February Dialogue: Love Rage and V-Day

I. Introductions
-Hot sub-themes that folks would like to bring up (emerging from articles, introductions, anything related that would like to be touched on at this historical moment in time 2014 a few days before V-day, what that is, marketed as 1 billion rising coming up, online explosions and controversies and wars of everything)

II. Labeling of online debate of “Wars”
-Beyonce sent shock-waves when she marketed her album (identifying it as a feminist)
-articles regarding toxic online environments (hardcore mysogenistic trolls, and how silencing that is to get waves of this all the time, when being a woman/gender minority person is calling attention to that)
-“War” self-identified feminists being super harsh on each other in these online spaces, valuable critique, slashing of people, undermining of people that is vicious online

III. Proposed sub-theme: comments on carceral (a prison abolition blog)
- critiques of Eve Ensler
-Huffington Post Natalie Gyte wrote the article on the Huff Post (all comments: you have a point she’s not doing it perfectly, but she’s doing a pretty good job, survivor of sexual violence seeing many people standing up to that was helpful) → ”not everyone starts with the most critical analysis you have, everyone starts somewhere, biased towards action, let’s pull Eve Ensler towards us, and let’s not shame anyone for anything they have done”
*push to be a smarter and more sharp analysis than someone else, anxiety that someone will point out your blind-spot (criticism of the process of dialogue online is interesting to look at)
* what do we do with that feedback? Do we feel shame or use it to inspire? (white-supremacist culture, perfectionist need: how do we start to give feedback to each other that doesn’t do that)

IV. Shaming of trying not to mis-step or say something that is “wrong” → the silencing that happens, is that part of the way that silencing happens around gender, socialization of women, and the silencing that happens when not wanting to mis-step

V. In mixed-race workplaces, how to know what parts of my reactions are things that I have been socialized to, and what are true needs of mine and how to have accountability, straight-talk with co-workers and accountability with co-workers (in the moment, how to identify, how to navigate that)
i.e. “white people don’t say their needs enough, because they are being overly sensitive, and thus not showing up fully in the moment
-Theater of the oppressed activity: acting out the internalized voices
VI. Colonial Feminism: the idea that folks are giving feedback to the HuffPost (take action vs. unintentional action causing harm) → how to start differentiate: when is doing something doing more harm, or doing something because something has to be done and developing internal dialogue, where do the skills come from to see that, because anything col. Perpetuates any dominance narratives
-Ani Di Franco’s organization for righteous babe writing retreat for women in a big house on a former plantation (a lot of critique, cycles of violence, history, erasure, recurring ways white feminists keep getting called out over certain dynamics, and an apology was issued which brought up further critique, etc.)

Constructive Feedback vs. Attack
“Beyond Eve Ensler” Organizing Against Gender Violence
--offers a reframing which is super powerful, no one has to be attacked, if this doesn’t make sense then let’s talk about it (people getting reactive and defensive and feeling attacked, it’s all compost/fertilizer for growth, but there can be key helpful ways to explore what to do so we aren’t causing damage)
--it depends on who you are talking about, in some spaces it’s fine for some folks to not strategically or emotionally react to something
--it might be white feminists who do similar work who try to make dialogue, and in terms of outrage its valid

Calling Out VS Calling In
“College Organizers” reinventing language
--“Calling In” if one person said something that is trans-phobic, call the person in welcome that in as a part of the community and engage in dialogue to challenge oppressive language
--how important relationship is → the difficulty with the online thing, violence breeds violence, and we are bound to perpetuate it as long as we can create other models

VII. “Shared Female Experience”
--what does happen when a group of people with a shared identity create power and how does it isolate, and what does it do in terms of downfalls, and they are intersectional and they are interdependent, and where do individual’s get lost in that?
--And brought back

VIII. How to talk about Beyonce, without shaming people who are really into it
--as white women, “we don’t do that”
--Black Girl Dangerous article that is really good, what does it mean when someone calls themselves a feminist while simultaneously perpetuates misogyny
--she’s a feminist, she’s objectifying and perpetuates problematic things about women’s bodies, how to engage in those conversations when not always in a safe space for such critique

THEME I: Beyonce
--it was made uncool to be a feminist: backlash stereotypes
--though right wing, goes so deep it makes it uncool
Basic definition behind feminism, folks struggled to back that
--powerful that Beyoncé is reappropriating the word “feminism” ➔ the production of
a new “cool”, she is showing that you can be a wife, and super sexy, and be a strip
please, and that is a counter to some of the caricatures and also dominant images that
have been used in a silencing way
--in addition to Black Girl Dangerous (Drunk in Love with Jay-Z) his piece in that is
so horrifying, it’s hard to imagine anything undermining (super sexy song, and his
piece is saying is “I’m Ike Turner” “Eat the Cake like Anna May” reference to Tina
Turner) ➔ like Turner smashing her face into a cake, sexifying domestic violence to
have some of these extreme tensions on the same album as “bow down bitches”
--really parallel to people who are saying Eve Ensler, bringing awareness to a billion
people, if this happens in such a way that reifies the violence, it’s actually
destruction, that in itself is an act of violence?
*Unpack conversation: SF county jail at a weekly group
--see Beyoncé’s videos, the folks in the group really wanted to see it, so they
downloaded them and brought them in and watched them, and everyone in the
room was super infatuated with it, and folks were wanting to have dialogue around
it the next week and there was a wanting to (brought in a few of the articles from
the website) and they were going off of some of the articles, but basically folks were
saying people weren’t able to hold both, “I love Beyoncé, she’s my hero, she’s really
amazing” and the space didn’t feel safe to articulate her/their malcontent
towards-- she looks like a white girl” while in the same breathe they wish they could look like
Beyoncé
-a lot of contradictions
-an intense dynamic because she—they were holding space (what happens in spaces
when we don’t feel like we can talk)
“I don’t want to fuck up, I don’t want to fuck up”
-resistance, not really knowing where to go or how to go, then defaulting to how to
be supportive and how to hold space, and trying to facilitate other people sharing
what they had to say, not guiding it in any
-heavy consumers of the videos: one of the ways that the album release with the
video that just came out
--their concession, a heavily image upbringing, her entire life has been being
groomed for the spotlight and the album talks about her mom and her values, and
being in girl groups growing up
--the salmon analogy: when we are in isolation from something then we find an idea,
then having that idea makes us feeling connected to meaning, the salmon knowing
they are salmon swimming upstream, and being a salmon (analogy, identification
what is it to use your own power to promote feminism or feminist something and
then what is it to use feminism to promote yourself) what is it to promote yourself?
--walk the walk vs. talk the talk, use the terms because I want people to see the
stream I want people to see the stream shifting from individualistic stream,
individual psychology, how could you not be if you are swimming in this river
--more as a verb than a noun: swimming against the stream and making it visible, then there is still unequal pay is powerful and we live in a pretty individualistic society and a pretty warped scenario in such a broad, how does it inform one’s ability to be a more complex...

--Mainstreaming movements: one could look at Beyonce, she’s getting this information out there about pay structures, and is there more harm done? To reach broad groups of people? What happens? And what gets lost? Is there some kind of inauthenticity? What happens when a figure like Beyonce come out for a cause

*Eve Ensler’s work is “activist”, and Beyonce her broad base, people will critique celebrities

1) calling in, falling into critiquing a black feminist
2) though we are here to critique white feminism

THEME 2: One Billion Rising
60 seconds➔launching from Vagina Monologues, then she created V-Day (raising awareness around violence against women, funding local support, shelter, refuges), travelling around the world meeting groups of people, a group of Congolese women chose their form of anti-violence to dance, and turned that into a day of dance, a choreographed dancing all over the world and all sorts of events, one billion rising is about encouraging women to speak up about violence, or spectators or people who have been touched, one big part of the critique and how the gender violence is punished and the ways that asking people perpetuates violence in itself

Natalie Gyte article, the V-day event she did was actually supporting a lot of local initiatives, so why does Eve Ensler have to take the spotlight for herself

Indigenous Critique out of Canada: one billion rising is framing it’s work as led by local groups, but it feels like the organization is finding causes and saying it's from that (the way these figures are co-opting the movements, and how does it derail it from broadcasting it to a large audience)➔harm/help

Example: Chief Lauren Elk was talking about all the rituals that happened in 2014, how that was being attributed to one billion rising instead of the work that is happening

Framing of giving a voice to the voiceless
➔she has been using her celebrity in Congo about rape as a tool of war, activism to make people care more than they do, and also this voice for the voiceless thing, and experiencing the same thing, and it's not all the same thing, and it's not all the same issue, and there’s a lot of power in epidemics of gender violence

Who's valuable? Who is being helped by this? But the cost to who? How does that inform our decisions around action? What we do, what don't we do, is it enough how do I respond to the things

A movement being co-opted: how the movement is a different thing for each person (different camps, and progress towards feminist goals mean)➔so much about how do you even define it? It’s interesting to think about cohesion and what nurtures cohesion and the idea of calling in, bringing closer very large entities and people
-- how to do that when we don’t even know what we are cohering around, I hold the contradiction within myself, feeling simultaneous emotions (what is problematic about it, and holding the conversation within myself about the aesthetic and my enjoyment of violence against women, and that’s part of it for me, how I hold my own objectification, and how an album like that plays on all those layers)

--One billion rising: there are parts of it that are offensive, it is mainly coordinated by a group of white women and almost all the performers are people of colors, many of whom she/they respect deeply but who did not organize it

--it’s also an example of a local community, and violence in our own community, locally, a night of performance

--hard to speak up: there are so many nuances that I would want to communicate to a group of people, you don’t even know, by asserting a particular view, how to assert opinion while also seeing the multiplicity of sides→ sometimes being more quiet can be fine too, but leading questions can be helpful too, being super open and honest, transparent as a movement or community

- whenever I do that, there are people or respond or don’t respond who get angry with me

→Eve: contradictions, highly problematic when creating a shared experience in only one way, Beyonce is trying to create a shared experience in various different ways, struggle/tension as well with reifying capitalist structure (Beyonce)

--what does it mean to be self-proclaimed feminist, how do we just start to focus in on the actions versus the person can the person called themselves that? Cause they do that→ contradictions of speaking one thing and “miststepping” at another moment

Distinction: between the people of feminism and the actions of feminism

Sheryl Sandberg, lack of class analysis, but is it a step?

CFO of Facebook, lean-in circles “lean-in” conversations

*I made it you can too

Equality, to what? You’ve made it to when? All issues of personal choice? All of this is happening within a capitalist patriarchy...50% women CEOs, as well as the police force and the military

*remind myself of my own identity development: I didn’t start off as an anti-capitalist, it was only through extensive experience, I don’t think starting with that anlysis and expecting people to move towards that point will be effective

--everyone you meet is your potential ally, and every conversation you have with them, see them as a potential anti-capitalist (Cheryl Sandberg: her people are not m people but if she wasn’t speaking to them then they would be even further away from where I am: the question is how can we move eve ensler? And Cheryl sandberg?)→Eve Ensler has been on Democracy Now, and it’s such a disconnect

--collectively write an email to Amy Goodman?

It might be interesting to experiment: Kimberly Crenshaw, on the V-day board in response to some of this? WOC developing ideas around intersectionality looking at movements at how the conversations were dominated around POC and other conversations around women, but she didn’t see conversations around WOC, intersectionality
*black women suing general motors, and the law literally could not see and therefore address the needs of black women (we need intersectional analysis and from there has grown and shifted into different things and how it’s been played out, and it’s become a buzz word which she has pushed back on) it came out of a really pragmatic need, like when you need an ambulance to come at the intersection
*it’s also a common part, it’s not intersectional enough, a lot of mainstream feminism has not been intersectional, really racist, and classist, and how do we work together so we can keep moving towards a deeper intersectional analysis

THEME: Constructive critique, the “othering” of folks
All these potential allies are never going to talk to them, the activist culture and not recognizing developing and not recognizing where I’m at and where I’m going (contacting Amy Goodman, the critique of One Billion Rising, NOT Eve Ensler, she was probably called-out not called-in, she did not react well to it, it was a lot of defensiveness, and you are riding your high and you think you are doing amazing stuff and someone saying this is all bad, the dialogue being cut off, her being able to receive Chief Lauren, she cried, addressed in the letter, reproducing the white woman tears, and then a disregard, because crying is great but then disregard the risk to speak on whatever the problem is where do you go from there, we are there and we are all in our states and our spaces, and trusting that somebody will pull her coat-tails, maybe she didn’t want to be called out by a person of color, maybe that triggered her as shit, who the fuck knows)

THEME: Calling out the action as opposed the person, mass media will not easily respond to that
--how to respond and get any kind of platform?
--facebook passively aggressively post things against one billion rising, facebook attack/defense mode through media
--talk about action, and also having the personal relationship for those discussions
--one of the loudest global voices/more amplified voice around sexual violence
*so many rape debates, rape was up a lot in terms of reproductive issues and outrage around the woman who was killed in India and feminists in India being incredibly courageous and inspiring
*a flood of caring and then going back to the norm of not caring: that seems very true about sexual violence, it feels like a symptom of internalized sexism, and numbness around that and then there’ll be an incident and seeing that outrage reflected and Eve Ensler is harnessing a lot of that and it just feels like there’s few bright spotlights of are on this issue and then it’s all kinds of churny feelings of problematics within it (the last thing I would want would be for it to take away from gender violence, )
*comment section on HuffPost: no no this is an important issue: one day or one flashmob, accountability
--if there weren’t all of the things that weren’t feeding into the media spectacle then
--white feminists can intersect with sexism and it is linked with a way that issues of violence with what is considered as female gets deprioritized, part of the normalization of it, not want to universalize that
--what is an effective platform: if calling in feels like you have to be community with someone, because you are saying you want them to stay community with them
Amy Goodman: can we ask these questions, I have been watching you for four years, these questions are really important, we need to ask them, taking on general media is going to be a lot harder, requires a level of strategy that people who do media stuff take on, also all the articles that we read, how can I make impact in my own community
Democracy Now: fairly close to home, what is our time and effort and how do we use our time and energy

An Open Letter to Amy Goodman: A NICE FORMAT (in general)
-how can we call-in our personal lives before it has to happen on the internet in front of a billion people, what if one billion people had had an accountability structure, and there would have been ample opportunities for her to have been called in to change what we see now (in my personal life, what are the ways that I can invite people to call me in and what are the ways we can call others in)
--an article in the nation: fem future award, there’s been a whole year long fight of feminists on twitter, turned into a woman of color hashtag “solidarity is for white women"

Calling In is predicated upon having an interpersonal relationship with someone and what happens when you are on an online space with less accountability

*scale issue: how can you call people-in when the movement becomes broader

I used to be a blogger for Feministing, a wonderful time because it was a time for the website (supposed to be a summit to talk about online feminism done with a zero budget, and...)
Summit, weekend/day, no budget, not blasted, thus exclusionary, women felt left out of goals that were defined at the retreat ➔ courtney martin’s response after a year, I have seen the same violent language of women of all shapes and sizes used against me for the wrong I have done by the larger digital feminist community, the response to exclusion was violent and served to make the internet a more violent place or people who had made their entire careers on sites like Feministing...] ➔ what happens when the movement gets too big that there aren’t people who represent you

-more people participating in the comment section?
-how do you come in as a moderator who is also a feminist to police that, change that, HuffPost comments vs. anti-incarceration website: “BELL CURVE OF COMMENTS”: it’s often the folks who vehemently disagree who comment, you would lose a lot of folks who would potentially participate in the discussion, different parts of the internet (i.e. desktops, excluding people who access internet in different ways, twitter can be the solution to that sometimes, people are more likely to give and take feedback on twitter)

➔ from what I read, at least one function was how to figure out how to fund the unfunded labor of women producing content online and it wasn’t getting paid for the work that we do is valuable and we should be compensated for the work we are doing
that provoked a really interesting twitter response, the creator of Racalicious tweeted the whole history of how site was funded, how do you pay people for writing, how do you fund these little blogs when you come to a start-up funder when you say your budget over a year is 3 million dollars, and they say that’s not enough, and you don’t want to become super corporate and a profit sharing entity 
Compensation, profit, and perceptions of all of that, a helpful layering

One Billion Rising: not dismissing the whole thing
-working for a non-profit that does environmental work, when can we start talking about the root problems in a very public way without sugar coating it without making it a digestible platform, and part of the answer to that is talking about the root of that shit patriarchy and white domination who do you say that without people saying “woah fuck you!”
-there are ED’s of greenpeace, etc. and campaign teams, and it boggles my mind that we can’t come up with language that doesn’t also talk about root problems*****
-new media workshops workshops, in those dialogues sometimes I feel like you want to rechange the message but radicalizing it while re-writing it it’s important to address those roots
--lots of money, let’s make it happen
*infantilizing of these things, this language
--work in an office, full-time, girl’s night and had a wonderful time and told them about the Bechdel test and forwarded the youtube video, building relationships with people and someone just says it outright naming things is such a relief→because then you can see where people are at and meet them there
--calling things what they are, and experimenting with what they are
*people were receptive
→relationship between radical politics and the amount of funding, and the relationship between funding, the people funding the work have an agenda themselves

-what consequence do we hold ourselves to? Punitive fixing model
-if I don’t do this thing, we’re going to do this other thing
-horizontal structures that allow you to be a person inside of them
-I need to be vigilant as a person, to be a person, as a white person in this country, in the world
-How to be sustainable
-Self-acceptance
-Navigating difference, habits, great relationship, community work
-Female socialization to feel that my needs are imposing, are bad – NVC can be a gift to express needs
-If was a family member, would express need
-Being vulnerable and honest
-What would this anti-gendered violence world look like?