

BOOK REVIEW

Vishwas Satgar and Ruth Ntlokotse, eds. *Emancipatory Feminism in the Time of Covid 19: Transformative Resistance and Social Production*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2023. 262 pp. Index. \$30.00. Paper. ISBN: 9781776148264.

Satgar and Ntlokotse's four-part volume *Emancipatory Feminism in the Time of Covid-19: Transformative Resistance and Social Production* presents a critical evaluation of the lived experiences of marginalized women in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. The introduction underscores the intersections of feminism and Marxism, advocating for a Marxist analysis that considers race, gender, and class as the center of analysis. Multiple chapters within the volume echo Satgar and Ntlokotse's perspective, providing in-depth analyses, critiques, and proposals for transformative emancipatory feminism in response to the crises of social reproduction.

This volume introduces the complex experiences of subaltern women within the sphere of social reproduction, emphasizing their persistent struggles against oppression and their pursuit of emancipatory feminist alternatives. The accounts highlighted in this volume resonate with African, Transnational, and Black feminist perspectives on the intersections of race, gender, and class in various global contexts. However, while acknowledging the text's contributions to feminist discourses, some African, Transnational, and Black feminists might critique its perceived oversight in providing a deeper historical contextualization of the intersections of gender, race, and class from these standpoints on women's oppression. A more comprehensive engagement with the global socio-economic, political, and cultural histories of Black women could enrich the analysis of these intersecting oppressions. Nevertheless, Satgar and Ntlokotse adeptly lay the groundwork for re-imagining emancipatory feminist alternatives distinguishing their approach from mainstream liberal feminism, thus marking the text as a significant contribution to feminist discourse.

The editors underscore a departure from adherence to liberal feminism, often perceived as advocating for the interests of privileged upper-middle-class and affluent women. Instead, multiple chapters within the book advocate for emancipatory feminism, which prioritizes the narratives of marginalized women, specifically those within the subaltern class. Some chapters explore the historical, socio-political, and environmental contexts, highlighting their interconnectedness with the experiences of subaltern women. Chapter One illuminates the different crises in the African continent and their intersection with colonial and patriarchal ideologies and their severe effects on working-class women's livelihood. Hargreaves situates this work within an ecological, feminist, socialist, and Pan-African epistemological lens and cites insights from the WoMin African

Alliance to highlight historical and present crises and potential ways to seek “living African alternatives” (24). In Chapter Three, Konik provides a compelling analysis of the framework of ecofeminism, contrasting it with liberal feminism. She expounds on the fact that ecological feminism stems from different epistemological grounds and has different goals from those of liberal feminism. Unlike liberal feminism, ecological feminism centers the experiences of subaltern women and challenges patriarchy and capitalism, an emancipatory potential that liberal feminism lacks (7). In Chapter Four, Skosana and Cock integrate the notion of solidarity, emphasizing that ideological divergences frequently impede its realization. Despite liberal feminism’s goal of facilitating equal participation of all women in economic systems, it often excludes working-class and marginalized women, thereby obstructing the formation of solidarity and empowerment of women at large. In this context, marginalized women do not self-identify as “feminists” or “activists” (87), but collectively work towards changes that benefit everyone. This mirrors Wawire’s formulation of solidarity through differentiation, wherein women demonstrate feminist solidarity through collective action, despite the multifaceted ideological and cultural obstacles (G.N. Wawire, “Discursive Scaling of Solidarity through Difference: Experiences of African Women in the African Diaspora,” *Language in Society*, 2024).

In other chapters, the authors explore the intricate dynamics of class, gender, and employment through rich ethnographic narratives. The authors’ use of ethnographic interviews and observations underscores the effectiveness of personal narratives in illuminating lived experiences to decolonize the entrenched systems of oppression. The women’s voices in the narrative have emancipatory power. Benya, in Chapter Six, examines the experiences of women employed in the mining industry, revealing how economic pressures and rising unemployment rates have driven many towards traditionally male-dominated sectors. Persistent economic disparities and adverse working conditions exacerbate women’s economic vulnerability, perpetuating cycles of poverty, hunger, and inequality (Chapter Five). Chapter Seven, authored by Mbithi-Dikgole, examines inequities in job opportunities and labor practices, highlighting how heightened unemployment rates disproportionately affect women. Consequently, marginalized women often bear the burden of societal crises such as the pandemic, hunger, and climate change, embodying what is termed the “crisis of social reproduction” (151). In Chapter Eight, Phalatse and Sibeko critique the government’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic, arguing that it exacerbated existing structural inequalities, particularly impacting women. Chapter Nine, by Bischoff, examines the hierarchical divisions within the nursing profession in South Africa, revealing deep-seated disparities rooted in class, gender, and racial stratifications. Black African women predominantly occupy roles marked by segregation, often laboring under strenuous conditions in racially segregated hospital settings. It is imperative to continue challenging systemic barriers and patriarchal norms while amplifying the leadership and voices of grassroots women on crucial issues such as employment and social justice. This ongoing effort is essential for fostering a more just and equitable society where all women can thrive.

This book presents an examination of the complex dynamics in which social reproduction, refusals, and resistances give rise to emancipatory alternatives, thereby facilitating new avenues for effecting social change. The volume comprises valuable chapters tailored for scholars in African, transnational, diaspora, and Black feminist studies, particularly those interested in exploring the experiences of Black women within the broader field of feminist studies. Additionally, the volume identifies significant gaps in feminist scholarship perpetuated by patriarchal and colonial influences, as well as structural and systemic oppressions. These issues underscore the ongoing necessity for works of this nature to address and disrupt the deep-rooted power structures, thereby advancing social justice for all women.

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