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Introduction

Sometimes, silence is loud.

A dry and raspy laugh. A pause followed by a long and exasperated exhale. *Can you still even call it a pause if she hesitated, sardonically laughed, waited, and sighed all before trying once more to explain her point?* Abena and I found it hard to meet in person.[1] We tried. But with our conflicting schedules, we quickly gave up and decided to speak late one evening over the phone after we had both put our kids to bed. A dark brown-skinned, black,[2] cisgender woman in her early thirties, Abena spent the first twenty minutes of our conversation proudly sharing how she lived in the exact same house in the working-poor neighborhood where she grew up.

It's changed, though. When she was a little girl, the area was mostly black folks; neighbors watched out for each other's kids, and houses cost "$20,000." Back then, the police didn't come quickly when called for help. Instead, Abena grew up watching officers heavily patrol the border between her neighborhood and the predominantly white and wealthier part of the city. Now, houses cost "6, 7, $800,000." Newcomers and coffee shops displaced her friends and neighbors. And the police—they were always around now, with Abena saying the cops were like, "Oh, now we have to protect our white people from the few black people that are left."

Gentrification upended Abena's social world. Her voice was low and seemingly far away over the phone as she described the many changes that came with the shift from historical divestment in her black neighborhood to police-assisted "revitalization" for her new white neighbors. But her laugh? It was loud, wry, and broken up by long sighs as she repeatedly pauses before trying once again to explain to me that there was absolutely no point in black women and girls speaking about violence—police or otherwise—because "nothing is going to happen anyway." She's shared her story before. She's learned her lesson. In our

interview, she shared her stories and lessons with me, detailing exactly how she learned the hard way just what types of consequences lay on the other sides of violence disclosures folks weren't ready or willing to hear from black girls.

A high-pitched giggle. A pause? *Okay, a pause filled with nervous, high-pitched childlike giggles, sighs, and long looks out the back café window.* Joy and I were the only two visibly black people in the coffee shop, so we quickly found each other. Greeting one another with a hug, we stood in line and chatted while ordering our drinks. An upwardly mobile, light brown-skinned, black, cisgender woman with sandy hair in her early thirties, Joy hated the working-poor neighborhood in which she grew up, calling it a "terrible city." She's glad she made it out. She listed the many reasons why most folks don't. Even though she's now far away from the inner city where she spent most of her youth, she's carried the stories with her.

We found a table in the back corner of the sparsely populated café to guarantee she and I had some privacy. Before we could settle into our seats, Joy started in with a series of questions about the project, sharing details along the way about who she would and wouldn't allow to interview her. No one was in the back room with us. We were so far away from the front bar that we couldn't even smell the freshly roasted coffee. Even still—once Joy was satisfied with my answers—she leaned forward and waved her hand to gesture that it was time for me to join her. Hunched over the table with our heads almost touching, it was as if we were kids on the playground sharing secrets as she nervously giggled and admitted, "I got like three decades' worth of stories."

After announcing the arrival of stories amassed and untold over the course of her life, Joy leaned back in her chair, clasped her warm mug with both hands, and sighed as she looked out the window at some place far off in her memories. Although I couldn't go there with her, the slump in her shoulders and the tears forming on the outer edges of her eyes let me know that it was not easy for her to return. Yet, she did. And she described what it was like to grow up terrified of officers and her neighbors, anxious about neighborhood violence *and* the police. She knew as a child that "police officers can't protect me." In her city: "You'd rather get robbed by a criminal than get pulled over by police."

Even though she's now far away from the inner city where she grew up, it's still really difficult for her when she meets new people. It triggers old wounds around trust. It reminds her of how hard it was back then to distinguish

between the danger from corrupt cops and those in her neighborhood engaged in illicit activities, questioning: "Who's the bad guy? Who's the good guy?" All she knew back then was that they all scared her. As a little girl, she didn't know how to figure out the difference. When we met, she still didn't.

The grating clink of a metal chair dragged across the concrete each time she shuffled. Her backpack rustling as she pulled it closer to her chest for comfort or more warmth. Not a pause, then. *A long ellipsis punctuated by fidgeting movements, shaky laughter, and anxious apologies.* It was November, and it was freezing. Yet, we still sat on the outside patio so Nema could have some privacy away from the crowd gathering in the heated café. She is an eighteen-year-old, dark brown-skinned, black, cisgender teenager with shoulder-length braids who didn't really have a strong opinion one way or the other about what it was like to grow up in a wealthy, mostly white suburb located outside a large metropolitan city. And stories? Nema anxiously laughed as she emphatically stated, "I really don't interact with the police as often," especially "as an individual who grew up in a middle-class suburban area." To further emphasize her point, Nema disclosed that prior to speaking with me, she "*really* had to reflect" on her experiences with police, stressing the "really" to let me know the memories did not come easy. Given as an apology, she then eagerly explained why she was excited to talk.

She was learning a lot about mass incarceration and policing in inner cities in one of her favorite college classes. From what they had covered so far that semester, she was curious and unsure why I would even do a project exclusively focused on black women and girls—especially including those from middle-class backgrounds like hers.

> I mean, I really don't feel like the situation affects [*pause*], well, let me stop—I feel like certain aspects of police brutality and interaction don't really apply to all black [people] or [*pause*] other people of color.

Starting, stopping, and abruptly changing directions several times while making this statement, Nema went on to specify who exactly was at risk of "certain aspects" of police violence. It's definitely not folks like her. Maybe? She's unsure.

Her cheery disposition gradually shifted as she began answering the interview questions and discussed dealing with the police. Remembering, the act

of speaking aloud and listening to herself provide the details of her encounters conjured up new realizations about her own story. She fidgeted. The metal chair scraped the concrete. Squeezing her backpack closer to her chest, Nema worked through, in real time, her growing confusion about what happened during a recent police encounter, speaking to herself and me as she trailed off, "Well, he said he had a daughter too—."

Like most black women and girls in the United States, Abena's, Joy's, and Nema's experiences with officers wouldn't show up in any national databases tracking police violence.[3] Their police encounters wouldn't be covered in mainstream news reports or local news outlets.[4] Nor would their stories likely be shared and passed down in intergenerational talks in black families and communities.[5] For many, their experiences would be what black feminist activists and scholars have called out as "invisible"—or the countless instances of police violence against black women and girls that go unnamed and unrecognized.[6]

But, despite our absence from official and unofficial accounts, Abena, Joy, Nema, and other black women exist.[7] Our police encounters happen. Our lives matter. And so too do our stories.

One major contribution of this book is demonstrating how the policing of black women is inextricably tied to the policing of our stories. Released in 2015, the *#SayHerName* report directly challenged the erasure of black women's experiences, lifting up the names of Miriam Carey, Tarika Wilson, Janisha Fonville, and many others who were killed by the police.[8] The report also invited researchers, activists, and media to use gender expansive policing frames that account for the many ways black women and girls experience police violence. In *Invisible No More*, Andrea Ritchie further calls our attention to these harms, naming police sexual violence, neglect in a crisis, and psychological abuse as acts of police violence that policymakers and communities tend to minimize and ignore.[9] Yet, as black feminists arduously counter what Kimberlé Crenshaw calls out as the loud public silence around policing in black women's and girl's lives, the report also stresses that these absences are "not purely a matter of missing facts."[10] Indeed, the "missing-ness" of our stories from the facts and so many conversations on policing warns of deeper processes at work in our social worlds.

By trade, sociologists are obsessed with social processes like these. The entire field is dedicated to picking apart just exactly how inequality is reproduced

in our day-to-day lives. And it is from people's stories—whether directly shared through narratives or filtered through other methods and measures—that we understand how the police are critical to reproducing the unequal social world that exists today. In every encounter, officers are on the front lines of deciding who is entitled to personhood, safety, and resources and who is relegated to the "invisible." However, as a discipline, we have been complicit in the loud public silence: Very little sociological attention has been paid to the social problem of police violence against black women and girls.[11] Even less has been given to the incessant social processes that render our stories so perpetually "missing."

Like many black feminists who come to research and write about violence, this "missing-ness" is not something that sits far away from me. Its personal, and I don't recall a time in my life when I didn't want to make sense of it or push through it. Yearning to deeply understand this seemingly ever-present process that makes our stories "missing," this book draws on a long lineage of black feminist sociology, which Zakiya Luna and Whitney Pirtle state is unapologetically grounded in the belief that "no one in the Black community [is] disposable."[12] In firmly taking this stance, "black feminist sociology theorizes about the value of everyday life and all that it entails."[13] Thus, to understand "missing-ness" around policing as an everyday social process, I knew I needed to speak directly to black women about their encounters, and more, I needed to talk with them about their journeys to sharing their accounts with others. So, for four years, I sought out and listened to black women's stories: the ones that far too often don't find their way into the data, news headlines, and familial talks stressing the importance of making it home. From 2017 to 2021, I interviewed sixty-two black women. I spoke with many others at anti–police violence protests and neighborhood events. I talked with those at school meetings and police-community forums. Throughout our interviews and conversations, black women intimately described their lived experiences with officers. They also very, *very* cautiously shared their interactions with people in their lives who adopted similar practices of social control.

In *Arrested Justice*, Beth E. Richie explores these shared practices, offering the violence matrix as a way to see the connections between police violence and communal violence and interpersonal violence in our social worlds.[14] The violence matrix, more specifically, allows us to map black women's vulnerabilities across a continuum of harm, bringing into view physical assault, sexual harassment, exploitation, verbal harassment, and emotional manipulation from officers and others in their everyday lives. While Richie focuses on the

experiences of poor black women, the black women I interviewed come from different social backgrounds. Yet, they also spoke to the violence matrix, to these various harms and connections, and more, how "missing-ness" occurred in any place where they experienced violence. It linked their public encounters with their private ones. It relegated their experiences to an individual issue rather than a systemic social problem. Thus, their stories make visible how policing moves across domains—linking the structural, institutional, and bureaucratic with the intimate and everyday through acts of violence as well as stories told, suppressed, and distorted about these harms.[15] Indeed, our absence is not just an issue of missing facts. It's about the stories we tell and the ways we decide each and every day who and what matters. It's about the ways we rely on social structures to recognize each other, relate to one another, and right ourselves in a crisis. And as Shatema Threadcraft argues, this process of determining what goes missing and what crystalizes into view is central to how we build and rebuild people and our social worlds.[16]

In sharing their stories, many for the first time, black women poignantly describe what it was like for them to confront and embody this systemic and intimate process of "missing-ness," which left them alone to address the violence in their lives. Thus, what started as an investigation into black women's "invisible" interactions with officers quickly expanded to the ways people in and out of uniform police black women and our stories about violence to relegate us to the outer edges of our social worlds. In spotlighting these connections, this book brings into view continuities in police practices and moments of collusion between officers and others in institutions, families, and communities. These moments reveal what I refer to as *everyday policing*—or how officers and others build and rebuild people and social worlds in public and intimate spaces by withholding recognition, asserting dominance, and enforcing their interests and realities. This social process effectively puts and keeps black women in their place—in their homes, their schools, their communities, and in political organizing.

This place is not new. Black feminist research, literature, and other writings on violence are dedicated to centering this place as a significant site of social inquiry and change. Working to understand the macro and micro ways black women are pushed, forced, and coerced into "knowing her place," black feminists highlight the violence that occurs here along with how testimonies and knowledge from "her place" are persistently dismissed. Some, like Crenshaw, refer to this place as the margins—a space etched out by multiple, interconnected structures of inequality.[17] Others like Patricia Hill Collins and Kristie

Dotson also understand this place as a space outside of mainstream recognition and categories that form the building blocks of what we claim to know about society and one another.[18] Still, others, like bell hooks, emphatically state that while this place materializes from multiple systems of domination, it also offers "to one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds."[19]

Thus, when I set out in 2017 to investigate what felt so stubbornly "invisible," it mandated centering her place—or taking seriously black women's everyday encounters along with our stories about violence that often lie on the outer edges of dominant policing frames and research. In this vein, Matthew Clair issues an invitation, asking sociologists to take seriously the intersectional subjectivities of people subjected to criminalization.[20] These subjectivities, Clair argues, carry "unique understandings and visions" about the social problem of policing and the carceral system as well as provide insights into what is needed for radical social change.[21] Many sociologists of policing and violence, such as Victor Rios and Nikki Jones, do this by focusing on the experiences and stories of those directly subjected to surveillance and punishments.[22] For example, Rios's Oakland-based ethnography traces the everyday experiences of black and Latino adolescent boys and, in the process, demonstrates how police practices extend way beyond the four walls of the department and are taken up by other authority figures in their lives.[23] From these youths' place, we see how criminalization connects their experiences with officers and others in schools and neighborhoods to create a complex web of youth social control. Similarly, Jones's ethnography of black girls in Philadelphia follows their day-to-day challenges surviving violence.[24] Complicating the code of the street, gendered norms steeped in respectability constrain their options for safety. From these girls' place, we see how they are forced to make strategic decisions between cultivating an image of a "good girl" or being seen as a "bad one" by those around them all while trying to defend themselves from violence.

My book joins scholars of policing and violence to show how practices of social control, as Uriel Serrano notes, move and seep into our lives, interweaving our public worlds with our private ones.[25] Through centering black women's place, each chapter focuses on what I came to conceptualize as *the space between*: defined as spaces where black women encounter and make meaning around our lived experiences of violence from officers and others outside of what is conventionally recognized and known about policing. As a liminal space,[26] the space between is where black women and girls have to

quickly and slowly figure out what's happening to us when others inflict violence, along with deciding if we will name, share, report, or hide it. *Here*—black women in this study not only, as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva says, felt race, they embodied an emotional register that mapped onto the ways policing dynamically reproduced intersectional inequality in daily life.[27] As a literal space,[28] the space between materializes as a terrain spanning multiple contexts where officers and others target black women and girls, inflicting many unnamed and unrecognized acts of violence. *Here*—they were often left with sole responsibility for protecting themselves from harm that others minimized and ignored. Bridging the literal with the liminal in our social worlds, the black women I interviewed *felt* pathology, exclusion, apathy, idealization, and coercion, or what Audre Lorde describes as the master's tools carving out their place.[29] They *felt* the everyday policing of their personhood and stories, of the social process breaking and bending black lives and social relations into a complex web of social control. Thus, black women's experiences and searches for recognition shared in this book illuminate everyday policing as a social process that reproduces the margins in our social worlds, therein revealing how policing is just as much about silence as it is about violence.

Importantly, the black women I interviewed are not voiceless. However, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak reminds us, to speak is to be heard—or politically and social recognized.[30] Or, as Arundhati Roy puts it, "We know of course there's really no such thing as the 'voiceless.' There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard."[31] Hence, silence exposes the links in the dynamic reproduction of inequitable social worlds between speakers and listeners—be they individuals, social groups, or institutions.[32] As an active social process, silence elucidates how certain people's experiences are made visible, legible, and important, while others are rendered invisible, illegible, and disposable. Thus, silence brings into focus who and what is policed. For example: How is it that police violence against one group is used to dismiss police violence against another? Why is it that speaking about one's experiences with officers in certain contexts is seen as a distraction or form of betrayal? How is it that many times black women's "invisible" encounters happened in broad daylight, or in homes surrounded by family, friends, and partners, or in public places while strangers, teachers, neighbors, and co-workers watched?

The Secrets of Silence theorizes this silence and how it operates—as deception, as disavowal, as gendered socialization, as social control, and as forms of self-protection. In doing so, this book shifts us away from relative comparisons to black men that often obscure black women's stories. Grounded in a diverse

group of black women's experiences with police violence, I parse through how silence around violence constitutes a distinct vulnerability to harm. And ultimately, I define *silence as a matrix* that consists of politics, norms, and sanctions that make it difficult and dangerous for black women and girls to speak about and report violence. Within the silence matrix, politics are a collection of beliefs about vulnerabilities and violence that shape our ideas about protection and people's right to safety.[33] Norms are steeped in our politics and dictate our daily practices of protection, while sanctions reinforce them.[34] Everyday policing, then, is how officers and others use violence and the silence matrix as the master's tools to draw and redraw intersectional lines of exclusion and coercive inclusion in daily life, normalizing black women's place on the margins. In centering black women's experiences, this book contributes to research on contemporary policing as a racial project.[35] However, this book shows how policing is not just a racial project: It is an intersectional project that is just as much grounded in maintaining heteropatriarchal order as white supremacy. And, as Candice Merritt warns us not to forget, understanding black women's experiences of violence pushes us to examine black heteropatriarchy alongside white heteropatriarchy as interconnected systems of social control that put us "in our place."[36] Indeed, black women's persistent absence from the official and unofficial accounts is grounded in the symbiotic relationship between white heteropatriarchy and black heteropatriarchy—both of which make black women and girls vulnerable to violence and our stories "missing."

As a result of everyday policing, I met Joy and others like her: *black women who had been holding on tight to their stories since they were little girls*. Over coffee or over the phone, they would tell me that our interviews were the first time they had ever told anyone about their experiences. They traveled back in their memories. Or maybe their memories traveled forward with them. Either way, together, they described in vivid detail their encounters along with the emotional, psychological, and physical toll of police and other violence in their lives. Sitting across from them or on the other end of the telephone line, we shared quiet moments—*here*, in the space between—where they narrated some of their most intimate experiences even as they questioned throughout our interviews whether their stories would be recognized or deemed important.

Others I met were like Nema: *black women who made anxious apologies and declarations at the beginning of our interviews about not having any personal experiences to share*. They signed up anyway. They were curious. They wanted to talk. But they made sure to apologize first just in case I heard their stories and

walked away feeling as though they had wasted my time with their "unimportant" experiences. Like Joy and others, they often had never directly been asked before about themselves, about their own police encounters. However, once questioned, they spent hours talking aloud and listening as they narrated their interactions with officers. *Here*—in the space between as speaker and witness to their own stories—they bumped up against and wrestled with the boundaries of dominant policing frames that didn't quite fit them and their experiences.

With very clear pictures in their heads about "what" police violence was (*i.e., shootings*), "who" it happened to (*i.e., black men and boys*), and "where" it took place (*i.e., traffic or pedestrian stops*), they struggled with the interpretations and implications of their own stories. *Like . . .* [pause] *. . . they weren't driving in their cars. But . . .* [long pause] *. . . they were just walking down the street with their sister and cousins to the corner store. Wait . . .* [even longer pause] *. . . they were at home with their parents or grandparents or romantic partners. Or hanging out in the school cafeteria, grabbing lunch on a Wednesday with their friends. Or at a college party or shopping at the mall on Saturday evening with close acquaintances. Here*—left in the space between without frames to understand these encounters, they fluctuated between doubt and denial. *Here*, they wondered what their encounters meant about police violence and themselves. Unsure, some ran immediately and all the way back to what is conventionally known about policing, downplaying their interactions with officers. Unsure, some steadied themselves within the policing and violence frames they knew, making sure I clearly understood how "good" of a girl or woman they were and precisely where and with whom their loyalties lay. Unsure, some stretched out their arms to the unknown, tentatively holding onto what they once knew while staying with their lived experiences and emergent realizations. Cautiously peeking over the edges of the unknown in their social worlds, they circled back multiple times in our interviews to incorporate their new awareness about their experiences into their expanding understandings of policing. However, no matter if they ran and steadied or stretched and stayed—all of them questioned if what happened to them would be seen as "significant" or "counted" as police violence by others.

Still, some I met were like Abena: *black women who had already talked about what happened, already disclosed, and already reported their encounters*. They knew what lay beyond the edges of what is widely recognized about policing, and, in our interviews, they told their stories once more. *Here*—pushed to the space between, they shared their intimate struggles trying to break through

the doubt and denial from police, family, friends, teachers, co-workers, and media that black women and girls' encounters happened and mattered. They called out the ways they were excluded and hated the ways they were blamed. And from *here*, some questioned the utility of black women and girls disclosing violence at all, especially if it could lead to even more of it. Yet, they and others still worked tirelessly to change the punishing consequences that lay on the other sides of disclosures, along with the conditions that shaped there even needing to be disclosure in the first place.

The Secrets of Silence follows the threads weaving together Nema, Joy, Abena, and other black women's stories, encouraging readers to see that silence is not a benign aftereffect or shadow of policing. Instead, silence is a continuation of policing logics in everyday life. And if we listen, or stretch, let go, and expand our understandings of how policing intersectionally reproduces inequality, black women's stories also allow us to see some of the necessary conditions for new worlds: ones with the alternative systems and ways of relating that hooks and other black feminist abolitionists imagine, remember, and dream about—as well as work to make a reality.

Situating the Silence Around Police Violence Against Black Women and Girls

In *America Goddam,* historian Treva B. Lindsey emphasizes that "it's essential when studying violence against Black women and girls to look for the silences, the elisions, and the absences."[37] But what does it mean to look into the silences? To excavate the elisions? To peer into the absences? For feminist and critical race social scientists, it means taking seriously the ways people on the margins make meaning, create knowledge, and resist oppression. Thus, given the "missing-ness" surrounding black women's encounters from so many places, particularly sociology, it was important for me to take an interdisciplinary approach—as our stories on the outer edges of what is conventionally known about policing are unbounded by disciplines.

Everyday Policing: Epistemic Oppression and Policing as an Intersectional Project

When looking into the silences, it's crucial to note that all silences are not the same. There are the silences others impose, then there are the silences people individually and collectively create to navigate violence and find safety in their

day-to-day lives. However, black feminist philosopher Kristie Dotson delineates how both silences result from epistemic violence.[38] Simply put, epistemic violence is a refusal to acknowledge, accept, or respond to an individual or social group's experiences, along with a denial of the meaning they make from them. Structurally, epistemic violence encompasses how institutions withhold recognition by framing certain people as illegitimate knowers and pathologically deceptive. Interpersonally, epistemic violence includes the ways individuals uphold these beliefs in their social interactions. Together, Dotson describes how epistemic violence quiets the testimonies of those who do not see certain speakers as legitimate knowers and knowledge producers in our social worlds.

In response, people may strategically hold onto their stories within institutions and with individuals where they feel unsafe. While holding onto their stories, people may come to the realization that certain listeners and those who occupy specific social positions don't have the frames to interpret their narratives or the tools to respond appropriately to their experiences. From there, people don't just hold onto their stories—they stop telling them altogether. They effectively smother their own testimonies. Yet, whether quieted or smothered, Dotson roots these various silences in epistemological ignorance: people's consistent unwillingness or inability to listen to, recognize, and learn from stories that are not their own.[39] Importantly, this unwillingness and inability to listen causes harm and is rooted in domination, producing a distorted knowing about people's experiences.[40] Epistemic oppression, then, is the institutional and intimate exclusion of groups of people and their stories from how we understand, create knowledge, and build our social worlds.[41]

One way I conceptualize everyday policing is by centering moments in black women's stories where people and institutions were unwilling and unable to recognize their encounters of violence and their testimonies. These moments bring "missing-ness" as a social process into view and elucidate one of the most common forms of ignorance discussed in the social sciences—white ignorance. White ignorance systemically ensures people who occupy the social position of "white" maintain legal, institutional, and interpersonal power.[42] This includes the power to determine which people and stories have institutional accounts, or rather which stories matter and which don't. Under white ignorance, knowing is grounded in epistemes that align with and shore up white positions of authority as "knowers" and knowledge producers.[43] From there, knowers actively ignore and violently respond to stories that contradict their perspectives and ability to stay in and garner more power. Thus, as Jennifer C. Mueller states, a white epistemology of racial ignorance

encompasses the ways "white people evade and distort the perspectives of people of color and empirical facts of racism."[44] The easiest way to justify these evasions and distortions is by following a belief system that people of color are inherently pathological and thus: "their ways of knowing are flawed. Their methods are inadequate." This allows for our stories and what they reveal about the social world to be disregarded. When this cannot be easily done, we can look to the latest news headline on critical race theory to see how those in power mobilize judicial, institutional, and literal violence in an effort to silence knowledge produced by marginalized groups.

Personally attuned to the "missing-ness," or separateness that emerges from white ignorance and white supremacist violence, sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois famously stated in *The Souls of Black Folk*: "The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line."[45] This line demarcates social worlds based on anti-black racism—dictating people's place on one side or the other. Supporting this line, Du Bois says, is a "conspiracy of silence," wherein "it is done quietly; no mistakes are made, or if one occurs, the swift arm of the law and of public opinion swings down for a moment."[46] Most critical sociologists share an understanding of policing, or the "swift arm of the law," as integral to maintaining the color line and the social world as we know it: one where racism determines people's place in society. Consequentially, different stories emerge and circulate on each side of the color line about the purpose of the police. On one side, a common motto is that officers "protect and serve"; however, as Michelle Phelps explains in *The Minneapolis Reckoning*, on the other side, state promises of protection contradict state realities of violence, making this motto feel like a myth for many black people who are often targeted by the police and cannot safely rely on its services.[47] For example, black people are about 2.6 times more likely to be stopped by the police than their white counterparts,[48] and once stopped, face an increased risk of officer searches, arrest, and violence.[49] This violence can quickly turn deadly, with black men being 2.5 times more likely to be killed by the police than white men and black women being 1.4 times more likely to be killed by officers than white women.[50] Moreover, these racial disparities do not end with the police. They extend into every aspect of carceral contact, from fines and fees,[51] court proceedings,[52] sentencing,[53] and carceral confinement, with almost 1 in 10 black adults experiencing imprisonment in their lifetime.[54] As frontline workers for this carceral world, officers do the everyday work of racialization—constructing and ascribing sociopolitical meaning to racial categories by divvying out protection and services to some while surveilling and punishing others.[55]

Consequentially, policing is widely understood as a racial project that uses violence to reproduce people's place within the racial hierarchies that make up the building blocks of our social worlds.[56]

However, violence doesn't work alone. Domination has historically required a veiled "missing-ness" or enforced silence as grounds for reproducing social order. Upon arrival to the Americas, European colonizers engaged in settler-colonialism, wielding violence with the explicit intent of erasing indigenous traditions and communities and taking lands.[57] Throughout slave trade passages, violence was also used to eradicate native African people's histories, identities, and ways of socially relating to one another.[58] In both instances, violence was used to silence—or to suppress the subjectivities, kinship structures, and knowledges of other worlds in order to construct new ones under colonial and racial capitalist regimes. Fearing rebellion and retaliation, slave patrols were organized across the Americas as early as the 1500s to recapture those enslaved who fled the plantations.[59] The first officers, then, were overseers and volunteers who formally and informally enforced people's place.[60] Over time, patrols evolved, transitioning from volunteers and watchmen to formal institutions in the 1800s.[61] In 1838, the first US police department was established in Boston, with many large cities creating their own departments by the mid- and late 1800s.[62] Post-enslavement, white ruling classes created black codes to restrict black people's everyday movements, effectively institutionalizing the continued surveillance of formerly enslaved populations to keep them in their place while the world was remade.[63] Now criminalized for public idleness, black people were targeted by white vigilante mobs, many of whom were members of the police and judicial courts.[64] Thus, as a racial project, policing kept the color line intact as the world shifted from enslavement to Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and now contemporary militarized police institutions.[65] Upholding this color line meant suppressing black life and continuing the formal protection of white people, property, and perspectives.

At the same time, policing has never been an exclusively racial project or one singularly focused on the color line. Black feminist scholars and activists, such as Angela Y. Davis, Andrea Ritchie, Nicole Burrowes, Christen Smith, Mariame Kaba, Sarah Haley, and many others call attention to other lines etching out our social world—and how policing is equally invested in maintaining heteropatriarchal order as it is white supremacy. This order racializes, sexualizes, genders, and ungenders black women at will, making us hypervisible and invisible in ways that suit the building and rebuilding of an intersectional carceral world.[66] In particular, Haley picks up where Davis's influential

Women, Race and Class leaves off and, in the process, brings into view how the often-forgotten gender and sexuality lines become the grounds for carceral expansion during times of social upheaval. First, Davis demonstrates how the prevailing gender social arrangements during enslavement, one where a patriarchal line allowed men to dominate public worlds while relegating women to private ones, didn't apply to black women who labored in fields and domestic spaces.[67] Black women's legibility fluctuated, and stereotypes, such as jezebels, sapphires, and mammies spread stories that worked to legitimate violence as a means to meet the everyday needs of white ruling classes. Then, in *No Mercy Here,* Haley demonstrates how during Jim Crow these distorted stories were a critical resource for public and private carceral expansion.[68] In particular, the policing of black women upheld the continuity in racialized heteropatriarchal and capitalist lines after emancipation *and* as white women entered the paid labor force in large numbers. As the world shifted, black women were targeted, arrested, and pushed into excruciating labor conditions in camps and chain gangs as well as serving paroles in white homes.[69] The distorted stories told about black women allowed for this multiple-domained carceral expansion without much public attention and outcry. Thus, as Roderick Ferguson, Patricia Hill Collins, and others writing on race, gender, and sexuality note, knowledge production and the practice of telling distorted stories are essential to drawing lines that pathologize and work to legitimate violence—a strategy that continues today as post-emancipation laws that prohibit loitering are reanimated, allowing officers to target black lesbian, bisexual, queer, and trans women.[70]

Grounded in these sociopolitical histories that condition legibility, each chapter of *The Secrets of Silence* examines how officers and others reproduce intersecting lines and distinctions in daily life through violence and the suppression and distortion of black women's stories. One historical distinction that persists today is between what Lindsey describes as spectacular and soft killings. Beatings, lynchings, and now shootings are spectacular killings or "fatal incidents when a life is snuffed out; they happen in an instant, a moment."[71] Conversely, "soft killings refer to those that are slow and intentionally imperceptible."[72] Many times, police gender-based and sexual violence, psychological abuse, neglect, and the dwindling health of those left behind falls into this latter designation. Increasingly, however, scholars are focusing on what Rory Kramer and Brianna Remester call the slow violence of policing, or "how contemporary policing practices harm not only the individual stopped but also their peers, families, and communities."[73] This slow violence encompasses policing's impact on intergenerational social relations, failures

to provide protection, vicarious trauma, and what Christen Smith points to as the lingering, unquantifiable impact of anti-black state violence.[74] Thus, Korey Tillman argues that we must "broaden the understanding of policing to account for how bodies are restricted, surveilled, prevented, and altered along their paths across time, culture, and geographical context."[75] Yet, as all policing functions to reproduce an anti-black social world, it often forces epistemic distinctions of "most" and "least" vulnerable on the communities policed.[76] This book contributes to this growing body of work on contemporary policing by analyzing the everyday forms of policing that often get minimized and ignored. In doing so, I argue that we must also expand our understanding of policing as an intersectional project that accounts for the regulation of personhood as well as the suppression and distortion of people's stories—as they shape visibility conditions, vulnerabilities, and experiences of harm for black women and girls.

The Silence Matrix: Veils, Hierarchies of Visibility, and The Violence Matrix

Excavating the elisions requires an examination into our deeply held beliefs about vulnerabilities and rights to safety. These beliefs form the bases of our politics, structuring how we bring people and their stories into view. From there, these beliefs condition our practices of protection in everyday life. Indeed, Du Bois describes how it felt to come into consciousness about white politics, or the beliefs and practices constructing the color line, writing: "Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil."[77] This veil, as José Itzigsohn and Karida L. Brown note, is a "metaphor to describe the work of the color line in the process of self-formation—[which] interrupts interactions, communication, and recognition among people who inhabit social spaces organized around the color line."[78] Able to see through the veil but excluded from social life on the other side, Du Bois developed a double consciousness or "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity."[79] Shut out from the broader white world, people become what Audre Lorde calls "watchers," wherein they learn "the language and manners of the oppressor, even sometimes adopting them for some illusion of protection."[80] Thus, whether it is "the swift arm of the law" or "the adoption of language and manners," both sides of a racialized veil

develop separate but interrelated politics around people's vulnerabilities, rights to safety, and protection.

The Secrets of Silence offers the silence matrix as a way to observe the dynamic relationship between the police politics of protection on one side of the veil and on the other, black intracommunal politics of protectionism in response to police violence. Specifically, the silence matrix tracks the veiling process—tracing the ebb and flow of black women's fluctuating legibility to see how both their hypervisibility as targets and invisibility as victims create a "missing-ness" in everyday life. In doing so, this book builds on important work by Cathy Cohen, Saida Grundy, and others who center and theorize social life within black spaces. In *Boundaries of Blackness*, Cohen focuses on black people directly impacted by the HIV/AIDS epidemic and subsequent political organizing, detailing how exclusionary politics are adopted and enforced within the context of black people constantly responding to racism, stating:

> African Americans must weigh concerns over the respectability and legitimization of black communities in the eyes of dominant groups against concerns over the well-being of those most vulnerable in our communities, as they struggle against very public, stigmatizing issues.[81]

When weighing these concerns, black communities can engage in secondary marginalization, which involves "reproducing a rhetoric of blame and punishment and directing it at the most vulnerable and stigmatized in their communities."[82] Black intracommunal politics, then, work to manage the public image and behavior of the social group while dealing with broader racial injustices. And these politics have direct implications for black people calling attention to issues of homophobia, poverty, and sexism as to speak about these issues means to risk being seen as someone distracting from racial injustice.

In *Respectable*, Grundy expands upon Cohen's influential work, showing how the veil obscures visibility around interpersonal violence within black communities.[83] Focusing on social life at a historically black college, she finds people compete for resources behind a racialized veil, and one of those resources is legibility. Within this intracommunal competition, a single story about heteromasculine criminalization can take root in black communities and be used to make universalistic claims that hierarchize victims and vulnerabilities.[84] Black men can leverage these dominant framings in the broader world to silence black women and queer men victims of sexual assault. Thus, when people engage in competitions for visibility, they often use what Jennifer Carlson refers to as a politics of vulnerability, which is "a particular kind of political

frame for making universalistic claims based on embodied vulnerability. By centering political claims on vulnerability, claims makers can universalize particular standpoints under the politically appealing guise of vulnerability and victimhood."[85] Misrecognition is key to vulnerability politics, to hierarchizing victims and experiences of harm—as it brings into view and elevates certain stories and perspectives while disregarding others. Within black communities, this process often coincides with a politics of respectability, which is a historically black resistance strategy that works to achieve personhood and legibility within the broader world by regulating one's behavior and appearance.[86] However, as Grundy notes, individual and group desires for respectability, along with fear of outside interventions, can constrain a victim's visibility to a binary—of either pathologization or adherence to normative gender roles.

The police also mobilize vulnerability discourses, historically conceptualizing themselves as protectors and guardians.[87] Importantly, this self-promotion is juxtaposed against depictions of black people as racialized, "dangerous" threats.[88] Thus, Collins refers to stereotypes as controlling images precisely because they package together ideologies into stories that are easily passed along—shaping how people bring others into view and subsequent practices for enforcing their interests and realities.[89] These images encapsulate many lines and distorted stories that officers can use to target black people. In this way, Forrest Stuart and Ava Benezra demonstrate how young black men navigate these images and officer surveillance by "getting cover," enlisting black women in heterosexual performances to maneuver around criminalization and narratives about a "deviant" black masculinity.[90] However, black women and girls face distinct controlling images, grounded in misogynoir, that work to justify violence.[91] For example, the jezebel image delegitimizes disclosures of sexual violence by labeling black women and girls as "fast" or "asking for it." In *Hood Feminism*, Mikki Kendall traces how this story traverses the veil:

> For young Black American girls there is no presumption of innocence by people outside our communities, and too many inside our communities have bought into the victim-blaming ideology that respectability will save us, not acknowledging that we are so often targeted regardless of how we behave. The cycle created by racist narratives and perpetuated by the myth of the fast-tailed girl is infinitely harmful and so difficult to break, precisely because of the ugly history of sexual violence against Black women and other women of color.[92]

As such, controlling images create norms we use to evaluate and regulate others. Sanctions go hand-in-hand with these norms, enforcing consequences for violating the ways we expect to socially relate to one another.[93] Ultimately, the distorting stories told about black women undergird the violence matrix, wherein Richie notes "various kinds of abuse in multiple contexts line up to leave black women uniquely vulnerable."[94] As a framework for making visible black women's experiences, this matrix allows us to see how domestic violence leads to police encounters, wherein black women experience even further harm from officers and how an estimated 60–70 percent of black women incarcerated are also victims of domestic violence.[95] It also brings into view the "sexual-abuse-to-prison pipeline," which encapsulates the relationship between sexual violence, controlling images, and schools' punitive responses to black girls in a crisis.[96] This book builds on this understanding of the violence matrix by demonstrating how politics, norms, and sanctions veil, or silence, these harms in everyday life—producing, enforcing, and normalizing white and black heteropatriarchal lines in our social worlds.

A Note on Methods

Storytelling with Interviews and Invading Ethnography

People's lived experiences help us peer into the absences, and, as Cecilia Menjívar argues, they provide a window into the social world in between dominant categories and ways of knowing.[97] To get at experiences in the space between what is legible and what has yet to be named, sociologists rely on standpoint epistemologies. As conceptualized by Sandra Harding, Dorothy Smith, and Patricia Hill Collins, feminist standpoint epistemology emphasizes ways of knowing grounded in lived experiences contextualized by the broader social relations, structures, and histories that produce them.[98] Without accounting for black women's experiences, it is impossible see into the social world at the intersection of anti-black and patriarchal violence, and as Threadcraft states, "visibility, legibility, requires storytelling, narrativization."[99] Indeed, feminist scholars often engage storytelling as a form of political and intellectual activism to speak truth to power and people, to make visible what has been "missing."[100] And as Gloria González-López notes in her study on familial incest, telling people's stories about violence carries political and ethical responsibilities to participants, who vulnerably shared their experiences in hopes that it would change social conditions.[101] Similarly, most of the black women I interviewed

shared their stories with me as a praxis of hope that it would somehow change the social conditions for the next black woman or girl. As such, this book explicitly engages in black storytelling traditions that link the (re)telling of people's stories with an ongoing ethical responsibility to care for their narratives.[102]

The stories presented in this book are primarily drawn from interviews with black women who narrated their lived experiences of policing. Our interviews were a part of a larger mixed-methods study on police violence against black women and girls in two urban cities in the southern United States. The larger project comprised three phases, consisting of in-depth and life-history interviews, field observations, and surveys. In the first phase, I spoke with thirty black mothers about the intergenerational talks on policing within their families and communities. While these mothers' narratives are not shared in this book, I mention these interviews because our conversations greatly informed the ensuing methodological decisions. Namely, they lead to a more intentional life-history approach and to centering more diversity among black women. In the second phase, I conducted life-history interviews with a diverse group of thirty-two black women in a predominantly white city in the US South. Their stories are foregrounded in this book. The second and third phases also included field observations of community events on policing, protests, and other social issues as well as local and national surveys. With a focus on black women's stories, I only gesture to the survey in chapter 3 to highlight black women's reactions to participating in them before the interviews. For those interested in reading about the project's phases and survey measures of police violence, more details are provided in the methodological appendices.

In presenting black women's stories, I draw from sociologist Anima Adjepong's invading ethnography, which is a queer of color reflexive practice that pushes scholars to write more transparently about the researcher's presence and embodiment within the text.[103] Invading ethnography makes explicit researchers' impact on interviews and the ways we shape the (re)telling of people's stories. It creates a conversation between readers with the researcher's methodological process and participants. In this case, invading ethnography meant writing into the presentation of stories how numerous black women chose to interview me before answering my interview questions. These moments illustrate how black women wrestled out loud with whether they would share their stories—with me and future readers. They also serve as an additional site from which to observe how black women navigate everyday policing.

Interior Lives Behind a Veil of Dissemblance: Struggles for Recognition, Emotions, and Multiple Consciousness

Over time, black women learned to guard their stories from others who did not have the lived experiences or tools to understand them—strategically producing silence to physically and psychically protect themselves from literal and epistemic violence. This silence is a part of what historian Darlene Clark Hine describes as a larger culture of dissemblance, wherein black women historically have resisted oppression by giving off the illusion of being open while hiding their inner worlds from others.[104] Dissemblance allows black women to move between social worlds where they face pathologization, violence, and what Paige Sweet refers to as gaslighting—wherein others strategically deploy controlling images and misrecognition to create a surrealness around their lived experiences of violence.[105] Thus, dissemblance allows black women to resist gaslighting and the lines carving out their social worlds.[106] While contextualized by broader social conditions, dissemblance is self-imposed "missing-ness," as Hine states: "The inclination of the larger society to ignore those considered 'marginal' actually enabled subordinate Black women to craft the veil of secrecy and to perfect the art of dissemblance."[107]

It can be challenging, then, to understand the meaning of silence in black women's lives. When is silence suppression? When is it resistance? Or can it be both or something else altogether? Across disciplines, scholars turn to the interior lives of marginalized populations to find answers to these questions. Within the interior life, stories told and untold—and the personal meaning made of them—provide a way to observe how lines are internalized and reproduced or resisted and transformed.[108] At times, some black women sought recognition of their stories, and as political scientist Melissa Harris-Perry argues, the pursuit of recognition and ensuing struggles highlight the power dynamics between individuals and social groups.[109] Using the metaphor of navigating a "crooked room," she describes black women's embodied disorientation maneuvering around misrecognition in their social worlds and their journeys to political consciousness.[110] From the space between, pathways and roadblocks to recognition make visible the intersecting lines drawn in daily life, effectively illuminating the veils through people's attempts to lift and remove them. From *here,* we can trace silencing and how black women develop what sociologist Deborah K. King describes as a multiple consciousness, which, similar to double consciousness, emerges through black women's embodied encounters with and resistance to an intersectional social order.[111]

Consequentially, Harris-Perry argues that struggle for recognition "brings to the fore the emotional experiences of black women as a location for political understanding."[112] Indeed, feminist scholars like bell hooks, Audre Lorde, and Sara Ahmed have turned to emotions, such as fear, shame, pain, resilience, love, rage, joy, and isolation, to show how social orders are reproduced in intimate relations, institutions, and internal lives.[113] Drawing from these scholars, this book takes seriously black women's emotions as an epistemology for understanding the meaning of silence, highlighting their expressions, pauses, hesitations, and back-and-forth conversations with me and themselves.

Black Women and Heterogeneity

When developing this study, I was adamant about including black women like Abena, Joy, and Nema—those with different identities and backgrounds. I knew there was a diversity of experiences among us. I also knew from my own interactions with officers and those of other black women closest to me that most of us feared and had encountered the police, even if we didn't talk openly about what happened during those interactions. Yet, from the very beginning, I received a lot of academic pushback. Sociologists have a long history of reifying "variation" and deploying it in ways that center whiteness, heterosexuality, and masculinity—explicitly and implicitly keeping white heterosexual men as a central reference point.[114] As such, non-black women would confidently tell me: "If you want to know or say anything about black women, you need variation—you need to interview black men and white women." Equally long is the history of social science research as a driver in pathologizing poor black communities in ways that suggest, or at worst, perpetuate, the false belief that violence only happens "over there." So, their advice for my wanting to include black middle-class women? "Their social background means they don't encounter officers or experience violence." Yet, research on the black middle-class shows how they are not buffered from racism and violence, and as Andrea Boyles reminds us in *Race, Place, and Suburban Policing*, officers heavily patrol the suburbs and borders of privileged spaces where the presence of black people disrupts white comfort and intensifies anxieties.[115] Thus, in analyzing the "missing-ness," it was imperative to include black women who were omitted from policing social science research and conversations. Heterogeneity was a critical resource in allowing me to follow the strands linking black women's experiences within, outside, and in between preconceived notions about policing and violence.[116] It allowed me to describe the social world in the space

between that connected black women across all of their differences—and also produced distinct conditions under which they and their stories were policed.

Ultimately, the black women I interviewed were mostly from the United States and some were originally from countries in the Caribbean, Central America, or West Africa. They were raised by two parents or one mother or stepparents or grandmother or aunt or older sibling, and almost all of them talked about also being raised by their communities. Some grew up in neighborhoods in the center of bustling urban inner cities, attending public schools, and others grew up in suburban neighborhoods, attending a mix of public, private, and boarding schools. Some still lived in the economic circumstances and communities in which they were born. Some moved far away and to higher tax brackets. Others struggled through "revitalization," displacement, and economic decline. Some had completed college or advanced graduate degrees and worked as doctors, lawyers, and teachers. Some had completed high school or had GEDs and technical degrees and worked as assistants, hairdressers, and on assembly lines. A few were unemployed or between jobs. Regardless of their educational background and job status, most had side hustles to keep a steady income and provide financial support for themselves and their families.

Some of them were activists with grassroots organizations, and a couple of them were police officers themselves. Many of them organized and participated in efforts to help those in their communities, with some putting together protests and community events and others putting together hot plates for their elders down the street. Some of them talked openly about their mental health, their anxieties, depression, post-traumatic stresses, and other disabilities, as well as how they managed and coped and struggled and thrived. Most were cisgender, and a few were transgender, non-binary, or gender fluid. All of them identified as black women. Collectively, they were bisexual and heterosexual and lesbian and queer and partnered and married and single and divorced and remarried and dating and figuring it out. Some had children, some did not, and most discussed othermothering children in their families, churches, neighborhoods, and broader communities.[117] All of them had encountered the police in their lifetime. Many of these encounters were violent. "Missing-ness" connected them across social class, gender identities, sexualities, ages, and geographies.

However, this book does not minimize their differences. The ways these black women were differentially situated at other intersections—in addition to anti-black racism and patriarchy—created unique conditions under which they and their stories were policed. Black women who grew up in or resided

in poorer neighborhoods within inner cities had distinct experiences navigating highly surveilled communities and encountering officers in schools, while walking down the street, and other places as they went about their daily lives. Black transgender and gender-fluid women encountered transphobia in their interactions with police no matter the context. Black queer, lesbian, and bisexual women dealt with homophobic violence in public and private places. Black women with disabilities explained how they were punished instead of supported when they called the police during mental health emergencies. Regardless of their identities and backgrounds, black women who lived with police officers in their homes, either as romantic partners, parents, or other family members, shared how they had nowhere to turn and no one to call. Many of them talked about how as black girls, no one would believe them and their stories. And collectively, all of them guided me through and explained shifts in their awareness and understanding of their encounters that are often made "missing."

Outline of Chapters

Each chapter is organized around five sites—or spaces between—where black women encountered and made meaning of violence from officers and others outside of what is conventionally recognized and addressed about policing. Each chapter also centers on four or five black women's stories and asks readers to first listen to these stories without any or much analysis. Some black women are met once. Others show up in multiple chapters, revealing how black women's experiences span many spaces between throughout their lives. Situating their stories within the historical and contemporary conditions of silence, I then trace them through the silence matrix and show how everyday policing accommodates difference while producing indifference—making black women collectively and distinctly vulnerable. Finally, between each chapter, I place black women's voices in conversation with one another to guide readers from one space between to another.

The first chapter, "I Wish I Was Taught to Be Okay in Me," invites readers into the space between the talks about violence from black women's childhood and their vulnerabilities. An intergenerational oral tradition to call out racism and the "missing-ness" in mainstream views about police as public servants, these intracommunal conversations are a space to listen to stories, learn strategies for navigating encounters, and receive affirmation about one's humanity. Thus, black women distinctly recall learning their place through the talks, noticing

how they entered and vanished from these discussions. This chapter, then, examines how the talks are a critical site of everyday policing, wherein the silence matrix becomes embodied and legitimated—traveling with black women as they encounter, identify, and work through violence in their lives.

The following three chapters focus on the connections between police, interpersonal, and community violence. The second chapter, "What Happens in Our House" / "You Don't Call the Police on Your Family," centers the space between home and police contact. With intracommunal politics working to make home a safe space from the police, black women had to navigate domestic violence alongside outsiders' pathologization and insiders' deification of black domestic spaces. Their stories about home violence and officers' responses reveal how the lines drawn and redrawn are simultaneously enforced by officers as well as those closest to them. The third chapter, "He's Just Gonna Be Right Back Out There," focuses on the space between conceptualizations of police violence as exclusively police shootings and physical assaults and black women's disclosure of police gender-based and sexual violence. Their stories reveal how officers leverage the cover of multiple veils to target black women and girls, illuminating how sexual coercion is a form of violence made possible by "missing-ness" in our social world. The fourth chapter, "I Was Kind of Scared to Report It," brings into focus the space between black women pushing through silence and the consequences that lie on the other side—namely, officer retaliation and intracommunal backlash. Faced with these punishments, black women made constant, daily evaluations about the risks of speaking and reporting. Accordingly, this chapter analyzes the nuanced ways dissemblance takes on protective features and transforms silence into a radical act of resistance.

The fifth chapter, "When We Gather," centers the space between black women's lived experiences and self-definition. From these journeys, I theorize *gathering* as an alternative process to everyday policing, wherein black women reflected on their lived experiences and reconfigured their relationships with themselves and others. While everyday policing etched out their place in the space between, gathering was how black women practiced abolition feminism in everyday life—linking the sharing of stories and the co-creation of knowledge with the everyday work toward safety and alternative world-making. However, while I show the promises of gathering through its valuation of people and stories, I also show how it could easily give way to everyday policing around differences in identities and backgrounds.

The conclusion wrestles with a question I often asked myself before, during, and after talking with black women: Missing to whom? Black feminist

activists and scholars have been and continue to call out the "missing-ness" so that victims will not be "invisible" or forgotten. People frequently post online with #SayHerName to bring awareness to black women's lives and stories. In 2020, we countered the "missing-ness" in protests, writing Breonna Taylor's and Oluwatoyin Salau's names on signs alongside others and chanting them as we marched down the street so they would not be "invisible" or forgotten. Thus, the conclusion asks: Missing to whom? And importantly, what are the lessons learned about policing and world-making when or if we listen to black women's stories?

One final note: since "missing-ness" is built deep into the fabric of our social worlds, readers might find that speaking to the violence that the silence matrix often obscures may make them uncomfortable. That's fine. This book attempts to show how this discomfort and subsequent retrenchment to silence in homes, schools, neighborhoods, activism spaces, and social science research constitutes a distinct vulnerability to violence. However, some readers of this book may be black women with shared experiences of childhood sexual abuse, familial violence, interpersonal violence, stalking, gender-based and sexual violence, retaliatory violence, other forms of harm, or loss of loved ones. These experiences may have gone unnamed and unrecognized. Many of the black women I interviewed anticipated you. The idea of *you* reading their stories and being helped to recognize and legitimate yours gave them courage, and some explicitly cited you as the reason they chose to participate in the study. They wanted you to take care of yourselves as you listen to their stories. They also left messages for you in the space between chapter 5 and the conclusion. *Here*—they challenged the "missing-ness," speaking ahead in time so that you would know that you are *seen*, *valued*, and *loved*.

Other readers of this book may also know violence and the margins intimately, moving through and between spaces in similar and different ways to these black women. While this book exclusively focuses on the everyday "missing-ness" of black women and girls from understandings of policing in the United States, a centering of their stories in no way meant that they did not see you and that we are the only social group that experiences violence and "missing-ness." Many of the black women I interviewed and met at protests spoke of the connections and distinctions between theirs and others' daily struggles for safety and freedom. Several recognized that within every large social movement fighting against state and other forms of institutional violence were women and gender-nonconforming people fighting against violence on intimate fronts within their own families and communities. They

wanted you to know that you too are *seen* and *valued*. And they expressed empathy and solidarity.

Still, other readers may have only read about or studied the margins as a place in our social world described by others whose lives are shaped daily by the master's tools. They saw you, too, and conveyed their wariness.

Last, other readers may have only heard about the margins in passing as they carry on with their lives undisturbed by the "missing-ness," yet undoubtedly benefiting from the margin's existence. Or—there may be readers who are acutely aware of the margins and intentionally target the space between to evade accountability. They saw you, too. They expressed rage and disdain.

Nevertheless, this book takes seriously black women's stories, emotions, and what they wanted shared about their experiences as a political location for understanding everyday policing, even as it may make readers uncomfortable for very different reasons. Borrowing from the words of Alexis, a black woman activist in her late twenties whose story is shared in chapter 5: "You might feel disrupted, and you might feel mad, even. In the long-term, this disruption was positive . . . I'm gonna be uncomfortable anyway, so I might as well say what I'm gonna say."

"nothing is going to happen anyway"

"i mean, i really don't feel like the situation affects [*pause*], well, let me stop—"

"who's the bad guy? who's the good guy?"

"because i'm like is everything I say [*pause*] am I going to have to overexplain, you know what i mean?"

"i think it's bullshit!"

"in order for me to protect myself, I feel like I have to have my own back"

"it made me feel like it was more urgent to protect them than myself"

"i wish i was taught to be okay in me"

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