

# Introduction

The New South is the epicenter of neoteric sex wars, technologies, and economies. Issues of reproductive freedom, criminalization of sexual practices, HIV/AIDS, partner rights and marriage equality, and transgender rights reveal how southern states have entered into another era of reconstruction centered on sexuality and gender. This New South strategizes sexual violence and terrorism into policies about education, immigration, wage labor, and economic development: not unlike the Old South's previous era of crafting Black Codes and Jim Crow, it continues to depend upon anti-Blackness, sexual morality, and dehumanization of the poor for its growth and support. Yet, there is a great deal of resistance in the New South made evident by the strategies and missions of movements including SONG (Southerners on New Ground), SisterSong, Women with a Vision, BreakOUT!, Black Lives Matter chapters, Moral Mondays, and sanctuary movements. Thus, this book understands and reiterates that sexual resistance is already happening. It celebrates, examines, and highlights the various

modes that resistance has taken and the possible future directions it may take.

While persons living in southern states typically classified under the broad rubric of “the South” know that there is not one South but many, there are historical narratives that have ignored the development of multiple Souths. Recent developments in southern studies unravel essentialist ideas of “the South.” Some of the essentialisms being challenged include agrarianism, Christian-centricity, singular public/political identity linked with the Confederacy, racial binary of Black/white, and genteel men and women. In explaining their concerted scholarly effort to bring southern studies and global studies into conversation with each other, Deborah Cohn and Jon Smith state that “constructions of southern identity offered by white male southerners, from the Confederate flag to . . . the canon of southern literature, themselves constitute exclusionary and exceptionalist myths . . . [and] figure (white) southern culture and history as a corrective to provincial hubris of the imperial United States.”<sup>1</sup> Likewise, historian Jane Landers insists that southern studies scholars “do a better job of incorporating the lives of the many non-Europeans who formed the majority population as they reshape the history of the Southeast.”<sup>2</sup> These scholars attend to the issues of nationalism and whiteness dominating understandings of southern identity. Sociologist Zandria Robinson knows that there are also risks in using Black authenticity to outline the parameters of the Dirty South, explaining, “From the plays, films, and television shows of writer and producer Tyler Perry . . . to hip-hop’s music definitive turn toward crunk and the Dirty South, the South has risen again as the geographic epicenter of authentic Black identity.”<sup>3</sup> Outside of academia, various cultural creators of the Dirty South have done exactly that, while also

grappling with other forms of essentialism. Explicitly, the whiteness of southern identity and exceptionalism is confronted within the Dirty South. Implicitly, even when they are espoused, authentic and essentialist ideals of blackness are not sustained in Dirty South cultural production as a result of intersections of gender, sexuality, and geographical regionalisms.

As this book is entitled *A Dirty South Manifesto*, readers of a particular generation will see the influence of southern hip-hop culture. Because Dirty South music helped many survive the oppressive state policies around class, race, gender, and sexuality signed into existence during the two terms of former president William Jefferson Clinton (1993–2001) from Arkansas, this manifesto is without a doubt inspired by southern hip-hop genres of booty bass, crunk, trap, and bounce music created or cultivated by artists such as 2 Live Crew, Geto Boys, Master P, UGK, OutKast, Ludacris, Justus League, Little Brother, Juvenile, Lil Wayne, TI, Lil Jon, Trick Daddy, and Trina. In Georgia, Dr. Regina Bradley and Dr. Bettina Love have been going about the work of institution building for southern hip-hop. Bradley, the author of a collection of short stories entitled *Boondock Kollage: Stories from the Hip Hop South* and the forthcoming book *Chronicling Stankonia: OutKast and the Rise of the Hip Hop South*, remains convinced that southern hip-hop contains lessons as valuable as those of trickster tales, folklore, and mother wit for a post-Civil Rights generation. Love's *Hip Hop's Li'l Sistas Speak: Negotiating Hip Hop Identities and Politics in the New South* examines the significance of hip-hop to Black girlhood identity and insists upon its usefulness as a pedagogical tool in urban classroom spaces. Not so quietly, they have been going off about the value of southern hip-hop and righteously so. Years earlier, the Crunk Feminist Collective, cofounded by Brittney Cooper and Susana

Morris, linked hip-hop, regionalism, and concerns of gender and sexuality. These stalwarts pay attention to the political impetus, as well as the urgency of aesthetics, in the Dirty South's refusals of an essentialist Black identity rooted in Black heteronormative masculinity. Thus, this book joins previous work in comprehending the significance of southern hip-hop to political and artistic imagination, as well as to the terrain of sexuality and gender studies. It intends to destabilize southern essentialisms based in white patriarchy and racialized class myths.

As outlined in the following chapters, I am specifically guided by the fecundity of "dirt" (dirty imagination), a different, older set of sonic aesthetic practices sampled in southern hip-hop music, and by one persistent metaphor and analytic framework—the intersection—as well as by how the practice of intersectional politics is often offered as a solution for challenging the anti-Black, pro-patriarchal state to make institutional practices about gender and sexuality more equitable. This short book attends to an irresolvable factor within aboveground political movements whose foundation is intersectionality: the delimitation placed on the concept of intersectionality and the practice of intersectional politics by an unacknowledged prior foundational commitment to moral authority that is neither gender neutral, sexually apolitical, antiracist, atheistic, nor agnostic.

Therefore, the book metaphorically highlights the imaginative off-road routes, shortcuts, side streets, dirt roads, and secret paths that might be located at, near, or surrounding the intersection, to think through its shortcomings when we think about what exists in the interim of policy and legislation. I highlight how the Dirty South's aesthetics and artistic critique of moral authority disengage from the boundaries of legal discourse and public policy established by regional differences and markers of

gender and sexuality. The book embraces the still-useful phrase, “the dirty,” since in its finest and filthiest iterations it exists as the simultaneous place and practice of intersectional politics, critiques of moral authority, and the development of regional aesthetic philosophies whose purpose is dismantling and reinventing southern public spheres largely erected out of the sexual economy of slavery and sustained by settler colonialism.

With this inspiration in mind, I provide several minor Dirty South manifestos to address individual issues that comprise the larger completed manifesto. I then offer explanations for why particular tactics in the manifesto might be necessary based on case studies taken from contemporary southern life. By focusing on Black communities and their construction of the Dirty South, I rejoice in the roots of radical sexual politics and cultural imagination in the New South before discussing their significance to the U.S. political landscape. I do so by placing Black communities’ politics and efforts in conversation with those of other racially and sexually marginalized communities. Through an exploration of how some Black communities recognize the previously mentioned racialized elements of southern gender and sexual politics, and their countering of such politics with radical investment in arts and culture, I underscore the invention of cultural economies that shift the ideological ground upon which sexual moral panics in the South emerge. Unfortunately, it does not comprehensively attend to all issues regarding gender and sexual resistance in the South. Pressing concerns such as sexuality and disability, child and adolescent sexual education, and HIV/AIDS are not explicitly covered as stand-alone chapters, but the arguments of the chapters and manifestos are applicable to those issues and communities.

Because contemporary southern politics and public spheres have produced sexual moral panics, I offer a manifesto culled

from dirty moments of political or cultural resistance, which combat the sexual conservatism that continues to harm racial, gendered, and sexual minorities. As Janet Lyon has written, “to write a manifesto is to announce one’s participation, however discursive, in a history of struggle against oppressive forces.”<sup>4</sup> Historically, manifestos have been used in a variety of ways: as inspiration for radicalizing politics, a way to share cultural insights and innovations, or as means to build and locate a communal space for new social being. They can be political, scientific, aesthetic, or technical. The manifesto’s function as a guerrilla form of writing and slow studying is even more important in the era of inhuman pace established by digital speed and space that is the worldwide web. Manifestos direct us to numerous and various figures, books, and texts to study for self or with others. Despite the function of the manifesto in the modern public sphere, Lyon does note several conflicting issues within the form: universalism, the signature pronoun “we,” the difficulty of a collective self-representation, gendered imperatives derived from masculinist revolutionary discourse, and rigid hierarchical binaries.<sup>5</sup> Southern manifestos have typically been centered on racial segregation and white nationalism, as opposed to sexuality and gender.<sup>6</sup> However, *A Dirty South Manifesto* insists that sexual liberation and gender fluidity can also shape ongoing efforts to achieve racial and class equality, while also critiquing geographical sexual identity politics, antifeminism, and trans-respectability politics. *A Dirty South Manifesto* is modeled after themes and stylistic elements utilized in southern hip-hop, *Black Manifesto* (1969) by James Forman, and *Black Woman’s Manifesto* (1970) by the Third World Alliance, as well as elements from the *S.C.U.M. Manifesto* and the *Dada Manifesto*. In addition, it echoes the theoretical and political impetus of the *Communist Manifesto*,

*The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto*, and *A Cyborg Manifesto*.

My contribution to the American Studies Now series intends to offer a discussion about revising the ideals of a public sphere and public good that underwrite the democratic foundations shaping public policy. Using the thesis of political scientist Cathy Cohen, I “take seriously the possibility that in the space created by deviant discourse and practice, especially in Black communities, a new radical politics of deviance could emerge. It might take the shape of a radical politics of the personal, embedded in more recognized Black counter publics, where the most marginal individuals in Black communities, with an eye on the state and other regulatory systems, act with the limited agency available to them to secure small levels of autonomy in their lives.”<sup>77</sup> I embrace Cohen’s call for a public politics of deviance as a counter to what is being called for in the New South (moral revival and moral authority), as well as outline its necessity to something less public, a belowground movement. I also align myself with Deborah Vargas, who “situate[s] the queer analytic of *lo sucio* in relation to contemporary neoliberal projects that disappear the most vulnerable and disenfranchised by cleaning up spaces and populations deemed dirty and wasteful.”<sup>78</sup> Vargas reminds us to think about such questions from the perspective of the land before it is monetized. Thus, I discuss the impact that breaking with settler colonialism and settler sexuality may have on racial and sexual minorities in the New South.

Doing this work from the perspective of the land is a recursive strategy meant to keep in mind one question that is critical to sexual resistance in the New South: Is intersectionality dirty enough for the social justice needs of cisgender, transgender, and queer folk in the South? Intersectionality has been crucial

in contemporary social justice movements and considerations of race, gender, class, and nation. Nevertheless, local geographies and the distinct narratives of moral authority they produce reveal the limitations of a policy-based intersectional approach. Honing in on cultural origins of the practice long before Crenshaw's articulation of it in legal discourse may help. Intersectionality remains a political strategy reliant upon moral authority, but community strategies more skeptical of the state are often imagined from alternative perspectives so as to address the moral narrative going unchallenged in the aboveground movements of southern sexual liberation.

At times, this book eschews going public for going underground, forming secret societies and networks, and using models of Black intellectual and imaginative cultures to do so when political and cultural rhetoric of our current era insists upon the good of public intellectuals, institutions, and modes of protest. In spite of capitalism's dehumanization of living beings and its merciless privatization of every natural resource and community institution, such rhetoric relies upon ideals of a universal humanity and outdated notions of a public good and public space. *A Dirty South Manifesto* does not assume that there are not already multiple underground movements. Rather, it honors the different approaches they may take. Arguably, in writing and publishing these words, there is no way to avoid the perils of publicness. But I won't make it easy for all y'all or 'nem who yearn for publicness on behalf of the state's surveillance and appropriation purposes. You will need a decoder ring, a password, a codex, a unique kind of map, and a new type of math to fully decipher the meaning left behind in the book. Its manifestos demand performance and translation to multiple readers and audiences. You will need to closely read what comes before and after the manifestos to fully



comprehend the message. You will need to meditate on what is clear and accessible as much as you will need to mark and remark upon what requires clarification. You will need to argue their uselessness/usefulness with self, parents and grandparents, nieces and nephews, lovers and friends, and comrades and community. On the other hand, them so like the CIA cointelning their way through the long twentieth century, be warned that it will require a psychic core of COINTEL spies, linguists fluid in Ebonics, and witches to brew, hoodoo, and conjure for the enemy to understand and fracture what this text is calling for, what this text is moving toward, and what subject this text is seeking out.

By definition manifestos are public declarations announcing political or aesthetic movements, but what they inspire or call forth can be interior, private, and covert forms of insurgency and resistance. As a genre, the manifesto is a text suited for dystopias. Currently, a new wave of hatred threatens to return the South to a Reconstruction fantasy of white supremacy revivalism for misogynist and bigoted men and women, as well as a dystopia for women of color, poor white women, and queer and transfolk. Such a sexual dystopia requires many marginalized people to figure out how to live and reform it from within and from below. Though dystopias are said to be imagined places where people live dehumanized lives and the fantasy of democracy known as America insists that our current reality is not a dystopia, planning strategies of resistance from this imagined place has become most useful in the realities of southern geographies and of the beings living in the margins of those geographies. The manifestos are written based on the South as a sexual dystopia, since this positionality is what the innovators of the Dirty South have used as the basis of their world-making and

cultural creations. For those marginalized by colonial regimes of sex and gender and the racially oppressed within these economically disenfranchised segments of society, the South has been a sexual dystopia. For individuals who have ever imagined their freedom as different from an afterlife contingent upon the whims of moral turpitude within white supremacist patriarchy's greed, I hope you find your praise song or your calling in any part of *A Dirty South Manifesto*.