



Statement from AMERICAN WOMAN creator Sarah Huny Young regarding Brooke Baldwin's American Woman series for CNN

PITTSBURGH, PA (January 4, 2018) – As the creator of **AMERICAN WOMAN**, a portrait and documentary series about Black American women that I began in July of 2016, I'm dismayed to see that journalist Brooke Baldwin has launched a new series for CNN also called **American Woman**.

This isn't, of course, to say that I'm the only person that gets to celebrate women in the US or that I have ownership of the title or moniker "American Woman" in any way. However, that the original AMERICAN WOMAN series is very specifically about *Black* women in America—American for multiple generations, first generation American, or American via naturalization or dual citizenship—is a very important distinction that I intend to protect. Namely, it's about reframing the face most people picture, and the characteristics most associate with the term American woman to include Black American women. It's about intersectionality and womanism. It's about our complex relationship with this country and the labor we're tasked with as it's most resilient, brilliant population. That I named it AMERICAN WOMAN and not *BLACK AMERICAN WOMAN* is very purposeful.

I don't assume that Brooke's intentions were or are malicious; I believe she's passionate about her project the same way I'm passionate about mine. I'm pleased to see that Ava DuVernay and Issa Rae are included in her series; I admire them and enjoy their work. I also give due props to talented women like Ashley Graham, Pat Benatar, and Betty White The Gawd, but I'd venture to say that they don't get told to "go back to [their] own country" nor does their patriotism, their rights, or whether they even *belong* here get called into question as frequently as it does with Black women in America. This is why my AMERICAN WOMAN project exists, why I feel it's important, and why it shouldn't be overshadowed or diluted by another conceptually similar series with the exact same name. That is where my frustration mainly lies at the moment; the potential added labor of distancing myself from Brooke's series by explaining that my AMERICAN WOMAN series was first, that it centers Black women, and that hers is derivative. I'm concerned that it will get in the way of my marketing and promotional efforts and even my fundraising ventures.

"Isn't CNN already doing that, though?"

I've photographed and filmed interviews with almost 70 Black women in NYC, Pittsburgh, Philly, DC, Chicago, Atlanta, Los Angeles, and New Orleans over the past year and a half. AMERICAN WOMAN is

nothing less than a complete labor of love and my greatest work to date and I will never hesitate to fiercely protect it. I'm *immensely* proud that I'm shining a light on incredible, impactful Black women who don't have millions of followers already (but certainly deserve them), like the founder of #MeToo and "Silence Breaker" **Tarana Burke**, activist and Black Youth Project 100 Director **Charlene Carruthers**, NY Times bestselling author **Samantha Irby**, plus-sized blogging icon **Marie Leggette** a.k.a. The Curvy Fashionista, the godmother of brown girl blogging **Patrice Grell Yursik** a.k.a. Afrobella, founder of The Lingerie Addict and author **Cora Harrington**, art commissioner **Kilolo Lockett**, Afrofuturist artist **Krista Franklin**, burlesque superstar **Essence Revealed**, and many, many more.

I wish Brooke's series was named something else. I wish someone at CNN had done their research. I wish this wasn't such a prevalent narrative: Black creative gets co-opted by someone with more money, resources, privilege, and a far larger platform. Nevertheless, my AMERICAN WOMAN series is not going *anywhere*. There are dozens more portraits and video shorts forthcoming, a full-length documentary, and an art exhibition I hope to tour with in 2018. I'd love for you to follow along:

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Thank you for your support,

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