

## **ABSTRACT**

**ABSTRACT DISSERTATION:** In the Wake of Our Womanist Foremothers: Resistance as Signif(y)er Among Self-Identified Womanist Scholars in Higher Education

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The objective of this purposeful sampling qualitative case study was to describe how self-identified womanist scholars who are faculty members in higher education institutions signify resistance in their curriculum and pedagogy. The primary research question was "How do these scholars signify resistance in the development of curriculum and their teaching style?" Sub-questions included: "How does each womanist scholar perceive what it means to be a womanist as realized in their course materials? What common themes of resistance emerge among these womanist scholars in higher education?" The population for this study consisted of four (4) Black women faculty who are professors at four (4) different four-year post-secondary institutions of higher education in the United States of America. Snowball sampling was used to identify participants who met specific criteria. Data collection consisted of semi-formal interviews, classroom observations, field notes, and content and artifact analysis. The study employed a social constructionist semi-formal interviewing approach that prioritized dialogue and co-constructed and mutually agreed upon meaning-making. Non-Participant observations were conducted to observe phenomena in the classroom. Analysis of course materials included interview transcripts, syllabus, other course documents, and course emails. The research found

that womanist teaching and resistance for these participants began in the body, a radical place of lived-subjectivity. For these Black women, to Be was to resist. Their approaches to curriculum and pedagogy bore witness to a radical Black female subjectivity grounded in spirituality that signified to ontologies, symbols, and political dimensions of Black women resistance in higher education and beyond.

**Key words: Resistance, Womanist, Intersectionality, Resistance, Signification, Gadamerian hermeneutics, testimony**