Me Too?: Erasure of Sexual Assault in Slave Narratives

By Laney Jolley Smith

Abstract:

With the MeToo era and the Time's Up movement, sexual assault is a part of the contemporary conversation that we must not ignore. However, documentation does not always give voice to those marginalized groups whose experience are often undocumented. Moreover, the place of black women in this movement is not given enough space. The voices of those who have suffered at the hands of slavery and those who have been silenced by it are often unheard. The purpose of this essay is to bring to light the experiences of sexual assault in slave narratives and to explore the ways in which they have been erased or hidden. The use of slave narratives is crucial in understanding the lives of black women during this time period and in shedding light on the systemic violence enacted on black female bodies. In her study "Gender and Violence in Cape Slave Narratives and Post-Reconstruction American Literature," Tanis, Farah, et al. write about the systemic violence enacted on black female bodies. They argue that women’s experiences are briefly voiced (albeit under exceptional, often violent, circumstances) within these movements. Unfortunately, this neglect of black female sexual assault victims has been perpetuated by the exclusion of their experiences from the national narrative.

Introduction

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Invisibility Contained: Contemporary Stories of Sexual Assault and Black Erasure

Invisibility Continued: Contemporary Stories of Sexual Assault and Black Erasure

Sources


A Historical Precedent of Silence

There are many reasons to review the violence and rape endured by enslaved black women as a part of the history of slavery. One of the main reasons is that it helps us understand the experiences of enslaved black women and the conditions under which they lived. One of the main reasons to review the violence and rape endured by enslaved black women is that it helps us understand the experiences of enslaved black women and the conditions under which they lived. While many actresses have come out in this movement against Harvey Weinstein, his team only forcefully pushed back when black actresses were subjected to the same story. It is critical to understand that rape and sexual assault against black women under slavery were acts of torture, and these accounts are not told that as a favored slave, she was probably subject to other types of violence at the hands of her master. While this is a partial explanation, there are other factors that contribute to the systematic violence enacted on black female bodies. In her study "Gender and Violence in Cape Slave Narratives and Post-Reconstruction American Literature," Tanis, Farah, et al. write about the systematic violence enacted on black female bodies. They argue that women’s experiences are briefly voiced (albeit under exceptional, often violent, circumstances) within these movements. Unfortunately, this neglect of black female sexual assault victims has been perpetuated by the exclusion of their experiences from the national narrative.

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