

Ain't I Woman? The Black Woman's Body as a Battleground

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ABSTRACT

This paper begins by providing a historical analysis of the Black woman's body as a casualty of the colonial conquest. Having been picked apart, prodded and discarded; her body is the epitome of a battleground whose restoration has not begun. To achieve this, I use narratives the that ended in Sarah Baartman's exoticism, exploitation, death and post-mortal humiliation. I argue here that until cleansing begins in the place of spirit, healing is impossible. In the contemporary, I then link the devaluation of Sarah's body with the current scourge of femicide that plagues South Africa. The way Black women die in the hands of those they love, the brutality and gruesomeness of their murders, and the subsequent humiliation of their remains; is to me as much a historical as it is a contemporary problem. I will then position Karabo Mokoena, Tshegofatso Pule and Nomzamo Mhlathi's murders as a continuation of the devaluation of Black women's bodies, within and without. Although this paper seeks to contribute to a conversation about a colonial wound that remains, its primary objective is to highlight how the Black woman remains a sacrifice on a men's battleground.

Keywords: Black, coloniality, exploitation, femicide, woman