

Stephanie Y. Evans, Andrea D. Domingue, and Tania D. Mitchell (editors)  
*Black Women and Social Justice Education: Legacies and Lessons*  
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Quote:

Taken together, the chapters in *Black Women and Social Justice Education: Legacies and Lessons* create a working syllabus through which to understand the social justice education work of Black women in the past and present, in the academy, and in the community, and from conceptual, theoretical, and practice-based orientations.

In a time in which discussions of social justice education, the status of Black women in the US, and activism are often reduced to a series of hashtags and video clips, Stephanie Evans, Andrea Domingue, and Tania Mitchell's *Black Women and Social Justice Education* provides a comprehensive exploration into the past, present, and future work of Black women educators involved in social justice education work in the classroom and the community. The stated goal of the book is to center the identities and experiences of Black women as a way to understand the social justice education work currently going on in the academy, and in doing so, to push back against the normative frames of whiteness and maleness that promote a particular understanding

of the ways in which society operates and is replicated within the higher education space. Simply put, "Studying Black women's writing expands our understanding of how to better comprehend identity, society, oppression, and equity, the four major themes in social justice education" (5).

This edited volume's selection of contributors and structure speaks to its commitment to situating the discussion of Black women's involvement in social justice education at the nexus of theory, practice, and praxis. While acknowledging the visionary and transformative foundation of Black feminist thought to which the works in this volume owe their lineage, this book offers a move away from the idea of Black women's consciousness (Collins 2000/2009), a central component of Black feminist thought, to instead explore how Black women operate using a liberatory consciousness (Freire 1973; hooks 1994). In the foreword to the volume, Barbara Love and Valerie Jiggetts describe liberatory consciousness as a mindset in which individuals "theorize about issues of equity and social justice, . . . analyze events and activities from an equity and social justice perspective, and . . . act in responsive ways to transform institutions and society to accomplish goals of fairness, justice, and equity" (xiv). In using the phenomenon of liberatory consciousness as a starting point, the contributors to this book illustrate how Black women enact a liberatory consciousness within the realm of social justice education.

One way to understand the organization of the chapters in the volume is to explore how they speak to the four different elements of a liberatory consciousness: awareness, analysis, action, and accountability/allyship (xiii). In addressing the first element of *awareness*, the chapter "When Intersections Collide: Young Black Women Combat Sexism, Racism, and Ageism in Higher Education" (Lewis-Flenaugh, Turnbow, and Myricks) serves as a review of the state of the field of higher education concerning the status and experiences of Black women

within the workplace. Drawing on various sources, the authors show how Black women are forced to navigate an unequal structure at the intersections of race, gender, and age. Similarly, Judith Alston's chapter, "Standing Outside of the Circle: The Politics of Identity and Leadership in the Life of a Black Lesbian Professor," contributes the added intersections of gender expression and sexual orientation as social categories that also contribute to the silencing and invisibility of Black women in the academy. Both of these chapters call for the inclusion of Black women in the workplace and the potential of intentional community-building among women of all experiences and social categories as a way to combat inequities within the workplace.

The liberatory consciousness element of *analysis* is a central theme in Bettina Love and Sarah Abdelaziz's "We Got a Lot to be Mad About: A Seat at Solange's Table." In this chapter, the authors use Solange Knowles's album, *A Seat at the Table*, as an example of how Black women engage in social justice education outside of the classroom, often through arts and music. As a part of their analysis, Love and Abdelaziz put Knowles's work in conversation with the works of other Black women artists such as Claudia Rankine and Beyoncé Knowles who, through their work, also engage in forms of social justice education. Robin Brooks's chapter "Black, Female, and Teaching Social Justice: Transformative Pedagogy for Challenging Times," illustrates the use of analysis in a slightly different manner in that her focus is an analysis of her own teaching practice and pedagogy in her undergraduate course on social justice issues through a social justice education framework. Through a presentation of resources and strategies, Brooks's chapter illustrates how social justice education takes shape both in theory and in practice.

The liberatory consciousness element of *action*, although woven throughout almost every chapter within the volume, is especially prominent in "Storytelling: Advising Black Women Student Leaders in White Spaces" (Washington). This chapter highlights how nurturing the leadership of Black women undergraduates, particularly those attending predominantly white institutions, is itself a form of social justice education. In particular, Washington shows how storytelling is a practice that can be incorporated when advising students to promote their leadership. Ashley Preston's chapter, "A Seat at the Table: Mary McLeod Bethune's Call for the Inclusion of Black Women during World War II," provides a historical account of Bethune's work through a lens of social justice education. Similarly, Katie McCabe and Stephanie Evans's chapter, "The Life of Dovey Johnson Roundtree (1914-2018): A Centenarian Lesson in Social Justice and Regenerative Power," profiles the work and career of a lifelong activist whose groundbreaking social justice work spans decades in its action and impact. Both of these works serve as a much-deserved homage to the long history of Black women's commitment to social justice education.

Lastly, the elements of *accountability* and *allyship* are forefront in the chapters "The Dialectic of Radical Black Feminism" (Taylor) and "For Black Women Who Educate for Social Justice and Put Their Time, Lives, and Spirits on the Line" (Williams). Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor's chapter uses the 2016 US presidential election and the white supremacist actions of the Trump administration to illustrate how the work of the Combahee River Collective, initiated forty-five years ago, is as relevant as ever. Their creation of the term *identity politics* and their development of radical Black feminist thought provided a new way to understand the intersection of politics, identity, and activism--a perspective that is not to be forgotten. Similarly,

in her multi-genre essay, Rhonda Williams reminds readers of our own accountability in continuing the social justice education movement. Williams uses the chapter to highlight the work of the Black women social justice educators who came before us and the legacy that we are expected to uphold as we move into the future.

Taken together, the chapters in *Black Women and Social Justice Education: Legacies and Lessons* create a working syllabus through which to understand the social justice education work of Black women in the past and present, in the academy, and in the community, and from conceptual, theoretical, and practice-based orientations. This volume serves as a much-needed primer for and contribution to the ongoing discussion of how we can continue to move toward social change and equity in our society through intentional and focused social justice education.

## References

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