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DeVerne Calloway: “I am a Teacher---I will Teach”

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Abstract

In 1962, DeVerne Calloway was the first Black woman elected to the Missouri General Assembly and the first Black woman elected to any public office in the state of Missouri. A political activist and educator by nature, a legislator by trade, DeVerne has decades of historically documented critical work within the intersections of race, gender, and class. Her work, though well documented, remains undertheorized. This study seeks to explore DeVerne's life and work through Black feminist theory and Critical Race Theory's tenets of intersectionality and interest convergence, ultimately tracing her actions as a public intellectual. Written as an educational biography, this study focuses on delineating how DeVerne's work cut through domains of power, shaping the political, social and cultural development of St. Louis's Black community.

Acknowledgements

I owe much to many. This achievement surely is not mine alone; it is the culmination of a lifetime of experiences, throughout which I have never been alone. I have been accompanied by phenomenally loving and loyal family, friends, scholars, students, and colleagues, who are my fundamental inspirations.

To DeVerne, I bow. May your legacy be told and retold; may your contributions to Black liberation be further studied and situated. It is time people learn to know you, to *see* you. May your essence live on.

I am profoundly thankful to Dr. Matthew Davis. You have encouraged me in every step of this achievement. Your brilliance and insight are unmatched. It was you who introduced me to DeVerne three years ago, and you still continue to provide me ideas and platforms for my research and writing. You've watched me cry and want to give up, and yet, you never gave up on me. With heartfelt appreciation, thank you.

To my committee, Dr. Thomasina Hassler, Dr. Carl Hoagland, and Dr. Shanté Lyons, thank you in perpetuum. Dr. Hassler, I've loved every course I had with you, and this paper's theoretical foundation is a testament to that, as well as to your insights from which I've learned an abundance.

To my husband, Marty, I would be nowhere good without you. Exactly a decade ago, I embarked on my teaching journey, and it was tough. You had to vicariously relive what most teachers, including you, want to forget – their first year in the classroom. You supported me emotionally and pedagogically. Through your cards, kind notes, countless hours setting up my classroom, and sound advice, you always helped me believe I would

succeed. Four years ago when I began my doctoral studies, you stepped up even more. This time around, however, it wasn't just me that you looked out for; we had a child to raise, and I'm sure at times you felt like a single dad. Yet, you handled it seamlessly. I love you, and I thank you, and I simply would not be at this point without you.

To Clara, may your curiosity and zeal for life continue to flourish. Keep asking questions. Never stop learning. Do not discard your dreams. You will go far; you are already on your way. I will never forget you telling people, "My mommy is going to be a doctor – not for sick people. She is going to be a doctor of thinking." I love you so incredibly much.

Mom and Dad, thank you for always encouraging me, supporting me, and being proud of me. Thank you for believing in me and helping me find my way. Your lifelong support of all my endeavors will never be forgotten. This achievement was only possible because of you, your teachings, your values, and your sacrifices. I love you both.

To Erin, I am intensely appreciative of our sisterhood. I've always looked up to you and admired you, and you always made me feel included. You taught me that it is okay to go against the grain and to be different. You illuminated selflessness and perspective, and through that, you've enlightened me and truly transformed me. I admire you, and I love you.

To Walter, I sorely wish you were still here, as you were when I began this doctoral journey. I miss you. To Dorothy, I fiercely adore and admire you. To both of you, thank you for your wisdom, support, humor, and love. I am proud and honored to be part of your family.

Definition of Terms

1. **Cultural Domain of Power** – A power relation that is comprised of social divisions between class, gender, and race that creates a false and manufactured message of equality, of a level playing field, and of fair competition.¹
2. **Disciplinary Domain of Power** – A power relation that is comprised of how, in the organization of power, “different people find themselves encountering different treatment regarding which rules apply to them and how those rules will be implemented.”²
3. **Interest Convergence** – “The interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interest of whites.”³
4. **Interpersonal Domain of Power** – A power relation that is comprised of “how people relate to one another, and who is advantaged and disadvantaged within social interactions.”⁴
5. **Intersectionality** – “Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people’s lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division,

¹ Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016) 11.

² Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 9.

³ Kevin Brown and Darrell D. Jackson, “The History and Conceptual Elements of Critical Race Theory,” in *Handbook of Critical Race Theory in Education*, ed. Marvin Lynn and Adrienne D. Dixson (New York: Routledge, 2013), 17.

⁴ Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 7.

be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other.”⁵

6. **Race Woman** – A Black-or-Brown-bodied woman at the center of creating an “intellectual genealogy and geography” for and of the work of other race women “as a practice of resistance against intellectual erasure.”⁶
7. **Structural Domain of Power** – A power relation that examines how “intersecting power relations of class, gender, race, and nation shape” institutionalization.⁷

⁵ Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 2.

⁶ Brittney C. Cooper, *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women* (Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, 2016) 26.

⁷ Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 12.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background:

“A revolution is needed—but it should be instigated within the system. The causes of a deteriorating system must be high-lighted and remedied (sic).”⁸ Thus spoke educational, political, and social activist DeVerne Calloway (herein referred to as DeVerne) in 1984 to a class of University of Missouri School of Education graduates about her vision for systemic education reform for St. Louis schools. Rewind the clock thirty years from that speech, and St. Louis – like the rest of the nation – was reeling from the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which forced public schools to navigate desegregation mandates as a matter of legality. However, despite what was being done on paper, Black schools were still Black, and white schools were still white. Attempts toward integration seemed superficial at best. Fast forward the clock thirty years from DeVerne’s speech, and St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) were in the clutches of a state takeover, having their elected school board replaced with an appointed Special Administrative Board.⁹ DeVerne passed away in 1993, and did not live to see the state takeover; however, her thirty years of advocacy prior to her death stand as testament to an unwavering and steadfast devotion to improving outcomes to the underserved populations of St. Louis City, where she arrived in 1952 – two years prior to the *Brown* decision.

⁸ DeVerne Calloway, “The Teaching Profession: Is it an Endangered Species?” April 26, 1984, 5, S0551 Roll 19, Folder 235 “Speeches, 1963-1987,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

⁹ Malcolm Gay, “State Takes Control of Troubled Public Schools in St. Louis,” *New York Times*, March 23, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/23/us/23missouri.html>.

On June 17, 1916, DeVerne was born in Memphis, where she spent her childhood and young adulthood, bearing witness to the oppressive throws of the Jim Crow South. She attended segregated schools, and ultimately graduated with honors from Booker T. Washington High School in 1934.¹⁰ She attended LeMoyne-Owen College, a historically Black college in Memphis, whose roots are connected to educating freed and runaway slaves as early as 1862.¹¹ She graduated cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Social Science.¹² She did graduate work at both Atlanta University (1939-40), also a historically Black college, and Northwestern University in Chicago (1948).¹³ In between her graduate school stints, she taught school in Vicksburg, MS and Cedartown, GA.¹⁴ DeVerne said her experience at Cherry Hill Elementary School in Vicksburg brought her face-to-face with the harshest realities of a segregated school system. As told to the UMSL Education graduates, “What a shock to find out that as an eager young Black teacher, it was written that I should have to teach at one-half the salary of my white peers, in a building constructed prior to the Civil War...”¹⁵

Although DeVerne was only a classroom teacher for three years, her experiences propelled her to continue her work outside of the classroom and inside a system of policies – fighting systemic racial injustices that undergirded and reinforced the insolvent conditions in which she had taught. She volunteered for the United Service Organization (USO) in 1942, and in 1943, she joined the American Red Cross, through which she

¹⁰ Typescript of “Biographical Sketch,” n.d., S0551, Roll 2, Folder 24 “Autobiographical Material, 1983-1986,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹¹ “Biographical Sketch,” n.d.

¹² “Biographical Sketch,” n.d.

¹³ “Biographical Sketch,” n.d.

¹⁴ “Biographical Sketch,” n.d.

¹⁵ Calloway, “The Teaching Profession,” 3.

served in the China-Burma-India theatre. Of note and of character, DeVerne led a protest at the Red-Cross facilities in India over the segregation of Negro soldiers in the facilities.¹⁶

Following her years of service with the Red Cross, DeVerne moved to Chicago, Illinois, where she continued her pursuit of social reform and justice, working for the Fair Employment Practices Office, the Jewish Welfare Fund, and the Chicago Health Department.¹⁷ In 1948, she married Ernest Calloway, a teamster and activist. In 1952, DeVerne moved to St. Louis, where she tirelessly volunteered for the St. Louis NAACP branch, which incited her to become more politically active, organizing for the successful election of people of color to public office. She was instrumental in helping Reverend John J. Hicks be elected as the first Black person to the St. Louis School Board, and Senator T.D. McNeal, the first Black person elected to the Missouri Senate.¹⁸ Certainly, her efforts helped her focus-in on her own political aspirations as a vehicle to uplifting St. Louis's Black community. In 1962, DeVerne was the first Black woman elected to the Missouri state legislature, where she remained, being reelected every two years through her last term in 1980, after which she retired in 1982.¹⁹ DeVerne quickly earned a reputation as a pioneer for social welfare for those in St. Louis's Black community. Her causes were many: education, reproductive justice, employment, housing, welfare, and improved conditions for prisoners. Throughout her advocacy, she took issues head-on, intentionally meddling in terrains that had previously been unchartered – especially by a

¹⁶ "DeVerne Calloway Papers, Introduction" The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis, accessed November 14, 2018, at <https://files.shsmo.org/manuscripts/saint-louis/S0012.pdf>.

¹⁷ "Biographical Sketch," n.d.

¹⁸ "Biographical Sketch," n.d.

¹⁹ "Biographical Sketch," n.d.

Black woman. Moreover, she approached her activism with intersectionality, meaning she did not examine issues monolithically; rather, she confronted them through the interlinking of race, gender, and social class, and through the interlinking of the issues themselves. For example, DeVerne was instrumental in “saving” Harris Stowe College (HSC), now Harris-Stowe State University (HSSU), a designated historically black college and university (HBCU) in the city of St. Louis, by having it become part of the state of Missouri’s higher education system, in short, a state-funded college. The college, whose mission was to offer low-cost higher education in the form of teacher preparedness to assist in transforming St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS), was financially strapped. St. Louis Public Schools was facing its own funding challenges for K-12 education and could not afford HSC. Without DeVerne’s sustained legislative attention, HSC faced closure, which also meant a lack of geographic and affordable access to higher education opportunities for St. Louis’s Black population. Of her ten terms in the Missouri General Assembly, DeVerne dedicated the majority of her efforts to education, serving on the Education Committee for nine sessions, including as the committee chairperson for two: the 79th and 80th sessions.²⁰

DeVerne approached her legislative role in a manner she knew best: as an educator – an educator to both those in her community and to the (mostly white) state’s lawmakers. While her approach took the form of an educator, her aim centered on cutting through domains of power that left those in her community with inequitable access and the perpetuation of the *haves* against the *have-nots*. Fiercely focused and fiercely compassionate, DeVerne was a force with which to be reckoned, “Friends label her one

²⁰ “Biographical Sketch,” n.d.

of the most unselfish persons they have ever known; foes cite her as a formidable opponent.”²¹

Purpose of the Study:

Throughout the course of my adult life, I have been drawn to voices of either underserved populations or to voices that have been silenced or suffered erasure. Since beginning my doctoral studies, I have unfortunately grown accustomed to the gap in the documentation of Black women’s contributions to educational practice and policy. During independent archival research, I began investigating DeVerne’s contributions as a policy maker, public educator, and advocate for St. Louis’s Black community. Throughout her life, she fully inhabited and propagated contemporary strategies as a critical knowledge producer, activist, and educator; yet, she remains unknown and her accomplishments remain unrecognized. The outcome is not just that of an untold story; it’s one of an incomplete historical record.

Storytelling is how life is recorded; but, so much of what has been shared and retold stems from narratives belonging to dominant culture; thus, the resulting persuasion is centered on white narratives. In the hope that a new, truer reality is formed, Critical Race Theory (CRT) calls for locating and centering Black voices. The aim of this study is twofold. The first intention is to tell the history of a Black woman’s legacy, whose work has virtually gone unnoticed and uncited. Critical race theorists have called for counter stories demonstrating methods that go against the further marginalization of people of

²¹ Typescript of “DeVerne L. Calloway State Representative 81st District” n.d., S0551, Roll 2, Folder 24 “Autobiographical Material, 1983-1986,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

color, whose voices have historically not been heard and have intentionally been silenced.²² Thus, this study locates DeVerne's work as she navigated educational and social policies that disproportionately affected St. Louis's Black community. As a result, the second purpose of this study is to explore DeVerne's work through CRT's tenets of interest convergence and intersectionality, specifically that "When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other."²³ Intersectional analysis of DeVerne's work will center on race, gender, and class while illuminating the critical intellectualism she produced as she navigated through intersectionality's interdisciplinary, cultural, disciplinary, and structural power domains.²⁴ As a result of intersectional analysis, the study also extrapolates her work within a Black feminist framework.

Research Question:

1. What actions did DeVerne take toward racial equity for St. Louis's Black community?

Scope of Study:

This study's methodological framework blends both educational biography and case study. Though loosely defined, educational biography includes the examination of "how one describes the behavior of others, new ways to appraise the impact of the

²² Daniella Ann Cook, "Blurring the Boundaries: The Mechanics of Creating Composite Characters," in *Handbook of Critical Race Theory in Education*, ed. Marvin Lynn and Adrienne D. Dixon (New York: Routledge, 2013), 182.

²³ Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 2.

²⁴ Brittney C. Cooper, *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women* (Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, 2016) 2.

pedagogical process on students and teachers, new ways to explain how educational policy manifests itself in the lives of individuals.”²⁵ Whether in the classroom or working within her legislative capacity, Calloway was a teacher -- her pupils were comprised of students in desks, and constituents in St. Louis City, as well as the greater public, whose attention she sought in order to raise awareness and gain momentum on key political and social issues. Educational biographer Robert Bullough, Jr. said the purpose of biographical writing is “to reveal meaning as a way to provide understanding,” and that it demonstrates “potential for teacher training...in the complexity and thoughtfulness that appear whenever one takes a biographical perspective.”²⁶ He is using the term “teacher” to define one who imparts knowledge or understanding, particularly in the social realm.

In describing biographical writing, Kridel explains, “Perhaps one of the more interesting aspects of biography—if not one of its greatest attributes—is the actual blurring of genres, combining areas, topics and paradigms.”²⁷ The “blurring of genres” is dichotomous in that on one hand, it opens up potential for more flexibility; on the other hand, it does not follow a precise methodological approach, thus creating the possibility for criticism as not being serious scholarship. Kridel acknowledges that case studies, too, receive similar criticism, and offers how biography can fill in gaps and connotative meanings that case studies often do not:

Under the influence of social science and the quest for both reliable and valid conclusions, the process of emplotment in case study research has lost some of its mystery, being bounded by technical scaffolding and discussed in a decidedly technical jargon. Part of what is lost is the wonder the biographer feels when he or

²⁵ Craig Kridel, *Writing Educational Biography: Explorations in Qualitative Research* (Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), 4.

²⁶ Kridel, *Writing Educational Biography*, 16.

²⁷ Kridel, *Writing Educational Biography*, 10.

she has ‘got it,’ when the plot first begins to emerge, then pours forth, and the elements suddenly flow together and make sense.²⁸

The case study guidelines this project utilizes are simply relegated to two primary principles: the researcher being “the primary instrument of data collection and analysis”; and DeVerne being the single object of the study.²⁹ In constructing DeVerne’s educational biography, my research is centered on documents kept within the DeVerne Calloway Collection at the Missouri Historical Society of St. Louis, which consists of 27 microfilm rolls and four boxes of autobiographical material, scrapbooks of political publications, and records from her years of service as a legislator. In order to ensure a smooth and valid process, I draw upon my background as a trained journalist, which includes experiences of mining, cataloging, and analyzing documents in order to reconstruct a life story that illustrates a development of deeper meanings. Through the exploration of DeVerne’s actions, this study is, by proxy, a life-writing of DeVerne, where her life’s threads are connected, interwoven, and displayed, thus, not only answering the research questions, but also inviting meaning making as readers embark on a journey of her life story.³⁰ The goal is to illuminate understanding of her practices, values and mindsets, while remaining committed to the possibility that her actions and life experiences may be transferable, inspirational, and liberatory, which “is when biography transcends the bounds of qualitative research and brings together the disparate communities in education so that we can consider the universal in a single human life.”³¹

²⁸ Kridel, *Writing Educational Biography*, 28.

²⁹ Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (4th edition) (Jossey-Bass, 2016). 37-38.

³⁰ Kridel, *Writing Educational Biography*, 25.

³¹ Kridel, *Writing Educational Biography*, 11.

The primary limitation of this study is that DeVerne is deceased and cannot be interviewed. Her husband, Ernest Calloway, is also deceased, and the couple did not have children. As a result, I am relying on documents contained in the archives at the State Historical Society of Missouri and newspaper archives to construct her life story.

Significance of Study:

This study defines DeVerne's life, her actions, and the societal transformations she piloted. It tells the story of how a Black woman navigated a racially unjust society, leveraging her unwavering commitment to the Black community. It explains how DeVerne engaged in white-dominated spaces, tirelessly cutting through power domains in order to inspire, incite, and invest in the Black community. The study situates DeVerne as an architect of Black empowerment and as a pillar of her community. The conclusions of this study result in an improved understanding of how Black women, who have historically been silenced, invalidated, and erased, can substantiate their presence in society. The findings of this research could be useful to local and regional historians, the current-and-future St. Louis Black community, Black women everywhere, biographers with an interest in the restoration of erased voices, social justice advocates, and policy makers.

Inspiration for this study stems from two domains: organizational and contextual. Organizational ingenuity in biographical writing comes from Shante' Lyons, whose dissertation on the biographical account of Doxey A. Wilkerson, has provided a framework for this study. Contextually, inspiration comes from educator and civil rights activist Septima Clark in *Freedom's Teacher* by Katherine Charron; Brittney Cooper's, *Beyond Respectability*, in which the liberatory work of several "race women" were

highlighted; Imani Perry's, *Looking for Lorraine*, which highlights “the radiant and radical life of Lorraine Hansberry”; and Paula Giddings, *Ida: A Sword Among Lions*, which extrapolates Ida Barnet Wells' life of activism. What these books have in common are similar stories of Black women who were willing to jeopardize their livelihoods in order to seek racial justice; and yet, their stories, their Black womanhood, and their life's private and personal livelihoods – like DeVerne's – remain largely untold.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Theory:

DeVerne understood that racial disparities were not only systemic; they were, as noted in CRT, a normal part of US society.³² DeVerne aimed to make structural and systemic racism abnormal. This research explores her work with the St. Louis Black community through the lens of CRT, focusing on its tenets of interest convergence; race as a social construction; and intersectionality.³³

A central hallmark of CRT is that its tenets are pervasive in US society from past to present. Although CRT was not conceptualized as a formal theory until 1989 – seven years after DeVerne retired – it is relevant to her life's work, as well as to future educational issues. Metaphorically speaking, inscriptions of CRT are as deeply embedded in US society as the founding of this country itself. It is for that reason that DeVerne's work be examined using CRT, focusing specifically on the tenet of intersectionality as an analytic tool to examine the organization of power in four domains: interpersonal [who is dis/advantaged within social interactions]; disciplinary [how one encounters and experiences society's “rules,” biases and privileges]; cultural [the manufacturing of

³² Gloria Ladson-Billings, “Critical Race Theory: What it is Not!,” in *Handbook of Critical Race Theory in Education*, ed. Marvin Lynn and Adrienne D. Dixson (New York: Routledge, 2013), 35, 37.

³³ Ladson-Billings, “Critical Race Theory: What it is Not!,” 35, 37.

messages that social inequalities under laws of equality are fairly produced]; and structural [how intersecting power relations cast and frame social institutions].³⁴

As a Black female social and political leader from 1962-1982, DeVerne spent the vast majority of her professional life in white-male dominated spaces. In order to do Black work in white spaces, she had to navigate waters previously untouched by Black women in Missouri. That meant she needed more than just an understanding of the Black community she sought to represent; she needed a vision, a platform, and a steadfast commitment to proving her worth as not only a woman, but as a Black woman – a societal double marginality, then and now.

CRT's roots stemmed from a need to respond to 1950's, 1960's, and early 1970's historical developments that Critical Legal Studies (CLS) scholars believed were no longer effectively representing racial minorities, and instead, perpetuating racial oppression.³⁵ That DeVerne's work is situated within a period of both racial progress and a turn towards a reversal of progress, that she was a Black female lawmaker during much of this time, and that CRT had not yet been conceptualized during her lawmaking years, is what led me to analyze her work within the tenets of CRT. CRT's central tenets of interest convergence, race as a social construction, and intersectionality have been used as analytic tools for understanding societal inequities in a variety of areas, including education, class, healthcare, welfare, and housing – all of which DeVerne also advocated for improvements in for the Black community.

³⁴ Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 7-13.

³⁵ Kevin Brown and Darrell D. Jackson, "The History and Conceptual Elements of Critical Race Theory," in *Handbook of Critical Race Theory in Education*, ed. Marvin Lynn and Adrienne D. Dixson (New York: Routledge, 2013), 9, 12, 14.

The first major tenet of CRT, interest convergence, is centered on the idea that “The interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interest of whites.”³⁶ For example, DeVerne understood that her legislative push for reproductive justice had to be centered on women’s (in totality) right to choose rather than the disproportionate ways in which an 1835 law affected Black women.

The second major tenet of CRT, race as a social construction, rests on the premise that critical race theorists recognize the paradoxical relationship between scientific assertions that biologically there are no perceptible racial differences and race is an institutionalized form of power and control.³⁷ Critical race theorists recognize that American politics shape and construct the idea and definitions of race.³⁸ DeVerne – through her political activities – attempted to cut through such power in order to recast the meaning of Black against a backdrop of whiteness.

The next major tenet of CRT, intersectionality, plays a central focus of this study. That DeVerne – a Black female lawmaker, and the first of such in the state of Missouri – worked across, within, and at the intersections of race, class, and gender, situates both her identity and her work’s categorical combinations in a way that CRT scholars maintain must be studied concurrently rather than adopted monolithically.³⁹

³⁶ Brown and Jackson, “The History and Conceptual Elements of Critical Race Theory,” 17.

³⁷ Ladson-Billings, “Critical Race Theory: What it is Not!,” 38-39.

³⁸ Lawrence Parker and Marvin Lynn, “What’s Race Got to Do With It? Critical Race Theory’s Conflicts With and Connections to Qualitative Research Methodology and Epistemology,” in *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education*, ed. Edward Taylor, David Gillborn, and Gloria Ladson-Billings (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2016), 146.

³⁹ Ladson-Billings, “Critical Race Theory: What it is Not!,” 40.

Kimberle' Crenshaw is credited as the scholar who, in 1991, coined the term intersectionality, specifically regarding how race and gender intersect structurally and politically in relation to violence against Black women.⁴⁰ However, that landmark manuscript followed her previous work in which she theorized that intersections of race and gender are not mutually exclusive.⁴¹

Crenshaw's study noted that the most-pressing problem was how values are attached to identities which create and perpetuate power in the form of social hierarchies.⁴² Of particular interest is a question Crenshaw asks on the final page of her manuscript. "If, as this analysis asserts, history and context determine the utility of identity politics, how then do we understand identity politics today, especially in light of our recognition of multiple dimensions of identity?"⁴³ Crenshaw ends with a call-to-action for further intersectional analyses that decentralize singular group identities in order to build a more robust awareness of societal expression.⁴⁴

As intersectionality became omnipresent within the university, scholars recognized a new lens from which to view not only social inequities, but also the power relations that cemented such inequities. Such a lens allows for the possibility to use intersectionality as an analytic tool to better understand first, what power dynamics are at play; and second, how power domains institutionalize privilege and oppression. DeVerne's actions and nearly two decades of work will be analyzed within

⁴⁰ Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (Jul. 1991) 1244.

⁴¹ Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1, article 8 (1989) 139.

⁴² Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins," 1297.

⁴³ Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins," 1299.

⁴⁴ Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins," 1299.

intersectionality's four domains of power: interpersonal, disciplinary, cultural, and structural.⁴⁵ The recognition of intersectionality and the delineations of power within intersectionality during the past three decades impels the analysis of DeVerne's work which is virtually unstudied and thus, undertheorized in extant literature.

The CRT tenets collectively demonstrate both explanation and examples of how DeVerne's work – which pre-dates CRT's advent – reflects the need for theoretical analysis. Her activism is situated within interest convergence, race as a social construction, and intersectionality.

Black Feminism: Erasure of Black Women's Voices:

“Many black women thinkers labor under the exigencies of historical triage.”⁴⁶

DeVerne's name is almost completely devoid from university scholarship, commonly tied to her husband's work as a union leader, or has been relegated to that of a memorial scholarship and award. Historically, Black female leaders have suffered erasure. Their actions, their life's work, their contributions to society, and their intellectual agendas either go unnoticed or are merely complemented in sidebars to that of Black male or white male and female counterparts. In sociopolitical movements, including the Civil Rights Movement, Black women played second fiddle to Black men in order to bolster a collective Black empowerment. Thus, US history delivers the message that Black women's voices are inconsequential, irrelevant, or cannot be trusted.⁴⁷

Scholar Brittney C. Cooper discusses this phenomenon, noting that Black women's intellectual legacies and knowledge production have the potential to shape

⁴⁵ Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 7-13.

⁴⁶ Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 2.

⁴⁷ Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 2.

future landscapes.⁴⁸ Cooper resurrects the term “race woman,” from Pauline Hopkins, who first used the term in 1902, describing a Black-or-Brown-bodied woman at the center of creating an “intellectual genealogy and geography” for and of the work of other race women “as a practice of resistance against intellectual erasure.”⁴⁹ Cooper argues race women’s intellectual contributions remain “greatly understudied.”⁵⁰ The Combahee River Collective – a group of Black feminists who formed in 1974 to define Black female politics for and by Black women – note the US’s fascination with a handful of Black women activists, like Sojourner Truth or Harriet Tubman, yet they exist as outliers to “thousands upon thousands” of unknown Black female leaders whose political work have gone unnoticed and undocumented.⁵¹ DeVerne embodies true race womanhood, yet a vast gap exists in the documentation and analysis of her activism in extant literature.

Establishing DeVerne’s race womanhood and activism as part of the historical record reaffirms the message that Black women’s praxis matters. Extant literature lacks theorization of Black women’s critical praxis, creating a need for this study to demonstrate a more complete and accurate historical account of DeVerne’s work, which is a backdrop capable of shaping and fulfilling future movements. Her work cut through domains of power, and with proper analysis and theorization, it has the possibility to reform and restore, paving the path for the pendulum to swing in a new direction – a direction of honesty, hope, and healing, and of trusting Black women.

DeVerne and Extant Literature:

⁴⁸ Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 10.

⁴⁹ Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 26.

⁵⁰ Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 16.

⁵¹ “The Combahee River Collective Statement,” Combahee River Collective, accessed October 18, 2018, <http://circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html>.

DeVerne's work has been briefly noted in only two pieces of literature:

Grassroots of the Gateway and *For Dignity and Power: Black Women's Political Leadership in Postwar St. Louis*.⁵² The briefest mention resides in Clarence Lang's *Grassroots of the Gateway*, in which he mentions that she participated in an NAACP-CORE alliance boycott of St. Louis's Federal Reserve Bank in October 1963, further demonstrating her willingness to meddle for the sake of civil rights and to fight wealth distribution inequities.⁵³ The author further notes DeVerne's integrity being questioned as a result of ties to the St. Louis city treasurer and therefore to the sitting mayor, though the one doing the questioning was at political odds with her union-leader husband, Ernest Calloway.⁵⁴ This political feud stemmed from a group of younger Democratic committeeman seeking control of five additional St. Louis City wards, which would require them to "sweep aside older 'Uncle Tom' leaders" like "the Calloways."⁵⁵ Lang also notes DeVerne's work in fighting a redistricting bill that would have gerrymandered eight Black districts into three, illustrating a snippet of her work fighting residential and political zoning inequities.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, that two of the four mentions of DeVerne in Lang's book are tied to her husband, demonstrates not only a gap in the literature about her work, but also it elucidates Black women's political work being vastly undocumented and undertheorized.

⁵² Clarence Lang, *Grassroots at the Gateway: Class Politics and Black Freedom Struggle in St. Louis, 1936-75* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2009).

Keona K. Ervin, "For Dignity and Power: Black Women's Political Leadership in Postwar St. Louis," *Journal of Civil and Human Rights* 1, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2015).

⁵³ Lang, *Grassroots at the Gateway*, 165.

⁵⁴ Lang, *Grassroots at the Gateway*, 175.

⁵⁵ Lang, *Grassroots at the Gateway*, 180.

⁵⁶ Lang, *Grassroots at the Gateway*, 205.

For Dignity and Power: Black Women's Political Leadership in Postwar St.

Louis features the organized resistance of five Black women, including DeVerne, against racialized poverty. DeVerne's work in political meddling was noted.

Black opponents criticized her refusal to work within the city's Democratic Party machine, her 'negative attitude towards God,' as well as her refusal to affiliate with any particular church, and urged voters to find someone who 'would have been more acceptable to the body politic,' as a regular political commentator in Calloway's *New Citizen* newspaper put it.⁵⁷

In essence, DeVerne was highlighted for her dignified agitation to the St. Louis political scene. The piece further notes her social justice work for single mothers, the disabled, young, elderly, women workers and their children, unemployed pregnant women, the passage of a state minimum wage law, support of reproductive rights, and prisoners' rights.⁵⁸ While the article summarizes her work as evidence of her resistance efforts, it does not provide theorization of her work within intersectionality's domains of power, nor does it utilize CRT as a theoretical framework; thus demonstrating a need for this study.

Additional evidence of DeVerne's contributions to St. Louis's Black community is traceable through her work as co-editor and publisher of *Citizen Crusader*, later renamed *The New Citizen*, a small St. Louis-focused bi-monthly newspaper that covered civil rights and Black politics from 1960-1962. With Ernest as the newspaper's publisher and DeVerne as executive editor, DeVerne had her first public platform of record. In the paper's first three editions with the Calloways at the helm (June 9-July 21, 1961),

⁵⁷ Ervin, "For Dignity and Power," 144.

⁵⁸ Ervin, "For Dignity and Power," 144-145.

DeVerne seized the opportunity to write her own column, titled, “around the town,” in which she demonstrated both political prowess and social musings on, of, and about St. Louis’s pre-Civil-Rights-Act society. In her debut column, she begins lovingly, offering up summertime fun activities for children, such as de-dandelioning a yard by giving each child a basket to fill, then to use the dandelions “for all kinds of play,” “laying out designs of faces, flags, and stars.”⁵⁹ Padding this, she proposes another activity – a sponge-toss game using hula hoops. Then, with deliberate diction, her tone takes a careful-but-political shift to safety for children, in which she cautions, but almost chides, parents to watch children more closely when they have access to the sidewalks and streets because “last year 63 pedestrians were killed in St. Louis.”⁶⁰ Both establishing her ethos and leaving readers to heed her warning, she shifts her tone back to one with more festivity, noting prize winners and out-of-town guests who had visited St. Louis. And with intentional calculation, she transposes again to politics, in a paragraph titled, “Women’s Influence,” which of no coincidence is to tout political ally Senator T.D. McNeal, who DeVerne said spoke “to the influence of Women in Government at the clubhouse of the Associated Colored Women’s Clubs on Cabanne. Senator McNeal was generous in his praise of the efforts of women in the modern day to play a more active role in the government of local, state and national affairs.”⁶¹ The organization of her column with carefully placed and balanced social and political commentary, along with

⁵⁹ DeVerne Calloway, “Around the Town,” *The New Citizen*, June 9, 1961, Vol I Number 23, S0540, Box 016, Folder 319, Calloway, Ernest Addenda, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

⁶⁰ Calloway, “Around the Town,” June 9, 1961.

⁶¹ DeVerne Calloway, “Women’s Influence,” *The New Citizen*, June 9, 1961, Vol I Number 23, S0540, Box 016, Folder 319, Calloway, Ernest Addenda, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

the reverberation of her words honing in on women in politics, are enchanting. It is clear she knew what she was doing. She was subtly but slyfully laying the groundwork for her bid for state representative, which was just one short year away. Further, this demonstrates the location of DeVerne's political meddling in an unexpected place, which Scholar Brittney Cooper notes is key for documenting and analyzing the work of race women.⁶²

The New Citizen's second edition, on June 23, 1961, featured a cover story about the Freedom Riders. Incensed and holding true to her activism, DeVerne's second column begins with both a political and emancipatory spirit:

There is much pro and con discussion on the "Freedom Riders." Should they observe a "cooling off" period? Are they contributing to increased racial tensions?" Wouldn't it be better to let the Southerners solve their own problems, etc., etc.? For each question there is probably a convincing and persuasive argument favoring inertia, or indifference to the existing conditions of intolerance and racial segregation. In our opinion, **any action** by any dedicated group working within the framework of law and order, and aimed at the elimination of discrimination because of race, creed or color is **Good** and ought to continue.⁶³

DeVerne's voice and vision are explicit and direct. Though not particularly radical, she is situating herself as a pillar of the community, as a trusted theorist, and as an intellectual capable of inserting herself politically. She rounded out her Freedom Rider commentary with a call. She warned against "sluggishness" and asked readers whether they were

⁶² Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 12.

⁶³ DeVerne Calloway, "Around the Town," *The New Citizen*, June 23, 1961, Vol I Number 23, S0540, Box 016, Folder 319, Calloway, Ernest Addenda, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

committed to mankind or not, and if so, “then there is only one answer – a continued agitation and pressure for the full dignity and equal recognition of every American citizen.”⁶⁴ Of particular note, is DeVerne’s use of *agitation*, as the word is historically rooted and documented in a 1913 speech by Mary Church Terrell, in which she propagated the idea of “dignified agitation” which has offshoots connected to Ida B. Wells.⁶⁵ That DeVerne, Terrell, and Wells have shared intellectual genealogy and that they have had to navigate double marginalities as Black women albeit different decades, demonstrates a transhistoric scholarly interlinking amongst Black women who were unwilling to accept designation of second-class citizens. And like the pleas of Terrell and Wells, DeVerne, too, was not going to sit idly and watch whiteness further fold her community. So with her typewriter, she respectably pointed and pushed. In the same column in which she called for agitation, a subheading titled “WHAT’S NEW DEPARTMENT”— ” carries a more upbeat, social tone. DeVerne begins, appearing to tout the United Negro Improvement Association, writing, “A group called the United Negro Improvement Association has recently raised money and sent it off to Liberia, West Africa, to help in the development of chicken and coffee farms there.”⁶⁶ She then continues in a cleverly crafted condemnation, writing:

Over on Enright, a baby is reported to have languished and died because of lack of food. Approximately five hundred young people from the public schools have been released with certificates into a world of stress and strain. What they will do, how they will adjust, and what will happen to them is anybody’s guess.

⁶⁴ Calloway, “Around the Town,” June 23, 1961.

⁶⁵ Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 64.

⁶⁶ Calloway, “Around the Town,” June 23, 1961.

Meanwhile a group called “Friends of Youth” from one of the leading churches is busy entertaining themselves by regular social meetings.”⁶⁷

Clearly, DeVerne was just unable to turn her sights away from her community, but posited so in a manner that, while deliberately disruptive, also simultaneously demonstrated her dedication. Her wit was sharp, her medium respectable, and her tone agitating. She took chances, understanding the stakes of complacency were far too vast and far too high. But DeVerne had another trait – a trait that allowed her to meddle, to push the envelope, and that even led to her career in Missouri’s General Assembly, and that trait is charisma. DeVerne was a small-statured, light-skinned, smiling and befitting woman who was poised and alluring; she was a woman who made history, a woman who defied odds; and, she was a woman who saw seeds of possibility and wanted to tend to them.

Despite her intellectualism, she has received limited mention; thus, the remaining chapters will demonstrate her intersectional activism. Chapter Two details DeVerne’s efforts for fair housing legislation. Chapter Three focuses on welfare, improving grants for dependent children, people with disabilities, and the elderly. Chapter Four highlights her work for reproductive justice. Chapter Five focuses on her lifelong advocacy for improved educational outcomes for the Black community. Chapter Six illustrates, controversially, how though the public viewed her marriage as a true love story, it was actually symptomatic of gendered oppression undergirded by racial oppression.

⁶⁷ Calloway, “Around the Town,” June 23, 1961.

Chapter 2: Housing: “Anti-Ghetto” Laws

Introduction:

In the contentious and swiftly changing arena of civil rights in the 1960s, social justice efforts in employment, education, and other public accommodations came before housing, which had been more resistant to change. In February 1964, the St. Louis board of alderman adopted an ordinance that contained fair housing provisions, but at the state level, fair housing legislation was still being widely disputed.⁶⁸ By 1965, fourteen states had enacted fair housing bills.⁶⁹ Hopeful that Missouri would join the ranks of the other states, DeVerne proposed a 1965 fair-housing bill – the first of its kind in the state.⁷⁰ This chapter provides careful navigation of fair-housing laws in Missouri in the context of intersectional analysis, as well as analysis of how DeVerne’s strategies align to interest convergence as it was originally theorized by Professor Derrick Bell in the context of the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

“A Law That Leaves the White People No Place to Run”:

On March 3, 1965, DeVerne and Representative Raymond Howard (Dem) introduced House Bill 529, a fair-housing bill, which would “outlaw discriminatory practices based on race, color, religion, or national origin” for rentals and purchases.⁷¹ In the proposed legislation, a “conviction of a violation would be a misdemeanor with a fine

⁶⁸ Robert P. Sigman, “Step to End Bias in Housing Deals,” *The Kansas City Times*, March 4, 1965, Newspapers.com.

⁶⁹ Edward H. Thornton, “House Judiciary Committee Hears Testimony for State Bill Against Housing Discrimination,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 12, 1965, Newspapers.com.

⁷⁰ “The Honorable Mrs. DeVerne Lee Calloway,” *Proud Magazine*, August 1978, S0551, Roll 1, folder 24 “Autobiographical Material, 1983-1986,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

⁷¹ Thornton, “House Judiciary Committee.”

of \$500 and-or a year in jail.”⁷² DeVerne said “ghetto housing for Negroes has increased rather than diminished within the last decade.”⁷³ She called the proposed legislation an “anti-ghetto law,” for she understood that with few affordable options for Black folks to move out of the city, they were confined in an age-old structurally based system of exclusion.⁷⁴ In May 1965, she “acted as master of ceremonies, calling witnesses to testify” at a House Judiciary Committee hearing.⁷⁵ The bill did not make it out of committee, but DeVerne and Howard saw it as a small victory nonetheless to merely have the subject discussed in a committee hearing.⁷⁶

In January 1967, DeVerne met with the other seven Black members of the Missouri House to strategize future fair housing legislation.⁷⁷ DeVerne told the group, “I want a law that leaves the white people no place to run.”⁷⁸ She recognized the implications white flight was causing, as a result of the intersection of racism and the city’s fair-housing law which were accelerating the flight.⁷⁹ She noted that while there were housing integration efforts in St. Louis County, they were geared towards purchases, not rentals, which was a concern for lower-income Black people who were essentially confined to overcrowded and decrepit city housing, isolated from the rest of society, and had very little means to leave.⁸⁰ On February 27, 1967, DeVerne and 25 co-

⁷² Sigman, “Step to End Bias.”

⁷³ Sigman, “Step to End Bias.”

⁷⁴ “Housing Legislation Studied by Committee,” *The Chillicothe Constitution-Tribune*, May 12, 1965, Newspapers.com.

⁷⁵ Thornton, “House Judiciary Committee.”

⁷⁶ Ronald D. Willnow, “Legislature Voted Major Gains For Civil Rights, Urban Causes,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 4, 1965, Newspapers.com.

⁷⁷ Fred W. Lindecke, “Negro Members of House From St. Louis Study Aims, Strategy,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* January 22, 1967, Newspapers.com.

⁷⁸ Lindecke, “Negro Members of House.”

⁷⁹ Lindecke, “Negro Members of House.”

⁸⁰ Lindecke, “Negro Members of House.”

sponsors introduced House Bill 501, marking a second chance at the state's first fair-housing bill.⁸¹ On May 9, 1967, the House Judiciary Committee held a hearing in which DeVerne seized the opportunity to address the committee and explicitly the chairman, taking direct aim at the bedrock structures designed to segregate, control, and dehumanize Black folks. DeVerne remarked:

HB 501 strikes straight at the whole question of prejudice and discrimination in this state and in this nation. Despite recent moves by the federal government in the area of...voting rights for the Southern Negro – and a concentrated move against poverty – racial prejudice and discrimination, and the negro's persistence to achieve full citizenship often is the number one problem. The determination of the white majority to maintain a dual set of standards – one set of rules which apply to whites and [a] second set of rules applying to negroes only – is [an] open sore. And although the Negro is the one who bears the brunt of all the evils bred by the dual system of rules --- the problem, no matter how they may wish to avoid it, effects the white majority as well.⁸²

The matter of equal housing opportunity is not more important than equal educational opportunity or equal employment opportunity, it is just as important as education and employment.

The civil rights problem will not be solved until there is effective, coordinated action in all areas. What really has been solved for a poor black citizen who is given some educational opportunity equal to his white brother, who is afforded the same job opportunities as his white brother, but at the same time is denied the right to read or to purchase a decent house to live in?

Now, the people who have a financial stake in the ghetto, realtors, insurance companies, and rentals agencies rush forward to argue that legalization as proposed in HB 501 would force people to sell or rent their property to persons they don't wish to sell or rent to – and thereby destroy his constitutional 'right' to sell. This argument promoted by the real estate industry is in my opinion just plain poppycock. I submit that this argument is neither legal nor logical...⁸³

DeVerne's remarks inadvertently hints at what Professor Derrick Bell later identified as the idea of interest convergence, a critical component of Critical Race

⁸¹ "Fair Housing Bills," S0012 Box 3, Folder 22 "Housing 1967-1971," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

⁸² "HB 501 Chairman/Committee Address," S0012 Box 3, Folder 22 "Housing, 1967-1971," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

⁸³ "HB 501 Chairman/Committee Address."

Theory. Tenets of Professor Bell's interest convergence theory can be used to illuminate DeVerne's strategies and even her predictions related to legislative progress or lack thereof, as the case may be. Professor Bell's initial positing on interest convergence includes three examples. First, that in the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, interests of both sides were represented. The abatement of communism, for racial segregation in the U.S. would not garner support of emerging nations in Asia and Africa.⁸⁴ Improving the U.S.'s international reputation for being a country that promoted equality was in the interest of white elites.⁸⁵ Second, the segregation in the South was stalling further industrialization and by proxy stalling the national economy causing another negative consequence for white elites.⁸⁶ Third, representing the interests of Blacks, was primarily situated in the ideals of equality that educational desegregation would commence. The outcome was a converging of dissimilar interests under the veil of equality.

In the context of fair housing, interest convergence operates with similar transactional components where both parties (white elites and subordinated blacks) collaborate to exchange value based on differing interests. Housing segregation gained its momentum by intersections of race and class. On one side, white elites, comprised of government leaders, suburban residents, realtors, and other business entities had a shared interest in preserving whiteness and classism. On the other side, Blacks had a shared interest in gaining equality via equitable access outside the confinement of the city. Was

⁸⁴ Kevin Brown and Darrell D. Jackson, "The History and Conceptual Elements of Critical Race Theory," in *Handbook of Critical Race Theory in Education*, ed. Marvin Lynn and Adrienne D. Dixson (New York: Routledge, 2013), 17.

⁸⁵ Brown and Jackson, "History and Conceptual Elements," 17.

⁸⁶ Brown and Jackson, "History and Conceptual Elements," 17.

it even possible to imagine a world where either side's interests were united under the umbrella of fair-housing? It was unlikely, and DeVerne knew it. In her committee address above, she tries to connect the dots by pointing out that "The matter of equal housing opportunity is not more important than equal educational opportunity" and that "The civil rights problem will not be solved until there is effective, coordinated action in all areas."⁸⁷ In other words, if the U.S. truly wants to polish its image as a country that promotes equality and tolerance, fair-housing practices are akin to educational integration. Similarly, if the U.S. truly wants economic prosperity, then fair-housing practices *had* to be incorporated. But the question remained, would this type of interest convergence be mutually agreed upon? Remarkably, House Bill 501 made it out of committee, marking the first time a proposed Missouri fair-housing law emerged from committee.⁸⁸ However by June 1967, the bill was essentially killed as the House had stopped floor action nearing the end of the 1967 session.⁸⁹

On April 11, 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the Civil Rights Act of 1968 as a follow-up to the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Title VIII of the Act is also known as the Fair Housing Act (of 1968), and it included fair-housing legislation and "prohibited discrimination concerning the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin, sex, (and as amended) handicap and family status."⁹⁰ For two years prior to its signing, fair-housing bills failed to gain enough support. Interests could not converge like they had for education. What changed, however, was that

⁸⁷ "HB 501 Chairman/Committee Address."

⁸⁸ "House Group Indorses Bill to Prohibit Housing Bias," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 9, 1967, Newspapers.com.

⁸⁹ "Fair Housing Bill Killed in State House," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 4, 1967, Newspapers.com.

⁹⁰ "History of Fair Housing," U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, accessed May 28, 2020, https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/aboutfheo/history.

Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968.⁹¹ And although the country had been under a spotlight as a result of Dr. King's open housing marches in Chicago, his death symbolically sunk the U.S.'s credibility regarding the image of racial equality. Another significant issue with a direct relation to unfair-housing practices in the U.S. was highlighted by the return of Black GI's from Vietnam, who were systematically being denied opportunities to purchase or lease homes in certain neighborhoods.⁹²

Despite the federal law *and* even fair-housing ordinances enacted in various Missouri counties, housing discrimination continued. Enforcement policies of the 1968 Act were left to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Affairs (HUD). Counties that enacted their own ordinances, including unincorporated St. Louis County, had to either use internal staff or contract out enforcement policies. Essentially that meant there was not uniformity in enforcement policies.

So, DeVerne and nine co-sponsors responded on behalf of Missouri's minorities. On February 12, 1969, they introduced House Bill 521, which gave general jurisdiction and power to the state Commission of Human Rights to more clearly define discriminatory practices and to provide a procedure for relief against discriminatory practices.⁹³ The hopeful result was that more localized enforcement would be better equipped to investigate and mitigate allegations of discrimination. But DeVerne also recognized that to be effective, the Human Rights Commission would need more funding and more staff, both of which were actually cut in 1968, leaving the commission just 12

⁹¹ "History of Fair Housing."

⁹² "History of Fair Housing."

⁹³ "Fair Housing Bills."

staff members.⁹⁴ In February 1969, House Bill 521 was referred to the House Judiciary Committee, yet it was not scheduled for a hearing until April 22.⁹⁵ In July 1969, the St. Louis County municipality of Kirkwood enacted its own fair-housing law that mirrored federal legislation.⁹⁶ They were the first municipality incorporated in St. Louis County to do so following the 1968 Act, though University City had a fair housing policy in place as of 1960.⁹⁷ Kirkwood contracted out enforcement to the county Human Relations Commission.⁹⁸ The Mayor of Kirkwood, Robert G. Reim, sent copies of the city's fair housing code to all county municipalities with populations 2500 or more in hope they would enact similar laws.⁹⁹ What can logically be inferred is two-fold: (1) Kirkwood was interested in aligning itself with the national trend of promoting racial equality, and (2) Kirkwood's interest in fair housing was less-than altruistic. Had the mayor not sent their fair-housing policy to other municipalities, then their interest in racial housing equality could be deemed genuine. In other words, the conclusion may be drawn that Kirkwood did not want to fly solo, putting itself "at risk" of receiving a larger influx of Blacks than other municipalities. Meanwhile, Black folks merely wanted access to affordable housing outside the city and routine and effective enforcement for those who violated such.

⁹⁴ Margaret Sheppard, "Missouri Fair Housing Law Given Best Chance to Pass," *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, January 18, 1969, S0012 Box 3, Folder 22 "Housing 1967-1971," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

⁹⁵ "Some Human Rights Legislation Lagging," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 6, 1969, Newspapers.com.

⁹⁶ "Kirkwood Housing Law Could Spread," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 8, 1969, Newspapers.com.

⁹⁷ "Kirkwood Housing Law"

⁹⁸ "Kirkwood Housing Law"

⁹⁹ "Kirkwood Housing Law"

The following table demonstrates how interest convergence was initially applied in the *Brown* decision in comparison to interest convergence in housing at the federal and regional levels.

Table 2.1 Interest Convergence Comparison

	Interests: White Elites	Interests: Subordinated Blacks	Platform of Convergence
<i>Brown</i> Interest Convergence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • abatement of communism to promote a more positive U.S. reputation/image of racial equality • stalled industrialization in the South caused by racial segregation 	racial equality in education	U.S. Supreme Court
1968 Fair Housing Act Interest Convergence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. international reputation/image of racial equality following: (1) Rev. Dr. MLK’s assassination, and (2) Black G.I.’s return from Vietnam unable to find housing 	racial equality in housing	U.S. Congress
County/Municipality Fair Housing Ordinance Interest Convergence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local reputation alignment with national reputation • Municipality alignment of local ordinances (to avoid Black influx) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access to affordable housing outside the city • uniformed enforcement of violations 	Regional/Local Governments

By the next congressional session in 1971, DeVerne and 13 co-sponsors introduced a fourth fair-housing law, House Bill 693, with new language. This time,

DeVerne's bill was simply for the state to comply with the Federal Fair Housing Act (of 1968).¹⁰⁰ As more counties and municipalities had adopted their own fair-housing policies, support for DeVerne's bill was lagging. In DeVerne's own words, even her own support of a state fair-housing bill began to wane following the federal litigation.

DeVerne remarked:

...I got really lukewarm about it...because the whole idea of having one on the Missouri level would be to put the machinery of the administration into Missouri hands and, in my own thinking, although it's a longer route, I would be satisfied with Federal intervention rather than bringing it to Missouri. So, I became lukewarm about housing. The only reason I would be interested at all in Missouri...to get on passed...would be to make it stronger. I couldn't see any depth in the legislature of concern that would guarantee any stronger law locally from the state than the one the Federal Government had passed. So I really just sort ...introduced it...but...I have had other concerns in terms of legislation...¹⁰¹

In March 1972, DeVerne and her co-sponsors agreed to withdraw the bill because other representatives were "trying to weaken it" by proposing amendments that would have required the complainants to incur any costs associated with the investigation and adjudication of proceedings, essentially blaming the victim, who in most cases was an impoverished Black person.¹⁰²

The 1968 Fair Housing Act was symbolic in its efforts to curtail overt discrimination. In Missouri, the Act's proliferation also assisted in the support of fair-housing policies and ordinances at more localized levels within counties and municipalities. On the other hand, the Act is also symbolic of exacerbating white flight

¹⁰⁰ "Fair Housing Bills."

¹⁰¹ "Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway," interview by Irene Cortinovis, University of Missouri-St. Louis Archive and Manuscript Division," September 9, 1971, 17, Western Historical Manuscript Collection T-016, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹⁰² "Open-Housing Bill Scuttled in the House," *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, March 2, 1972, S0551 Box 3, Folder 22 "Housing 1967-1971," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

from St. Louis City to St. Louis County, with the City's population falling by 169,151 from 1970 to 1980.¹⁰³ So while outward acts of housing discrimination were illegal, more covert acts of discrimination such as exclusionary zoning were becoming more prevalent.

In 1969, DeVerne began serving on the Union Sarah Economic Development's Board of Directors, whose aim was to "revitalized the economy and the housing stock" within the boundaries of from Union Boulevard to Sarah Avenue. DeVerne joined the board in hopes that they would be able to revitalize housing in the area, but there were "so many hangups about how they should spend the money," and the majority held a philosophy "that we should loan money to our professional people, our well-known established artisans and trades people and help them...to run grocery stores, and all those things" but that was a philosophy that differed from DeVerne's, who firmly believed that housing revitalization needed to happen first in order to address the population losses due to low housing stock.¹⁰⁴ The differing philosophies led to DeVerne losing interest in her board member role, and she eventually left the board, which later on did turn from business rebuilding to housing revitalization through the Land Re-utilization Act, "And that is part of the way Union Sarah has been advancing, is to work with land re-utilization to acquire some of the properties that have become tax delinquent and become property of the land reutilization" which "would help in terms of lower-income people acquiring the abandoned houses."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ "Population of St. Louis City & County, and Missouri 1820-2010," accessed June 4, 2020, <https://www.genealogybranches.com/stlouispopulation.html>

¹⁰⁴ "Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway," p. 19.

¹⁰⁵ "Interview 2 with DeVerne Calloway," interview by Kenn Thomas, "Oral History," University of Missouri, February 23, 1983, 20, Western Historical Manuscript Collection T-705, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

Housing and Intersectionality:

At the most basic level, housing has always had intersections of race and class – intersections that still hold true today. The intersections in this analysis, however, are centered within power domains that have fluctuated over time. By DeVerne’s own admission as noted above, once the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 was enacted, she had “lukewarm” feelings at best toward state-level fair-housing legislation because she felt from a legal standpoint, housing equality was finally in the books. From a cultural and disciplinary power-domain lens, the message was being manufactured that social inequalities under laws of equality existed as a remedy to the housing challenges faced by Blacks. The result of such rhetorical messaging is that U.S. society continues to be plagued by these manufactured beliefs that continue to create a false reality that some have even dubbed a post-racial society. Meanwhile, the reality is that black-and-brown bodies still do not have the same privileges afforded to whites in access to affordable housing, rentals, or more recently, vacation rentals, which also touches on the interpersonal domain of power via the advent of social media, where one’s race can be determined by a few “clicks.” The intersecting power dynamics under the pretense of “fairness” are exponentially intertwined creating bedrock structures of racial oppression. While DeVerne may not have felt called to continue the legislative fight for fair housing, she still surely understood that despite fair-housing’s legalities, more covert racial and class discrimination would continue as a result of the societal false pretense of equality and fairness. She addressed the coiling of such complexities in an intersectional framework, commenting on the work of any civil rights activist:

I mean, say, you're interested in civil rights... but if you're going to stick with it and attempt to get something done and changed...you'll find that it also gets involved into the political, and it may also get involved into the economic. In other words, in order to effect a change, you might find yourself having to relate to a boycott of a certain product, so that this, in my opinion, is one of the greatest dilemmas that the black has to face at this time...¹⁰⁶

While not explicitly using the word intersectionality, DeVerne's remarks clearly show that she was already considering her work, as well as others in the civil rights arena, as intersectional. Moreover, she hinted at not only the complexity that *is* intersectionality, rather she was conceiving the manifestation of what intersectionality *does*. She continues:

In my opinion, there is no wall...you can't say... 'Well, there's a wall out there that represents the difference between the black having complete freedom and complete viability, and we're just going to tear that wall down'...cause when you begin to tear the wall down...or you attack it...you find that it is buttressed by other faces and facets of the community.¹⁰⁷

DeVerne's words are a prime example of how intersecting domains of power frame social institutions to form the structural domain of power, resulting in the perpetuation of intersecting discrimination over decades and centuries. DeVerne was baffled by this realization and said she gave "a lot of thought to it... what the total outcome may be...in terms of the blacks."¹⁰⁸ Her thoughts wavered between calls for the complete destruction of the system and ideals of interest convergence between races. As a woman of the legislature, she settled with interest convergence, remarking:

But wisdom and experience teach me that there can be changes effected, and the key...in my mind...is to get a maximum number of people committed to making the change...maximum black and maximum white...committed to making the changes, and then you get success.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ "Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway," p. 32.

¹⁰⁷ "Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway," p. 32.

¹⁰⁸ "Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway," p. 32.

¹⁰⁹ "Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway," p. 32.

One may conclude, therefore, that DeVerne's advocacy for fair housing falls solidly within understandings of what intersectionality and interest convergence mean for Blacks in their seemingly endless pursuit of equitable access.

Chapter 3: Welfare: Humanizing the Pauper

Introduction:

“But in the caste system, a low-caste Indian could be lying in the street dying, and upper caste people would just walk around him or even step on him. This was something...I mean, that experience had an effect on me” remarked DeVerne as she reflected upon her time spent with the American Red Cross in the China-Burma-India theater during World War II.¹¹⁰ DeVerne’s experiences with India’s caste system parlayed into her legislative work for improved welfare access, benefits, and rights on behalf of St. Louis’s Black community for whom, “I tried to be a liaison between two very different kinds of communities, a low-income black community and a sort of middle upper-income white community which is what most legislators in the white community are.”¹¹¹ Similar to the mindsets associated in the fight for access to equitable education access, welfare also pits the public against the pauper. Both education and welfare are centered on the idea of redistribution – that all of a community will best be served in the long run with citizens who are better educated, have improved skills, and therefore require less poverty assistance. Yet, both are uphill battles for the poor, and almost guaranteed wins for white elites. From DeVerne’s earliest days in the Missouri Legislature, welfare reform was one of her primary platforms. DeVerne’s advocacy for welfare improvements included a variety of strategies including direct legislation; relationship-building with constituents, legislators, and government officials; helping

¹¹⁰ “Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway,” interview by Irene Cortinovis, University of Missouri-St. Louis Archive and Manuscript Division,” September 9, 1971, 5, Western Historical Manuscript Collection T-016, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹¹¹ “Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway,” 29.

constituents navigate welfare applications, denials, and hearings; and even protest support.

Welfare *is* intersectional. At its core, welfare only exists because of the *have nots*, who are people comprised of multifaceted intersections of race, class, ability, age, and gender. Yet the formula for welfare benefits is based by-and-large, on one thing: income. Despite such a singular approach, the messaging surrounding welfare lands at the intersection of race and gender. For families headed by Black women, feminism must be channeled in order to combat society's admonishments of them. Widely believed to be a Black woman's self-inflicted plight rather than simply that of an impoverished person's misfortune, the fight for adequate welfare programs in Missouri has a history of being one of the worst in the U.S. Two tenets of Black feminist theory include the shared experiences Black women have made meaning from and the dialectical images of Black women in the U.S., which almost always stands in contrast to white women. As a social welfarist, DeVerne sought to humanize Black women from the disrespectability imposed upon them. And for years she chipped away at the structures that legally confined the state's poorest – Black women, who were-and-are disproportionately stigmatized, marginalized, and victimized as a result of inadequate assistance to offset increasing inflation, adequate housing, healthcare, childcare, and hunger. This chapter highlights DeVerne as an agitator and meddler against the oppression thrust upon the Black community, and especially upon Black women. In an effort to reshape Missouri's welfare program with a never-ending hope for respectability of the Black community, DeVerne aroused organizational protests, jockeyed legislators, and used the media, demonstrating a variety of locations in which her intellectual thought has been both produced and

propagated. The chapter also illustrates the intersectional power dynamics she was up against and how she used intersectional praxis and Black feminist theory to navigate race politics.

Missouri's Welfare Program: A State of Impossibility:

As DeVerne ventured into new territories during her earliest days in the general assembly, she observed the brutality of power that is the state's welfare program. As part of the House's "Negro delegation," whose "bread-and-butter" services often fell largely at the grassroots level, DeVerne's began helping constituents individually, such as reviewing welfare claim denials, speeding up the process to receive benefits, initiating emergency food stamps, and even seeking state hospital admittance for people with disabilities. Her advocacy at that time put her in continuous contact with J.P. Lynes, the Director of the Division of Welfare in St. Louis, with whom she communicated back-and-forth on a variety of challenges faced by applicants, such as reviewing benefit payments, itemizing incomes, and analyzing explanations of denials.¹¹² Through this earlier work, DeVerne entered into a public racial leadership role, fashioning her public duty to serve her people. In Brittney Cooper's *Beyond Respectability*, she notes that Pauline Hopkins identified two key tasks that are part of the work of the "true race-woman": 'to study' and 'to discuss' "all phases of the race question."¹¹³ Indeed, DeVerne's work is situated within her study of constituent's benefits and incomes, within

¹¹² "Letters to/from Lynes," S0012 Box 10, Folder 74A "Welfare, 1961-1968, 1972-1975," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹¹³ Brittney C. Cooper, *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017), introduction.

her frequent letters to Lynes, and in her explanations to her constituents, who saw her as a trustful beacon and source of knowledge.

The year of 1967 proved more hopeful to the “Negro delegation’s” mission to improve the state’s welfare program because Missouri Governor Warren E. Hearnes showed signs of being more supportive of welfare aid. Collectively, the delegation urged for “increases in old age welfare payments, relaxation of limitations or ownership of property and securities by welfare recipients and full state implementation of medical care for the needy.”¹¹⁴ However by April of that year, Governor Hearnes seemed to be avoiding the issue. Demonstrations had been planned for St. Louis in an effort to get Hearnes’s attention to simply hear from welfare recipients.¹¹⁵ To thwart the demonstrations, Hearnes agreed to meet with recipients, but the meeting ended without his support of changes in the state’s welfare benefits.¹¹⁶ While unable to commit to changes, Hearnes was at least somewhat sympathetic. In September 1967, he urged the United States Congress to refrain from supporting proposed legislation that would have required states to fully fund their Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) programs.¹¹⁷ In December 1967, Governor Hearnes announced he would include-and-support legislation in the upcoming state congressional session to provide state welfare aid to children of unemployed fathers living at home, despite facing overall budget cuts that year totaling

¹¹⁴ Fred W. Lindecke, “Negromembers of House From St. Louis Study Aims, Strategy,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 22, 1967, Newspapers.com.

¹¹⁵ “Aid Recipients See Hearnes, Get No Promise,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 12, 1967, Newspapers.com.

¹¹⁶ “Aid Recipients”

¹¹⁷ “Welfare Fund Limits Opposed By Governor,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 12, 1967, Newspapers.com.

\$160,000,000.¹¹⁸ He kept his word, and in a February 1968 special legislative session, bills were approved that authorized welfare aid to indigent families with unemployed fathers living at home, a monthly increase in aid to the elderly, and a monthly increase to families with dependent children.¹¹⁹ Though definitely a positive move, the state's most needy still lived far below poverty line and additional reform was necessary.

Governor Hearnes was wishy-washy, sometimes appearing lukewarm on pro-welfare assistance, and other times he left legislators guessing his next moves. This is illustrative of the political climate and power dynamics DeVerne had to work within while hoping to simultaneously improve the state's welfare programs and reduce the blow felt by her constituents. Her earliest welfare advocacy has, first-and-foremost, an interpersonal emphasis. The interpersonal domain of power is centered on the power relations that shape people's lives, "how people relate to one another, and who is advantaged or disadvantaged within social interactions"¹²⁰ People's lives and the meager existences in which they lived, shaped DeVerne's advocacy as much as the political climate and power relations shaped DeVerne's efforts. She provided interpersonal relief through building relationships with constituents and helping them do what they were not equipped to do individually. Having the ear of the city's welfare director, and leveraging her power as a state representative, DeVerne assisted countless constituents in their pursuit of welfare benefits. Her efforts further demonstrate another tenet of Black feminist theory: social justice and action, which is "accomplished through challenging

¹¹⁸ Louis J. Rose, "Hearnes Urges Budget Be Cut By \$160,000,000," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 5, 1967, Newspapers.com.

¹¹⁹ Donald Tapperson, "Education and Welfare Bills Supported" *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 10, 1968, Newspapers.com.

¹²⁰ Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016) 7.

hierarchies of power...and reinvigorating grassroots mobilization efforts for social change.”¹²¹

Turning to 1969, Governor Hearnes was hopeful that the Nixon Administration would approve full-federal funding of welfare aide, where St. Louis ranked 46th amongst states in the size of payments to dependent children.¹²² DeVerne introduced legislation that year – House Bill 627, “which would make the Welfare Department responsible for housing costs of more than 25 percent of a welfare recipient’s income.”¹²³ The bill was perceived as having no chance of passage, but DeVerne’s strategy was one of planting seeds that would, at the very least, raise the level of awareness regarding the need for not only improved benefits, but also to begin chipping away at the power held by the real estate industry during a time when state fair-housing assurances were still being sought despite the passage of the 1968 Fair Housing Act. The bill would have essentially provided assurances of steady monthly income, thereby creating more access to affordable housing. Her strategy of linking welfare to fair housing but in the context of welfare legislation forces a reconciliation of thought that welfare “isn’t about a single event, but a series of encounters with power.”¹²⁴ Thus, DeVerne intentionally sends the message that welfare ought to be focused on ensuring the most endangered are cared for. Through this, she attempts to dismantle the manufactured message that welfare benefits such as ADC offer enough assistance for persons in poverty to compete on a supposed

¹²¹ Beth E. Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black women, violence, and America's Prison Nation*, NYU Press, 2012, accessed June 16, 2020 at <https://cls.unc.edu/files/2017/08/5-Tenets-of-Black-Feminism.pdf>.

¹²² Sally Bixby Defty, “Inadequate Payments, Lack of Caseworkers Viewed as main Welfare Problems in City” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 4, 1969, Newspapers.com.

¹²³ Bixby Defty, “Inadequate Payments.”

¹²⁴ Mikki Kendall, *Hood Feminism* (New York: Penguin Random House LLC, 2020) 173.

level-playing field with middle or upper class society.¹²⁵ Such actions are a near-perfect example of DeVerne's ability to chip away at the cultural domain of power. Similarly, a December 1969 game of "welfare Monopoly" attempted to do the same thing – dispute the manufactured myth of equal opportunity to compete. The week-long "game" was played by 332 St. Louisans who were tasked with living on 11 cents per meal for one week.¹²⁶ The Christian Conscience Commission of Berea Presbyterian Church in St. Louis organized the game, and a panel of state legislators, including DeVerne, called for "welfare recipients to organize to fight for changes in the system."¹²⁷ Game participants found that 11 cents per meal was far from sustainable, and legislators blamed the inadequate welfare funding on the sweeping-but-erroneous belief amongst the majority of the state's legislators that "welfare recipients are just inherently inferior."¹²⁸ Situated at the heart of the cultural domain of power, the ideas surrounding "Welfare Monopoly" demonstrates the fallacy of thought that those receiving welfare benefits are supposedly competing in a game of "fair play." Chairman of the New Democratic Coalition Charles Wood noted that for a welfare recipient to actually "win" the game, it would mean they would have to be the player with the most money left over, and the only way to do that would be to bring about an onslaught of other challenges such as giving up eating and then ending up in a mental health center suffering from malnutrition, a nervous breakdown, and paranoia.¹²⁹ Welfare Monopoly also highlights how power operates with disciplinary outcomes for the game's "losers," whose lives are simply not put on the

¹²⁵ Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 11.

¹²⁶ Jerry W. Venters, "Feasts End Privations Of Welfare Monopoly," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 8, 1969, Newspapers.com.

¹²⁷ Venters, "Welfare Monopoly."

¹²⁸ Venters, "Welfare Monopoly."

¹²⁹ Venters, "Welfare Monopoly."

same paths as the game's "winners." At the root of the disciplinary and cultural power axes is the structural power domain – which is illustrated by the governmental organization of the welfare program and the majority of the legislators who refused to acknowledge the stark disparities in the game's rules (laws). Additionally, DeVerne's call for "welfare recipients to organize to fight for changes in the system" demonstrates her ability to engage within "organized anxiety" – a term cathected from Fannie Barrier Williams, who identified "racial change within Black women's bodies, identifying collective racial discontent and collective racial anxiety as forces that propelled institutional and social change through the work of organized Black women."¹³⁰

The House ended up approving a welfare package that included cost-of-living increases in the Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) benefits. Still though, additional improvements were needed. In a 1969 letter to a constituent seeking help with a denial for an increase in benefits, DeVerne explained that she made phone calls and even went to see Proctor Carter, the Director of the Missouri Division of Welfare, only to be told that nothing could be done. DeVerne explained to the constituent, "It is regrettable, but our state allotment is very pitiful. I am supporting legislation to increase the maximum grant and also to make the state pay rent for those needing aid, which right now is about all I can do."¹³¹

In September 1970, the state's food stamp program became a visible area-of-advocacy. At that time, there were only two food stamp distribution centers in St. Louis: The Welfare Office (at Euclid Avenue and Delmar Boulevard) and a church facility at

¹³⁰ Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 39.

¹³¹ "Constituent Letter," February 5, 1969, S0012 Box 10, Folder 75 "Welfare, 1964-1973," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

2331 Mullanphy Street, down the street from the Pruitt Igoe Housing Projects.¹³² Peak times for purchasing food stamps was always around the 1st, 5th and 10th of each month, when welfare payments were received.¹³³ The resulting problem was that “on peak buying days, the lines on the sidewalks around the welfare office are as deep as 100 to 150 persons deep for most of the day.”¹³⁴ An October 1971 *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* article investigated and reported the situation, painting a harsh picture of reality for those whose lives literally depended on this assistance. The article began by elaborately describing the scene:

Two small children frolicked next to an elderly black woman who stood staring wistfully into a window at 4909 Delmar Boulevard.

‘I live so far . . . I’ve been here twice before today,’ she said to no one in particular. ‘I can’t come back lest somebody brings me. I’m a cripple.’

A younger woman stared through another window in the same office. Over the office door, a sign in red letters said, ‘City of St. Louis: Food Stamp Office.’ On the door, a 3 p.m. closing time was clearly marked. It was 3:15 p.m. last Thursday.

‘I’m taking off work,’ the second woman lamented, “and it’s so hard for me to do that. I came at noon, but I couldn’t get in.’

The two were victims last week of the crowds that developed at the two food stamp sales offices maintained by St. Louis. The lines of applicants wound around corners and across streets for several blocks.¹³⁵

Food insecurity means hunger, and hunger in the Black community means inadequate nutrition, and inadequate nutrition means the community is suppressed from the most basic human right that allows a community to thrive and fight for all their

¹³² “Food Stamp Fact Sheet,” September 2, 1970, S0012 Box 10, Folder 75 “Welfare, 1964-1973,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹³³ “Food Stamp Fact Sheet.”

¹³⁴ “Food Stamp Fact Sheet.”

¹³⁵ Judson W. Calkins, “Food Stamp Distribution—A Problem” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 18, 1970, Newspapers.com.

rights.¹³⁶ Black feminist and author Mikki Kendell notes, “As feminist issues go, there are none that span more women and their families than this one.”¹³⁷ Food insecurity creates disrespectability. It is dehumanization to the core. It is what DeVerne witnessed in the streets of India during her days with the American Red Cross. It is a societal ill that disciplines its victims and prevents them from “participation in political and other organizational spaces” and prevents marginalized people from “defending their interests against other forms of structural oppression.”¹³⁸ Kendell notes, “For families headed by women and by other marginalized people, feminism has to come through to combat food insecurity, from higher prices for fresh foods to insufficient government funding for programs that address hunger on a systemic level.”¹³⁹ DeVerne, along with the Black Caucus wrote letters to city banks to “jointly and severally take those steps necessary to sell food stamps at your facilities, thus making the purchase of food stamps a convenience and dignified service...”¹⁴⁰ Additionally, DeVerne met with bank presidents and city Comptroller John H. Poelker to address the problems and seek solutions.

By November, three banks in South City St. Louis were distributing food stamps; however, as of November, no north city banks had opted in and people were still standing in lines for hours waiting for the opportunity to purchase food stamps.¹⁴¹ President of the St. Louis Welfare Coalition Barbara Bates said, “What banks are saying is they don’t want poor people floating around in their lobbies.”¹⁴² By the end of November, plans

¹³⁶ Kendell, *Hood Feminism*, 45.

¹³⁷ Kendell, *Hood Feminism*, 45.

¹³⁸ Kendell, *Hood Feminism*, 45.

¹³⁹ Kendell, *Hood Feminism*, 44.

¹⁴⁰ “Food Stamp Fact Sheet.”

¹⁴¹ “Food Stamp Action,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 16, 1970, Newspapers.com.

¹⁴² “Food Stamp Action.”

were made to add three downtown banks and one midtown bank, slated to begin distribution by January 5.¹⁴³ The Wellston Community Relations Office began efforts with two local banks to begin issuing food stamps beginning February 8.¹⁴⁴

As the food stamp buzz waned with the opening of more distribution centers, a new disturbance percolated. In July 1971, welfare recipients' benefits were suddenly cut by 5% for General Relief (GR) and 10% Permanent and Total Disability (PTD).¹⁴⁵ State Welfare Director Proctor Carter explained he adjusted the appropriations for Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), Permanent and Total Disability (PTD), General Relief (GR), and the Food Stamp Program due to a deficit in the state's budget from "a failure of the Legislature to appropriate enough funds" in the previous session.¹⁴⁶ The State Fiscal Affairs Committee approved the cut.¹⁴⁷ As a result, on October 12, 1971, more than 100 people converged on the St. Louis City office of the State Division of Welfare, demanding that Director Paul R. Nelson speak to them. They had 168-completed applications-for-hearing forms about the reduction in their benefits. In a letter dated the same day as the protest from Director Nelson to Missouri State Director Carter, Director

¹⁴³ "Three Downtown Banks To Issue Food Stamps," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 25, 1970, Newspapers.com.

¹⁴⁴ "New Wellston Office Issuing Food Stamps," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 3, 1971, Newspapers.com.

¹⁴⁵ "Black Legislative Caucus objects to welfare cuts" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, November 10, 1971, S0012 Box 10, folder 76 "Welfare 1970-72, 1975," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹⁴⁶ "Blacks Seek Restoration Of State Welfare Cuts" *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Nov. 11, 1971, Newspapers.com.

¹⁴⁷ "Welfare Payments Tied to Budget" *Kansas City Star*, July 21, 1971, S0012, Box 10, folder 76, "Welfare 1970-72, 1975," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

Nelson closes with, “Will you please do everything within your power to restore the PTD and GR grants to their original level and to reduce the purchase price of Food Stamps.”¹⁴⁸

On November 10, 1971, the Black Legislative Caucus, of which DeVerne was vice chair[wo]man, delivered a press release wherein they formally stated their objection to the welfare cuts, and invited the governor and lieutenant governor to join their discussion the following week when they would be exploring possible sources of revenue for the state’s welfare programs.¹⁴⁹ Further, she noted that “a large portion of these citizens are our constituents looking to and pressing us for relief from this harsh, unjustly punitive blow dealt by authorities of Missouri Government.” They noted further that in the last General Assembly, Black Caucus members “reluctantly supported a proposed tax increase *only* after assurances that such tax increase was necessary to prevent cuts in the funds of education, mental health, and the welfare programs.”¹⁵⁰

Organization efforts amongst legislators increased. The “Ad Hoc Joint Legislative Committee for the Restoration of Welfare Cuts” was formed with 14 members of Missouri’s Congress, and within a week from the Black Legislative Caucus’s press release, a letter was sent to congress members requesting support of an emergency appropriation to restore the welfare cuts.¹⁵¹ The next day, State Welfare Director Carter delivered a press release, in which he declared he had instructed all welfare offices to

¹⁴⁸ “Nelson Letter to Carter,” October 12, 1971, S0012 Box 10, Folder 76 “Welfare 1970-72, 1975,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹⁴⁹ “Nov 10, 1971 newspaper clipping,” S0012 Box 10, Folder 76 “Welfare 1970-72, 1975,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹⁵⁰ “Black Caucus Press Release,” November 10, 1971, S0012 Box 10, Folder 76 “Welfare 1970-72, 1975,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹⁵¹ “Missouri House of Representatives Ad-Hoc Joint Legislative Committee for Restoration of Welfare Cuts letter,” November 17, 1971, 0012 Box 10, Folder 76 “Welfare 1970-72, 1975,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

make a sweeping reinvestigation of ADC cases as the ADC load had increased 32 percent, a total of 14,539 families, and 40,027 persons since October 1970.¹⁵²

Organization efforts of St. Louis City residents were also underway. On November 17, 1971, Operation Live, a group that worked closely with welfare recipients, hosted a hearing “to let the public know that because of the cuts the poor of Missouri would have a dark and dismal Thanksgiving.”¹⁵³ On December 14, 1971, a hearing hosted by the Missouri Division of Welfare quickly turned into a highly emotional display of angry protests over the welfare cuts, and it was continued to another date.¹⁵⁴ However, a second hearing ensued, facilitated by Olive Franklin chair[wo]man of the St. Louis Welfare Rights Organization, who wanted welfare recipients to have an opportunity to testify about the hardships caused by the welfare cuts.¹⁵⁵ This meeting also became emotional and was again continued after a woman fainted.¹⁵⁶ DeVerne was in attendance, and she “urged the group to band together to restore the welfare budgets.”¹⁵⁷ She also told a reporter that “black legislators were seeking support for emergency passage of a bill to restore the cuts when the General Assembly reconvenes next month.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² “Carter Press Release,” November 18, 1971, 0012 Box 10, Folder 76 “Welfare 1970-72, 1975,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹⁵³ “Hearing Set For Protests On Welfare Cuts,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 21, 1971, Newspapers.com.

¹⁵⁴ “Angry Protests Voiced Over Cuts In Welfare,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 15, 1971, Newspapers.com.

¹⁵⁵ “Angry Protests.”

¹⁵⁶ “Angry Protests.”

¹⁵⁷ “Angry Protests.”

¹⁵⁸ “Angry Protests.”

DeVerne's word was bond, and upon the General Assembly's return-to-session in January 1972, House Bill 1109 was introduced, proposing an emergency clause be enacted to restore welfare cuts.¹⁵⁹ At the opening joint session with the House and Senate, Governor Hearnes called for "broad changes in Missouri's welfare programs to make them more responsive to the needs of the poor" and for a drastic budget increase to offset costs associated with welfare aid.¹⁶⁰

On February 23, 1972, the House amended Governor Hearnes's recommendations on a welfare bill that would have based aid payments on need, and amended a provision "to add two members who are welfare recipients to the welfare advisory boards in each city or county."¹⁶¹ DeVerne took issue with House members' attempts to block the acceptance of welfare recipients to serve on these advisory boards, saying, "Here again, certain legislators are saying that only certain people belonging to a certain class – the so-called 'in' crowd – have the ability to sit on those boards. That kind of attitude blocks any real input by the people who are affected by these programs."¹⁶²

By March of 1972, the Senate Appropriations Committee's approval was needed in order to restore the welfare cuts. Senator Donald Manford (Dem)-Kansas City, Committee Chairman, said he did not expect the Senate to approve the emergency funding despite the plea made to him by Director Carter, who painted a grim picture of what was at stake for the families who desperately needed their benefits restored. Carter

¹⁵⁹ "House Bill 1109," 0012 Box 10, Folder 76 "Welfare 1970-72, 1975," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹⁶⁰ Jerry W. Venters, "Hearnes For Attack On Arson For Profit," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 5, 1972, Newspapers.com.

¹⁶¹ Dana L. Spitzer, "Senate Rejects Plan to Base Welfare Aid On Need," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 24, 1972, Newspapers.com.

¹⁶² Spitzer, "Senate Rejects Plan."

also told Manford of additional concerns such as the commodity food program no longer having funds to function, home health care services needing funding to comply with a federal lawsuit, and money needed to provide day care services so ADC mothers could work.¹⁶³ Manford replied, “This is the same garbage we cut out before.” Needless to say, DeVerne did *not* let that statement go.¹⁶⁴ In less than a week, she had written and circulated a letter to fellow congress members which stated:

As you no doubt realise (sic) – one of my strongest hang-ups is the unreasonable attitude many legislators take against welfare recipients – and funding the various aid programs.

Accordingly, I am circulating, as widely as possible, the two enclosed articles. One is the M.A.S.W. newsletter which describes the welfare department’s financial need for extra money – and the other, a new item in a Jefferson City paper giving Senator Don Manford’s reaction to the request.

I hope you will react to this as indignantly as I and communicate with Senator Manford and others listed.¹⁶⁵

DeVerne didn’t stop there. By March 22, she had also written St. Louis City Welfare Director Nelson apologizing for missing a coffee hour due to “a problem one of my constituents presented me absorbed most of the whole day.” She explained, “Incidentally, I’m now involved in trying to stimulate community reaction to Senator Manford’s apparent willingness to under-fund the coming budget. I hope that can be forestalled. Enclosed is a copy of a news item which reflects his attitude.”¹⁶⁶ As it turns out, DeVerne’s advocacy worked, and by March 22, welfare funds were scheduled to be

¹⁶³ “Panel said unlikely to okay emergency funds for welfare,” *Jefferson City Post-Tribune*, March 10, 1972, 0012 Box 10, Folder 76 “Welfare 1970-72, 1975,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹⁶⁴ “Panel unlikely to okay emergency funds.”

¹⁶⁵ “Calloway letter on Manford,” March 16, 1972, 0012 Box 10, Folder 76 “Welfare 1970-72, 1975,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹⁶⁶ “Calloway letter to Director Nelson,” March 22, 1972, 0012 Box 10, Folder 76 “Welfare 1970-72, 1975,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

restored, giving back payments to the those with PTD and GR benefits who had previously been cut between 5% and 10%.¹⁶⁷ Just before the session's close in April, the legislature approved a budget that was \$59,000,000 higher than the current fiscal year, but that was also \$13,522,000 below what Hearnese had asked for.¹⁶⁸ Of that, \$4,596,731 was approved for the Division of Welfare.¹⁶⁹

In a fight as large and complex as this, the power is both seen and unseen, and the fight against the power is both visible and behind-the-scenes. It is the inconspicuous and amorphous perception amongst white elites that those on welfare assistance, predominantly Black women, are distinctly inferior. Occasionally, visible instances of power and its subsequent oppressive mindsets manifest, such as Senator Manford's comment about cutting out garbage. In both cases, the axes of interpersonal, disciplinary, cultural and structural power can be analyzed. Interpersonally, DeVerne had to relate not only to her constituents, but also to fellow legislators, and other government officials. She had to fight for less severe penalization of those living in poverty. She had to battle through the unfair culturally perpetuated stigma that those on welfare are somehow to blame for their plight. Thus, she had to take an intersectional approach in order to cut through power that was structurally operationalized through the state's regulatory regime of oppression, marginalization, and violence that has been euphemized as "welfare."

¹⁶⁷ "821,720 being mailed to restore cuts in welfare," March 22, 1972, 0012 Box 10, Folder 76 "Welfare 1970-72, 1975," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹⁶⁸ Jerry W. Venters, "Legislature Approves \$808,984,487 Budget," *St Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 23, 1972, Newspapers.com.

¹⁶⁹ Venters, "Legislature Approves Budget."

Additionally, DeVerne's strategies embodied true race womanhood, using direct agitation against axes of power: who saw Black lives as disposable garbage.

In February 1973, DeVerne wrote to Patrick Lynch of Missouri's Department of Community Affairs, with comments pertaining to a draft of a report being prepared for the Governor and General Assembly that highlighted goals for the state. She urged Mr. Lynch to incorporate her comments into the final draft. Her remarks included an incentive program for welfare mothers to receive ADC increases based upon her activities in social courses on nutrition, meal-making, home tutoring, budgeting, and child psychology; reorganization of social workers' time to be less consumed with paperwork and more focused on working with recipients' access and utilization of community resources; an ADC Child's Bill of Rights, which would guarantee each ADC child's access to healthcare and education services and needs such as food, clothing, and shelter; transportation assistance; and an opposition to the state's "Right to Work Law," which DeVerne linked to a burgeoning class of low-income workers who would therefore be more likely to end up needing old-age assistance.¹⁷⁰ She co-sponsored House Bill 565, which aimed at increasing ADC benefits to a mother with three children from \$130 a month to \$160 a month and establishing an "Unemployed Fathers Program" "(ADC-U)," which would allow unemployed fathers to live with their families while receiving welfare benefits, which would reverse the state's policy that required fathers to forfeit their benefits if they lived at home.¹⁷¹ In April 1973, the House gave preliminary approval to

¹⁷⁰ "Calloway Letter to Patrick Lynch," February 27, 1973, 0012 Box 10, Folder 77 "Welfare 1971-1973," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹⁷¹ Dana L. Spitzer, "Welfare Increases Backed By House," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 6, 1973, Newspapers.com.

the bill, and it was receiving heavy support from social welfare and religious organizations.¹⁷² In June, the bill was passed, raising the state of Missouri from the ranks of 45th to 35th.¹⁷³ Despite the bill's enactment, the ADC-U part of the bill was criticized because it inadvertently left out natural fathers, meaning it only applied to step fathers and adoptive fathers¹⁷⁴. Governor Kit S. Bond still urged for its passing anyway, understanding that natural fathers would be added to it in the next legislative session.¹⁷⁵

During DeVerne's most-salient years of pro-welfare advocacy, she experienced nearly insurmountable power that she had to dissect in order to squeak out even a meager existence for her constituents. DeVerne explained that "Of the 163 Legislators, be assured that only about 20 are pro Welfare in every aspect. Another 35 or so may be counted as generally positive and that leaves over 100 who need special effort to convince them."¹⁷⁶ Yet, through her political maneuvering, she was able to assist in the enactment of several laws that had positive outcomes for the city's Black residents. Even after 1973 when DeVerne was not directly involved in bill authorship or sponsorship, she continued her grassroots advocacy of writing letters and making phone calls on the behalf of her constituents who needed help navigating the disciplining terrain that is the state's welfare program.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² Jerry W. Venters, "Welfare Rise Is Passed By House," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 26, 1973, Newspapers.com.

¹⁷³ Jerry W. Venters, "Welfare Legislation Hailed As Important," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 1, 1973 Newspapers.com.

¹⁷⁴ Venters, "Welfare Legislation."

¹⁷⁵ Venters, "Welfare Legislation."

¹⁷⁶ "Letter to Gutzke and Goward," May 16, 1974, 0012 Box 10, Folder 74B "Welfare, 1961-1968, 1972-1975," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹⁷⁷ "Letter from Sen. McMillian," June 5, 1974, 0012 Box 10, Folder 74B "Welfare, 1961-1968, 1972-1975," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

Chapter 4: Reproductive Justice and the Dignity of Womanhood

Introduction:

Prior to the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision, states were left to pass their own abortion repeal laws. In Missouri (and 40 other states) through 1969, the governing law that prohibited abortions dated back to 1835. That law made it a crime to perform an abortion except to save the life of the mother.¹⁷⁸ In 1967, Missouri Senator Robert L. Prange (Rep.), introduced a bill that would have liberalized the 1835 abortion law.¹⁷⁹ It passed the Senate, but died in the House.¹⁸⁰ In 1969, he introduced a similar bill. This time, it died in the Senate.¹⁸¹ His bill would have allowed a woman to obtain an abortion if she was pregnant as a result of rape, her health was at risk, or if three doctors certified the baby would be born with a serious defect.¹⁸² Prange lost his Missouri Senate seat following the November 1970 elections.¹⁸³ In 1971, DeVerne believed the 1835 abortion law needed to be liberalized, as it had been in 16 other states, and she embarked on two-year journey of advocacy for reproductive justice.¹⁸⁴ This chapter focuses on: (1) highlighting her legislative endeavors towards seeking liberalization of the 1835 abortion law in the years before-and-after *Roe v. Wade*, and (2) analyzing her work through

¹⁷⁸ James W. Singer, "Legislators, Doctors Favor Model Abortion Laws," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 9, 1969, Newspapers.com.

¹⁷⁹ Singer, "Model Abortion Laws."

¹⁸⁰ Singer, "Model Abortion Laws."

¹⁸¹ "Bill Liberalizing Abortion Laws is Defeated in Senate," *St. Joseph News-Press*, June 3, 1969, Newspapers.com.

¹⁸² "Bill Liberalizing Abortion Laws."

¹⁸³ "Senate Legislators Returning for More Work on Tax Bills," *St. Joseph Gazette*, Nov 30, 1970, Newspapers.com.

¹⁸⁴ "The Chance for Abortion Reform," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 19, 1971, Newspapers.com.

intersectionality's domains of power with nods to Black feminist theory and to the interest convergence she employed in her pursuit of reproductive justice for women.

“An Unholy Alliance”:

On January 27, 1971, DeVerne promised to sponsor legislation that would legalize abortion in Missouri.¹⁸⁵ Less than two weeks later, on February 9, 1971, DeVerne, along with two other representatives from Kansas City, introduced what became known as “the abortion bill.” The bill – House Bill 650 – aimed at permitting abortion for “non-viable fetuses” by licensed physicians in licensed hospitals.¹⁸⁶

Anti-abortion legislators responded by introducing legislation that proposed an amendment to the state constitution that would ensure “from the moment of conception,” the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”¹⁸⁷ The arguments from both sides rested on issues of religion, gender, mortality, safety and medical advisability, poverty and legal precedent.¹⁸⁸

DeVerne began receiving mail from Missouri voters – some in support of her bill; others vehemently opposed. DeVerne's replies to such letters varied; some were personalized; others were based off of two pre-written “response letters” that she gave her secretary to use to help her keep up with the anti-abortion-related letters she received.

¹⁸⁵ Clarissa Start, “Legislator Plans Bill to Legalize Abortion,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 27, 1971, Newspapers.com.

¹⁸⁶ “Abortion Bill Introduced in State Legislature,” *Mexico Ledger*, February 9, 1971, Newspapers.com.

¹⁸⁷ Connie Rosenbaum, “Abortion: Modern Dilemma,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 21, 1971, Newspapers.com.

¹⁸⁸ Rosenbaum, “Abortion: Modern Dilemma.”

One of the canned response letters focused on rebutting religious points of contention. In those response letters, dubbed “Abortion Response 2,” DeVerne wrote:

Thank you for your letter of _____ relating your views against abortion. Don't you also believe that religious belief should be the personal choice of the individual? I do. For this reason I have introduced a bill to keep the State from restricting a woman's choice to one certain religious belief.

If we were to compel a woman to nurse to maturity the growth of a fetus in her uterus, then, don't you think that we who compel should assume the moral responsibility for the child which results? Somehow or other we have set up laws and conditions which kill the spirit, the initiative, and the potential of large numbers of our young.

Who is to say which is the deadliest sin? I prefer that the State not try to make the decision – and that this be left to each woman, her God, and her physician.¹⁸⁹

DeVerne's remarks demonstrate how she was not only able to navigate working within the intersections of religion, gender and politics, but also how she was able to take an intersectional approach to a deeply impassioned issue that traversed highly sensitive religious lines of demarcation. In her final statement, “I prefer that the State not try to make the decision – and that this be left to each woman, her God, and her physician,” she illuminates her intersectional appeal that abortion ought not be based solely on a singular religious belief, rather it is a philosophical decision based on the individualized ideals that each woman have the freedom to examine her own religious spirituality and medical advisement before concluding what may be the right choice for her, as a polyethnic person whose body cannot be legislated with a one-size-fits all law.¹⁹⁰ In order to rebut the largely religious anti-abortion majority in the 1970s, DeVerne had to utilize an intersectional approach that was not based on singular religious morals that abortion was

¹⁸⁹ DeVerne Calloway, “Abortion Response Letter 2,” S0012 Box 1, Folder 2 “Abortion, 1971,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹⁹⁰ Calloway, “Abortion Response Letter 2.”

either right or wrong. Rather, she had to propel the pitch that “Abortion is part of a woman” and “the state has no right to interfere.”¹⁹¹

DeVerne’s approach calls attention to intersectionality’s power domains: interpersonal (how people relate to one another and who is disadvantaged within social interactions); disciplinary (how one encounters and experiences society’s rules and biases); cultural (the manufacturing of messages that social inequalities under laws of equality are fairly produced); and structural (how intersecting power domains cast and frame social institutions).¹⁹² Abortion *is* very much a part of common social interactions that shape people’s interpersonal relationships with one another. Whether pro-choice or pro-life, the abortion debate is about individual beliefs. However, from a sociological standpoint, individuals tend to flock to others with whom they can relate, and when that relationality is formed from a highly charged and widely contested issue such as abortion, individuals find ways of interpersonally connecting with others regardless of race, class, gender, sexuality, or even citizenship. Thus, people’s connections are interpersonal which then is used to collectively shape and even organize unified fronts. In this sense, both DeVerne’s approach *and* pro-lifers’ approach are similarly constructed.

Turning now to the disciplinary domain of power in the context of abortion legislation at the surface and of DeVerne’s approach in being the primary architect of such legislation, power operates by disproportionately disciplining impoverished women who are either forced into compulsory childbearing or into secretive and unsafe

¹⁹¹ “Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway,” interview by Irene Cortinovis, University of Missouri-St. Louis Archive and Manuscript Division,” September 9, 1971, 29, Western Historical Manuscript Collection T-016, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹⁹² Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016) 7-13.

abortions. DeVerne felt the 1835 abortion law was inhumanely punitive, stripping a woman of dignity and the integrity to consent or deny the use of her body to perform physiological functions (childbirth) against her will. Should a woman be forced into childbirth, she then is faced to either keep the child or give it away – both demonstrative of additional disciplining and control that have lifelong consequences such as financial hardships, impaired mental health and trauma of the mother (or child), and racially charged derogatory stereotypes of Black woman as “welfare queens” who supposedly enjoyed generating income by having multiple babies in order to cunningly manipulate the system. Fully cognizant of such harmful physical and rhetorical disciplinary practices, DeVerne sought reprieve.

The cultural domain of power is organized around the presumption that the laws that govern society are fairly produced, that all “competitors” play on a level playing field, and thus, any outcome is upright, just, and fair.¹⁹³ In her quest to liberalize Missouri’s abortion law, DeVerne had to cast and reframe the 1835 law as unconstitutional. Her messaging was organized, therefore, around making the law “fair” in that it would make it possible for women who had abortions to also have professional medical care. DeVerne’s messaging was always centered on improving the law’s fairness because, as she stated, “I believe this to be every individual’s right – to be treated when in need of care.” Through such messaging, DeVerne chipped away at the manufactured messages that abortion was morally wrong, religiously dishonorable, and socially unacceptable, a trifecta of intersectionality. Such messaging is a tough pill to swallow for the white majority who is accustomed to accessing privileges based upon the ethos that

¹⁹³ Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 11.

laws *are* fair and just, created with equality in mind, and create equitable access regardless of one's race, class, gender, sexuality, or religious beliefs.

The structural domain of power here is based upon how power relations of race, class, gender, sexuality, and religion shape the institution, which in this case is a law from 1835, that had a myopic stance that women only required protections if her immediate life was at risk from the pregnancy. The outcome of such, therefore, is that for 130-plus years, the government's power remained unchecked. The ensuing result was that women without means to safer reproductive alternatives were unjustly punished by the system.

Considering the power dynamics at play, it came as little surprise that the majority of DeVerne's fellow legislators had negative reactions.¹⁹⁴ Her proposed bill was referred to the House Committee on Civil and Criminal Procedures, and a hearing on the bill was held in March 1971. In strategizing her address to the committee, DeVerne understood that her reasoning had to be centered on women in totality and the 1835 law's unconstitutionality, rather than the disproportionality of Black women affected by strict abortion laws. She had to organize though converging interests, for otherwise the bill would surely gain no traction. Only page four of DeVerne's address was located; however, it included the summary of her address:

The time has come, Mr. Chairman and members of the Civil and Criminal Procedures Committee to recognize woman as a whole and total person – legally deserving and guaranteed the right to assert and defend her womanhood at every

¹⁹⁴ Wendy Risk, "Abortion – Still Against the Law," *Columbia Missourian*, February 22, 1972, S0012 Box 1, Folder 4 "Abortion Correspondence, 1971-1972," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

level – including the right not to unwillingly breed off-spring – to abort, if she chooses.

I have presented my case and will seek no rebuttal ---- for no purpose will be served by a religious dispute. History shows that such disputes are the stuff and tinder of wars. From the point of my own Christian Ethic ---it is impossible for me to conceive any situation, any alleged moral transgression, which would sway me to deny another woman professional medical attention she feels needed.

I finally urge you and this Committee to give soul-searching consideration to repeal of (sic) Missouri's Abortion Law ----- asking and answering in your own private souls—how long should you endure a law which has – most certainly – unintentionally, perpetuated a strange alliance --- an unholy alliance between priests and moralists, on the one hand -----and on the other, charlatans and quacks who financially exploit and profane the dignity of Missouri's womanhood.¹⁹⁵

DeVerne's address to the committee was centered on emboldening women monolithically. To be clear, DeVerne did not separate out the disproportionality that Black women faced compared to white women in regards to the complexity of access to healthcare, childcare, education, and jobs availability. *She couldn't*. As a Black woman, DeVerne had to tread carefully, for what was at stake was, effectually, raising the status of women, and especially Black women, from that of "societal parasites" to the level of being the stabilizers of the family unit.¹⁹⁶ But in order to do so, she could not explicitly denounce the 1835 law's racial implications. In this sense, DeVerne had to discipline herself by essentially disregarding her own identity as a Black woman and as an advocate for other Black women. Through such a glimpse, one can see yet another layer of complexity added to the tangled domains of power shaping this debate.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ "Calloway's Address to House Committee on Civil and Criminal Procedures," S0012 Box 1, Folder 1 "Abortion Issues 1970-1976," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹⁹⁶ "House Bill 1399," S0012 Box 1, folder 1 "Abortion Issues 1970-1976," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

¹⁹⁷ Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 7-13.

Nonetheless, by May 1971, it was clear the bill would not make it out of committee to the House floor as summer adjournment loomed in June, meaning there would be no chance of it being considered by the full House.¹⁹⁸ DeVerne would have to wait until the next legislative session.

In a separate-but-related context, DeVerne organized a safer platform to address the disproportionality faced by Black women in regards to the state's Family Planning Services, via her support of House Bill 1399, which sought to provide family planning services to all citizens. DeVerne spoke to the House committee, and from the second sentence in her two-page address, DeVerne made it clear that this fight *was* for Black women. DeVerne cited figures that "Nationally, black women die in childbirth at the rate of some 20 in every 100,000 childbirths," and that St. Louis "currently has the highest black infant mortality rate in the nation."¹⁹⁹ She continued:

Of every 1,000 black women who complete 3rd and 4th pregnancies, 25 die; 45% of all black babies born to mothers with four previous pregnancies die within 28 days of birth, and the rate is 4 times higher for infants born within 15 months of the mother's most recent pregnancy. These national statistics also show that black women with 3 or more children are the lowest paid in the work force, make up 1/3 of the welfare rolls, and bear a high number of deformed children – victims of cerebral palsy and brain damage.²⁰⁰

Akin to the intersectional analysis in the abortion-related context above, DeVerne's remarks again demonstrate each of the four intersectional power domains. What's dissimilar, however, is that in the context of family planning services DeVerne felt it to be a safer platform than abortion (explicitly) to illuminate the disproportionate

¹⁹⁸ "Action Unlikely on Bill Relaxing Abortion Laws," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 12, 1971, Newspapers.com.

¹⁹⁹ "House Bill 1399."

²⁰⁰ "House Bill 1399."

disciplining of Black women. That 45% of all black babies born to mothers with four previous pregnancies die within 28 days of birth is a not only demonstrative of the disciplining of Black women, it is state power as a source of violence against Black women. INCITE! – “a network of radical feminists of color organizing to end state violence” use a framework of analysis called “dangerous intersections” “to address how violence operates in institutionalized ways against oppressed groups.”²⁰¹ “Dangerous intersections” means that “women of color live in the dangerous intersections of sexism, racism and other oppressions” and that “anti-violence strategies that are mindful of the larger structures of violence that shape the world we live in” must be analyzed and adopted.²⁰² That DeVerne felt she could only remark on institutionalized state violence against Black women in the context of family planning, but not in the context of abortion, explicitly demonstrates not only reticence in her own disciplining, but also her intuitive understanding of the cultural domain of power, for she knew the messaging of her liberalized abortion legislation could not be about Black women’s societal disciplining because the message would be that this was an individual form of social injustice, rather than a collective injustice. She had to converge upon the interests of white women in order for it to be considered collective social harm that required correction.

By January 1972, DeVerne’s original “abortion bill” (House Bill 650) was re-referred to the same committee, but the chairman of the committee, Harold L. Holliday (Dem), 14th District, was reluctant to allow a vote to move it out of the committee because the Senate had already indicated that it would not take action on any bill “left

²⁰¹ Hill Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 54.

²⁰² “Dangerous Intersections” INCITE!, accessed May 26, 2020 at <https://incite-national.org/dangerous-intersections/>.

over” from previous sessions. So DeVerne just introduced a new bill (House Bill 1470), one which would repeal the current anti-abortion bill from 1835.²⁰³ DeVerne, who was dubbed by the press as “the chief House proponent of liberalization” (of abortion legislation), knew that even this newly proposed legislation would have a tough chance at getting out of committee. She also knew that the longer the issue was kept alive in the short-term, the better the outcome would be in the long-term. Her hope, at that point, was just to obtain a favorable committee report. DeVerne said, “Legislators pay a lot of attention to what the courts are saying...And courts, in turn, pay attention to legislatures and public opinion. That is why it is important to keep the issue alive and before the Legislature even if there is little chance of passage.”²⁰⁴ DeVerne’s synergistic approach gets at the heart of chipping away at the structure of intersecting power relations formed by the laws that create and perpetuate beliefs, which in this case was the belief that reproductive injustices were occurring and required drastic change.

By March of that year, the bill made it to a committee hearing. About 800 people attended the hearing held by the House Committee on Civil and Criminal Procedure (the same committee who received last session’s bill.²⁰⁵ A petition in support of the bill, signed by 3,400 Missouri voters, was submitted to the committee. After four hours of testimony, the committee adjourned without taking action on the bill.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ “Letter to Dr. Shear,” January 19, 1972, S0012 Box 1, Folder 4 “Abortion Correspondence, 1971-1972,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

²⁰⁴ “Few Calls for Change in State Abortion Law,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 19, 1972, Newspapers.com.

²⁰⁵ “Political Impact of Abortion Slight, House Panel is Told,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 9, 1972, Newspapers.com.

²⁰⁶ Michael R. Fancher, “Abortion Hearing Draws Crowd,” *Kansas-City Star*, March 9, 1972, Newspapers.com.

On January 22, 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision was announced, granting women the liberty to choose to have an abortion without excessive government restriction during the first six months of the pregnancy. On January 31, 1973, DeVerne announced she had withdrawn her abortion bill because "its constitutionality under the Supreme Court decision was in doubt."²⁰⁷ Over the next few years, DeVerne still remained active in the federal abortion fight, via writing letters related to *ad hoc* abortion-related rumblings such as the Hyde Amendment, which forbade public funding for abortions unless they were deemed medically necessary to save the life of the mother. DeVerne also took her sights internationally, writing the Prime Minister of Canada, Pierre Trudeau, regarding an 18-month imprisonment of a doctor who performed abortions. DeVerne wrote:

"Again, I urge you, in the name of thousands of women who have had safe abortions, and on behalf of those other thousands who have been maimed and butchered by quacks, to free the doctors. If you do not approve of abortions, then restrain the doctor from performing them, but for humanity's sake, free him!"²⁰⁸

Her words reverberate and starkly reveal the violence endured by women, the disciplining of women and even of the doctors who sought to protect women from the structural violence being committed against them.

DeVerne continued to collect newspaper clips and remained on the mailing list for NARAL, Planned Parenthood, and the Abortions Rights Alliance (ARA). Though a lifelong pro-choice advocate, DeVerne never had another need to introduce additional abortion legislation. Her legislative mission of raising awareness and public support was

²⁰⁷ Dana Spitzer, "Withdraws Bill to Set Rules for Abortion," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 31, 1973, Newspapers.com.

²⁰⁸ "Letter to Trudeau," April 30, 1975, S0012 Box 1, Folder 1 "Abortion, 1968-1977," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

accomplished. Twenty years before intersectional frameworks were even being used as analytic tools, DeVerne heuristically navigated intersectional power domains, and her dedicated work and public knowledge production deserve merit for the roused attention that she had the courage to amass.

Chapter 5: Education and the Prism of Power

Introduction:

Growing up and teaching school in the Jim Crow South, DeVerne understood personally, professionally, and politically that the U.S. education system was neither equal or equitable. Her experiences were foundational in forming her commitment to improving educational opportunities for Black students and teachers, ultimately becoming a hallmark of her 50-plus years of activism. DeVerne's experiences as a teacher brought her "face to face (sic) with a chilling, exasperating, and humiliating reality which nothing in the college textbooks, or the lectures, or the teaching experiments had prepared [her] for."²⁰⁹ Her teaching experiences were a watershed in her realizations of how grossly unjust education was, and she fought back, meddling like the race women who came before her. DeVerne explained:

I had lived [in the] South all my life, but I had never been in the deep South. And I thought that there was something terrible, and I became quite militant, in terms of my reaction, and was constantly having confrontations with the authorities, the board of education, the superintendent, and some of the local store people.²¹⁰

As a result of her refusal to sit quietly and accept the harsh realities of segregation, DeVerne's boss – the superintendent of the schools, told her that she "was an alien to that community," that she "was having a difficult time adjusting," and therefore he suggested "that, for the happiness for everybody concerned, maybe [she] had better find somewhere else to teach the following year."²¹¹ So, DeVerne left and moved to Philadelphia, where

²⁰⁹ Speech "For UMSL Education Graduates" April 26, 1984, S0551, Roll 19, Folder 235, Calloway, DeVerne, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

²¹⁰ "Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway," interview by Irene Cortinovis, University of Missouri-St. Louis Archive and Manuscript Division," September 9, 1971, 5, Western Historical Manuscript Collection T-016, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

²¹¹ "Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway," 5.

in 1941, she had her first brush with politics, which in her own words, “fascinated” her.²¹² DeVerne was doing secretarial work for a Black lawyer, who was also an elected judge. As his judgeship was an elected position, DeVerne began assisting him politically, attending meetings with him, preparing speeches for him, and ultimately becoming acquainted with the methods and techniques of the political arena.²¹³ Although she enjoyed her work, she was sensing a need for more. During the throes of World War II, she volunteered for the United Service Organization (USO) in 1942, to find out if she could “relate to men and if [she] could handle [herself] and do the work that was related to military people.”²¹⁴ She realized she could handle it and then joined the American Red Cross in 1943. Fortunately, DeVerne’s experiences in the classroom, her time in Philadelphia, and her preparation with the USO, had stoked a fire for advocacy and activism, and as a result, DeVerne did just that during her time in the Red Cross, where she was stationed in India from 1943 through 1946. In one situation, the American forces built a swimming pool, and it was scheduled to open in an official ceremony on July 4th, but the Black G.I.s and Black Red Cross girls were told they were not welcome, and instead were offered a separate, segregated celebration on July 3rd. In protest, the Black service men and women boycotted the July 3rd event, angering the Red Cross personnel. DeVerne was considered to be “the leader of this rebellious reaction.”²¹⁵ As a result, she was moved from her post and stuck in a post with no other Black women. The Red Cross tried to play it off as a move to a “higher post” in an effort to prove they did not have a pattern of discrimination; however, DeVerne was furious, commenting, “This, of course,

²¹² “Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway,” 7.

²¹³ “Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway,” 6.

²¹⁴ “Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway,” 8.

²¹⁵ “Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway,” 9.

rubbed against my grain, and it separated me in daily activities from the other women . . . black women.”²¹⁶ So, she demanded to be sent home.

DeVerne’s experiences show her earliest attempts at intuitively cutting through the power dynamics she encountered in her daily life. As a young teacher, DeVerne employed interpersonal tactics, namely her voice, to speak out against the harsh and unfair conditions of education in the Jim Crow South. As a result, she came face-to-face with intersectionality’s disciplinary domain of power when she was forced to leave. Her job in Philadelphia helped her become a stronger activist, as she learned more about organized political resistance. Wanting to understand more about the way the world operated, DeVerne sojourned to India, where she witnessed firsthand, the cruelty of India’s caste system, which she noted had comparisons (though on a less-severe scale) to the treatment of Blacks in the states. She observed how the cultural equation of the *haves* and *have nots* fell into power dynamics that resulted in the deliberate oppression of Blacks. The combination of these power domains (interpersonal, disciplinary, and cultural), led to DeVerne’s lifelong activism of effecting change for education, which, more than any other societal power play, was where she began and ended her lifelong work. In fact, of her time in the Missouri House of Representatives, she served on the Education Committee in the 72nd – 81st General Assemblies, and she was the committee’s chairperson in the 79th and 80th General Assemblies. While a strong proponent of measures and endeavors that were favorable to public education, especially for that of St. Louis’s Black community, her crowning achievement centered on her efforts in securing

²¹⁶ “Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway,” 10.

state funding for Harris-Stowe College (HSC) in 1979, which later became Harris Stowe State University (HSSU).

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section highlights both her behind-the-scenes legislative work and some of her more visible actions in education. It should be noted that every education-related bill she ever sponsored is not included; instead, this section focuses on her approach and philosophy, as well as three of her most-salient legislative efforts during the 1973 and 1979 St. Louis school strikes and her attempts at restructuring the St. Louis Board of Education. The second section highlights DeVerne's legislative efforts in assisting HTC in becoming a state-funded college, ultimately securing college-access for St. Louis's Black community. Each section situates her work within intersectionality's domains of power, Critical Race Theory's tenets of interest convergence and racism as a normal occurrence within the U.S., and Black feminist theory.

K-12 Public Education Initiatives: Living the Future Ahead:

In situating DeVerne's legislative work in the arena of public education, it is important to hear her own summary of her efforts, her philosophy, and her strategy. The idea of a legislative victory for DeVerne did not mean that her name was attached as an author of a bill that was pushed through; rather, it was more aligned with the idea of being a conduit between underserved populations and white lawmakers, who had little experience understanding the lives of those in the district DeVerne represented. DeVerne described:

I made it my special business if I found out in some way by some expression or some vote on the floor that legislators had some very fixed, and I thought negative

views about race, then I went to work on them and tried to get them, to give them another view, to see another side of the whole issue so I called myself an ambassador and considered myself a bridge which the extreme black race-conscious people and the extreme white race-conscious people could somehow or other through me, could sort of get along with one another.”²¹⁷

DeVerne was keenly aware of the whitewashing and privilege espoused by white lawmakers through their proposed laws, laws that would have or did have negative impacts on the Black community, and “so my whole role had been kind of a conciliator, peace-maker, and general person of good will.”²¹⁸ DeVerne never sought notoriety. Hubris served no purpose. DeVerne explained, “So I never had the pride of authorship of a bill. That was never my thing. My thing was if it should be done, whatever I can do, if it means play a low profile in the move, but if what I’m doing is helping, that’s alright.”²¹⁹

In one such behind-the-scenes piece of legislation, DeVerne introduced House Bill 1684 in 1979, to add funding for elementary “guidance teachers.” The bill called for the initiation and improvement or expansion of elementary guidance services in public school districts to help students function in a manner that enhances their social and academic growth, to assist elementary school students and school personnel in identified areas of community concern, such as: basic skills development, irregular attendance, career awareness and planning skills, child growth and development problems related to learning, health and physical development problems, home-school related problems, and other personal, psychological and social problems of children.²²⁰ In essence, her bill

²¹⁷“Interview 2 with DeVerne Calloway,” interview by Kenn Thomas, “Oral History,” University of Missouri, February 23, 1983, 29, Western Historical Manuscript Collection T-705, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

²¹⁸ “Interview 2 with DeVerne Calloway,” 29.

²¹⁹ “Interview 2 with DeVerne Calloway,” 26.

²²⁰ “House Bill 1684,” S0012 Box 12 “Bills Introduced by DeVerne Calloway, 1968-1979,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

would have created positions specifically aimed at guiding children both emotionally and academically, helping them gain a sense of their futures at a younger age “so that the children could begin to get a notion of where they were going and how they might get there in terms of the courses they needed to take.”²²¹ DeVerne added, “And they needed a certain amount of guidance in regard to their own life because some of them had a complicated family situation and the school did not appear to give them a sufficient answer just through the textbook approach.”²²² Though the bill never made it, it’s introduction to the General Assembly underscores a prime example of how DeVerne went about her legislative advocacy – philosophically planting seeds in order to help propagate the inextricable link between education, workforce skills, mental health, and ultimately, welfare. It’s what Black feminist author Mikki Kendell describes as the need to create programs that promote safety instead of policing. Kendell writes, “Students need schools and politicians to expand the definition of safety to include more school-based counselors, social workers, nurses, and after-school, weekend, and summer programs.”²²³ It is worth noting that their synchronicity on this topic spans 40 years. DeVerne saw what her white elite counterparts did not: that unstable school systems jeopardize student safety and achievement. Yet, her knowledge production on this was unheeded, sidelined, and ultimately ignored.

For DeVerne to successfully operate in such a manner required her awareness of the dangerous ripple effects that resolutions and bills could potentially have on St. Louis’s Black community. It also demonstrates another way in which she cut through

²²¹ “Interview 2 with DeVerne Calloway,” 10.

²²² “Interview 2 with DeVerne Calloway,” 10.

²²³ Mikki Kendell, *Hood Feminism* (New York: Penguin Random House LLC, 2020), 200.

structural domains of power in order to prevent additional hardships from racial isolation when there was otherwise scant attention being paid to such. Her efforts paint a scene of intellectual labor and racial leadership, and a scene that has been consigned to oblivion like the race women who came before her. It's what Black feminist scholar Brittney Cooper describes as "...changing public opinion as the animated force of race women's 'intellectual activism.'"²²⁴ As a public lawmaker, DeVerne's Black female body was "on display for white public consumption."²²⁵ Cognizant of white surveillance, DeVerne's public role falls within the idea of respectability politics, a discourse that constitutes "one of the earliest theorizations of gender within newly emancipated Black communities."²²⁶ Cooper situates this within what political theorist Mary Hawkesworth decided that:

because only some men—men of a specific race, class, education, and ancestry—are positioned to represent the public, the "public" is a raced, classed, and gendered concept. Thus, when Black women advocated for opportunities to engage their thought leadership "beyond woman's sphere," they were arguing explicitly for the right to do intellectual work in public space.

DeVerne, who saw herself as a "kind of a conciliator, peace-maker, and general person of good will," had to create a character of sorts, one of respectability, of sophistication, and of refinement, in order for her to make any sort of strides and to shape the way public audiences would perceive her.

Visible-But-Forgotten Advocacy:

One of DeVerne's more visible pushes came to light in 1971, when DeVerne co-sponsored a bill which called for a restructuring of the St. Louis Board of Education from

²²⁴ *Beyond Respectability* p. 19

²²⁵ *Beyond Respectability* p. 19

²²⁶ Brittney C. Cooper, *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 19.

twelve elected-at-large representatives to six at-large and six from sub districts throughout the city. The bill received heavy criticism from the current board at that time, and it was also not endorsed by the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* nor the *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, although the St. Louis Federation of Teachers Union, Local 420, did, in fact, support the bill. When the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* ran an editorial, “A Bad School Bill,” DeVerne fired back in a letter to the editor, beginning with, “A diminishment of power is oftentimes (sic) painful to the elite. However, history has not proven this disastrous to the people’s welfare.”²²⁷ Her letter reiterated her main point – that the current system of costly campaigns was depriving many other qualified persons from even considering a bid. She also questioned why one would fear the “in-put by six community-oriented members.”²²⁸

DeVerne referred to the current board as basically being self-selected by the board without campaigning and was used by the board to advance its own interests.²²⁹ She also estimated “a city-wide campaign run with some chance of election would cost about \$10,000” whereas “running a district candidate would lower the price to about \$2,000, which would be within reach of a neighborhood organization” within a city sub district.²³⁰ DeVerne’s primary claim was that the current board was far-removed from and unresponsive to district patrons, resulting in a centralized authority of power, and that

²²⁷ “For Community Input,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Letter to Editor, June 7, 1971, S0012 Box 27, Folder 210 “Redistricting, School Board, 1971-1974,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

²²⁸ “For Community Input.”

²²⁹ Dana L. Spitzer, “St. Louis School Board Assailed As Closed Shop,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 19, 1972, S0012, Box 27, Folder 210 “Redistricting, School Board, 1971-1974,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

²³⁰ Katherine Waters, “Insulated? Unresponsive?,” *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, February 8, 1972, S0012, Box 27, Folder 210 “Redistricting, School Board, 1971-1974,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

the board was made up of upper middle-class professionals (with the exception of one) who lived mainly in South St. Louis and who did not even have children in the city's public schools.²³¹ Citing the unexpected departure of a board member with a track record for his efforts in improving the education of disadvantaged students, Samuel Shepard Jr., who left the previous year, DeVerne testified to the House Education Committee that "Shepard left because the Board of Education did not use his ideas on education in the ghetto community."²³² DeVerne maintained the election of twelve at-large board members was not representative of the city's constituency in terms of who goes to the public schools.²³³ DeVerne said the bill is "part of a national movement in recent years to make school boards more accountable to communities by decentralizing their authority."²³⁴ She recognized what it was: the silencing and disciplining of Black community stakeholders.

Although DeVerne's bill was passed in the House, it was defeated in the Senate. Ultimately, DeVerne considered this one of her biggest defeats. Two years later in 1973, St. Louis School teachers went on strike, and one of the board's redistricting bill cosponsors, Representative James F. Conway, was vocal in connecting the School Board's shortcomings with teachers and the community to the strike. He said the strike would have been avoided if there would have been "better communication between the

²³¹ Dana L. Spitzer, "City's School Board Fears Polarization," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 7, 1971, S0012, Box 27, Folder 210 "Redistricting, School Board, 1971-1974," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

²³² Jacob H. Wolf, "School Aid Gains," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, February 17, no year, S0012, Box 27, Folder 210 "Redistricting, School Board, 1971-1974," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

²³³ "Interview 2 with DeVerne Calloway," 26.

²³⁴ Spitzer, "Board Fears Polarization."

School Board and teachers.”²³⁵ DeVerne, as co-leader of the Black Legislative Caucus, also spoke out in support of the teachers. The Black Caucus endorsed the strike and condemned the St. Louis School Board for refusing to negotiate with the St. Louis Teachers Union and the St. Louis Teachers Association.²³⁶ The strike ended after 28 days when the two sides agreed to a \$600 raise over 18 months.²³⁷

In January 1979, St. Louis public school teachers again voted to go on strike, supported by their union, the American Federation of Teachers (Local 420) to demand more pay. DeVerne, in her legislative capacities, assisted mediation efforts between the teachers, represented by AFT 420 and the Board. The logjam between these powers was historically rooted through the Board’s documented actions of reporting less funding, on average by 4.83 percent, than they had in actuality; thus, the teachers cited this track record in their 1979 demands for better contracts in the next school year.²³⁸ Teachers were demanding a \$1,000 raise.²³⁹ The Board of Education initially offered a \$100 raise for returning teachers, a \$200 increase in the starting salary for new teachers, the addition of a second planning period, and an additional 31 elementary teachers.²⁴⁰

DeVerne, who was the chairperson of the St. Louis Legislative Delegation’s Sub-Committee on Education, reached out to both the St. Louis Board of Education via

²³⁵ Robert Christman, “Mayor’s Strike Role Becomes Hot Issue,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 2, 1973, Newspapers.com.

²³⁶ “Black Caucus Gives Support to Teachers,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 24, 1973, Newspapers.com.

²³⁷ Robert J. Kelly, “School Strike Ends,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 19 1973, Newspapers.com.

²³⁸ “St. Louis School Strike Letters,” March 8, 1979, S0012, Box 27, Folder 210 “Redistricting, School Board, 1971-1974,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

²³⁹ James E. Ellis and J. Pulitzer, “Negotiations Break Off in St. Louis Teachers Strike” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 13, 1979, Newspapers.com.

²⁴⁰ James E. Ellis, “St. Louis Teachers Reject Wage Offer, Vote to Strike,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 15, 1979, Newspapers.com.

treasurer Sam Lawson and state auditor James F. Antonio, who had offered to put together an independent audit. In separate letters to both sides, DeVerne requested the following: a list of the 20 school monies' funds maintained by St. Louis Public Schools and their current balances; the current balance in the Teachers' Fund (including a statement as to the number of state allocations represented by that balance; the dates they were received, and additionally the anticipated allocations from the State to be credited to said fund for the 1978-1979 fiscal year; and the total amount of any allocated or projected monies for the Teachers fund.²⁴¹

An outside audit firm, Peat, Marwick, Mitchell, & Co., conducted the audit, finding that school district officials were not far off from their initial budget projections of a \$1.1 million surplus.²⁴² In the end, the strike lasted 56 days, spanned eight weeks, and ended with agreed-upon negotiations that resulted in a \$525 raise for teachers. The additional funding necessary to successfully complete the transaction came from eleven outside businesses, who agreed to chip in an extra \$600,000 and \$1.3 million from the state, pledged by Governor Joseph P. Teasdale.²⁴³ The check from the state, though part of the St. Louis teachers' strike negotiations, was also money owed to the district in advance of the state takeover of Harris Teachers College.²⁴⁴

Indeed, there is a connection from DeVerne's experiences as a Black woman teaching in the Jim Crow South to her advocacy and legislative work on the strikes. As a

²⁴¹ "St. Louis School Strike Letters."

²⁴² James E. Ellis, "Neither Side Wins as Teacher Strike Ends," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 12, 1979, Newspapers.com.

²⁴³ Ellis, "Neither Side Wins."

²⁴⁴ "Agencies Say Controversial Check Should Earn Interest," *The Springfield News-Leader*, March 23, 1979, Newspapers.com.

teacher, her advocacy for better conditions forced her out; she did not have the power to win that battle. As a legislator, DeVerne could do what Black female teachers in St. Louis Public Schools could not do on their own: cut through the disciplining and structural power that confined them. In other words, in order for a Black woman to be taken somewhat seriously, a societal contract that gave credence and believability was needed, even in a profession that is largely foundational on the work of Black women.

Harris-Stowe State University:

In the seventies, much of DeVerne's attention focused on the plight of Harris Teachers College (HTC), now Harris-Stowe State University (HSSU), a designated historically black college and university (HBCU) in the city of St. Louis. Before becoming a state-funded college, HTC was run by the Board of Education of the St. Louis Public Schools. The issue at hand was that the district could no longer afford HTC. DeVerne recognized the harsh implications that closure would have on St. Louis's Black community. Her advocacy centered on "saving" HTC by having it become part of the state of Missouri's higher education system, in short, a state-funded college. In order to understand the full scope of DeVerne's advocacy, it is also helpful to understand the 130-plus-years of racialized history at HSSU.

HSSU History:

HSSU's roots are traced back to 1857, when it was founded as a white-only teachers college by the St. Louis Public School System.²⁴⁵ In 1890, the St. Louis Public School System founded a second school -- this time to prepare future Black teachers in

²⁴⁵ "Harris-Stowe State University Campus History," Harris-Stowe State University, Accessed December 17, 2019 at http://go.hssu.edu/rsp_content.cfm?wid=50&pid=478.

the city of St. Louis.²⁴⁶ In 1929, this school adopted the named Stowe Teachers College, in honor of abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe.²⁴⁷ In 1954, the Board of Education of St. Louis Public Schools merged both schools under the name of Harris Teachers College (HTC), dropping the Stowe part of the name.²⁴⁸ In 1977, in response to Black alumni, the St. Louis Board of Education revised the name again, this time to Harris-Stowe College.²⁴⁹ In 1979, under Senate Bill 703, and with Calloway's determined efforts, Harris-Stowe became part of Missouri's higher education state system, the word "State" was added, and the name officially became Harris-Stowe State College (HSSC). In 1987, HSSC was named a HCBU.²⁵⁰ In 2005, HSSC obtained university status, and became Harris-Stowe State University (HSSU).²⁵¹

DeVerne and Harris-Stowe State University:

A staunch and unwavering advocate for improved public education initiatives, DeVerne first began focusing her legislative attention on Harris Teachers College (HTC) in 1971, which is when public rumblings on an HTC closure seemed imminent. On February 17, 1971, the House Appropriations Committee proposed a \$1-million proposed spending cut for HTC, which was part of an overall \$18,000,000 budget cut proposal. Within one week, on a House motion by DeVerne, "the House voted 141 to 1 to override the recommendation of its Appropriations Committee," and the cut never came to

²⁴⁶ "Harris-Stowe State University Campus History."

²⁴⁷ "Harris-Stowe State University Campus History."

²⁴⁸ "Harris-Stowe State University Campus History."

²⁴⁹ "Harris-Stowe State University Campus History."

²⁵⁰ "Harris-Stowe State University Pivotal Years," Harris-Stowe State University, Accessed December 17, 2019 at

http://go.hssu.edu/rsp_content.cfm?wid=52&pid=503.

²⁵¹ "Harris-Stowe State University Pivotal Years"

fruition.²⁵² A small victory on an otherwise ominous trajectory, keeping the doors open at HTC, meant convincing white legislators and the public that offering low-cost higher education for urban teacher preparedness would be transformative to the St. Louis Black community. DeVerne received letters from people in the Black community thanking her for her commitment to serving the neighborhood through her work in “saving” HTC from a budget cut that surely would have forced its doors to close.²⁵³

By 1973, the state saw its first House bill that would change HTC into a state college, ultimately relieving some of the St. Louis Board of Education’s \$7,000,000 deficit.²⁵⁴ The bill, sponsored by DeVerne’s colleague, Representative James Conway, was supported by-and-large from students, faculty and administrators, but it was heavily opposed by the school board because policy control would be given to a board of regents, thus illustrative of the board’s desire for power, rather than on what it could effectively and financially support.²⁵⁵ HTC’s funding at that time was comprised of two-thirds (\$1,500,000) from the state, \$250,000 from the board, and the rest from student fees.²⁵⁶ The bill never made it, but its introduction served as a warm-up to DeVerne’s later bills, which ultimately secured the transfer of HTC to the state.

In 1974, all was quiet on the HTC state-transfer front, but by 1975, momentum increased when a legislative committee was formed to study the financing of St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) and to investigate the feasibility of state funding for HTC. On

²⁵² Louis J. Rose, “House Votes to Restore \$1,000,000 For Harris College,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 23, 1971, Newspapers.com.

²⁵³ “Community Letters,” February 1971, S0012 Box 2, Folder 18 “Harris-Stowe Special Committee, 1971-1978,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

²⁵⁴ “Conflict Over Making Harris A State College,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 21, 1973, Newspapers.com.

²⁵⁵ “Conflict.”

²⁵⁶ “Conflict.”

April 15, 1975, DeVerne was asked to serve as vice chair[wo]man on that subcommittee. At stake was not just the fate of the college, but also that of St. Louis urban education. In DeVerne's mind, it was a classic civil rights issue of access for the city's Black community. She understood the high stakes for SLPS, who otherwise would likely struggle in recruiting and retaining teachers trained for a career in urban education, and for the livelihoods of St. Louis's Black children, who not only deserved an education that compared to those in higher tax-earning neighborhoods, but also who deserved teachers who did not criminalize them based on the color of their skin.

Within one week of DeVerne's appointment, the committee held its first meeting and concluded they would need the following from the St. Louis Board of Education: the School Board's structure of organization, personnel of the school system, rules and regulations under which the Board operates, and financial background material. Over the course of the next year, the committee met with the St. Louis Board of Education, the Coordinating Board of Higher Education (CBHE), the HTC Board of Directors, and staff at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The committee also collected and analyzed documents and studied a variety of line items including: a shrinking tax base, decreasing enrollment, tax rates, and associated local and state revenues for Average Daily Attendance (ADA).²⁵⁷ Other factors studied were transportation costs, the Foundation Program funding (a formula used for the distribution of state funds within the St. Louis School Board of Education), the number of students receiving Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) payments from the Division of Family

²⁵⁷ "Report of the Special Committee Studying St. Louis Public Schools," January 13, 1976, 6-7, S0551 Box 9, Folder 234, DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

Services, building repair, security, supplies, and teachers' salaries. The results were released in 20-page report on January 13, 1976. The first section of the report covered SLPS's financial status. The second section of the report covered the future of HTC. Ultimately affecting both SLPS and HTC were the committee's grim financial findings. The estimated revenue for the 1975-76 school year was just under \$90 million; whereas, the budget for that same year called for expenditures of \$91,209,512.²⁵⁸

For SLPS, the committee's recommendations centered on a more equitable approach to local and state funding, including: a more responsive school board that is able to address concerns specific to certain localities within St. Louis rather than a one-sized-fits all approach (note the similarity to DeVerne's school-board restructuring bill); a more effective approach to increasing students' attendance; a three-pronged revised formula for ADA funding, a higher recovery rate for transportation costs, revenue sharing for building construction and maintenance, the call for an additional study for the effectiveness of the Teachers' Fund and a call for volunteers to fill roles such as security, classroom aides, clerical assistance, food service areas, and maintenance and repair.²⁵⁹

In regards to HTC, the committee studied the funding structure, HTC's mission related to curriculum and its impact on urban education, and the governance of the school.²⁶⁰ They also submitted a separate 18-page report on "The Future of Harris Teachers College." The report began by establishing perspective about why HTC is of value, including its history and establishment in 1857 as the first teacher training institution west of the Mississippi River, the only institution in the U.S. that assisted in

²⁵⁸ "Report of the Special Committee," 5.

²⁵⁹ "Report of the Special Committee," 15.

²⁶⁰ "Report of the Special Committee," 18.

the operation of a local, urban school district as part of its operation, and its accessibility to affordable college for Black students while centering coursework on urban-related affairs.²⁶¹ The report also included the following statement, situating the high stakes at which the Black community would likely suffer, should the college be forced to close its doors:

The full and appropriate utilization of the College by the School System is an opportunity of great significance. If this opportunity is not grasped emphatically and decisively now at this point in time, it is likely that it will pass and be lost forever.²⁶²

Underscoring this point, the report included evidence studies conducted by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, “to provide perspective about key issues in higher education as well as insights about the value of an institution like Harris.”²⁶³ A 1969 Carnegie study titled, “Colleges of the Forgotten Americans,” described how colleges could grow from single-purpose colleges to multipurpose universities.²⁶⁴ The report also utilized the Carnegie study to specifically address and situate the impact on urban education, and through such, made several key insights which can also be viewed through the lens of Critical Race Theory’s tenets of interest convergence and that racism is (unfortunately), a “normal” part of white American society. The Carnegie report established, “The founders of American colleges deliberately avoided the distractions of the city by locating their institutions where students could soak up learning in bucolic solitude.”²⁶⁵ In other words, colleges were intentionally established away from Black

²⁶¹ “The Future of Harris Teachers College,” September 1975, 1, S0551 Box 2, folder 18, DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

²⁶² “Future of Harris,” 1.

²⁶³ “Future of Harris,” 1.

²⁶⁴ “Future of Harris,” 2.

²⁶⁵ “Future of Harris,” 3.

communities, solidifying one of the many layers of how racism was a “normal” part of white American life. The study also illustrates converging interests, noting, “As the socioeconomic base of the nation has shifted from the countryside to the city, so there has arisen a corresponding pressure for institutions to respond to the immense and complex needs of urban areas.”²⁶⁶ In short, once white lives would benefit, the notion of urban access to higher education became plausible. Of course, in order for this to be of interest to white elites, the tie-in had to carry the necessity of a financial connection, which the HTC study did by again highlighting the point that the college had the potential to go from a single-purpose teacher training college to a multipurpose university vis-à-vis tremendous enrollment growth through the restructuring of courses, continuing education programs, and community programs.

The next section described the various funding formulas from which existing law provided money to the district, which was situated by describing white flight (in so many words) as an erosion to the city’s tax base which ultimately lead to a mismatch between the needs and actual resources available.²⁶⁷

Final recommendations based on the committee’s research placed the future of HTC in clear focus and situated it as an invaluable resource that should be utilized to address pressing needs in creating a viable and vibrant future for St. Louis, stating, “that the public school system nor the public can afford to lose the service, influence or impact this institution has on the elementary education system, the secondary program, the city,

²⁶⁶ “Future of Harris,” 3.

²⁶⁷ “Future of Harris,” 17-18.

the immediate community, and the teacher education profession.”²⁶⁸ Specific recommendations included:

- Continuing a relationship with St. Louis Public Schools, but where SLPS will not be the exclusive consumer of the college’s services
- The college’s primary area of emphasis will still be understood as urban-concentrated
- Expanded degree programs beyond only elementary education (such as secondary education, special education, early childhood education, speech and language, library sciences, instructional media specialists, gifted, and paraprofessional certificates)
- Expanded degree programs connected to subject matter extensions (such as art, English, health, physical education, math, music, science, and social science, journalism, and theatre)
- Student teaching and classroom observations in SLPS
- In-service (staff development) training for teachers both in SLPS as well as other districts to continue adding to their education and/or certification areas
- Professional development provided in coordination with SLPS, as well as the option to do so for other districts, with the concentration as aforementioned on urban affairs
- Servicing the community by way of affordable college education to those for whom college was not historically accessible

²⁶⁸ “Future of Harris,” 6.

- Servicing the community through providing a day care center for the neighboring communities and for students, a gerontology center for older citizens, counseling services, a drug abuse education center, and educational services for social agencies, as well as a community center for the neighborhood
- An urban education research center
- An urban education human resource hub²⁶⁹

In order for the committee's recommendations to come to fruition, they suggested that operations be brought under the control of the college, but with the understanding that SLPS staff would still assist in coordinating a variety of initiatives such as professional development and curriculum development as well as some financial obligations such as purchasing, data processing, coordinated legal affairs, personnel, and auditing. In terms of governance, the committee suggested the college's president would be responsible to the college's board of directors, who would in turn be responsible to the Board of Education. The Board of Education would be responsible for funding only until funds from other sources were obtained, namely operational funds from the state of Missouri, which would be asked for by the General Assembly and from Capital Improvement Funds, also provided by the state of Missouri, which would be used to upgrade the physical campus in a way that would attract more students.²⁷⁰ The legislative committee called for legislation to be introduced in support of the report's findings.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ "Future of Harris," 9-15.

²⁷⁰ "Future of Harris," 17-18.

²⁷¹ Report of the Special Committee," 19.

On February 3, 1976, State Treasurer James Spainhower announced his full support of permanent and full state funding of HTC in a press release.²⁷² Spainhower's backing was vital in establishing early momentum for support of Harris's future as a fully funded state university. The Board of Education began meeting to discuss options and plan for state takeover of Harris. A board document described a three-stage process to be rolled out over three years beginning in July 1976, with the transition ending in July 1979.²⁷³

On February 18, 1977, one year and one month from the official submission of the January 1975 report on the viability of SLPS and the future of Harris, Commissioner of Higher Education, Bruce Robertson, submitted his recommendations in a twelve-page report in which he noted four possible alternatives regarding Harris's future:

1. Termination as a collegiate institution
2. Full funding by the State and operation by the St. Louis Board of Education
3. Affiliation with another college or university with full funding by the State or a continuation of the present dual funding and operation.
4. Operation as an autonomous college with full funding by the State or a continuation of the present dual funding.²⁷⁴

Commissioner Robertson was not in favor of the first alternative noted, termination, stating in part:

²⁷² "James Spainhower Press Release," February 3, 1976, S0012 Box 2, Folder 18 "Harris-Stowe Special Committee, 1971-1978," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

²⁷³ "St. Louis Board of Education Resolution," n.d., S0012 Box 2, Folder 18 "Harris-Stowe Special Committee, 1971-1978," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

²⁷⁴ Bruce Robertson, "Recommendations concerning Harris Teachers College," The Department of Higher Education, February 18, 1977, 2, S0012 Box 2, Folder 18 "Harris-Stowe Special Committee, 1971-1978," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

Harris' competency-based teacher education program is unique to the state; in the minds of many educators it is the direction in which most teacher education programs should move...Harris, nonetheless, remains the Missouri institution with the most experience in providing continuing education for urban elementary teachers.²⁷⁵

He also did not recommend the second alternative, full funding by the State and operation by the St. Louis Board of Education, which he said was “undesirable on both educational and fiscal grounds.”²⁷⁶ Commissioner Robertson strongly considered the possibility of affiliating Harris with another local university – either the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL) or St. Louis University (SLU). He said to propose such an affiliation with SLU “would most certainly result in serious debates over legal matters and, quite possibly, litigation” which would “be non-productive and possibly detrimental.”²⁷⁷ He believed an affiliation with UMSL, however, was viable. He outlined a brief breakdown of how the affiliation could work. The plan, in summary, would make Harris a division of UMSL, with the name retained, and the title of president would be changed to dean, but both UMSL and Harris would have their own board of directors and each would have separate state funding.²⁷⁸ The most egregious components, and the ones from which whiteness would prevail, centered on determining which UMSL activities might overlap with HTC activities and that as overlap was imminent, HTC's focus would have to be only on teacher education, and “under no circumstances should Harris become a general liberal arts college or a staging campus for another institution's graduate programs.”²⁷⁹ Of similar disciplining, this plan also offered that Harris faculty would function as

²⁷⁵ Robertson, “Recommendations,” 3.

²⁷⁶ Robertson, “Recommendations,” 4.

²⁷⁷ Robertson, “Recommendations,” 5.

²⁷⁸ Robertson, “Recommendations,” 5.

²⁷⁹ Robertson, “Recommendations,” 8.

“college teachers” rather than university scholars, which would remain the primary function of UMSL faculty.²⁸⁰ In other words, the Harris “division” of UMSL would be the “lesser than” arm of UMSL, as it was obviously and flagrantly deemed incapable of the same adequacy of a “whiter” institution. Similarly, it delivered the message a whiter, and therefore more “scholarly” university would be Harris’s savior. Surprisingly, however, Commissioner Robertson did not fully endorse the Harris-UMSL affiliation. After all that was literally said, he then presented his ultimate recommendation: that Harris should remain on its present site, with upgrades to the campus a necessity, and under autonomous control with full state funding “in the preservation of Harris’ unique flavor and contributions.”²⁸¹ While Robertson did in fact voice support for the most equitable option for St. Louis’s Black community, his delivery of his recommendations and notions of viability in the UMSL-Harris affiliation demonstrate again the CRT tenet of how racism has become a normalized part of life in the U.S. Unfortunately, Robertson inadvertently planted seeds – seeds that although unfruitful this time, would begin to sprout later in 1985, when then Commissioner of Higher Education Shaila Aery called for a merger between UMSL and Harris, which was vehemently opposed by both institutions, as well as legislators, and the public.²⁸²

In January 1978, the St. Louis Board of Alderman adopted a resolution supporting the state takeover.²⁸³ That same month, senate and house bills supporting the takeover were introduced in the legislature. Representative Edward Sweeney and DeVerne and

²⁸⁰ Robertson, “Recommendations,” 9.

²⁸¹ Robertson, “Recommendations,” 11.

²⁸² Dale Singer, “UMSL Harris-Stowe Cooperation Grew Amid Controversy,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 27, 1985, Newspapers.com.

²⁸³ Jeff Gelles, “New Harris-Stowe Takeover Hearings,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 15, 1978, Newspapers.com.

Senator J.B. “Jet” Banks introduced the bills, which called for the college to be established as a state school “with an independent six-member board of regents” and the building to be given to the state.²⁸⁴ In the Senate, the bill was successfully voted out of the Revenue and Economics Committee; however, in the House, the bill did not make it out of committee. Representative James “Jay” Russell refused to allow a vote on it, which observers said was intentional due to a personal feud between he and DeVerne.²⁸⁵

On February 7, 1978, two years and one month from the official submission of the January 1975 report on the viability of SLPS and the future of HTC, the speaker of the House, Ken Rothman, announced his endorsement of the state takeover of Harris.²⁸⁶ Rothman announced his support of House Bill 1463, which called for the state to take on full funding of Harris, whose official name was revised the previous year to Harris-Stowe College (HSC). Prior to this, Rothman had voiced concerns about the merit of the bill, centered on the argument that another four-year college in St. Louis City would begin competing with older established colleges for state dollars.²⁸⁷ DeVerne, along with members of the Black Legislative Caucus successfully voiced their counterpoints, ultimately securing his active backing. Later that month, the House tentatively approved the bill 99-48.²⁸⁸ In March, the Senate approved the bill. In April, Representative Russell “finally allowed backers of the takeover to bring the matter up for a vote.”²⁸⁹ Another roadblock presented by Representative Wayne Goode, whose district was in Normandy,

²⁸⁴ Gelles, “Takeover Hearings.”

²⁸⁵ “Harris-Stowe College,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 20, 1978, Newspapers.com.

²⁸⁶ DeVerne Calloway, “Speaker Endorses Harris Stowe Take-Over by State,” Press Release, February 7, 1978, S0012 Box 2, Folder 18 “Harris-Stowe Special Committee, 1971-1978,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

²⁸⁷ Calloway, “Speaker Endorses Harris Stowe Take-Over.”

²⁸⁸ Jeff Gelles, “House Tentatively Approves Takeover of Harris College,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 16, 1978, Newspapers.com.

²⁸⁹ “Harris-Stowe College,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 20, 1978, Newspapers.com.

where UMSL is located, was vehemently opposed to the bill. The House only had until the end of the month before the session closed, and just days before the close of the session, Representative Goode tried attaching an amendment to the bill regarding a dispute over whose retirement system would cover the teachers. Senator Banks accused Representative Goode of attempting to block the bill's progress. Ultimately, the House approved the state takeover 121-21. On April 28, 1978, the bill was sent to Governor Teasdale for signing. The final bill included the state taking over full financing beginning on August 13, 1978, and by July 1, 1979, control would be given to a six-member board of regents, appointed by the state.²⁹⁰ In 1979, the Missouri General Assembly enacted Senate Bill 703 that officially made the college a part of the state system of higher education and changed the name to Harris-Stowe State College. (HSSC).²⁹¹

The 1978 legislative happenings deserve situation within Black feminism, intersectionality and interest convergence. At the heart of it all is intersectionality's cultural domain of power, wherein DeVerne and Representative Sweeney and Senator Banks had to persistently work to combat the perception that HSC was disposable – quite an uphill battle for a mostly white General Assembly. As an architect of the House bill, DeVerne had to demonstrate respectable swagger as a Black woman involved in racial leadership that required her to shift public opinion from seeing HSC as expendable and unworthy. Additionally, she had to cut through intersectionality's disciplinary domain of power each time a white-male adversary presented a roadblock, such as Representative Russell's attempt to stymie discussion from the bill's supporters and Representative

²⁹⁰ "Harris-Stowe Bill Goes to Teasdale," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 30, 1978, Newspapers.com.

²⁹¹ Brian Gann, "Harris-Stowe University," *Black Past*, last modified June 21, 2011, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/harris-stowe-university-1857>.

Goode's attempt to attach a last-minute amendment in the hopes that it would raise enough concern to thwart the bill's overall passage. Additionally, there is the overall disciplining of Black women, HSC's main student-body demographic, who surely would have experienced hardships without the preservation of HSC. Not only would Black women be disproportionately affected by an HSC closure, but also this gets at what Melissa Harris-Perry connects to the idea of recognition within "the experience of citizenship."²⁹² Reflecting on political theorist Hannah Arendt's work, Harris-Perry explains how self-actualization is realized in the public sphere through having opportunities for recognition.²⁹³ Harris-Perry speculates, "Craving recognition of one's special inexchangeable uniqueness is part of the human condition, and it is soothed only by the opportunity to contribute freely to the public realm."²⁹⁴ Thus, Black women would be denied additional access to the public realm of recognition, further limiting their social possibilities.²⁹⁵ Similarly, DeVerne's avid dedication to preserving HSC demonstrates what scholar Brittney Cooper refers to as *racial sociality*, "a cultivated and intentional" "love for one's fellow wo/man and radical empathy for members of one's race."²⁹⁶ Cooper connects racial sociality with Fannie Barrier Williams's work demonstrating the ways in which Black women connect with other Black women through "affective notions of sympathy, love, and delight", all of which are historically rooted amongst Black women's role in affective politics.²⁹⁷

²⁹² Melissa V. Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 37.

²⁹³ Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen*, 37.

²⁹⁴ Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen*, 38.

²⁹⁵ Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen*, 38.

²⁹⁶ Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 52.

²⁹⁷ Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 53.

Regarding the illustration of interest convergence, the legislative committee who prepared the 1975 Harris study understood they had to demonstrate the benefit for the greater St. Louis community in order to get whites to buy-in. The committee did this through recommending that Harris would offer professional development for teachers in SLPS *and* other districts, and that the teacher education profession at-large would benefit, thereby uplifting St. Louis as a viable and vibrant city.²⁹⁸

The Aftermath:

In the years following the transfer of HSC to the state, DeVerne continued her efforts as an HSSC advocate. In September 1982, HSSC President Givens wrote DeVerne, inviting her to the HSSC 125-year anniversary commemoration during which she would be publicly honored. Givins wrote:

In grateful recognition to you for your excellent work, support and strong feelings for this college, we wish to publicly recognize you as one of our institutions true friends who fought long and successfully to rescue it from possible oblivion a few years ago.

In May 1983, Missouri Governor Christopher S. Bond appointed DeVerne to the HSSC Board of Regents.²⁹⁹ Fortunately for the college and the Black Community, DeVerne was on the board when State Commissioner of Higher Education Shaila Aery formally proposed to merge HSSC and the University of Missouri-St. Louis in September 1984. Almost immediately after Aery's proposal was announced, DeVerne organized "The Citizen's Ad-Hoc Committee to Preserve HSSC."³⁰⁰ She led the charge for the

²⁹⁸ "Future of Harris," 6.

²⁹⁹ Christopher S. Bond, "DC named to Board of Regents," letter, May 31, 1983, S0551 Roll 11, Folder 134 "Harris Board of Regents, 1983-1989," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

³⁰⁰ Edgar Burnett, "Memo," November 6, 1984, S0551 Roll 11, Folder 136 "Harris Stowe Ad Hoc Citizen's Committee, 1984," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

committee's role in collecting signatures on a petition to go against the HSSC-UMSL merger and spoke out publicly against the merger, deliberately meddling in yet another attempt to diminish Harris, its students, and its legacy. In her denouncing the merger, DeVerne remarked, "If you eliminate this (Harris-Stowe), you eliminate hundreds of thousands of young people" then referring to the merger plan as a "yucky bowl of distasteful and insipid soup," and a "call to war."³⁰¹ Her cries were heard, and opponents to the merger far outweighed any proponents. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* ran an editorial titled, "Downgrading A University" in which it noted that Aery's proposal would strip UMSL of its doctoral program and professional programs creating an independent institution that would render St. Louis the only major U.S. city without a public university. The *St. Louis Globe Democrat* ran a more insightful editorial titled, "Don't (Sub)merge UMSL, Harris-Stowe," in which it noted:

If the proposed merger would diminish UMSL, it would effectively obliterate Harris-Stowe... This would be a cruel fate for an institution whose small size belies the important contribution it has made to St. Louis for 127 years by training teacher who went to work in the city's public elementary schools.³⁰²

By the end of November, Aery withdrew her merger proposal for reasons cited as "dead because of nearly unanimous opposition from the St. Louis area" including "a storm of criticism from supporters of each institution as well as the individuals."³⁰³ She also claimed her merger proposal was 10 years ahead of her time and that she believed

³⁰¹ Victor Volland, "Harris-Stowe Backers Denounce Merger Proposal," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 13, 1984, S0551 Roll 11, Folder 138 "Harris-Stowe Merger Controversy, 1984." DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

³⁰² "Don't (Sub)merge UMSL, Harris-Stowe," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, September 26, 1984, Roll 11, Folder 138 "Harris-Stowe Merger Controversy, 1984," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

³⁰³ Dale Singer, "UMSL Merger Plan Dead, Official Says," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 28, 1984, S0551 Roll 11, Folder 138 "Harris-Stowe Merger Controversy, 1984," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

such an institution would be formed within the next decade.³⁰⁴ Aery's merger proposal demonstrates a completely whitewashed logic that failed to recognize HSSC as symbol of pride for St. Louis's Black community. To be clear, had UMSL supporters' interests not converged with HSSC's interests, HSSC may have found itself in yet another long-winded battle. Aery saw HSSC as disposable, thus again representing the cultural domain of power that needed to be crushed in order for survival.

DeVerne was a champion for improved educational access and outcomes for St. Louis's Black community. Her dedication to public service was virtuous, her approach was theoretical, her demeanor was accessible, and to adversaries, she was formidable. She was an architect of St. Louis's past-and-present educational landscape, yet she never sought accolades; she only wanted sustainable equality and equity for St. Louis's Black community. She was a true race woman, as this chapter presents, and as located in the words of her poem, "Too Much Ego."³⁰⁵

He had ego
She had ego
His was the kind that could play dead
Hers was alive living the future ahead

³⁰⁴ Singer, "UMSL Merger."

³⁰⁵ DeVerne Calloway, "Too Much Ego," S0551 Roll 15, Folder 193 "Poetry and Writing, 1933-1983," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

Chapter 6: DeVerne's Marriage as a Continuum of Oppression

Introduction:

DeVerne and Ernest Calloway were household names in St. Louis's Black community for a period spanning nearly three decades, beginning in the 1950s. Both were political and social activists, and both could be found on the frontlines of protests or behind-the-scenes at their typewriters, pecking away at material aimed at cutting through oppressive power domains and unifying St. Louis's Black community around issues of race, labor, healthcare, welfare, and education. DeVerne volunteered for the NAACP's St. Louis chapter and worked on several successful campaigns of Blacks to locally-held public offices. DeVerne went on to become the first Black woman elected to any public office in Missouri when she was elected to the Missouri General Assembly for a two-year term that began in January 1962. She was reelected every two years thereafter, serving a total of 20 years. Ernest was the former president of the NAACP's St. Louis chapter (1955-1959), research director for the Teamsters Local 688 for 23 years, and at age 65, became a professor of urban affairs at St. Louis University. Yet, for all of their efforts and contributions, it is only Ernest who is remembered. DeVerne has been sidelined. Not only have her public contributions suffered erasure, but the very election that cemented her in Missouri's history has been said to be a result of Ernest's efforts to help elect Black candidates to city and state offices, of one of *his* "crowning achievements."³⁰⁶ Further bolstering this point, according to a former coworker, "He used to tell us (with a smile of course) that he got her elected to give her something to do since she was going

³⁰⁶ Robert Bussel, *Fighting for Total Person Unionism: Harold Gibbons, Ernest Calloway, and Working-Class Citizenship* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 7.

through ‘The change.’”³⁰⁷ Clearly, such jest hints at Ernest’s underlying insecurity that he could be outpaced by his wife. He felt compelled to receive notoriety for DeVerne’s election to office while simultaneously diminishing her capability as a woman.

Despite their full schedules and subsequent commitments that often kept them geographically separated, the couple remained married for forty-one years, until Ernest’s death in 1989. DeVerne passed away four years later. Even though DeVerne has decades of documented contributions to improving education, healthcare, and employment for St. Louis’s Black community, she has been erased, relegated to a legacy tantamount to merely being Ernest’s loving and supportive wife. What has not been researched, is how such a prolific and politically involved couple could manage to stay afloat both professionally and personally. This manuscript provides insights into the couple’s personal lives ala an analysis that uses Black Feminist Thought and Critical Race Theory, specifically the tenets of interest convergence and intersectionality to frame that what the public viewed as a true love story was actually symptomatic of gendered oppression undergirded by racial oppression.

A “Commuter Marriage”:

DeVerne and Ernest’s marriage made perfect sense. Both were active social welfarists and political organizers, running in related circles since first meeting each other in the workplace, the United Transport Service Employees of America (UTSEA), formerly the International Brotherhood of Redcaps that formed in Chicago in 1938. DeVerne was doing secretarial work, and Ernest was the union’s education director.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁷ Holly Hick, “Paying tribute to a forgotten Black trailblazer, DeVerne Lee Calloway,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, August 10, 2020, online reader’s comment.

³⁰⁸ Bussel, *Fighting for Total Person Unionism*, 35.

Their first encounter was eerily emblematic of their marriage. As DeVerne described it, “I think the most striking thing that I can recall about him was the great turmoil in his office. He had papers and books...and I decided the greatest thing that I could do for this man... would be to clean up. And that’s how we met...because he wanted to know who in the hell had come in there and messed up his office! I had organized it to the nth degree.”³⁰⁹ While the quote makes an endearing anecdote, the situation itself was much more. It was foundational – not just in the formation of their joined union – but also in the conforming to gender roles that created a disproportionate amount of busy work for DeVerne. Truth be told, Ernest always surrounded himself with piles and piles of article clippings, research, full-and-partial newspapers, and a multitude of photocopies. He was always working, leaving DeVerne to take care of the rest of it – cleaning, cooking, sewing, gardening, etc. – she did it all. And, for at least twenty years, she also held down her position in the legislature. DeVerne seldom had an opportunity to relax. For most of her professional career, she suffered with colitis and insomnia, both triggered by the amount of stress she was under. Meanwhile, Ernest was publically recognized and celebrated for his knowledge production while DeVerne remained, at best, simply “the first Black woman in the Missouri Legislature,” thus sidelining her as a public theorist and ultimately, leading to her erasure from historical record. So, while their marriage indeed could seem near-perfect in terms of their shared social and political advocacy, the reality is that it was situated within a continuum of oppression that is difficult to diagnose because DeVerne’s personality was strong and unapologetic and her life’s work centered

³⁰⁹ “Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway,” interview by Irene Cortinovis, University of Missouri-St. Louis Archive and Manuscript Division,” September 9, 1971, 5, Western Historical Manuscript Collection T-016, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

on creating a more just and equitable world. It is indeed an irony that despite her demonstrated capabilities as a political organizer, writer, and educator, she was still expected to carry on all duties that come with the making of a functional home. Certainly, the argument can be made that DeVerne successfully cut through gendered patriarchal power by the sheer nature of the fact that not only did she work, but that she was a legislator, and that much of her legislative work was for improving women's livelihoods. One could also argue that DeVerne was always a doer who thrived when serving others and that she enjoyed keeping busy. But the reality is that husband relied on wife, catapulting DeVerne into prescribed gender norms, despite the optics that she was an *avant garde* liberated woman of the 50s, 60s and 70s. This chapter will highlight the deficits and strengths of their marriage through the lens of a feminist framework.

DeVerne and Ernest were married in 1948, two years after Ernest's first wife Martha Sutton passed away from a long illness.³¹⁰ To what extent this affected Ernest and DeVerne's relationship is unknown. DeVerne's first and only marriage was to Ernest, though she had many prior suitors – even a marriage proposal, which she declined. The same year Ernest and DeVerne married, he left for Ruskin College in Oxford, England on a scholarship he received from the British Trades Union Congress.³¹¹ It is important to note that during this time, the couple were still newlyweds. On one hand, this demonstrates a profound strength in their relationship and refutes the previous notion that Ernest was unequally codependent on DeVerne. As newlyweds, they lead independent lives, trusted and supported one another in their pursuits, and appeared to subvert

³¹⁰ Bussel, *Fighting for Total Person Unionism*, 50.

³¹¹ Bussel, *Fighting for Total Person Unionism*, 50.

codependency. On the other hand, Ernest's departure to Oxford was an early emblem of a marriage later dubbed "a commuter marriage."³¹² During Ernest's time away in England, he and DeVerne corresponded with each other regularly. From September 1948 through June 1949, 25 letters -- 19 from Ernest and 5 from DeVerne -- are of record.³¹³ Despite this time period being the couple's newlywed period, the letters are neither saccharine nor overly effusive, despite Ernest's salutations always including a term of endearment, such as *Cheri'*, Darling, Sweetheart, Mama, and My Beloved -- rather than her name.

Interestingly and telling-in-nature, DeVerne always addressed him as either Papa or simply, Calloway -- a term that stuck throughout their lives. Viewing these terms from a feminist framework, DeVerne's names for Ernest connote patriarchal power, strength, and command. Contrastingly, Ernest's names for DeVerne are far more diminutive, connoting nurturance, deference, and gentleness -- traits socially prescribed to women. So, the prelude-to and inauguration-of DeVerne and Ernest's marriage is located within gendered language and geographical separation -- both of which became themes throughout their marriage. The contents of Ernest's letters are mostly updates on his surroundings, whereabouts, food, philosophical musings, coursework, and business-like ideas related to the charting of their futures. On Valentine's Day, 1949, Ernest writes DeVerne telling her that he is applying for a Fulbright scholarship:

Keep your fingers crossed as I may be staying here another year on a Fulbright grant. I sent for an application the other day. I am informed that the grants are very liberal, financially. If I am lucky enough to get it, you should definitely make

³¹² Joan Lipkin, "Love Story, St. Louis Style," February 10, 1980, S0551, Folder 177 "Love Story, 1980," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

³¹³ Ernest Calloway, "February 14, 1949 letter," S0540, Folder 50, Ernest Calloway Addenda, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

up your mind to come over. If I don't get it I will probably be back in the States by July.³¹⁴

Ernest's statement is declarative in that he *is* applying for the scholarship. It is clear it was *his choice* and seems likely that he did not consult with DeVerne first. At the same time and in the same sentence, Ernest frames it as a positive that he would be away another year; but then in the next sentence, he is encouraging her to come to Europe (should he get the scholarship) but hints at it being *her choice* whether to move or not. It is reasonable to conclude Ernest does indeed want to be near DeVerne and is hopeful she feels the same way. It also seems that he realizes it needs to be *her* decision on whether to temporarily move to Europe and recognizes it is not a light decision. But what lies beneath demonstrates a hierarchical relationship, and Ernest is on top. And so for the third time, we see an early emerging theme that is emblematic of their marriage: a patriarchal hierarchy. That is not to say that Ernest did not love DeVerne or vice versa. In fact, eight days after that letter, he follows with a letter that includes a rare glimpse of a softer Ernest, who is indeed yearning for DeVerne. Ernest writes, "I am also getting very lonely for you, and I don't think that I can stand being away from you much longer."³¹⁵ It is also fair to consider the year: 1949. Certainly, their relationship was progressive for this time period, for it would be only customary for the wife to follow the lead of the husband. But in terms of power domains, this is demonstrative of intersectionality's interpersonal and structural power domains, wherein DeVerne's needs and desires are second to her husband's. With acquiescence, DeVerne submits:

I don't know if you are already planning the future or not, but it seems to me that a second year would give you far more claim to a bigger, better job than one.

³¹⁴ E. Calloway, "February 14, 1949 letter."

³¹⁵ Ernest Calloway, "February 22, 1949 letter," S0540, Folder 50, Ernest Calloway Addenda, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

However work it out as you see fit. Should you get the Fullbright scholarship your living conditions will be far less straining than they are now.³¹⁶

While Ernest was away, DeVerne was working and alludes to a “new pleasant job and much more interesting.”³¹⁷ DeVerne described her employment:

I have full charge of closing cases of babies born to syphilitic mothers. The health department is doing a five year study on such babies. The babies are followed a year, that is blood tests are taken once each three months. My job is to tabulate the cards kept on them. I also telephone hospitals, private doctors and clinics for RX treatment records. Supervisor said that I would get a raise.³¹⁸

Though somewhat clerical in nature, her work centered upon contributing to public health research. After, this letter, there is a three-month gap in the record of letters sent between the Calloways. In the first letter of record after the gap, DeVerne responds to a letter from Ernest, that although unaccounted for, seems to have been sharply worded. DeVerne did not sit idly by; rather, she fired back:

Your letter came today and I am convinced that it pays to keep silent. I must confess that your last billet was somewhat harsh and I got angry. I thought of several cryptic retorts among these just a blank sheet of paper inscribed, ‘YES, Calloway’. However, I thought it best to not respond. Oh, yes I had a fleeting idea of returning it so you could re-read it and perhaps realize just how unjust it did sound.³¹⁹

What is unclear is what exactly Ernest wrote in that letter that was so off-putting to DeVerne. Whatever it was, her response was carefully calculated. She made sure she was heard, that her points were received, among those admitting she had considered mocking his high-handedness by merely responding, “YES, Calloway.” Instead, DeVerne did what was innate to her – she saw a teachable moment, and she instructed,

³¹⁶ DeVerne Calloway, “March 3, 1949 letter,” S0540, Folder 50, Ernest Calloway Addenda, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

³¹⁷ D. Calloway, “March 3, 1949 letter.”

³¹⁸ D. Calloway, “March 3, 1949 letter.”

³¹⁹ DeVerne Calloway, “June 29, 1949 letter,” S0540, Folder 50, Ernest Calloway Addenda, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

intentionally steering into the barrage, analyzing and calling it for what it is, and then leaving it to steep with the offender. She did not pick apart Ernest's letter word-for-word, and she did not dispute point-by-point. In this, she left Ernest no one to argue with but himself. DeVerne nipped at both interpersonal and structural power domains, targeting each with clear precision and acumen. Later in the same letter, she bolstered her lesson, reminding Ernest that he seemed to have forgotten her birthday, which was just a couple weeks beyond the date of this letter, and given the pace of overseas mail in the 1940s, a fair assessment to have made. Facetiously yet matter-of-factly, DeVerne wrote:

Do you plan to bring me any kind of gift? If so I should send you a little money. You complete ignored my birthday. Or did you just simply not remember that on July 17, 1916 I got borned (sic). Fine husband you are. No sentimentality. No romance.³²⁰

While her tone was jestful, it was undergirded with deadpan pragmatism, especially in light of having just received a letter from Ernest in which he attempted to needle her.

She wrote him again on July 15, and she still seemed to be brooding, but this time, much of it was due to Ernest selling a typewriter out from underneath DeVerne, who saw the typewriter not only as a line of communication, but as a symbol of her identity as a writer. His selling of it was tantamount to him telling her that her wants and needs are unimportant, that *she* does not matter. And so, she responded taking direct aim at his ignorance, but even so, her response was rounded out with respectability, holding up first and foremost, her dignity for Ernest to see. DeVerne admonished:

And also I have discovered that I don't like to be tied by the responsibilities of providing other's food and shelter. Also I have made up my mind that I am going to continue my writing and to hell with other people. Selling my typewriter was a wonderful contribution to my future plans. And you deserve a lot of credit for

³²⁰ D. Calloway, "June 29, 1949 letter."

thinking of the brilliant idea. It was already quite fully set up in my mind that I would quit work a month after you arrived, then grab up my papers and typewriter and hike off to Memphis...Now you have set me just that far back – to work until I get another typewriter. If I may so that was a typical Dickie performance. But this is not intended as a lecture.³²¹

DeVerne's sarcasm was coupled with blatant disdain. The letter continues and her tone was ominous as she goes so far as to question their marriage. She is clear on what she wants, and she flatly lays it all out, suggesting to Ernest that on his way back to the states, that he ought to think about what he truly wants from life, and whether he is prepared to be both husband and provider, rather "than one of a starry-eyed philosopher."³²² She then declared that she was warning him that she will positively live her life for herself, first and foremost. She also stated she realized that she may not have been explicit enough in stating her desires and demands, and therefore wanted to be clear so they can attempt to work out their union upon his arrival home.³²³ With humor and likely some truth, DeVerne signed the letter: "Love and a beer bottle across your skull DeVerne"³²⁴ In analyzing this letter, it is important also to consider DeVerne's previous letter as well. The obvious is that DeVerne was exasperated and angered. In the June 29th letter, she demonstrated her emotions to Ernest, but she did not wallow in her frustrations of him. She trusted that he was capable of reflecting and seeing the error of his ways. Apparently, in her mind however, he did not, because in the span of about two weeks, he sold her typewriter and she responded in a manner that displayed her disquietude. The point here is to peel back the layers of this in order to truly see that DeVerne was a near

³²¹ DeVerne Calloway, "July 15, 1949 letter," S0540, Folder 50, Ernest Calloway Addenda, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

³²² D. Calloway, "July 15, 1949 letter."

³²³ D. Calloway, "July 15, 1949 letter."

³²⁴ D. Calloway, "July 15, 1949 letter."

32-year-old college-educated Black woman, married, but living without her husband for nearly a year, working full time in 1948 without equal rights, looking forward to when she could attempt to put her passions first, only to have her physically absent husband emotionally disregard her. What she needed was a partner who supported her. What she got was yet another oppressive blanket of power cast upon her. DeVerne could feel the weight of race, class, and gender intersections of which she was caught between.

Intuitively, she recognized that her own husband's actions revealed sexist, patriarchal oppression. Her recognition comes through her tone, diction, and purpose in each of the two letters, with her first letter being more subdued though still assertive and her second letter demonstrating increased intensity. It is through this double-and-triple marginality that one can vividly see the debilitating emotional effects faced by so many Black women. Equally important to note is DeVerne's defiance of social norms regarding the need for a husband or for being willing to warn of divorce in so many words. In a matter of two consecutive letters, DeVerne went from embodying respectability politics, being willing to be the bigger person, to feeling like she still was not being heard or respected and thus, warning of her willingness "to defy the politics of respectability in pursuit of her own goals."³²⁵

The July 15, 1949 letter is the last letter of record before Ernest returned home. In 1950, Ernest moved to St. Louis to work with Teamster Harold Gibbons. Although Ernest did receive the Fulbright award, he turned it down as he was settling into a new labor assignment.³²⁶ Meanwhile, DeVerne stayed in Chicago, continuing her work at the health

³²⁵ Brittney C. Cooper, *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 70.

³²⁶ Bussel, *Fighting for Total Person Unionism*, 53.

department. Though she said her job was not that exciting, she stayed back because she wanted to save her own money in order to get ahead financially so that eventually she could take time off to get back to her writing. So during that time, Ernest and DeVerne remained geographically separated, and each were working toward their own, personal goals. But after a couple of years, DeVerne moved to St. Louis. She began volunteering for the NAACP and in local politics. In fact, once Ernest became NAACP president, DeVerne was right there alongside of him, helping “to gather much of his figures and facts...figures relating to the black community”³²⁷ Finally, DeVerne and Ernest were together, living in the same city, the same apartment, and doing the same work – only DeVerne’s work was unpaid, thus she was theoretically sidelined as she worked for the furtherance of Black men, but with the aim of assisting the Black community.

Nevertheless, it was during this time that Ernest and DeVerne were truly stronger together. Reflecting on that time, DeVerne said:

It just suddenly became, I would say, it hit us like some kind of a bombshell... that here are all these blacks in the City of St. Louis with the potential to participate in politics and without the interest. So, we decided...we’ll see if we can stimulate this...So, then it became a challenge to the two of us...how we could go about involving people and getting them aware of their potential in politics and getting them worked up to the point to give a little time and substitute for the money that is usually required...substitute a little of their own energies and initiative for the lack of funds...so that became a real challenge.³²⁸

One of DeVerne’s goals was always to get back to writing. In January 1961, she and Ernest began experimenting with a small newspaper – the *New Citizen*, later renamed the *Citizen Crusader*, a local community paper about Black politics and society. In a

³²⁷ “Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway,” interview by Irene Cortinovis, University of Missouri-St. Louis Archive and Manuscript Division,” September 9, 1971, 19, Western Historical Manuscript Collection T-016, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

³²⁸ “Interview with DeVerne Calloway,” 19.

February 1961 letter to her mom, DeVerne seemed excited, telling her mom that she found the newspaper work “more interesting than working with politics.”³²⁹

DeVerne’s mother, who still resided in Memphis, questioned DeVerne’s relentless and arduous work on the paper. DeVerne had confided in her that the paper may not make any money, and DeVerne’s mom did not see why her daughter would put forth so much effort into something that in her eyes, was objectionable for many reasons. DeVerne’s mom, Sadie Lee, saw the paper as an impediment to her hope that DeVerne would be a “lady of leisure.”³³⁰ Sadie offered:

But as I see it, I’d rather you’d be a lady of leisure from now on and let your beauty return – when you were a little girl all I could vision was you being a beautiful wife with a husband that adored you and gave you a beautiful home, nice car, and pretty clothes. But it seems you didn’t want any of those things. All you want is a pencil to worry yourself to death with writing a lot of stuff that only gives you headaches and old age before your time.³³¹

Sadie did not wholeheartedly approve of her daughter’s public meddling in politics, especially in such a public platform as a newspaper. Granted, given her upbringing, Mrs. Lee likely was also concerned for DeVerne’s safety. She even went so far as to say that she believed DeVerne’s work kept her “busy trying to destroy the Negro race” and that there was “too much hatred in the hearts of the races. Something has to give one way or the other.” Through this, it can be inferred that her mother found her daughter to be unnecessarily meddling and she likely just wished for her daughter to not be involved. Unflinching, DeVerne continued to run the paper, though she never received public acknowledgement or credit for such – but Ernest did. Much to DeVerne’s disapproval,

³²⁹ DeVerne Calloway, “February 8, 1961 letter,” S0012 Box 31, Folder 259 “Family Correspondence 1961,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

³³⁰ D. Calloway, “February 8, 1961 letter.”

³³¹ D. Calloway, “February 8, 1961 letter.”

she told her mom that everyone thinks Ernest's union was behind the paper, meanwhile Ernest was steadily "sitting on his ASS."³³² She confided in her mom that she was indeed running the paper – doing all of the selling, promoting, and keeping up the records. She also noted that as a result of her busy schedule, her house was filthy, and it was making her sick but that "Cal doesn't even seem to notice. I am on the verge of calling his boss asking that Calloway be assigned to some far corner of the globe."³³³ DeVerne also defended her role as a public knowledge producer and political activist, "I am sympathetic because it is time Negroes stood up for their rights. When they get free from the white man in the South – maybe they will take on a new character + Right now the imprint of slavery is too strong upon them."³³⁴ So here is DeVerne, running the paper with little-to-no acknowledgement, a husband who not only benefitted from her work on the paper, but also who did not help around the house, and a mom who was disappointed in her daughter despite her endless work. And despite her continuous exertion, she did not quit; in fact, she added more – her bid for public office. Between the volunteer political work she had done previously, coupled with her public platform in the newspaper and her unwavering commitment to St. Louis's Black community, the timing was ripe for her bid to the Missouri Legislature. In estimation of her decision to run, DeVerne noted:

Up until this point, I never really thought of myself in St. Louis as being an elected person, because I was, in a sense, a newcomer, and I thought this would be a hurdle to overcome...because although I had worked very hard, there were

³³² DeVerne Calloway, "June 14, 1961 letter," S0012 Box 31, Folder 259 "Family Correspondence 1961," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

³³³ D. Calloway, "June 14, 1961 letter."

³³⁴ D. Calloway, "June 14, 1961 letter."

many people in the city who had related to the Democratic Party much closer and longer than I had.³³⁵

Of course, it was not only that DeVerne was a newcomer to the St. Louis political scene that served as a potential roadblock. As a woman, it went without saying that DeVerne would likely need the support and endorsement from men in order to successfully enter the political arena at that time – a valid example of how Critical Race Theory’s tenet of interest convergence manifests itself within the intersection of race, class, and gender. Through the help and support of Jack Dwyer, the 18th Ward’s committeeman, and Senator T.D. McNeal, who DeVerne had previously helped get elected, she was elected in 1962 as the first Black female to any public office and the first Black woman elected to the Missouri General Assembly. A couple months before the August 1962 primary election, DeVerne wrote her mother and told her about her bid for state representative. She also told her mom that her sister-in-law, Anna White, was campaigning against her. Anna was married to DeVerne’s brother, Joe, and he was furious that his wife was supporting one of DeVerne’s main competitors -- Ida Harris. Coincidentally, a couple of years prior to this, DeVerne also campaigned for Ms. Harris -- against Anna -- in a bid for Committeewoman. At that time, part of DeVerne’s support of Ms. Harris rested in a mutual opposition to William Clay and his 26th Ward Voters Organization. However, by 1963, Harris had done an about-face and joined ranks with Clay, further fueling DeVerne’s campaign against Ms. Harris.³³⁶ Documents underscore this political strategy, as well as the fact that DeVerne did not really expect to win. In a letter to her mom, DeVerne wrote, “The whole thing is pretty much of a joke in a way” because she only

³³⁵ “Interview 1 with DeVerne Calloway,” 20.

³³⁶ Clarence Lang, *Grassroots to the Gateway: Class Politics & Black Freedom Struggle in St. Louis, 1936-1975* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 121-122, 180.

agreed to run because of “certain guaranteed endorsements” and “because of the wishes of Senator McNeal...who couldn’t bear the idea of Ida Harris – Anna’s candidate – being in Jefferson City trying to make laws.” Always wishing for her mother’s hard-won approval, DeVerne added, “I know you all will be proud of me when I become the Legislator. I will be the third Negro woman in the whole country to have such a distinction.”³³⁷ As cemented in history, DeVerne not only won the August primary, but also she won the November election. When the new legislative session began in January 1963, DeVerne found herself commuting back-and-forth between St. Louis and Jefferson City, where she would typically spend four days, returning to St. Louis for three. DeVerne and Ernest’s relationship reverted back to what they had practiced for so many years in the past – a commuter marriage.

During her first few months in the legislature, keeping up the newspaper became a real strain because she found she could not rely on Ernest to do the massive amounts of work that she had been doing in order to keep the paper operational. DeVerne complained about it to her mom, telling her she liked being in Jefferson City, but always hated returning to St. Louis and was trying to convince Ernest to give up the paper. By the end of March 1963, she had successfully convinced Ernest to give up the paper. In the meantime, she continued to try to get her mom to understand how time-consuming her job is and that with it, comes the responsibility of the city, first and foremost, and that “the home” is just not where her life is centered. DeVerne explained:

Different people lean to different things. Your total goal in the South seems to be acquire a home, live in it, give a few presents at Xmas time, and survive in a vacuum when it comes to the world around you. Ours is be and stay involved in

³³⁷ DeVerne Calloway, “June 5, 1962 letter,” S0012 Box 31, Folder 260 “Family Correspondence 1962,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

what makes the city, the state, the nation, and the world go round. It is very comfortable to live in your protected world and criticize all that happens... It is sometimes uncomfortable to live in ours and take the criticism because we have the ability and the interest to insist on helping make decisions that affect everybody's lives . . . It also sometimes fleetingly irritates me that you are so wrapped up in other things that you can feel nothing other than disgust because I am not cut of the mold you would have preferred.³³⁸

DeVerne's passion for improving lives and affecting change is clear. It is also clear that she and Ernest shared this passion. What is unclear is whether there was room remaining for passion or romance between the two of them, a suspicion her mother also likely had that became some of her disdain. DeVerne settled into her new legislative role while Ernest was still working for the NAACP.

In 1964, DeVerne again found herself campaigning for her re-election and again, starved for time. She often complained to her mom about Ernest – either his poor eating habits or his lack of assistance in keeping the house somewhat tidy – a common theme in the majority of her letters to her mother. DeVerne also alluded that she and Ernest had separate bedrooms, by way of mentioning she was sewing drapes for *his* bedroom.³³⁹ Considering geographic separations shaped their first few years of marriage and were a continuous part of their union during DeVerne's tenure in the legislature, it is not a total surprise that they would not share a bedroom in their home. Yet another clue conveying their separate lives came in a 1965 letter DeVerne wrote her mother:

He [Ernest] is just (an) old shoe..... self-contained and self-centered. I have learned just to go my way. I take care of his clothes, his meals, and live peacably [sic] in the house ---with a minimum of chit-chat and that seems to satisfy him. When I get disgusted too thoroughly, I leave town, or just get out of the house. It seems to work.

³³⁸ DeVerne Calloway, "January 18, 1963 letter," S0012 Box 31, Folder 261 "Family Correspondence 1963," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

³³⁹ DeVerne Calloway, "September 14, 1965 letter," S0012 Box 31, Folder 263 "Family Correspondence 1965," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

In DeVerne's own words – the union worked. All she had to do was leave when she was disgusted and no longer wished to be around Ernest, for she understood she could only deal with it up to a certain point, at which the merits of her own peace and joy could bend no more without such an absence, until enough time had passed to clear the air again long enough for DeVerne to breathe again and return home.

In June of 1966, the two set out to purchase their first house together. Not only did this signify a commitment to stay together, it also demonstrated DeVerne and Ernest's commitment to her legislative duties as the home had to be in the district that she represented. She invited her mother to move in with them, illustrating her love despite their differences and possibly also indicating her loneliness. DeVerne overworked herself fixing up their new house while Ernest mostly sat idly by, frustrating DeVerne. Anytime he travelled and was out of the house, DeVerne would clean up the overflow of papers, books and clutter he left behind and try to tidy up his bedroom by washing his linens, or even painting. The two often spent holidays apart, with DeVerne travelling home to Memphis when she could, often with a check from Ernest for her family. Although neither DeVerne nor Ernest were that much into holiday celebrations, DeVerne still enjoyed the spirit of it all. Never having been much of a gift giver, Ernest typically just gave DeVerne his credit card and told her to pick out something nice for herself. As she told him nearly 20 years prior when he forgot her birthday the first year they were married, "No sentimentality. No romance."³⁴⁰ Truly, her words summed up their relationship.

³⁴⁰ Ernest Calloway, "June 29, 1949 letter," S0540, Folder 50, Ernest Calloway Addenda, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

In 1968, Ernest decided to make a bid for congress, a decision that royally irritated DeVerne, who was already strapped for time campaigning for her re-election, while solely maintaining the home. Reflecting on this year, DeVerne described it as miserable, mainly due to Ernest's political campaign.³⁴¹ DeVerne was feeling a sense of job burn-out at the time and did not feel she had the physical vitality to sustain two campaigns. She had become disillusioned with politics and the layered complexities of trying to get people to care about the plight of Black women and men. Voicing her frustration to her mom, DeVerne wrote:

I am completely fed up with the problems of the Negro. They seem insoluble and even the legislature has gotten to the point where it is frustrating... A lot of smiling white folks trying to sway your vote in favor of their program but playing real crazy when it comes your time to get something accomplished.³⁴²

So the idealistic DeVerne was feeling defeated in her political role, somewhat abandoned in her marriage, and now her husband was attempting to take up the very thing that embittered her. Days before the August primary where she and Ernest were both on the ballot, she wrote to her mom about her exhaustion from the campaign, from addressing 700 envelopes and not being able to give up despite wanting to.³⁴³ In the end, Ernest lost; DeVerne won – poetic and prophetic, an extended metaphor in-and-of itself. Once things settled down after the primary, DeVerne had the November election looming. Although she won, she wasn't entirely sure she wanted to as a result of the pressure she was under.

³⁴¹ DeVerne Calloway, "December 29, 1968 letter," S0012 Box 31, Folder 266 "Family Correspondence 1968," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

³⁴² DeVerne Calloway, "August 1, 1968 letter," S0012 Box 31, Folder 266 "Family Correspondence 1968," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

³⁴³ D. Calloway, "August 1, 1968 letter."

Still feeling exhausted she told her mom “And I don't really care whether a Republican beats me, or not.”³⁴⁴

DeVerne -- a writer at heart -- aimed to write her mother at least monthly, though sometimes it was more often, and other times less. She confided in her mother about her frustrations with Ernest, about her desire to have her mother to move to St. Louis and live with her, about the enjoyment and irritations of politics, and even about her innermost feelings concerning her own race. Lacking a partner at home with whom she could converse, correspondence with her mom became DeVerne's spiritual grounding. Her letters to her mom are where she could let off steam. DeVerne had a critical eye, and it trickled into most everything she did, and it defined her work, pushing her to never accept status quo. At times, however, her criticism fell sharply upon the Black community, who she flitted between blaming and understanding.

On one hand, DeVerne definitely showed signs of loneliness; on the other hand, she kept herself busy from morning to night, playing into systemically rooted gender roles where she handled everything to do with the upkeep of a house *and* a demanding job.

Just four days before Valentine's Day in 1980, the St. Louis Post Dispatch's Sunday magazine featured the Calloways in an entertaining piece titled, “Love Story, St. Louis Style.” The article quotes Ernest:

‘I have the best of both worlds,’ says Calloway. ‘I’m a bachelor for four days a week and a husband for three. It keeps the old spark burning.’” Alluding to his messiness, Ernest says, ‘I don’t have to make the beds and I can leave things

³⁴⁴ DeVerne Calloway, “October 22, 1968 letter,” S0012 Box 31, Folder 266 “Family Correspondence 1968,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

scattered all over until the day before she comes home. Then I try like mad to clean up the house.’³⁴⁵

Several quoted words pique interest, particularly: “bachelor,” “husband,” and “old spark burning.” For starters, there is a clear dichotomous relationship between that of a bachelor and that of a husband. While on the surface, it works to establish their “commuter marriage” as innovative for such a time period, it also works to establish a chink. Just how does one switch between two ultra-different lifestyles? Even if one were to believe their situation worked, the bigger question is to whom exactly did it work for? Ernest stated he tried like mad to clean the house before DeVerne’s weekly return from the state capital, but letters spanning decades to her mother repeatedly show otherwise. For example, in an April 1980 letter to her mom, DeVerne’s frustration with Ernest is clearly demonstrated. Explaining how she had to go pick up table lights from the hardware store without Ernest so much as acknowledging her need for assistance, DeVerne writes:

I carry them to the Hardware store – about 30 blocks away from the house – go back – pick them up – get out of the car – with Calloway standing on the porch watching me – Creep up the steps with these two lamps and my purse in my arms – then Calloway goes through the front door and let the storm door slam on me and one of the lamps – which of course snapped right in two! I was so mad with Calloway he stood on the porch + watched while I painfully lifted one of the heavier lamps and dragged myself up the steps and set it down – then dragged back to the car + got the other – I was so tired I could barely creep up the steps – my legs were aching, my wrist and the operation scar were giving me stress from having done too much yard work the day before – and there was Calloway just walking on in the house just as if he hadn’t seen me. I started cussing and complaining and what does he say? ‘You ought to learn how to be more philosophical about these things.’ I just went straight upstairs, pulled off my shoes and slacks, climbed in bed and pulled the spread over my head. I stayed there about an hour then began figuring out how to repair the broken lamp³⁴⁶

³⁴⁵ Lipkin, “Love Story.”

³⁴⁶ DeVerne Calloway, “April 6, 1980 letter,” S0012 Box 32, Folder 278 “Family Correspondence 1980,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

The operation scar DeVerne refers to are from having a mastectomy six months earlier after receiving a breast cancer diagnosis – which adds yet another complexity to this entirely chauvinistic and abusive situation. So, Ernest saw himself as both a bachelor and a husband – both of which are situated in the idea of masculinity, and the social presumption that both are socially acceptable identity roles with “bachelor” connoting a more selfish identity than “husband,” but that such selfishness would be acceptable, if not endearing, while DeVerne was away. What Ernest fails to demonstrate, is his ability to be a *partner* when she commuted back home to St. Louis where he was supposedly keeping the “old spark burning.” There is a clear difference between how Ernest saw himself, how DeVerne saw him, and how he wanted others to see him. Two weeks after the “Love Story” article was published, DeVerne wrote to her mom about it, “He’s been getting comments all over the place about his love story, [saying], ‘Fancy me being a Romeo at 72.’”³⁴⁷ There is both irony and validity in Ernest’s allusion to himself being a Romeo. The extension of this metaphor is complex but sound.

Though the name “Romeo” has become synonymous with lover, there are several underlying character traits of which Ernest unintentionally mimics. Before meeting their true loves, both Ernest and Romeo had other lovers. Ernest was despaired when he lost his first wife; Romeo was despaired when Rosaline turned from him. Both quickly rebounded: Ernest found DeVerne; Romeo found Juliet. This is where the irony comes in. Ernest was characterized as being a Romeo; however, the historical record shows him being far from a romantic gallant.

³⁴⁷ DeVerne Calloway, “February 24, 1980 letter,” S0012 Box 32, Folder 278 “Family Correspondence 1980,” DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

In June 1981, Ernest suffered a devastating stroke and never fully recovered.³⁴⁸ DeVerne, always the caretaker and homemaker, now found herself with yet another role, Ernest's unofficial nurse. She labored days and nights to care for him while his body weakened, eventually losing the ability pull himself up in bed, speak, or even swallow his saliva while eating. Yet, his mind was very much alive, leaving him a prisoner in his own body, unable to perform basic bodily functions. The situation was heartbreaking to both Ernest and DeVerne, who was still trying to fulfill her legislative roles in her last year before official retirement. After painstakingly trying her best these duties with fidelity, DeVerne, who was 64 at this time, decided it was time to hire a home nurse to help care for Ernest. Unfortunately, she had a tough time finding someone she felt was capable. Ernest, ever the curmudgeon, even scribbled a note to one of the nurses that read, "You don't know what you are doing."³⁴⁹ Ernest's sufferings continued to worsen, and by October 1982, he had lost the ability to write. With his declining symptoms, DeVerne's retirement from the legislature could not come soon enough. Upon completing her tenth term in the Missouri Legislature, she officially retired in 1982 after 20 years of service as Missouri's first Black woman elected to a public office. And, despite Ernest's diminished health, he lived for seven more years, passing away at 80, one day before his 81st birthday. DeVerne, who was 72, did not attend his funeral, for she was infirmed at a St. Louis hospital after having herself suffered a serious stroke the month before. DeVerne

³⁴⁸ DeVerne Calloway, "June 27, 1982 letter," S0012 Box 32, Folder 280 "Family Correspondence 1982," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

³⁴⁹ DeVerne Calloway, "July 5, 1982 letter," S0012 Box 32, Folder 280 "Family Correspondence 1982," DeVerne Calloway Papers, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis.

eventually moved back home to Memphis, where she passed away at the age of 76 from a heart attack in her sister Evelyn's home.³⁵⁰

A commuter marriage from its advent, DeVerne and Ernest stayed together until death did them part after forty-one years of marriage. The testament of their commitment to each other in a heteronormative marriage rests safely within the respectability of four decades. What filled those decades however, defies the idea of respectability. DeVerne understood that a life relegated to the domestic realm would prevent her from doing the critical advocacy necessary to reshape race public opinion. She navigated through what can only be viewed as a dual “framework of ‘male supremacy’ and ‘white supremacy.’”³⁵¹ Theorized in a 1947 article by Pauli Murray, a civil rights activist and feminist, titled, “Why Negro Girls Stay Single,” Murray conceptualized what later became known as “Jane Crow discourse,” that women who outpaced their male counterparts could not find a partner with whom she could truly share her life.³⁵² Once DeVerne's election to the Missouri Legislature became very real, and that she enjoyed it and was successfully re-elected every two years, Ernest found himself with diminished novelty, especially after his unsuccessful 1968 bid for congress. According to Murray, such a situation was ripe for leaving Black men unprepared to “offer emotional security because he has rarely, if ever, known it himself... his submerged status in American life places unnatural stresses and strains upon his already inadequate equipment inherited from our immature democracy.”³⁵³ DeVerne likely intuitively understood this and

³⁵⁰ Tom Wheatley, “DeVerne Calloway Dead at 76,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 25, 1993, Newspapers.com.

³⁵¹ Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 103.

³⁵² Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 103.

³⁵³ Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 103.

maneuvered herself through a web of gendered and racial intersections. Her legacy, unwritten until now, demonstrates true race womanhood as she successfully held together a life of respectability while simultaneously defying it.

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