

SELECTED HISTORICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY ON AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S ACTIVISM (FOCUSING ON 1880 TO 1920)

*Susan D. Carle**

At the colloquium, some of the activist/scholars in the room complained about the apparent lack of literature on activism by U.S. women of color in early historical periods. As a participant pointed out, this apparent gap can lead to a lack of inspiration and role models for contemporary lawyer/activists. But this perceived gap in the historical literature on activism by women of color is apparent, not real. There is in fact a rich and growing body of historical literature on the activism of women of color in the U.S.; the problem is that this literature, like the work of these women as historical subjects themselves, has had to survive in the face of a process of subordination and partial erasure. As promised at the colloquium, I offer this selected and partial bibliography to counter the impression among contemporary women activists of color that there is scant historical literature on those who came before. I have limited my bibliography to the historical period of my own research leading to a book on African American women and men's activism on racial justice around the turn of the twentieth century, as referenced below. Note that before 1950, very few African American women held law degrees, for reasons involving the intersection of two powerful axes of discrimination, gender and race. Thus, many women activists were doing work at the intersection of activism and law reform that was similar to that done by male lawyers, but was not legal work per se. This is a topic I explore at some length in my book. For law students and other scholars interested in pursuing their own research in these areas, the sources below provide an excellent starting point.

* Professor of Law and Vice Dean, American University, Washington College of Law.

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