
Black Women And Feminism In White America

The way African Americans have been represented throughout history has affected the way black people are treated in the American society, their values, and their identities. Yes, black men were treated disgustingly and horrifically, but Black women have been the most overworked and unappreciated people and had to fight much, much harder than black men. Many of these women were brutally raped and were seen as property rather than human beings. They were not allowed to receive any sort of education due to fear of them escaping. "...sex and race are sued to ascribe to people a different rank, role and status, so long will they have a deferent historical experience from that of the dominant group".

As women in the United States started to excel, black women had to fight harder to get the same level of appreciation. Race was always seen first before anything else even for women. The primary motivation for establishing black women studies as well as the key obstacles to its establishment as an academic discipline was done by fighting for respect in academia, their rights as women, and overall equality. Black women have significantly progressed in academia over the years. During slavery, black slaves were not allowed to learn or teach education and if caught could be severely punished or killed. Black women in academia were not taken seriously or they were not acknowledged for their work even if it was astounding.

In the book by Lerner, *Black Women in White America*, black women's name and publications would be buried deep to ensure their work would never to be found. Their publications would be found in libraries, but would be very difficult to find. "The papers of outstanding figures such as Mary McLeod Bethune, Charlotte Hawkins Brown, and Nannie Burroughs are scattered in various libraries, have never been edited nor even partially published". Their published work was never read or even on the shelf due to the fact a black women had written them.

Black Women's Studies emerged because of the failure of Black Studies and Women's studies. Black feminism in particular, needs to be perceived as intersectional and not just one-dimensional. Black women had to prove their work much more in a white-male dominated field where they're continuously questioned for every detail. "No white historian can ever again approach his work without recognizing that there were black people in the American past whose contributions and whose viewpoint must be considered...there is a female aspect to all history, that women were there and that their special contributions to the buildings and shaping of society were different from those of men". It wasn't until black women like Lucy Terry Prince or Phyllis Wheatley, "the second woman to publish a book in America, in 1773" whose work showcased the brilliance of black women. The lack of Black studies was hard to teach. Nobody took the study seriously in academia. A white man would teach the course, which was

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problematic due to their lack of education upon this topic. Black women who were teaching this course had to be extremely courageous due it being a committed and passionate job. In the 1970's "the core of courses on Black women at colleges and universities has grown slowly but steadily". Even though black women studies was growing it was only until the 1970s where it was seen as an actual study. Facing the racism of white women and the sexism of black men, black women had to fight the fight on their own.

At the end of slavery and the civil war, many white women still had the racist mindset of not wanting to be inclusive with the black community. Women's rights were a huge conflict in the early 1900's. The women who were fighting for equal rights to vote would be seen as Feminist. Feminism advocates women to be seen as equals to everyone else. The only problem with this was that even though they called themselves "feminists" they were not fighting for all women, just the white women. In 1920, Congress passed the 19th Amendment granting American women the right to vote. This excluded black women from voting meaning they were the minority in the country when it came to voting, they were the only group not allowed the same rights as everyone else when it came to voting. It was until 1960 when black American women were granted the right to vote through the African-American women's suffrage movement.

Women in America were split up into groups due to their race that allowed white women to be more superior to black women regardless of their same biological makeup. Black women have consistently "had the lowest status in society- the economic and social-political status ranking order consisting of white men, white women, black men, black women". They were always the last ones to be considered because they were seen as caretakers, cooks, cleaners, or objects during slavery whereas a black man was considered to be better equipped based on their physical strength. Black women were also never represented in politics. In the article "History, Fictions, and Black Womanhood Bodies: Race and Gender in Twenty-First-Century Politics", feminist activist Gloria Steinem wrote an op-ed piece in The New York Times explaining women are never front-runners. She proposed a hypothetical woman named "Achola Obama" who runs against Hillary Clinton and explains that a female candidate is unable to reciprocate the ferocity of Barack Obama's speeches. She believed that Obama was able to compete with Hillary Clinton during the 2008 elections it would not be a woman of color in the running. "Steinem ignored the black women who, in 2008, were themselves commenting on the puzzle of race, gender, and politics."

Many black women were forced to become "mammies" to their white masters. Their jobs were to take care of their owners' family, cook, clean over their own families. Many of the black women were put into the Fancy Girl Market, which was a sexual slave market. During slavery, black women were not allowed to be educated and would have to succumb to their everyday life of obeying their masters. They formed their own black communities in the slave quarters where they taught their children, especially their daughters, how to behave and follow rules when it

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came to their white masters. Their sense of closeness and kinship helped strengthen their bonds due to the lack of opportunities they were allowed. Black women were also selfless when it came to protecting their own families by obeying their masters in hopes of their children not being sold. Their protection over their own families is ironic because they were trying to give their love and affection to the families they worked for in instead of their own families in order to keep them safe. In the end, black women triumphed over the many challenges in their lifetime. They excelled in academia, fought for their own rights, protected their families and created safe communities in order to survive in America. The recognition of women was unheard of due to the fact their work was never seen or appreciated. They worked from morning to night obeying their masters only to be met with cruelty. They had their lives taken away from them and had to fight harder than anybody else to get any respect or admiration. Being a feminist during this time was only showcased through white females, whereas black females were left to fend for themselves without any support. Their rights were not easily given and they had to work tirelessly in order to get anywhere.

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