


## #BlackScholarJoy: The Labor, Resistance and Joy Practices of Black Women Graduate Students

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### Abstract

Black graduate students from all disciplines, particularly Black women, who may otherwise be isolated in our respective institutions, have taken to the digital as a space to resist the marginalizing ways of the Academy as it exists. We fight, but we also care for each other, promote transparency about the graduate school process, lift as we climb, build professional networks and friendships alike. We utilize the digital in innovative ways to transform our separate experiences into collectives. Blogs, podcasts, Instagram accounts, twitter threads, digital writing groups, and more all serve as methods of resisting and engaging in carework. This essay will explore the various ways Black graduate students have decided that the “revolution will not be televised” -- but it will be online. [Everett 2002]

...come celebrate

with me that everyday

something has tried to kill me

and has failed.

-Lucille Clifton, “won’t you celebrate with me”

Black women graduate students who go online in search of community and infrastructure that they may lack on campus often become unlikely digital humanists. My own ability to identify myself as a digital humanist was a direct result of crafting, curating and cultivating years’ worth of content about graduate school for current and prospective Black woman graduate students on my blog, *Black Girl Does Grad School (BGDGS)*, and on Twitter. I have chronicled my journey into the academy since August 2016 on *BGDGS*, but this work has only recently become a part of my scholarly intervention. It practices a form of Black digital feminism, which communications scholar Catherine Knight Steele argues centralizes agency and our ability to prioritize ourselves in digital spaces [Steele 2021]. Our digital media making is as Moya Bailey argues, “a form of self-preservation and harm reduction that disrupts the onslaught of the problematic images that society perpetuates” [Bailey 2021]. We invest in each other, and use social media not just for activism, but for *celebrating*.

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Regardless of discipline, Black woman graduate students exist in abundance online and use Twitter, Instagram, blogs, vlogs and podcasts to “spill the tea” on all aspects of graduate life. An entire network of Black graduate digital content creators exists, who produce resources on everything from wellness and finance, to practical skills like abstract and grant writing, to spaces for personal narratives. We take to the digital as a space to resist the marginalizing ways of the

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Academy as it exists. We fight, but we also care for each other, promote transparency about the graduate school process, lift as we climb, build professional networks and friendships alike. We utilize the digital in innovative ways to transform our individual and often isolated experiences into collectives. Blogs, podcasts, Instagram accounts, twitter threads, digital writing groups, and more all serve as methods of resisting and engaging in carework. This essay will explore the various ways Black women graduate students have decided that *our* “revolution will not be televised” — but it will be online [Everett 2002].

Historian and digital humanist Jessica Marie Johnson writes in a 2014 blog post, “my feminism is a fury and fierce joy. It is an ACTION” [Johnson 2014]. Her exploration of her personal brand of feminism, which is derived from the thinkers of the Kitchen Table press, The Combahee Collective, her mother and ancestors, is the “spirit of abolition,” “futuristic,” and “digital.” Johnson, who would go on to write more about the intersections of Black feminism and digital humanities in articles such as, “Alter Egos and Infinite Literacies, Part III: How to Build a Real Gyrl in Three Easy Steps,” and “4DH + 1 black code / Black femme forms of knowledge and practice,” becoming a leading force in Black digital humanities, offers important ways to think about Black women’s digital futures. “Alter Egos and Infinite Literacies, Part III,” details the beautiful ways Black women self-make online. The digital, she argues, is a way to write oneself [the Black woman/girl’s self] visible [Johnson 2015]. It is a tool for witnessing and mourning [Johnson 2018]. And the digital allows the space for our feminism to reflect life: messy [Johnson 2014].

Because this article takes seriously the bonds formed by Black graduate students and the collective work we do in digital spaces, the primary sources that provide evidence for my claims (which take the form of articles, tweets, blog posts, and more ephemeral digital media, such as Instagram Live videos) reflect my experience building networks on Twitter, via blogs, and connecting with other content creators for other engagements: webinars, podcast episodes, and digital writing groups, to name a few. In the years since beginning my journey to the doctorate, Black women graduate students online have been integral to my success: they have sent me care packages during difficult moments in the program, they have forwarded my name for opportunities because they saw my tweets on the topic, we have held weekly pandemic watch parties using Twitter hashtags like #KorraKickback and #CrystalGemCrew, and we have organized together to support each other’s individual ventures, appearing on each other’s blogs and podcasts and online summits.<sup>[1]</sup> Simply put, the sources critical to this project were selected because of their personal impact on me — my personal orientation towards what qualifies as academic work, as well as, my well-being as a person. Though one may dismiss the value of personal connections as the premise for a scholarly study, I will note that collectives, particularly those who center marginalized people, take seriously (Black) feminist ethics seriously. Think of the Combahee Collective, FemTechNet, and more recently the digital project and online community curated by digital humanities scholar and historian, Jessica Marie Johnson, and scholar of Afro-Latinx literature, Yomaira C. Figueroa, Electric Marronage. These collectives are intentional about developing digital havens of care while promoting rigorous intellectual inquiry and centering joy, tasks which I find present in the online networks Black women graduate students have created.

This essay also takes cues from digital autoethnographic methodologies used by theorist Moya Bailey to self-reflexively examine my own place in this network of Black graduate students and how we occupy and use online spaces [Bailey 2015]. The essay draws from the multi-modal nature of Black Studies and uses narrative to underscore salient pieces of theory, as personal narrative is important to both Critical Race Theory as well as Black Feminist Theory. “Anecdotes,” as many like to call storytelling and narrative, are at the heart of Black digital humanities. If, as Brock writes, “all technologies are culturally and socially shaped,” then it follows that the stories which create our cultures and social realities are integral to how we use technology and how our use of these technologies reshape them [Brock 2019, 4]. Therefore, the stories and shared experiences that unite Black women graduate students inform how we have used technology to resist, work, and celebrate together.

## The Unintentional and Additional Labor of Hypervisible Online Discourse

This section examines the carework Black graduate students practice towards each other online, but also the necessity of labor implied therein. We congregate in a corner of this digital satellite counterpublic, as André Brock would call Black Twitter, for communal support, but we also exhibit characteristics of resistance, as well as joy [Brock 2019] [Steele

2011]. We gain a collective energy from navigating questions of professionalism and respectability in the physical Academy, but online as well, particularly in the way we choose to signify, knowing our conversations are hypervisible and subject to surveillance [Brock 2019] [Browne 2015]. This makes our online presences susceptible to additional labor — whether intentional as we extend carework to our peers, or unintentional as colleagues use our online presences as instructional.

Susan Brown's contribution to Elizabeth Losh and Jacquelyn Wernimont's edited volume *Bodies of Information: Intersectional Feminism and the Digital Humanities* [2019], offers an important insight to the way work is often parceled in the Academy. Brown here points to the fact that women and femme scholars are often saddled with additional service labor unlike their male counterparts. This includes, for example, serving on diversity committees, panels on status of gender (or race) in the Academy/one's given field, or doing work for university projects that may not count towards one's tenure file. However, Brown's argument does not quite address the intersections of race with this statement. Scholars of color often shoulder the extra emotional labor of service positions related to their racial or ethnic identities, as well as providing mentorship for undergraduate students that come to them in search of a professor that can understand them. These additional services begin as we take on professional roles as part of our graduate training.

Black women often find themselves in positions representing both women and scholars of color as well as facing misogynoir — prejudice toward Black women specifically — in and outside of the classroom [Bailey 2021]. Legal scholar and critical race theorist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw aptly describes, spaces meant for Black people are often posited towards Black men, and spaces meant for women tend to be for white women [1991]. Black women find ourselves often as the sole representative of either or both Black people or women, leading others to believe that we represent all of either or both Black people or women, ignoring the heterogeneity of both groups. As Patricia Hill Collins [1991] informs us, "Despite the common challenges confronting African-American women as a group, individual Black women neither have identical experiences nor interpret experiences in a similar fashion. The existence of core themes does not mean that African-American women respond to these themes in the same way" [Collins 1991, 27]. While many Black women graduate students are unified by common themes of gendered racial violence, difficulty navigating controlling images of Black women based stereotypes, such as perceptions about our anger, and the resulting frustration and fatigue of consistently managing this visibility and invisibility, our experiences are unique and individual [Collins 1991] [Cooper 2018].

These common themes, however, impact the way early career Black women scholars work and it is imperative that we understand the dual nature of how many of us approach it. For some, Black studies methodologies and Black life is critical to the core of our intellectual inquiry — those who study Black history, literature or cultural anthropology, humanities scholars, for example. For students of the hard sciences, as engineering Ph.D. student and creator, Allanté Whitmore, has noted, it may be more difficult to combine issues of race with their objects of study. In a recent #ShareTheMic event in collaboration with the graduate wellness and lifestyle blog, @PhDBalance, Whitmore spoke to the feeling of being torn: being *either* an engineer *or* someone whose life is impacted by issues of race. The academy encourages, *forces*, us to compartmentalize when Black feminist theory tells us that multiple truths may exist at once. We are not able to separate out our identities, in the same way that Black women are both Black and woman at the same time without needing to choose "which comes first."

Black graduate students produce astounding amounts of additional labor, in addition to those detailed earlier, particularly those with visible social media presences. The work does not end when one leaves the classroom or the lab; it continues on as Black graduate students use Twitter, blogs, vlogs and podcasts to do the work of providing incoming graduate students with infrastructure and ourselves with support and care. The labor continues beyond even this, as many of us take on the work of restorative justice, abolition, fights for living wages and unionization efforts. The question that plagues many a department and university remains how to recruit a more diverse campus climate; however, if Black graduate students are self-organizing and creating infrastructures for ourselves in academic spaces because there is an extreme lack of resources available on the part of the institution, then perhaps recruitment is not the underlying issue. Black graduate students take to the digital to coach each other through working under the conditions of systemic institutional violence. *That* is why, in part, these digital networks exist.

## Resistance as Labor

Often, the spaces Black folks occupy online are seen and viewed as resistance. A fair assumption to make given that much of online activism finds its origins with Black folks — Black women, femmes and queer folks, in particular [Bailey 2021]. Consider, for example, #BlackLivesMatter, which was originally coined by Patrice Cullors, Opal Tometti and Alicia Garza, has become the rallying cry of the new millennium; #MeToo originated with Tarana Burke, sparked the movement for accountability and recourse for those accused of sexual assault; and #BlackGirlMagic, which began as Black Girls Are Magic, founded by CaShawn Thompson, asks us to continually consider the ethereal essence of being a Black girl. Works by Feminista Jones, Kim Gallon as well as Moya Bailey, Sarah J. Jackson and Brooke Foucault Welles, foregrounds the digital activist labor done by Black women [Jones 2019] [Bailey 2021]. Resistance is labor.

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When Black graduate students take to Twitter, for example, to form community bonds and to push back against the oppressive confines of the Academy, our resistance is labor [Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012]. Black women faculty are underrepresented in higher education, and thus experience “hyper-visibility and attention, pressure to over-perform, and social isolation” [Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012, 84]. Shanna Benjamin, Roxane Donovan, and Joycelyn Moody (2016) also write that, “In addition to tokenism effects, other institutional and structural barriers work independently and collectively to hinder Black women faculty’s academic success, including excessive service/caretaking expectations, student opposition and hostility, devaluing/undervaluing of research, and experiences of gendered racism and racialized sexism” [Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012, 84]. It is out of the scope of Benjamin, Donovan and Moody’s work, but many of the concerns they present as obstacles for Black women faculty begin early in the graduate student career as Black women graduate students navigate classroom environments as teaching assistants and power dynamics in working with their advisors.

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Black women, for example, are often expected to take on extraordinary amounts of extra uncompensated service labor, which can include anything from mentoring BIPOC students; to directing centers or programs; and to being asked to split our time between various Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committees and panels to represent one of the handful of Black women at our institution. And while it must be said that many of us do love and cherish the work we do to support our students and fight for better campus environments for all, much of that work goes unnoticed, unappreciated, and does not count towards tenure and securing a job. This is in addition to the assumptions of incompetence and/or superheroism in respect to Black women in these spaces [Wallace 1979] [Harris-Perry 2011]. As Bailey, Jackson, and Welles write, “Black women have found Twitter to be a productive tool for highlighting misogynoir, sharing survival strategies and calling both intra- and intercommunity members to account” [Bailey 2021, 63]. We use the digital, therefore, to “speak truth to power” [Bailey 2021, 63].

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The threads from the June 2020 hashtag movement, #BlackInTheIvory, co-created by Joy Melody Woods and Dr. Shardé M. Davis shows in stark relief exactly what Black woman graduate students, but also Black professors and other academics in particular, face in the Academy. Woods and Davis’ hashtag encouraged Black academics to put a name to acts of racism they have endured in academic spaces, inspired and fueled by the collective rage that is moving us toward calls for system change. In an interview with NBC, Woods says:

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If we’re calling for the firing of police officers who put their knees on the necks of black people physically, then we should be calling for firings and suspensions of faculty who metaphorically put their knees on the necks of black graduate students. Some of the actions they have done, and you’ll see this on the thread, they have landed people in psychiatric facilities ... You say you want solidarity, well, we have the collective knowledge and evidence now and white folks can no longer look away. [Aviles 2020]

Many of the stories, including my own, appear to be individual or isolated incidents; when considered together, they illustrate the insidious nature of the racist infrastructure on which the Academy is built, deliberately crafted to keep Black folks out. #BlackInTheIvory told stories of tenure denials (see also “#TenureForPaul” [Harris 2020]), failed examinations, and racist remarks both overheard in departments and said to Black scholars.<sup>[2]</sup> While the aftermath of outpouring of stories was fraught, there was a moment in which Black scholars chose to speak up as a particular method for resistance.

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#BlackInTheVory points to many of these challenges, as Woods and Davis note in an interview with *The New York Times*, but journalists Harmon, Mandavilli, Maheshwari and Kantor write, “The stories of exclusion, humiliation and hostility were all too familiar. But the difference was that they had mostly been shared behind closed doors” [2020]. Not entirely true — many of these stories have been shared on social media. Perhaps whispered and without naming individuals, but they stories have gotten around the internet. Though some hashtag user did point to this truth: the precarity of many of our situations, including graduate students who will soon go on the academic job market, simply cannot afford to speak out for fear of recourse, which could be anything from denial of a job, which impacts financial security, to continued harassment, on and offline. As @ADBoyntonII tweets: “Being #BlackInTheVory is knowing that these tweets are only a tip of the iceberg. Many of us are too vulnerable to risk telling the whole truth.” The tweet in its entirety is reproduced below, published with the express permission of the original author.

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The work Joy Melody Woods is doing with #BlackInTheVory is but one way Black graduate students are using the digital as platforms for activism, advocacy, resistance and support. And while #BlackInTheVory is indeed resistance work, it is also a form of catharsis for those who can and do engage. This is perhaps not entirely what Brock speaks of when he describes libidinal economy, however, the impulse underlies the energy needed to execute a movement like #BlackInTheVory. At its core, this resistance work remains labor.

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## Choosing Joy and Refusing to Shrink

How then do we think about the relationship Black people have to joy, technology, labor and resistance? The fact remains that we should not let our circumstances steal our joy. As I wrote in 2017, early in my graduate school journey: “I deserve a quality life”:

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As often as you can, I think it’s worthwhile to list out things you can do to pick yourself up when you’re sad, things that you love doing because it feeds your soul, and just things you need to do to feel like a functional human. When it feels like nothing will make you feel better, just looking at list of things that make you smile reminds you that, at some point, all of this made you happy. During finals season, I’m going to make sure I come back to this list, so I can do things that center me and bring me a little peace. I deserve to have a quality life, and I am the only one who can ensure that for myself.  
[ (blackgirldoesgradschool.com), 2017]

Even early in my graduate school journey, as early as 2017, my goal was to maintain my own joy because I realized that I owed the Academy nothing and I am my own person. *That* I believe is part of the resistance. In an essay from *The Source of Self-Regard*, Toni Morrison writes of some of the “silencing challenges” of Afro-American art/literature, one which forces us our art to only be valuable if compared to Eurocentric art [Morrison 2019]. In a similar manner, the Academy seeks often only knowledge by Black scholars if it is presented in a way that mimics Western, imperialistic ideals. Choosing joy for Black scholars is the act of choosing to be whole in spite of what the Academy would rather us be: finding delight in self-expression when our voices are often interpreted as combative or aggressive, reveling in the reaction of the intended audiences of our work rather than the critiques of those who would intentionally misunderstand it, wearing our hair however we please in spite of the pressure of respectability [Cooper 2017].

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So if the arguments and claims I have staked so far are true:

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1. Resistance is labor.
2. Joy is resistance.

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Then...

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3. Joy must also be labor.

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It is, unfortunately, work, for Black people to remain joyous and retain joy for ourselves, particularly in moments of acute strife, such as the moment in which I write these very words — the summer of 2020. 2020 will be forever known globally for the Coronavirus; Black people will remember it as the summer in which we were driven to protest in the midst of a

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pandemic to demand justice for George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor and, and, and.... As Lu and Steele write in “Joy is Resistance,” “adapting strategies of song, signifying and storytelling online, Black users affirm that joy, too, is a meaningful way to subvert oppression and extend the resilience of Black oral culture” [Lu and Steele 2019, 835]. However, all of these strategies are *active*; they are things we must do and work towards to get to and remain in joy. This does not account for the ways in which we should be able to sit in our joy, to simply exist and be. Under this conceptualization, joy is labor.

In the spring of 2021, I was able to teach a course at my institution centering Black women in “the digital and future,” examining questions of fantasy, digital culture, and what could be. It attracted many students, particularly Black women undergraduates, looking for a space in which they could be intellectual rigorous about issues of personal concern and importance to them while also feeling safer than they might in other spaces. The uniqueness of the course was also indebted to its digital nature; we organized via Blackboard, our content management system, utilized a class Tumblr blog and Discord channel for communication and had weekly Zoom meetings for discussing content.<sup>[3]</sup> It enabled students to engage at their own pace, on their terms, and allowed for more freedom of expression.<sup>[4]</sup>

This course demanded a lot of me: I was called upon to think not just about how to make a classroom digital, but how to craft a unique digital classroom from the ground up. It was a situation that did not call for translation but imaginative speculation and creation. Joy became a defining characteristic of how I built that digital classroom with my students, which meant letting them use digital tools the ways they felt were intuitive which would lead to greater self-expression, offering more space for reflection with themselves and their peers. There is always much to learn from discipline, but more, I think, from freedom. As much as I learn from my Black woman graduate student peers as a young professor and thinker and writer, my ability to be insatiably curious with my students continued to push me further.

I argue, in the vein of Brock and Steele, that the digital ought to be a place of joy as well. As Black people, we find the ability to hold joy in tandem with pain. Lu and Steele argue that the use of particular technologies offers Black folks the ability to find and celebrate joy in the face of Black death: “Black users share and cultivate joy in ways that counter and resist the seemingly omnipresent images of Black Death that surround us” (831). Where we congregate to celebrate and *be*. I argue that there ought to be a space in the digital for Black folks, particular Black graduate students, some of whom go on to become professors and teachers, to go without doing the labor of educating about race. Remember: resistance is labor.

Black Digital Humanities scholars such as André Brock, Catherine Knight Steele, Moya Bailey, Meredith Clark and more have written about the ways Black folks use these types of digital platforms as ways of recreating public spheres for them. They argue that Black folks have always used and created and played in the digital, molding it until it serves us. In creating these spaces that are meant for us to simply exist but that are also public, Black graduate student creators have given others a window into our experiences. We shift from simply being Black online to doing labor online by creating these platforms, spaces and resources for others like us because only a select few in positions of power are interested and invested in our advancement. The result: we create the spaces and support networks we need ourselves.

To that end, for many scholars, racial justice is work they must do in addition. Whitmore’s podcast *Blk + In Grad School*, which has been helping scholars of color to and through their academic journeys since 2017, is in many ways periphery to her scholarship, but imperative for her wellbeing. The podcast, which has expanded into a digital network of several thousand followers on Twitter and Instagram and come to include an annual graduate school preparedness summit has formed collaborations with other Black digital content creators in graduate school, including a directory of Black graduate students blogging, vlogging, podcasting or using any means of digital methods to document their graduate school experience. Whitmore uses digital methods to create infrastructure to support Black graduate students; a strong act of resistance when one considers the myriad of ways academia gatekeeps. And yet, for all of the important infrastructure and networking labor Whitmore does in providing a place for Black graduate students to retreat, find and support each other, as the Academy stands established currently, none of this work will “count” in the eyes of a search committee or tenure committee. We, Black graduate students, know the worth of this work, however, and will attempt to continually lift it up.

Whitmore with *Blk + In Grad School* and Woods and Davis with #BlackInTheIvory are only two of many instances where digital resistance work manifests *in addition to* scholarship, in a manner that creates additional labor. During the 2020 uprising in Minneapolis following the murder of George Floyd, which spread nationwide in the midst of a global pandemic, graduate student Vanessa Anyanso began collecting donations to buy and run supplies for protestors and other organizations<sup>[5]</sup>, using Twitter and Instagram to amplify her calls for money. At the time of this writing, Anyanso has donated nearly \$20,000 worth of supplies. Dr. Autumn A. Griffin has turned to her follower base gained as a blogger and podcaster for her and Tiffany Lee's co-created and co-run website *Blackademia*, a network geared towards Black folks in academic spaces (not simply graduate school and higher education) to fundraise for support of various activist and community oriented organizations, including Anyanso's supply campaign — by selling bookmarks. While it may be tempting to dismiss such an act as “not digital humanities,” we must also remember the root of the word: digital — of or relating to the fingers. Do-It-Yourself, crafting and other prototyping and creative practices/making are at the core of digital humanities [Mauo-Flude 2017].

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This is why the work of André Brock becomes exceptionally important. Brock's *Distributed Blackness: African American Cybercultures*, which investigates the quotidian and libidinal pleasure of being Black online, inspires this work, as it will call for Black graduate students to pursue joy and being without negating the driving desire to present and show up online in particular ways. Brock argues the libidinal can be understood as pathos — similar, but distinct from affect [Brock 2019]. It is an energy that can be communally experienced through communicating culturally specific or shared experiences and contexts. While he also theorizes about joy, particularly in the digital, he rejects the need that it be for resistance purposes. Libidinal economy allows for us, Black people, to simply be [Brock 2019]. To sit in our emotions because we are human and we are entitled to them and for no other reason. This is, to circle back to the thesis of this article, at the core of why many Black women graduate students are turning to creating digital networks: we want to retain our joy.

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The digital gives us space to lean into and feel the messiness of our identities and our politics. As Bailey, Jackson & Welles describe for participants in the #YouOKSis hashtag, there is a feeling of catharsis associated with sharing stories and sparking conversation that may, hopefully, effect social change online [2020]. Black women graduate students often begin our forays into the digital as a means of self-making or finding a personal catharsis — but when we exhale, publicly, we often find many others releasing their stories and burdens as well. It's a shared experience that has always defined the feminisms of women of color — it simply also occurs now in the digital.

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## Conclusion

In the midst of digital resistance movements and finding solidarity through shared feelings of disenchantment with the possibilities of higher education exacerbated by a global pandemic, joy has been in short supply. Black women's participation in resistance efforts — whether it be antiracist demonstrations, actions against gender violence, living wage campaigns, etc. — challenge the impartiality and objectivity the Academy would have us believe we must uphold. The Academy is not neutral. The Academy is not exempt from oppressive practices. And as its Black graduate students are shining a mirror up to the gatekeepers so as to show every fault line and crack in the Ivory Tower as we know it, we still make space for those who will come after us.

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Digital practices like the ones I've explored here are often the brainchildren of Black women and queer graduate students, following a pattern of activism and advocating for our people that has existed for centuries. If we listen (or read) carefully, we will see that conversations about living wages for graduate students, the ability to find supportive mentorship, pedagogical innovation, restructuring our tenure system, responding to racism in the classroom, creating physical spaces for ourselves, our wellness in spite of working within an institution promotes productivity over health are all taking place online every day. Necessity breeds innovation.

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Where we conclude is with the realization and acceptance that Black women graduate students are doing the work of dismantling, learning and unlearning in the digital that, hopefully, will help scholars envision a new means of knowledge production that makes space for that which has existed at the margins of the institution. We are doing the work of resistance, which includes tending to our joy and prioritizing celebration, but also giving ourselves the freedom to be

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ourselves online, and making room for freer generations to come.

## Notes

[1] I extend gratitude to Dr. Tamara Wilkerson Dias and Dr. Autumn Adia Griffin, two Black Twitter friends who had recently finished or was finishing their graduate programs, for sending encouraging gifts during my comprehensive exams. Black women graduate students and early career scholars have forwarded my name for specific writing opportunities, some of my first in academia. Steven Nelson, Mary Shelley and I began a pandemic watch of *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, which grew to include more people, in particular Black women graduate students who needed moments of levity as we attempted to finish our programs during a global health crisis. As more folks gathered, we continued to watch more shows together, changing the hashtag each time for *Legend of Korra*, *She-Ra and the Princess of Power*, and *Steven Universe*. And Allanté Whitmore of *Blk + In Grad School* has been particularly diligent about including Black women graduate students on her podcast and during her year Grad School Success Summit.

[2] Since its inception, #BlackInTheIvory became contested ground vis-à-vis who had the claim to the hashtag as intellectual property — a dispute in and of itself showcases the difficulty Black graduate students have keeping a claim on their work.

[3] The students were tasked with writing three blog posts for our class Tumblr blog, “Blk Girls in the Future”:  
<https://blkgirlsinthefuture.tumblr.com/>

[4] In particular, students enjoyed digital functions where they could make asides without interrupting the person speaking, even if that person was them: the chat box in Zoom and in the hashtags at the bottom of their Tumblr posts. The hashtags in particular were useful rhetorical devices to express their full feeling about a given text without breaking the “scholarly” flow of their argument in the body of the text. The chat box allowed them to engage with enthusiasm during guest speaker visits without speaking over our guest.

[5] <https://www.startribune.com/i-m-in-danger-just-living-in-america-for-black-community-floyd-s-death-brings-more-grief-and-trauma/571242852/>

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