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Replaying Video Game History as a Mixtape of Black Feminist Thought

ABSTRACT This article, a Black feminist mixtape, blends music, interviews, and critical analysis in order to demonstrate some of the ways in which Black women have impactfully engaged with the video game industry. Organized as musical "tracks," it uses lyrics by Black women performers as a critical and cultural frame for understanding some of the work Black women have done with video games. In prioritizing the personal as not only political but also instructive for how we might think about digital media histories and feminism, each mixtape track focuses on Black women's lived experiences with games. As it argues throughout, Black feminism as defined and experienced by the Combahee River Collective of the 1970s has been an active and meaningful part of Black women's labor and play practices with video games. KEYWORDS African American feminism, African American women, music, new media, video games

> "We are going to act like Black women have things to say"
> —Amber J. Phillips and Jazmine Walker, *The Black Joy Mixtape*[1]

LINER NOTES

Video game studies is in dire need of a Black feminist mixtape. When we think of dominant narratives about the video game industry, for example, we can discern that from *Pong* and Atari to the rise in PC gaming and the now-fabled console wars among Nintendo, Microsoft, and Sony, the stories that have most often been circulated and recorded, referenced in books, taught in game studies curricula, and critically touted at media studies conferences all tend to conceptualize a video game history and industry that is white and male—notwithstanding a few notable attempts to disrupt the familiar narratives that conflate technological innovation with whiteness and masculinity.[2] Black women have been nearly absent in the annals of video game and digital media histories. Yet research that fails to imagine the existence of a vibrant Black

Feminist Media Histories, Vol. 6, Number 1, pps. 93–118. electronic ISSN 2373-7492. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/fmh.2020.6.1.93.

feminist gaming counter-public represents both a convenient historical omission and a dangerous cultural mythology.

In order to address some of these omissions and mythologies, we offer this article as a mixtape—a discursive cultural remediation—that insists that Black feminist thought has always informed the ways in which Black women have interacted with the video game industry. We are drawn to the mixtape as a formal conceit for three main reasons. First, in hip-hop the mixtape is understood as the materiality of resistance. For example, the mixtape has typically been an album that an artist self-publishes and distributes directly to the public, often for free. In bypassing traditional commercial mechanisms of distribution and subverting the economic interests of record labels, hip-hop artists have used the mixtape as a symbol of their agency and artistic autonomy. Beyond music, the idea of a mixtape as a tool of resistance has flourished in the production of non-musical creative works. Books of poetry (as in *Southern Migrant Mixtape*) and documentary films (as in *The Black Panther Mixtape 1967–1975* [2011]) have been called "mixtapes" for the ways in which the works blend forms, play with music, and function subversively and correctively.[3] There is even some precedent for writing academic articles entirely in song lyrics.[4]

If resistant formal practice is one reason we are presenting this research on Black women and video games as a mixtape, the second reason has to do with a disciplinary and industry need to listen to the experiences of Black women. We have been especially inspired by how new imaginings of the mixtape have both vernacularized Black feminism and served as new media invitations to *listen* to the individual and shared histories of Black women in the digital era. For instance, on the podcast *The Black Joy Mixtape*, hosts Amber J. Phillips, the "High Priestess of Black Joy," and Jazmine Walker, "Da K.O.S.," use the form as a mixtape that discursively breaks down and remediates everything from current events, politics, and the persistence of white supremacy to film, music, and Black celebrity gossip. Throughout the show, Phillips and Walker constantly reference their positionality as Black women who are often under attack (both inter- and intra-racially) because they advocate a Black feminism that treats race and gender, class and sexuality, gender presentation and other complex and interlocking aspects of their identities nonhierarchically. The podcast as mixtape becomes an expression of their creativity and agency as Black women. As they say, "A seat at the table is where we are right now. And the table is ours. We actually own the table. We built the seats. There will be flower crowns and sickening Snapchat filters at the function."[5] In mixing a style of personal oral storytelling that is never far from Black music traditions with a

clear social and political ambition, Phillips and Walker most want their listeners to know that they live and work in a "hard" social and subjective intersection where "you are called a traitor for actually trying to make a Black-liberation-paradise-world-justice-future that does not ultimately come with your oppression."[6] Importantly, as the title of the show indicates, theirs is a Black feminism that is as strong in its criticality as it is in its expression of Black women's joy and playfulness. Thus, the third main reason we frame this article as a mixtape has to do with the fact that Black women's resistant contributions must be listened to in ways that are also attentive to the creative, joyful, and playful realities of such practices.

What follows is undoubtedly an unconventional structure. In presenting this article as a mixtape, we invite researchers interested in historicizing digital media production to actually listen to Black women who design, play, and teach video games. With this form we argue that Black women's participation in the industry has always been resistant and creative, and we pair a historical understanding of Black feminist thought with contemporary first-person accounts, oral interviews, and the lyrics of Black women musical performers. We begin with stories about four Black women who have worked in the video game industry spanning from the early 1980s to now. Their stories make clear the relationships between their labor in the industry and their activism. Then, since Black feminist written traditions have always included personal narratives as a relevant part of feminist discourse, we share some first-person origin stories of Black women academics (Anna Everett, Samantha Blackmon, TreaAndrea M. Russworm, Gabriela T. Richard, and Kishonna Gray) who have been playing and writing about video games for most of their lives. Following a tradition of writing that stems from the Combahee River Collective, we have included these origin stories of Black women academics, which we collected as interviews, as a way of being transparent about the personal play histories that have preceded our pedagogical activism with games. In listening to another community of Black women players, women who livestream their game play on platforms like Twitch and Mixer, we explore some of the challenges and epic wins Black women streamers experience as they play publicly. The mixtape concludes with the radical persistence of a politics of joy by featuring interviews with Black women over the age of fifty who play casual games as a practice of self-care. Channeling Audre Lorde, gaming discussed here as Black women's self-care is "not a mere self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare."[7]

TRACKS 1, 2, 3: NICKI MINAJ, "MONSTER;" MARY J. BLIGE, "GOOD WOMAN DOWN"; ETTA JAMES, "AT LAST"

Although Kimberlé Crenshaw's definition of intersectionality (justifiably) looms large in contemporary public discourse about identity, as early as the 1970s the Combahee River Collective articulated a dynamic understanding of how multiple aspects of a person's identity might be informed by corresponding systems of bias and oppression.[8] Formed in 1974, this collective of Black women, inspired by Harriet Tubman's successful 1863 revolutionary plan to free Black slaves at the Combahee River, embodied a "politics that was anti-racist, unlike those of white women, and anti-sexist, unlike those of Black and white men." In centralizing the liberation of Black women in their activism, the Combahee Collective also reasoned that "if Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression." The Collective's works and organizing efforts consolidated the ethos of Black liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s while also advancing a radical vision of Black feminism. As they saw it, "The liberation of all oppressed people necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy."[9]

As both the video game and the hip-hop industries were forming in the United States during the early 1970s—the exact same years as the birth of contemporary Black feminism—it should come as no surprise that the experiences of Black women living with new technologies such as video games, from the 1970s onward, should evince a convergence of cultural revolutions. In order to situate Black women's video game labor histories in the context of Black political and cultural traditions, we offer three stories of four Black women working with video games.

In 1982, amid the US video game (coin-op) arcade craze, two Black women, Delores Williams and Delores Barrows, owned two different arcades in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. In a *Black Enterprise* interview they shared business secrets with other Black entrepreneurs who might have considered joining the booming industry by opening their own arcades. About her successes, Williams reflected, "The arcade is the easiest business to run that I've ever been involved in" because "it brings in a good return on each dollar invested" and "people don't get tired of the games."[10] Williams went on to share some strategies for maintaining and acquiring arcade cabinets (a costly part of ownership) and revealed that her arcade generated enough profit to allow her

to pursue other business ventures, such as opening an adjacent kosher deli and hosting reggae bands. Meanwhile, Barrows's arcade functioned dually as a space for entertainment and a site for community gathering and social organizing. For instance she hosted fundraising events to support local charities and after-school programs, and she even used the space to incentivize local children with perfect school attendance by rewarding them with free arcade time. These accounts of Black women's savvy and unconventional participation in the arcade business should unsettle any temptation to write US arcade histories as (white) all-boys' clubs.[11] Further, the ways in which both women used their arcades as multipurpose spaces that directly supported the social, cultural, and civic life of Black folks evinces just some of the ways in which a Black feminist consciousness had direct, albeit largely unrecognized, bearing on the formative years of the industry. This recognition of Black women's contributions to arcade history has the potential to change the game—or as Nicki Minaj, representing as the only female rapper in the company of men on the track "Monster," deftly rhymes about her "slept on" lyrical and financial prowess:

> And I'm all up all up all up in the bank with the funny face
> And if I'm fake I ain't notice cause my money ain't
> So let me get this straight wait I'm the rookie
> But my features and my shows ten times your pay
> Fifty K for a verse no album out
> Yeah my money's so tall that my barbies gotta climb it

Irrespective of who has listened, Black women have had plenty to say about their experiences in the tech and video game industries. Shana T. Bryant, who has worked as a video game producer for some of the industry's current major studios and distributors (such as Capcom, Midway Games, and Electronic Arts), has spoken openly about her challenges in the industry as often the only Black woman in the room when key decisions are being made. Despite a long personal and professional history of navigating the industry's notorious "terrible allydom" when it comes to hiring and supporting women of color, Bryant remains committed to producing video games. Although she regularly has to remind herself of Toni Morrison's discernment that "the very serious function of racism is distraction," Bryant continues to speak out when white male video game executives espouse the "new old logic" that "women, people of color, we're all too emotional to tell our own stories."[12] Despite the mental and physical exhaustion that stems from dealing with the industry's interlocking systemic biases, Bryant finds that

she simply cannot leave the production of games behind: "The games industry, with all its warts and blemishes and occasional anti-diversity *screeds*, where I feel alternately comfortable and uncomfortable, where I both belong and am supremely outside of belonging, is something . . . I'm not done with yet."[13] We hear in Bryant's resolve and refusal to leave the industry a fierce backbeat, echoing an anthem from the queen of hip-hop soul, survivalist Mary J. Blige in "Good Woman Down":

> It doesn't matter what they say or do
> Don't let 'em get to you, don't be afraid,
> You can, you can, you can break through
> Take what I've been through
> To see that you can't hold a good woman down

In resolving to remain in the industry despite its well-documented problems with diversity, equity, and justice, Bryant understands her contribution as fighting to ensure that marginalized people will have access to the special potential that digital games have for blending science and art: "I want other women and people of color and LGBTQIA people . . . to feel what I've felt for an industry that simultaneously shuns us and yet can't live without us."[14]

In addition to owning arcades and working in management capacities, Black women have of course also worked as video game designers. For example, Vanessa Paugh created Goddess Software in 2003 because, after being told in graduate school that "feminism is dead," she decided she needed to make video games that did not yet exist. Paugh learned to hack the default whiteness and masculinity in games, the "race and gender of the protagonist," to be more representative of her identity. In independently developing her own games, Paugh finally came to realize the kind of agency that feels right: "For me, that feeling of making textured hair and beautiful clothes for game characters, while wearing natural hair and comfortable clothes, is like no other agency." The iOS games that Paugh now makes—mobile, nonlinear, nonviolent, colorful, and fashion-focused—might be overlooked as not gamic enough or get lost among the thousands of other downloadable titles available for casual play. And yet Paugh cherishes the fact that her games do indeed offer something unique: they invite players to both see and play with more of themselves: "I cherish the moments when I imagine some female's face smiling in delight as she finds her skin tone among the choices. I remember playing a game where anything but blonde hair cost game currency."[15] In Etta

James's "At Last," we hear Paugh's interventionist design practices and the spirit of a computational dreamer:

I found a dream that I could speak to
A dream that I can call my own
I found a thrill to press my cheek to

These personal and professional stories remediated with hip-hop and soul lyrics demonstrate how Black women's participation in video game history can be thought about not in isolation but rather in the context of rich cultural traditions that synergize Black feminist resistance as business and labor practices. These accounts demonstrate just some of the ways Black women in the industry have had to respond to interlocking oppressions. The stories exhibit a politics of liberation (I'm going to stay here) and social activism through labor (business ownership, corporate positions, design practices). Through their labor in the games industry, these women also directly support Black communities while also expressing a Black feminist commitment to the betterment of all marginalized persons.

TRACKS 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9: JAMILA WOODS, "BLK GIRL SOLDIER"; ARETHA FRANKLIN, "RESPECT"; BEYONCÉ, "FREEDOM"; TLC, "HAT 2 DA BACK"; MISSY ELLIOTT, "WTF (WHERE THEY FROM)"; DESTINY'S CHILD, "SURVIVOR"

Rosa was a freedom fighter
And she taught us how to fight
Ella was a freedom fighter
And she taught us how to fight
Audre was a freedom fighter
And she taught us how to fight

In much the same way that the previous tracks implored us to listen to the stories of Black women who have been at the forefront of video game production and reception as game designers and arcade owners, these tracks turn up the volume on the legacy of Black women academics as "freedom fighters" in the tradition of Rosa, Ella, and Audre, as Jamila Woods forcefully sings above in "Blk Girl Soldier." Using an atypical structure, these tracks mix long-form autobiographical narrative with samples of the song lyrics that have inspired each speaker. While the lyrics provide a soundtrack for listening to Black women academics who work with video games, the autobiographical stories shared here reference a long tradition of Black women academics who have labored in the foreground of feminist interventions.

For example, Black women academics (Barbara Smith, Barbara Ransby, and Angela Davis, to name a few) were central to the articulation of Black feminism in the 1970s and 1980s. Edited by Barbara Smith, *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (1983) survives as a powerful and eclectic collection of interviews, prose, poetry, autobiographical reflections, and manifestos. Arguably a mixtape in its own right, *Home Girls* demonstrates that Black feminist consciousness and activism can take many forms. In her introduction to the anthology, after beginning with stories about her childhood, Smith writes: "Unlike any other movement, Black feminism provides the theory that clarifies the nature of Black women's experience, makes possible positive support from other Black women, and encourages political action that will change the very system that has put us down."[16] The ways in which Black women academics kept their personal experiences visible in their vision of activism had a compounding and validating effect on the movement.

Just as the Black women who have labored with games—both in work and in play—are often excluded from the historical record, so too are we missing an archive of stories about Black women academics at work and play in video game history. Part of this omission is self-protective, as, generally, we have tended to write much less about our personal experiences with games as we have navigated the various fault lines, institutional oppressions, and gatekeeping mechanisms of the academy. Yet in continuing to show the fidelity between Black feminist traditions and the rich and complex cultural history of Black women at work and play, we have collected five first-person accounts that detail Black women academics' personal and professional journeys with video games. In emulating a digital kitchen-table conversation, we hosted online interviews lasting several long hours where we talked about playing games as young girls and women and activism in our scholarship, on our campuses, and in our communities. We thoroughly discussed some of the blind spots in our experiences with the various interdisciplinary approaches to the study of games; we dreamed big about some of the games we want people (our students, most hopefully) to make; and we talked a good deal about what Black feminism has to offer in historicizing the industry. Rather than try to distill the many branching points of those interviews, we offer here a listening session where Black women video game scholars talk openly for the first time about their origin stories with games.

ANNA EVERETT I began playing games like *Ms. Pac-Man* in the early 1980s, mainly in nightclubs. When I would go out with friends to bars, there

would be pool tables or video games to play. I remember plopping in coin after coin and trying to get the little wedding bouquet or whatever the Easter egg was. This was back when I was a flight attendant, way before I began my academic career. I remember video games as one of the things that I've really enjoyed that you could do in bars or nightclubs besides drink. The game cabinets were in arcades but they were also in local bars, anyplace where you could get a snack and relax.

For a while that's what I would play, games like *Pac-Man* (Namco, 1980) or *Ms. Pac-Man* (General Computer Corporation, 1982), or sometimes pinball machines. Then when I was visiting my brother and his wife, their young daughter, who might have been eight or nine at the time, wanted someone to play *Super Mario Bros*. (Nintendo, 1985) with on her brand-new Nintendo. This was when the game had just come out. I thought, what the heck, why not? And I absolutely loved it. That was so much fun. It's an important memory for me because I was blown away by how much fun my niece and I had playing *Super Mario Bros*.!

Fast forward to when I was in graduate school. I'd study all of the high theory, read Michel Foucault, have intense seminars, and write papers, and then on the weekends I would jump into playing games. I had so much fun achieving the different levels, I just loved it. I think one of the things I appreciated about it was the mastery part. You know, learning how to beat different levels, unlocking secrets. It felt very rewarding at the time, especially as a break from academic work.

I have written about this before, but one moment that got me interested in writing about games was when I saw a special on ABC's *Good Morning America* about the release of *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* (Rockstar North, 2004). The segment was all about the moral panic around video games, and since I was playing video games, I was interested in what they were saying. A police officer, a sociologist, and a young white gamer were talking about the ill effects of violence and video games and how *GTA: San Andreas* marked a new level of hyperrealistic violence. There were no Black people on the segment except the interviewer. I remember the police officer saying something about how the white kids know they're playing a game, but the Black kids, they don't understand that it's just a game not to be emulated. He was saying that games like *GTA: San Andreas* will lead to lots of Black copycats of the game's violence. WTF? Right.

That's when I decided, okay, I've got to write about this.

In the beginning I was focused on the early formation of digital humanities initiatives. I was trying to keep questions about race and identity front and center when there was such a big formalist push and dismissal of those concerns.

At the time, I think my activism was very much pedagogically driven. I was one of very few people, and the only Black woman, trying to have those conversations about race and gender, race and class. For me, Aretha Franklin says it so plainly in "Respect":

> Oh (sock it to me, sock it to me, sock it to me, sock it to me)
> A little respect (sock it to me, sock it to me, sock it to me, sock it to me)
> Whoa, babe (just a little bit)
> A little respect (just a little bit)
> I get tired (just a little bit)

SAMANTHA BLACKMON My own journey with gaming began more than forty years ago. Two of my cousins and I received Mattel handheld sports games as presents. Between the three of us we owned football, baseball, and hockey. My memory tells me that the football game belonged to me first, but with so much exchanging among us, it may have just been that that was my favorite. We would have been six, seven, and eight years of age (with me being the middle child) and none of us had any real knowledge of sports. So how we ended up with electronic sports games is beyond me. My mother doesn't remember and my cousin is, sadly, no longer with us. But what does remain are the memories. They may have been single-player games, but for us they were a very social experience.

I remember many days of sharing seats on the couch and sharing controllers with whichever neighborhood kid had gotten the latest system or game and playing unofficial co-op by offering tips and tricks that we had learned from other gamers. This is something that continued even into my adulthood. I vividly remember pulling all-nighters with whichever friend had managed to scrape together the cash for the latest *Mario* or *Resident Evil* (Capcom, 1996) game because college students are notoriously poor, and college student gamers even more so. These experiences were far from solitary. For me, they were the building blocks for friendships that have spanned decades.

My own move to become a game scholar was fraught. Despite having more experience playing games and teaching with games than some of the white male scholars in the newly emerging field in the early 2000s, I was hesitant to make a scholarly shift because I was sure that rather than thinking about game studies as lacking, many people would see me, a Black female scholar, as the one who was lacking something, unable to do "serious" scholarship, or they'd assume that I spent valuable time playing rather than doing serious work.

Two decades and several notable accolades later, I still struggle with that perception. I find it telling that as an academic who has been studying video games for almost two decades and who has been playing video games for more than four, I still find myself the victim of a mindset that video games are the stuff of child's play. I face this mindset not only in academic circles, but also in ones that revolve around video games for entertainment purposes. This point of view is hard to combat. Since childhood I was taught that as a Black person I would always have to work twice as hard and be twice as smart as my non-Black colleagues to be seen as anywhere near approaching (but never quite reaching) equality. Fortunately I have been able to continue my work in the field and, ultimately, this internalized insecurity has led me to do more work and to become more visible in games rather than less.

As an African American, queer, middle-aged woman, living in a conservative and largely white Midwestern town, video games and the communities that I forge around them are an important space of socialization for me. I am drawn to Beyoncé's "Freedom" specifically because of the momentum of the lyrics, pushing ever forward:

> I break chains all by myself
> Won't let my freedom rot in hell
> Hey! I'ma keep running
> 'Cause a winner don't quit on themselves

TREAANDREA M. RUSSWORM The very first video games I remember playing were on the Atari 2600 during the early 1980s when I was about five or six years old. The people who introduced me to video games were my aunts; the youngest one was a teenager at the time. This aunt was amazing at *Pac-Man*; we all took turns in my grandmother's house trying to beat her but no one ever could. So even though the majority of my memories of playing with toys and video games involve playing with boys, I was actually introduced to the medium by my aunts. We spent hours playing in the dark—to conserve energy—and with the door closed—because we were too loud!—in the spare bedroom of my grandmother's house. I loved sleeping over because it meant I could try to outlast my aunt in *Pac-Man*. Even then she talked a whole mouthful of trash as she ran from and after the ghosts and moved on to the next boards. When it was my turn, she'd yell, "You better hustle, you better hustle, don't be scared, your heart pumps Kool Aid!" to try to make me nervous and end my turn.

As I grew up, my single mother and I moved to wherever the jobs were, and I played video games exclusively with the boys in each of my childhood neighborhoods. Video games were like He-Man and GI Joe and skateboards. I liked games more than the Easy Bake ovens, and I was proud to be a tomboy. The levels in games like *Contra* (Konami, 1987) and *Kid Icarus* (Nintendo, 1987) were difficult, and the worlds felt big and dizzying and electric to me. In middle school and high school I alternated between writing fiction and spending lost hours playing *Double Dragon* (Technōs Japan, 1987) in a pizza parlor late in the afternoons after debate practice. For me, the video games were more social, and writing and other types of play were more solitary. I loved both—my created worlds and the game worlds—probably equally in the end.

The seeds for me becoming a video game scholar were planted in the early 2000s when as a graduate student I participated in "Afrogeeks," a conference at the University of California at Santa Barbara hosted by none other than Anna Everett. I presented my first academic paper on *The Sims* (Maxis, 2000), the game I played unfailingly for the entirety of my PhD program. I found my mother ship at "Afrogeeks" among all the blerds, Black geeks, and Black technocrats.

My work on traditional Black media has me fixated on what I think video games could learn from Black popular culture. Video game developers could take some lessons from Tyler Perry about niche audiences and marketing, for example. Perry shows us that a video game that feels authentic to a portion of the Black community does not have to also have mass consumer appeal. Make and market a game for Black people as a niche audience and, as we have seen with the *Madea* films, that audience will show up and play the hell out of that game.

TLC's "Hat 2 da Back" reps my gaming story because as a teenager I strongly identified with the group's visual style:

> Hat 2 da back I gotta kick my pants down real low
> That's the kinda girl I am
> That's the kinda girl I am
> Hat 2 da back I gotta kick my pants down real low
> That's the kinda girl that I am

GABRIELA T. RICHARD In my earliest days playing, gaming was often a solo endeavor. I grew up in the Boston area in the 1980s, and I played computer games on an old home computer when I was around five. I don't remember the exact titles, but I know they were indie DOS-based games.

Then I transitioned to the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), but I also played quite a bit in local arcades. My stepfather worked in Cambridge and there were a lot of arcades in that area, around MIT. I recall not only being the youngest person and the only girl there, but also that other than the few people who worked there who were African American, I was one of the only people of color (I am multiracial, but I have always identified as Black). So, the fact that I was so young, a girl, and one of the few Black people playing in the arcades really stood out to me.

The few social experiences I had as a child with games were with other girls. I had a really good friend—she and I both identified as tomboys and are both women of color—and we played a lot of video games together from elementary to middle school. She would come over to my house to play one of the Nintendo systems and I would play the Sega Genesis at hers. This was intermixed with playing with dolls and watching MTV.

I also used to subscribe to *Nintendo Power*. This was back in the 1980s and 1990s, right? In *Nintendo Power*, you did not see people like us, girls or children of color. Around this time, the games and how they were advertised started to shift to heavily featuring boys. But in some sense, and I've come to reflect on this a lot recently, as somebody who felt like I didn't quite fit stereotypes about what young women of color are supposed to like, as well as feeling like my own racial identity was often contested by others based on their worldview, video games helped me counter these stereotypes. Looking back on it, playing video games was a way of being in opposition to how I was encouraged to act as a young girl. Playing was a way to refute racialized identity stereotypes that were assumed or assigned to me.

By high school, games were definitely more social for me and I played a lot in arcades, especially fighting games, competitively against boys. By college and graduate school, the online harassment of women was relentless (this stood in contrast to my experience in arcades, where harassment was nonexistent). Probably the most prominent and consistent experiences I've had online are men expecting me to be sexually or romantically available, or even to serve as a confidant (like a "girlfriend experience"). Whenever I would play online games like *Left 4 Dead* (Valve South, 2008) or *Call of Duty* (Infinity Ward, 2003-), some men would immediately friend me afterward. There was also a constant barrage of insults and innuendos in-game, especially if I spoke in voice chat. I felt like my experience was constantly policed. It wasn't always sexual, but then there would always be questions about my age. This is before I discovered the all-female clans to play with online. They really were a haven.

Missy Elliott's "WTF (Where They From)," with the eclectic beats and her poppin' dance moves, is for me:

> A bunch of girls do it and the shit looks fun
> That's how they do it where we from
> You know it don't start till one
> That's how they do it where they from

KISHONNA GRAY As a kid I played video games because my mama did not want us playing outside. We were being bused to school, like in Klan country, and she didn't want us hanging out with the other kids. So she was like, hey, I got something fun and cool for you. She saved up a little money from her puny paychecks and got us games and consoles. As a young girl who played video games I never had a negative experience with boys or men in my gaming circles. My brothers and my male cousins encouraged us girls to play, and they encouraged us to be great. On the flip side, my brothers probably had this other narrative, like, "If you are my sister, you going to be good." We operated with that kind of narrative, that girls should play games, as opposed to, "nah, you ain't getting ready to play this."

Also important to me as a young girl playing video games was my friend Terrence. Terrence had the Dreamcast and some other consoles like the GameCube, and we would take turns playing at his house because we didn't have the money to have them all. If we wanted to play GameCube we would go to his house, and if we wanted to play other systems we would go to Peanut's house. My early memories of gaming did not revolve around a narrative that Black girls (or any girls) didn't play games. My sister played, my friends who were girls played, my mama played with us.

In my research I have since discovered that my story is unusual, considering the literature on technology and gaming with regard to a lack of gender parity. I hear all these stories at academic conference from women saying that they were prevented from playing games. I'm like, really? And then I realize maybe that was a white thing, you know, because whenever I talk to women of color I find out that our experiences were different. We played video games from the beginning; it was something we were encouraged to do.

In my video game classes, I like putting the tools into my students' hands to see what folks will do. Once I had a Mexican American woman who really enjoyed updating this classic Mexican game that is like *Bingo.* She took it back to her family, they played it, and she made several copies of it. Then we hosted a

game jam because she took the connection between games and her culture so seriously. She created this really amazing work. To help with continuing to do this type of work, I wish we had more accessible tools to help students and players take the task of creation into our own hands. I wish that there were more people who make games who would actually listen to women of color and help them make the games they want to make. Where is the game that teaches white people not to call the police on Black folks all the time? Let's get together and make that game.

There are other games that I wish existed that would connect our creativity and our activism. The comic *Harriet Tubman: Demon Slayer*—I know that needs to be a game. Harriet Tubman just slamming fucking slave-owning devil demons or whatever, you know, and freeing everybody! I would love to see a lot more of our history as Black women turned into games that are not simply attempts to gamify our culture.

I hear Destiny's Child's "Survivor" playing during my game jam:

I'm a survivor (what), I'm not gon' give up (what)
I'm not gon' stop (what), I'm gon' work harder (what)
I'm a survivor (what), I'm gonna make it (what)
I will survive (what), keep on survivin' (what)

Like a chorus, the stories from Black women academics highlight and repeat certain themes—from daring to be one of the first scholars writing about race and games (Everett with Aretha Franklin deserving "respect") to fighting to be taken seriously and heard as a gaming scholar (Blackmon "breaking chains" with Beyoncé). Video games have been central to our bonds formed with family and friends, and games have played a key role in the development of our formative consciousness as young girls (Russworm and Richard, who along with TLC and Missy Elliott code-switched and played with gender). Then too, as scholars who see ourselves as activists, we use our writing and pedagogy to challenge game studies as a field for its omission of accounts like these from histories of the industry. With Gray and Destiny's Child, we are doing more than surviving as we continually find ways to put our resistant play practices into action.

TRACK 10: JANELLE MONÁE, "DIRTY COMPUTER"

Dirty computer, breaking down
Picking my face up off the ground
I'll love you in this space in time
'Cause baby all I'll ever be

Is your dirty computer
Dirty computer

If the autobiographical accounts of Black women academics who have contributed to video game studies by teaching and writing about games represents another facet of a Black feminist intervention, then the play and labor practices of Black women who livestream or otherwise record their video game sessions represents yet another part of this living public discourse. Black women content creators (podcasters, vloggers, livestreamers) routinely critique video games and the culture surrounding them in near real time, and they function as the community's cultural critics. As Kishonna L. Gray has written, "Marginalized gamers are often simultaneously active participants within gaming as well as savage critics of the hegemonic cultures in which they exist."[17] While Gray's study specifically examined Black male streamers, we note that Black women are streaming every day using similar resistant play practices.

As Gabriela T. Richard's narrative above indicates, Black women who play online often find themselves subjected to sexualized stereotypes that are also rooted in their racial identity. Black women like writer, producer, and technologist Latoya Peterson have discovered that when they openly discuss race, gender, class, or other aspects of their identity while playing online, the games environment becomes hostile and toxic, trying to suppress their critiques. In writing publicly about her experiences in her 2011 *Kotaku* article "The Tits Have It: Sexism, Character Design, and the Role of Women in Created Worlds," Peterson describes some of her most memorable experiences as a critical gamer, like the five times in twenty-two years of playing that she has been able to play as a female protagonist of color, and the time she publicly questioned Jonathan Jacques-Bellêtete, art director of *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* (2011), about his proud declaration that he designs his female game characters to look like women that he would want to sleep with.[18] In a 2016 interview on the podcast *Not Your Mama's Gamer*, Peterson discussed some of the backlash she received when she argued on her five-part documentary series *Girl Gamers* (2015) that the very idea of a "girl gamer" is complex, not monolithic, and has to include women of color and trans women.[19] This public, discursive dimension to Peterson's play blurs the lines between play and labor, as seen with so many of the other Black women profiled in this article. The way she participates in games by writing and making films about gaming culture is yet another form of visible Black feminist play.

Manifesting a similar politics of visibility, the livestreams of marginalized groups (POC, LGBTQIA+, older persons, or non-neurotypical people) are discursive and material confirmations that cis-gendered, heterosexual, white men are not the only users of platforms like Twitch, Mixer, and YouTube when it comes to playing video games publicly. Maintaining this type of visibility is uniquely stressful for marginalized streamers, however. As T. L. Taylor persuasively explains in her work on "Let's Play" culture, "women, LGBTQIA folks, and people of color regularly face harassment . . . and choosing to broadcast, especially with a webcam and/or audio, is no small feat" because "race, gender, class, sexuality, and disability thus all come to play critical roles as viewers confront actual streamers."[20] Although not a livestreamer, the writer, activist, and Black Twitter personality Mikki Kendall speaks from experience about what it is like to deal with online harassment as a Black woman:

> Here's the thing about being harassed online that no one tells you. It's not the first threat, or the first insult. It's not even the fifteenth (and yes, there will be a fifteenth), it's the realization that even with all the evidence in the world, people will still insist that A) You deserve it, B) That it is no big deal, or C) That you must be making it up.[21]

This same climate of antipathy informs livestream culture, where the mega-corporations that own the most popular platforms—Google, Microsoft, Amazon—often directly support or ignore the harassment (which should be understood as a type of terrorism) Black women face when they dare to labor and play publicly online. Black woman content creator Chinemere Iwuanyanwu explained on a 2016 TwitchCon panel that "it's so harsh to see new streamers have to go through this mess and give up so early because of something as simple as this. [It] can be fixed."[22] Complaints like Peterson's, Kendall's, and Iwuanyanwu's give us new context and inspiration for rethinking what the Combahee River Collective meant in the 1970s when they likewise claimed that "the psychological toll of being a Black woman and the difficulties this presents in reaching political consciousness and doing political work can never be underestimated."[23]

In addition to holding the major corporations that own the streaming platforms accountable by demanding that they proactively protect marginalized streamers, Iwuanyanwu calls upon the streamers themselves to continue to seek out and create safer digital spaces for their public play and labor. For example, she says that women of color "need to find better ways to connect, because if it's a toxic community out there, then our group will want to stay

away from Twitch. We want to feel included. But if we find ways to connect, we will come together and grow our community. It's just [a] means of finding each other."[24] Although the inspiration to build community remains an important goal, TwitchCon panel organizer Ryoga Vee points out the immense difficulty they had in finding streamers who would agree to participate in their public critical discourse. So many potential panelists said: "'Wow, that's an amazing panel, it sounds like a great discussion. It needs to happen, but I can't be a part of it. I don't want to alienate my fanbase.'"[25] Some marginalized streamers did not want to have to deal with the inevitable backlash, lose subscribers, or be attacked mercilessly as "social justice warriors" for talking about racism or sexism on Twitch. Even though many streamers were ideologically in support of this particular critical discourse, the economic reality of streaming as a part of their livelihood made them reluctant or unwilling to combine their play and labor with a politics of resistance.

These accounts reflect just some of the ways in which women and people of color are harassed, policed, and dismissed as deviant when they play publicly and critique the racism, sexism, or homophobia of the gaming industry and its communities. Our continued presence in these spaces functions as a dangerously destabilizing act. Envisioned as "dirty computers" in Janelle Monáe's lyrics and short film (an "emotion picture" of the same title), Black women become revolutionary leaders in a digital dystopian future when they are listened to and fight against digitized systems of oppression and surveillance.

TRACK 11: JILL SCOTT, "GOLDEN"

I'm taking my own freedom, putting it in my stroll
I'll be high stepping y'all, letting the joy unfold
I'm living my life like it's golden
livin' my life like it's golden
livin' my life like it's golden
livin' my life like it's golden
livin' my life like it's golden
golden

The preceding stories, from labor histories to play histories, about Black women participating in the video game industry express just some of the ways in which video games have been useful to an active intergenerational mix of Black women innovators, critics, and streamers. Despite the many efforts to suppress their activist play practices, Black women across generations continue to use games for

myriad social and personal purposes. As we discovered when we interviewed four Black women over the age of fifty-five who play games casually, not only can digital games be used to entertain, connect, and teach; they can also be used directly as an intentional form of self-care. We listened to our interviewees talk about their daily digital game play sessions. They preferred to remain anonymous (as they are not academics and they consider their digital play a private practice). Demographically we describe them as: Player One, sixty-one, employee at an educational software company; Player Two, sixty-two, a retired corrections officer; Player Three, a fifty-six-year-old administrator of a utility company; and Player Four, a seventy-nine-year-old retired nurse.[26]

These older Black women play a range of games, from popular mobile game titles like *Candy Crush* (King, 2012), *Farm Heroes* (King, 2013), *Township* (Playrix, 2013), and *Sudoku* (Various, 2006) to a few larger console or PC titles like *Animal Crossing* (Nintendo, 2001), *Minecraft* (Mojang, 2011), and *Style Savvy* (Nintendo, 2008). These games all have in common that they center on seemingly mundane tasks such as solving puzzles, gardening, or managing resources, or basic material acquisition like wardrobe building. The women strongly gravitate toward task-based games that allow them to compete and succeed in more traditionally domestic tasks such as farming, organizing, and financial management. When talking about why she enjoys playing titles like the fashion game *Style Savvy* with her granddaughter, Player Four comments: "I like learning what people want and finding the styles that they will accept. I feel good when I am able to help them. I learn what people are looking for so when the next customer comes in, I have the information that I can use to help them select the right clothing." This kind of engagement with everyday tasks, as Jesper Juul has argued, is central to the popularity of casual games.[27] Casual games ask us to complete tasks that are not outside our normal purview, and can easily fit around busy real-life schedules.

Player One shares that playing *Candy Crush* and *Sudoku* has become a regular part of her day; she plays the games on her phone as an intentional part of her relaxation practice while doing other relaxing things like watching television, coloring, or having a weekly pedicure. She elaborates:

> I used to like to pull out *Candy Crush* when I was in a long line at the store so I wouldn't get impatient and agitated. I haven't needed to do that in a long time. I've learned how to just do the deep breathing and go with the flow. I've mellowed out a lot. I always associate *Sudoku* with my Sunday pedicure, and so that in itself is relaxing. I'm soaking my feet in Epsom salts

> and all these essential oils. *Candy Crush* is therapeutic because I play it now when [my husband] and I are watching TV. We sit and watch several TV programs together, but while we're watching I'm coloring and I'll spend maybe twenty minutes playing *Candy Crush*. It's downtime that I look forward to.

As Player One's relaxation ritual makes clear, mobile games may function as a part of a uniquely parallel solitary and social experience. While games like *Candy Crush* do allow players to gauge their own progress against people on their friends lists, three of the four women we interviewed choose specifically not to pay attention to leaderboards and other forms of measurement, calling that attentiveness a stressor. As Player One puts it, "I don't want to know how other people are doing. I do this for myself."

This is not to say, however, that more direct sociality and competition are not part of some of the women's play practice as self-care. For example, Player Four plays games with her granddaughter during their time together, and Player Three talks specifically about using the friends function on the game *Farmville* (2009) to scope out the competition and ascertain that she is building a bigger and better farm than her friends. About the joy she feels in playing the farm management game—every day without fail—Player Three says, "You can connect with other people and go and take a look at their farms and see what they are doing to them. I like being able to get new ideas by looking at the other farms."

While none of the Black women over fifty-five we interviewed identified as gamers, each one regarded their play a hobby that is helping them learn or refine skills. For example, Player Four says that she continues to play games even when the learning curve is steep because it "keeps your mind going and you have to keep thinking." This commitment to learning a new hobby, even when it proves difficult, has been especially motivating for Player Two, who plays her games several times throughout the day. She commits to playing a level without the aid of walkthroughs or guides whenever possible. "If I'm stuck for a long time, I'll Google how to beat that particular level to get tips, but usually only after I'm stuck on it a week; that's when I'll Google it."

In addition to seeing video games as a means of relaxation and meditation and a challenging and rewarding hobby, all of the women say they play video games to preserve mental acuity, and they are all aware that their game play may help them live longer lives. Puzzle solving, strategy testing, township building, and management serve not only as entertainment or self-care; such digital play may also have the added benefit of helping

prevent dementia and Alzheimer's disease. As one 2017 study found, video games have some neurological benefit that produces "positive grey matter increases in brain regions known to decline with age and are related to aging-related cognitive decline."[28] These mental and physical health benefits connect older Black women's gaming practices to what Audre Lorde means when she claims that self-care is "an act of political warfare," and explicitly argues that "understanding what is joyful and life-affirming in my living becomes crucial."[29] In taking seriously the casual digital play of older Black women, following Patricia Hill Collins, we know that while activism "typically focuses on public, official, visible political activity," working and playing in the "invisible spheres of social life and organization may be equally important."[30] Thus, Black women living freely and healthily with video games—living "golden" as they approach their golden years, as Jill Scott would have it—is also activism.

TRACK 12 (CODA): NINA SIMONE, "FEELING GOOD"

It's a new dawn
It's a new day
It's a new life
For me
And I'm feeling good

New Black feminisms are forming every day that attest to the relevancy of Black feminist thought and resistance to our engagements with an always-online digital culture. In listening to Black women and documenting their experiences as a part of video game history, we have drawn on a mixed bag of methodological models and styles, as Black feminist writing has always been an assemblage of voices and forms. We have tried to present the mixtape as an auditory guide, as praxis for documenting new media histories, and as a soundtrack for replaying such histories.

The Black women whose stories we assemble in this article are not outliers; while their experiences may not be affirmed in the video game industry, such experiences were certainly not formed in social or cultural isolation. We know that Nina Simone surely never sang any songs about video games, but she lived through some of the same systems of interlocking oppressions that Black women working in and adjacent to the games industry currently face. In Simone's 1965 recording of "Feeling Good," despite having had every reason to succumb to the violence of life lived as

a Black woman in the United States, she claims a bold and playful psychological freedom as she sees a new dawn, a new day, and butterflies having fun. She sings victoriously and claims feeling good. While neither the video game industry nor video game studies has attempted to fully reflect Black women's lived experiences with games, in doing the work of documenting and listening to Black women's experiences, like Simone, we are hopeful for new dawns and new days. ■

A PLAYLIST OF BLACK FEMINIST THOUGHT

1. **Kayne West (featuring Nicki Minaj), "Monster," track 6 on *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*, Def Jam, 2010**
   https://youtu.be/pS6HRKZQLFA
   We like this positioning of Nicki Minaj on a track that is supposedly not hers; she lyrically dominates the game as the only woman rapping in the company of men. This positionality works well as a proxy for black women working in the games industry.
2. **Mary J. Blige, "Good Woman Down," track 6 on *The Breakthrough*, Geffen, 2005**
   https://youtu.be/NzC7AHC1M3Y
   Although this song is not from the time period of our stories of Black women working in the industry in the 1970s and 1980s, it speaks to some of the themes they talked about; the song works as a reminder that time does not always change the issues Black women face in the workplace.
3. **Etta James, "At Last," single, RCA, 1942**
   https://youtu.be/1qJU8G7gR_g
   Etta James's song works well to communicate how some Black women game designers finally realize their dreams of working in the industry, despite persistent systemic barriers.
4. **Jamila Woods, "Blk Girl Soldier," track 7 on *Heavn*, Jagjaguwar, 2016**
   https://youtu.be/gTE432gaDTs
   Mirroring the stories of Black women fighting to establish a place for themselves in working with games, the chorus of "Blk Girl Soldier" recites a list of Black women who have fought for freedom and racial equality.
5. **Aretha Franklin, "Respect," track 1 on *I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You*, Atlantic, 1967**
   https://youtu.be/fzPXozDgvYs

"Respect" epitomizes the foundational work Anna Everett contributed to the field as a Black feminist scholar doing early work in game studies.

6. **Beyoncé (featuring Kendrick Lamar), "Freedom," track 10 on *Lemonade*, Columbia, 2016**
   https://youtu.be/7FWF9375hUA
   This song conveys the feelings of many Black feminist scholars when they find themselves forging new paths despite a constant barrage of questions about the validity of their research.
7. **TLC, "Hat 2 Da Back," track 5 on *Ooooooohhh... On the TLC Tip*, LaFace, 1992**
   https://youtu.be/Yf-BzeSpv24
   "Hat 2 Da Back" affirms gender subversion and playing with fashion as survival and self-representational tactics.
8. **Missy Elliott (featuring Pharrell Williams), "WTF (Where They From)," single, Goldmind, 2015**
   https://youtu.be/3mL3uF7W-2Y
   This song returns us to a politics of joy and play that is also connected to where one is from—one's origin story.
9. **Destiny's Child, "Survivor," track 2 on *Survivor*, Columbia, 2001**
   https://youtu.be/aVJi5jj-zlo
   This song speaks plainly to the feelings we've had as gamers and researchers forced to survive economic and social barriers in order to pursue gaming as a pastime and a career. The anthem demonstrates our historical willingness to put in the work necessary to achieve our goals, scholarly and otherwise.
10. **Janelle Monáe, "Dirty Computer," track 1 on *Dirty Computer*, Wondaland, 2018**
    https://youtu.be/0FK6k-pvXmI
    Janelle Monáe's concept of the dirty computer resonates with the work Black women content creators and streamers are doing as they navigate online terrorism and form active discourse communities.
11. **Jill Scott, "Golden," track 3 on *Beautifully Human: Words and Sounds Vol. 2*, Hidden Beach, 2004**
    https://youtu.be/lWy-H5OpBKE
    The soulful and upbeat "Golden" speaks to mature Black female gamers who are embracing what video games have to offer them socially, cognitively, and as entertainment.

12. **Nina Simone, "Feeling Good," track 7 on *I Put a Spell on You*, Philips, 1965**

https://youtu.be/D5Y11hwjMNs

We end with Nina Simone not only because "Feeling Good" is hopeful but because it is balanced by the greater body of her creative contributions that constantly critiqued inequality and systems of bias.

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Samantha Blackmon has been gaming for more than forty years. She is an associate professor in the Department of English at Purdue University, cofounder of the feminist game studies blog and podcast *Not Your Mama's Gamer*, and editor in chief of the feminist game studies journal *NYMG*.

NOTES

1. Amber J. Phillips and Jazmine Walker, "The Birth of a Black Feminist," *The Black Joy Mixtape*, October 16, 2016, http://www.theblackjoymixtape.com.

2. We have found the following efforts to disrupt the video game industry's dominant narratives around race and gender particularly instructive: Anna Everett, *Digital Diaspora: A Race for Cyberspace*, SUNY Cultural Studies in Cinema/Video Series (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2009); Kishonna L. Gray, *Race, Gender, and Deviance in Xbox Live: Theoretical Perspectives from the Virtual Margins* (Waltham, MA: Anderson, 2014); Carly Kocurek, "Ronnie, Millie, Lila—Women's History for Games: A Manifesto and a Way Forward," *American Journal of Play* 10, no. 1 (2017): 52–70. See also Jennifer Malkowski and TreaAndrea M. Russworm, eds., *Gaming Representation: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Video Games* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017).

3. Vernon Keeve III, *Southern Migrant Mixtape* (Oakland: Nomadic, 2018).

4. Barbara Jane Reyes, "Brown Girl Mixtape," *New England Review*, no. 4 (2018): 38.

5. Phillips and Walker, "The Birth of a Black Feminist."

6. Phillips and Walker, "The Birth of a Black Feminist."

7. Audre Lorde, *A Burst of Light: Essays by Audre Lorde* (Ann Arbor, MI: Firebrand Books, 1988), 131.

8. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99.

9. Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement," in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, ed. Barbara Smith (New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983), 273, 278, 276.

10. S. Lee Hilliard, "Cash in on the Videogame Craze," *Black Enterprise*, December 1982, 43.

11. A book we find helpfully critical of the association between masculinity and the arcade is Carly A. Kocurek, *Coin-Operated Americans: Rebooting Boyhood at the Video Game Arcade* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015). For a short critique of the unbearable whiteness of game studies see TreaAndrea M. Russworm, "Video Game History and the Fact of Blackness," *ROMchip: A Journal of Game Histories* 1, no. 1 (2019): https://romchip.org/index.php/romchip-journal/article/view/85.

12. Toni Morrison, Black Studies Center Public Dialogue, part 2, Oregon Public Speakers Collection, May 30, 1975, in *Special Collections: Oregon Public Speakers*, 90, https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/orspeakers/90; Shana T. Bryant, "Distraction and Reaction: On Allies and Terrible Allydom," in *Game Devs and Others: Tales from the Margins*, ed. Tanya DePass (Boca Raton, FL: CRC, 2018), 74.

13. Bryant, "Distraction and Reaction," 75.

14. Bryant, "Distraction and Reaction," 75.

15. Vanessa Paugh, "Fight-Free Fashion Agency," in *Game Devs and Others*, 1, 6.

16. Barbara Smith, "Introduction," in *Home Girls*, xxxiv–xxxv.

17. Kishonna L. Gray, "'They're Just too Urban': Black Gamers Streaming on Twitch," in *Digital Sociologies*, ed. Jessie Daniels, Karen Gregory, and McMillan Cottom (Bristol, UK: Policy Press University of Bristol, 2016), 351.

18. Latoya Peterson, "The Tits Have It: Sexism, Character Design, and the Role of Women in Created Worlds," Kotaku.com, October 20, 2011, https://kotaku.com/sexism-character-design-and-the-role-of-women-in-crea-5851800.

19. Samantha Blackmon and Alisha Karabinus, "Episode 118: Who Gets to Be a Gamer?: A Conversation with Latoya Peterson," January 1, 2016, http://www.nymgamer.com/?p=12510.

20. T. L. Taylor, *Watch Me Play: Twitch and the Rise of Game Live Streaming* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 105.

21. Mikki Kendall, "The Harassment Game," *Model View Culture: A Magazine about Technology, Culture, and Diversity*, February 23, 2015, https://modelviewculture.com/pieces/the-harassment-game.

22. Chinemere Iwuanyanwu quoted on "TwitchCon LIVE from the BibleThump Theater," 2016, https://www.twitch.tv/videos/92310171.

23. Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement," 277.

24. Iwuanyanwu quoted on "TwitchCon LIVE from the BibleThump Theater."

25. Ryoga Vee quoted on "TwitchCon LIVE from the BibleThump Theater."

26. Our method of selection was a convenience sample: we selected women we knew and polled them for suggestions of additional subjects we might interview. Ilker Etikan explains, "Convenience sampling (also known as Haphazard Sampling or Accidental Sampling) is a type of nonprobability or nonrandom sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study.

It is also referred to the researching subjects of the population that are easily accessible to the researcher." Ilker Etikan, "Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling," *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics* 5, no. 1 (2016): 2.

27. Jesper Juul, *A Casual Revolution: Reinventing Video Games and Their Players* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012).

28. Greg L. West et al., "Playing Super Mario 64 Increases Hippocampal Grey Matter in Older Adults," *PLOS ONE* 12, no. 12 (2017): https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0187779.

29. Lorde, *A Burst of Light*, 131, 132.

30. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 202.