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Review of *Battle Cries: Black Women and Intimate  
Partner Violence*, by Hillary Potter

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***Battle Cries: Black Women  
and Intimate Partner Abuse***

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In 1851, women's suffrage activist, abolitionist, and former slave, Sojourner Truth, spoke at a women's suffrage convention in Akron, Ohio. It was during this speech that Truth famously asked, "Ain't I a Woman?", as she described her unique experience as a Black woman oppressed because of both her gender and race. Since this speech, women of color feminist activists have openly called for an increased awareness of how race, gender, class, and often sexuality, intersect and how this can cause further oppression. This concept, otherwise known as intersectionality, has been applied to the examination of a number of social problems impacting the lives of Black women, such as AIDS, poverty, and intimate partner abuse.

Hillary Potter's *Battle Cries: Black Women and Intimate Partner Abuse* is a thought provoking and well-detailed account of the abuse experienced by Black women in intimate relationships. According to data cited by Potter, with the exception of Native American women, Black women have the highest rates of intimate partner abuse. However, given these extremely high rates, very little attention has been paid to the abuse experienced by Black women. Potter's study sets out to explore how Black women experience intimate partner abuse and what they make of the violence they do experience. Potter focuses on the major themes that she found in her respondents' lives, such as "childhood abuse" and their perception of the batterers "," as well as their response and, in many cases, their escape from the abuse.

*Battle Cries* is based on data collected from 40 Black women in the Boulder, Colorado area. Based on

what is presented in the book, Potter's work does not appear to be as much ethnographic as she describes, but more so based on in-depth interviews. Regardless, these interviews provided fascinating and revealing insight into the lives, and even triumphs of these women. The level of intimacy that Potter was able to achieve with her respondents was obvious by the level of detail Potter was able to gather about their lives. Potter had developed such a positive rapport with her respondents that when one of these women, Billie, was being abused by her "common-law husband" and son, Billie called Potter in despair. Potter maintains that Billie mainly called her looking for some support and kind words; however, the simple fact that she was able to develop such a positive and trusting relationship with one of her respondents was admirable. Importantly, it was this level of trust that allowed Potter to gain such access into the lives of these women.

Not only is *Battle Cries* an important contribution to the research on intimate partner abuse, it is also a great contribution to the scholarship on Black and critical race feminist studies. Black feminist criminology is the theoretical framework used to explore the unique experiences that Black women have as victims and/or perpetrators of crime, deviance, or their experiences with the criminal justice system. Potter uses Black feminist criminology to explain what her respondents made of their abuse. Although Potter addresses a number of different issues, the notion of being a "strong Black woman" was heavily emphasized among all of the women interviewed. In fact, Potter's analysis of the "strong Black woman" and the discussion that she had with her respondents concerning the subject were, perhaps, the most fascinating aspect of this already well informative book.

*Battle Cries* is a great contribution to the scholarship on Black feminist theory, and more specifically, Black feminist criminology. Potter not only provides the reader with moving accounts of the lives of Black women who have experienced intimate partner abuse, but she also provides the reader with useful and even pragmatic responses to this violence. Most importantly, *Battle Cries* is a much needed addition to the scholarship on the lives and unique issues facing Black women in the United States.