

Foreword

. . . we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. As black women we see black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face.

—The Combahee River Collective, 1983

. . . dissidents are anchored to revolutionary possibilities that demand both intellectual discipline and irrepressible courage to speak the unspeakable, to stand alone if necessary, and to accept the material and emotional consequences of tramping over hegemony's "holy" ground.

—Antonia Darder, 2011

I am reminded while reading Joy James's provocative essay collection, *Seeking the Beloved Community: A Feminist Race Theory Reader*, of Antonia Darder's riveting anthology, *A Dissident Voice: Essays in Culture, Pedagogy, and Power*. Educators, scholars, endowed professors, activists, critical race theorists, *dissidents*—James and Darder emerge from marginalized/racialized communities in the United States and Puerto Rico. It is important to embrace the dissident women among us, so often maligned and misunderstood. For nearly two decades, Joy James's dissenting voice has been loud and unrelenting, beginning with the publication of her first book, *Resisting State Violence: Radicalism, Gender, and Race in U.S. Culture* (1996), followed by *Shadowboxing: Representations of Black*

Feminist Politics and Transcending the Talented Tenth: Black Leaders and American Intellectuals. Her edited books include *Spirit, Space and Survival: African American Women in (White) Academe*; *Warfare in the American Homeland: Policing and Prison in a Penal Democracy*; *The New Abolitionists: (Neo) Slave Narratives and Contemporary Prison Writings*; *Imprisoned Intellectuals: America's Political Prisoners Write on Life, Liberation, and Rebellion*; *States of Confinement: Policing, Detention, and Prisons*; *The Black Feminist Reader*; and *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*. One of the most prolific and radical, black feminist scholars, she is completing a book on interracial rape cases, tentatively titled, *Memory, Shame, and Rage*.

Like the *Angela Y. Davis Reader* that James edited, her own feminist race theory reader underscores the heterogeneity of contemporary black feminist discourse, a perennial theme in James's writings. Like dissident Angela Davis and the architects of the Combahee River Collective document above, Joy James emerges from a robust African American left tradition that is anticapitalist, anti-imperialist, and passionately critical of the U.S. state. Davis and James have been perhaps the most vocal black feminist voices with respect to the ravages of the prison industrial complex and U.S.-sponsored violence, including genocide, here and around the globe. James's work has been pioneering as well in its careful attention to radical black women such as Harriet Tubman, Assata Shakur, Angela Davis, and Ramona Africa. In fact, without James's work, it would be difficult to imagine the existence of black women revolutionaries since African American political history has privileged male figures such as Huey Newton, George Jackson, Malcolm X, and Mumia Abu-Jamal, to name a few.

While most of the essays are not new and have appeared in various publications, this Joy James reader is at its core a portrait of "the making of a dissident voice," to borrow from the title of Antonia Darder's introductory essay in the reader to which I alluded earlier. What we most desperately need in a world that fears and silences opposition—or worse—are revolutionaries who speak truth to power and beckon us to stand with them in solidarity. *A luta continua*. The struggle continues.

BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTALL,
Women's Research and Resource Center, Spelman College