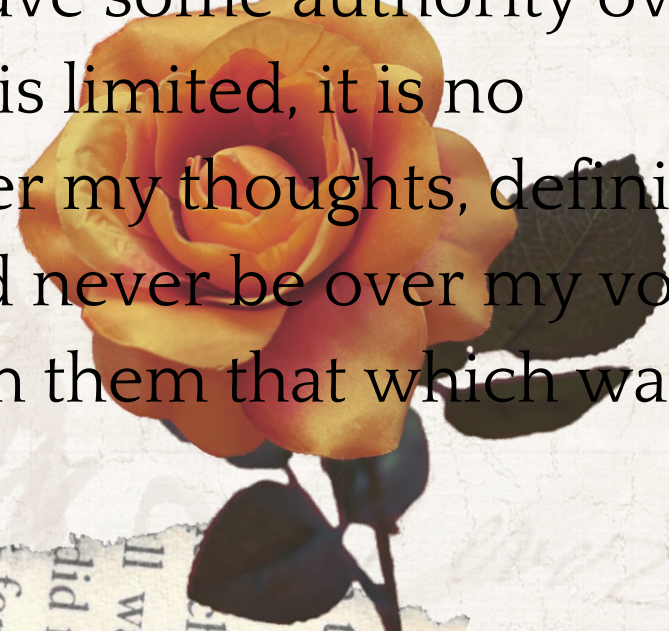


**Shut! Up!**



# This is Not About You

I retitled this image Taking Back my Power. In any space where my presence was not welcomed, where my thoughts were not invited and where my voice offended, I took a sip of water. I lubricate my throat so that when I spoke my voice would be strong, and my conviction could be felt. My right hand rises in the face of the would-be bully in front of me, demanding that they wait for me to have my moment. Shocked and affronted that I could be so bold, as to not only reclaim my time but that I would put them on pause and prepare. Confident they are because they believe they have some authority over me. But that authority is false, it is limited, it is no authority at all. Certainly not over my thoughts, definitely not over my presence and could never be over my voice. I speak. I spoke. I took back from them that which was never theirs in the first place.



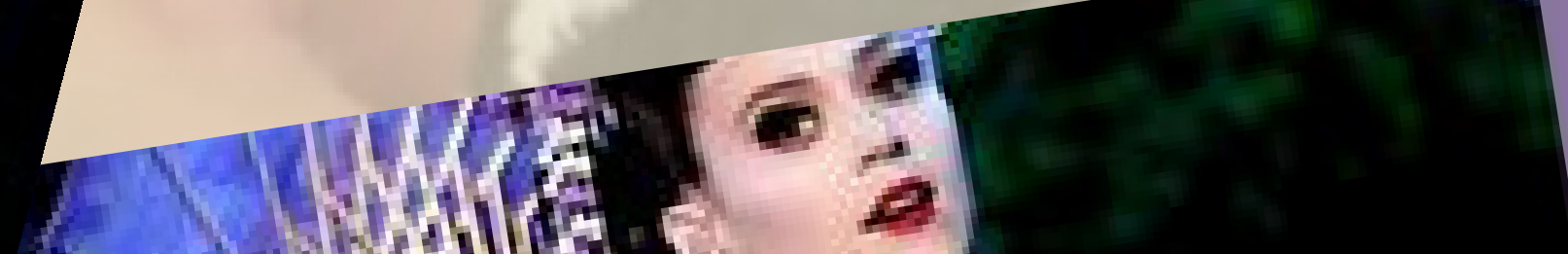




# Please Stop

I don't see color...  
I have a black [insert token here]  
But what about Black on Black crime?  
Can I touch your hair?  
I feel attacked...

*P.S. Coachella, Halloween and Football does not transform my  
culture into a costume.*





# *Words of Advice*

Look at us, of course  
you're looking. How else would you  
Copy the blueprint!

