



Hood Feminism

Notes from the Women That a Movement Forgot

Mikki Kendall

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What is the point?

Black women may deal with different issues than white women deal with; but their real-world struggles are the struggles of real women. And all feminists must join up. The hood needs feminists and accomplices...

WHY IS THIS BOOK WORTH OUR TIME? – WHY THIS BOOK MATTERS!

#1 – This book is an eye-opening reality check about the lives of Black women; especially poor Black women.

#2 – This book helps all understand that the anger, and rage, are...justified. And understandable.

#3 – This book absolutely reveals that the struggle is not going to be over anytime soon.

QUOTES AND EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOK – THE “BEST OF” RANDY’S HIGHLIGHTED PASSAGES:

1. My grandmother would not have described herself as a feminist. Born in 1924, after white women won the right to vote, but raised in the height of Jim Crow America, she did not think of white women as allies or sisters. ...To her mind, all women had to work. ...Her answer to almost everything was “Go to school.” pg. x
2. Because so much of what feminists had to say of her time was laden with racist and classist assumptions about women like her, she focused on what she could control and was openly disdainful of a lot of feminist rhetoric. pg. x
3. She taught me that being able to survive, to take care of myself and those I loved, was arguably more important than being concerned with respectability. pg. x
4. **A better deal for white women could not be, would not be, the road to freedom for Black women. pg. xi**
5. Especially in households like mine, where parents and grandparents who had lived through Jim Crow, COINTELPRO, Reaganomics, and the “war on drugs” talked to their children early and often about how to stay out of trouble. pg. xi



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6. Being skeptical of those who promise they care but do nothing to help those who are marginalized is a life skill that can serve you well when your identity makes you a target. There's no magic shield in being middle class that can completely insulate you from the consequences of being in a body that's already been criminalized for existing. pg. xi
7. I like not living up to the expectations of people who don't like me. pg. xii
8. My feminism doesn't center on those who are comfortable with the status quo because ultimately that road can never lead to equity for girls like me. pg. xii
9. I am not ashamed of where I came from; the hood taught me that feminism isn't just academic theory. pg. xiii
10. Critiques of mainstream feminism tend to get more attention when they come from outside, but the reality is that the internal conflicts are how feminism grows and becomes more effective. pg. xiii
- 11. We all have to engage with the world as it is, not as we might wish it to be, and that makes the idealized feminism that focuses on the concerns of those with the most the province of the privileged. pg. xiv**
12. In fact, even the most "positive" tropes about women of color are harmful precisely because they dehumanize us and erase the damage that can be done to us by those who might mean well, but whose actions show that they don't actually respect us or our right to self-determine what happens on our behalf. pg. xiv
13. The feminism at the University of Chicago on offer to the low-income Black women living in the neighborhood might as well have been a scene from *The Help*. pg. xvi
14. By the time I reached a place to engage with feminism versus womanism—the former being paying more lip service than actual service to equality, the latter being closer but still not inclusive enough of people who were engaged in sex work, in vice, as a way to pay the bills and as a way of life—neither felt like they fit me or my goals completely. pg. xvii
15. **Feminism in the hood is for everyone, because everyone needs it. ...For example, when we talk about rape culture the focus is often on potential date rape of suburban teens, not the higher rates of sexual assault and abuse faced by Indigenous American and Alaskan women. pg. xviii**
16. Since its inception, mainstream feminism has been insisting that some women have to wait longer for equality, that once one group (usually white women) achieves equality then that opens the way for all other women. ...mainstream white feminism often fails to show up for women of color. pg. 2
- 17. While white feminism can lean in, can prioritize the CEO level at work, it fails to show up when Black women are not being hired because of their names or fired for hairstyles. pg. 2**
18. White feminism tends to forget that a movement that claims to be for all women has to engage with the obstacles women who are not white face. pg. 2
19. A one-size-fits-all approach to feminism is damaging, because it alienates the very people it is supposed to serve, without ever managing to support them. pg. 3

20. After all, for women who are struggling to keep themselves housed, fed, and clothed, it's not a question of working hard enough. They need feminism to recognize that everything that affects women is a feminist issue, whether it be food insecurity or access to transit, schools, or a living wage. pg. 3
- 21. Respectability narratives discourage us from addressing the needs of sex workers, incarcerated women, or anyone else who has had to face hard life choices. No woman has to be respectable to be valuable. pg. 3**
22. Affirmative action complaints (including those filed by white women) hinge on the idea that people of color are getting the most benefit when the reality is that white women benefit the most from affirmative action policies. The sad reality is that while white women are an oppressed group, they still wield more power than any other group of women—including the power to oppress both men and women of color. pg. 4
23. In general, white women are taught to think of whiteness as default, of race as something to ignore. pg. 5
24. When white feminism ignores history, ignores that the tears of white women have the power to get Black people killed while insisting that all women are on the same side, it doesn't solve anything. Look at Carolyn Bryant, who lied about Emmett Till whistling at her in 1955. pg. 6
25. When feminist rhetoric is rooted in biases like racism, ableism, transmisogyny, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia, it automatically works against marginalized women and against any concept of solidarity. pg. 7
26. Well, for starters, feminists of all backgrounds have to address would-be allies about the things that we want. And when we act as allies, feminists have to be willing to listen to and respect those we want to help. pg. 8
- 27. When building solidarity, there is no room for savior myths. pg. 8**
28. Although the hashtag #solidarityisforwhitewomen rose out of a particular problem within the online feminist community at that moment, it addresses the much larger problem of what it means to stand in solidarity as a movement meant to encompass all women when there is the distinct likelihood that some women are oppressing others. It's rhetorical shorthand for the reality that white women can oppress women of color, straight women can oppress lesbian women, cis women can oppress trans women, and so on. pg. 8
29. We are part of the society that we are fighting to change, and we cannot absolve ourselves of our role in it. pg. 9
- 30. The anger now bubbling up in hashtags, blog posts, and meetings is shorthand for women of color declaring to white women, "I'm not here to clean up your mess, carry your spear, hold your hand, or cheer you on while I suffer in silence. I'm not here to raise your children, assuage your guilt, build your platforms, or fight your battles. I'm here for my community because no one else will stand up for us but us." pg. 9**
31. Untold numbers of women of color were and are still fighting to get paid at all. pg. 10

32. Many white feminist pundits were shocked in 2016 when Trump was elected, and it became clear that despite his abominable record on women's issues, race, class, gender, and education, the majority of white women voters (some 53 percent) voted for a man who promised to mistreat them. pg. 12

33. Feminism that could ignore police brutality killing women of color, that could ignore the steady disenfranchisement and abuse in local and national politics of some women based on race and religion, wasn't about equality or equity for all women; it was about benefiting white women at the expense of all others. pg. 13

34. Violence is most likely to proliferate where there is no other recourse for solving disputes. pg. 18

35. What compounds the problem of violence in the hood is the long history of isolated Black communities in America not being able to trust law enforcement as, over time, they have proven themselves to be largely indifferent to violence against marginalized people. pg. 18

36. America's history has been defined by its violence... pg. 19

37. We've taken war weapons to the streets and homes of civilians with no idea what harm these weapons can do, or that escalation is never a solution. pg. 19

38. Hypervigilance and anxiety are part of how you stay alive in communities where gun violence is a constant, and it took a long time for me to recognize that these traits were my response to trauma. pg. 20

39. In 2016, the Violence Policy Center documented that Black women experience the highest rates of gun homicide out of any group of women, and much of that can be attributed to instances of intimate partner violence. pg. 21

40. Our two-year-old son saw all of it, and I will forever regret not getting out earlier; but I also know that my tenuous plans to get out hinged on getting into a place I could afford on my own, getting childcare, and crafting a life where no matter what he did or didn't do, I could make it. pg. 25

41. Was he angry enough to kill me if a gun had been available? Yes. pg. 26

42. Should socializing with my neighbors include the risk of death? pg. 27

43. I don't believe that a large group of Black bodies equals crime, but I know a lot of people trumpeting on and on about the joys of gentrification who do. pg. 27

44. When annoying a new neighbor carries the risk of being shot, the question isn't whether gun violence is a feminist issue; the question is why mainstream feminism isn't doing more to address the problem. pg. 28

45. We need to invest in becoming the kind of society where resolutions to disputes, safety concerns, and crimes aren't reliant on someone's access to a weapon. pg. 28

46. It's time to treat domestic violence and hate speech as the neon red flags that they are and take the necessary steps to reduce the risks instead of hoping that they'll go away. pg. 29

47. We will either work to make it possible for all of us to be safe from gun violence or none of us will be. pg. 29

48. No need to mention their needs, hopes, dreams, or concerns. They have none, even if they do occasionally speak of themselves as real people with feelings. ...Contrast them with women of other races, always making sure to highlight that other women are real women, while Black women are simply Black. pg. 87

49. In an era marked by rising inequality and declining economic mobility for Black Americans, the modern version of the politics of respectability works to accommodate misogynoir. Misogynoir is a term coined by queer Black feminist professor Moya Bailey to describe the specific misogyny directed toward Black women in American visual and popular culture because of their race and gender. pg. 88

50. We have tied concepts like "lift as we climb" (coined after the Civil War to describe the idea that successful Black people had a duty to help those behind them) so deeply to what we present to the outside world that we don't even realize that working to prove to white America that Black people are worthy of full citizenship is ultimately a losing proposition. Any system that ties our rights to getting the entire Black community to assimilate isn't interested in equality, much less equity. pg. 89

51. Sure, it makes us feel like we have slightly more control when we know the ultimate culprit is racism and the work of dismantling it can't be done by us. But when Black women internalize the standards set by racism and hold ourselves to oppressive standards, we create a self-replicating schism inside our own communities. pg. 90

52. We point to the suits and ties and dresses worn during the civil rights movement and ignore that the people in them were still beaten, still arrested, still lynched. pg. 91

53. We adore the idea of a fierce Black girl who fights back, but we penalize her as soon as she does it. pg. 91

54. If we're being honest, the people most addicted to maintaining the status quo are those who reap the greatest rewards. pg. 95

55. The hood is a reflection of the wider world. We don't have bigotry by accident; it's built and sustained by the same cultural institutions we're taught to revere. pg. 95

56. We need to let go of respectability politics and understand that whiteness as a construct will never approve of us, and that the approval of white supremacy is nothing that we or any community should be seeking. pg. 96

57. There's no doubt that the white supremacist patriarchy needs to be dismantled, but we can't pretend that classism inside the Black community isn't also a major problem. pg. 97

58. White savior narratives embedded in feminist rhetoric tend to position the people who don't get out as not being worth the effort of engagement, of needing to be led toward progressive ideologies instead of understanding

that the conversations that need to happen between the proverbial hood and the hills are ones between equals who have had to face different obstacles to arrive at the same destination. pg. 146

59. It's easy to think of arresting predators as a solution, yet laws that govern the state's response to violence are more likely to be used against victims than against villains. pg. 157

60. This is not an argument that white women don't care about others so much as it is that in many cases, they simply don't care enough. The problem is that while they can see the danger in voting in support of building walls, discriminating against Muslims, and candidates accused of sexual assault, as long as they don't feel directly threatened, they are less likely to confront or bring about any social consequences for the family members who do. They don't realize how much their decisions will harm others... ...for those who will definitely be negatively impacted by white supremacy, they can't afford to coddle the feelings of white women who are invested in not being held accountable. ...So white feminism is going to have to get comfortable with the idea that until they challenge their racist aunts, parents, cousins, and so on, it is definitely all white women who are responsible. pg. 172

61. I was poor in the wake of welfare reform, you see, and while there were programs to help, you could see already that welfare reform was more about punishing poverty than ending it. pg. 174

62. Feminism that encompasses all the issues that impact women, from poverty to criminal justice reform to living wages to better protections for immigrants to LGBTQIA issues, is feminism that ensures voting rights for all as a foundational issue. pg. 187

63. A lack of teacher diversity combined with unstable school systems, as well as charters that frame a military-or prison-style disciplinary system as the key to student success, can't help but jeopardize student achievement as well as safety. ...As a result, a marginalized student with limited emotional resources may find themselves feeling attacked from all sides. ...And of course, there's the fact that teachers can also be bullies and use their power over marginalized students in ways that may drive a student out of their classroom, if not out of school altogether. pg. 196

64. The most common form of racial discrimination in education is harassment of students of color by their white counterparts. pg. 198

65. But what gets obscured is that consistent access to quality health care is something everyone needs at every stage of their life. And that for many, when things go awry, the first step isn't a lawsuit; it is survival. pg. 219

66. There has to be a shift in how we approach health-care access. It has to be seen as a right, not as a commodity or an option. And health-care providers have to interrogate what biases they have brought into the ways they approach patient care. pg. 220

67. Persistent racist beliefs in medicine and otherwise are at the root of ongoing racial disparities in treatment and patient outcomes; this represents a challenge not only for twenty-first-century medical providers, but for those who fight for the access of marginalized communities to quality health care. pg. 221

68. Reproductive justice means not just fighting to defend Planned Parenthood or the Title X family planning program. It also means protecting nutrition programs such as the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). pg. 236

69. I never wanted my children to have to worry about drunk men, much less drunk men with guns. pg. 238

70. It is never the privileged outsider who gets to decide when they're a good ally. ...A common problem is that when allies are challenged, they often insist that there is no way they could be part of the problem. ...Identifying yourself as an ally is a convenient way to give yourself a pass for dismissing the words or experiences of people with less privilege and power than you. pg. 250

71. My rage is sometimes eloquent and often effective, and it occasionally feels eviscerating in its intensity. I believe in rage, believe in aiming it when I unleash it because I know it can be so powerful. pg. 253

72. We have to get past peak white feminism and into actual feminism. pg. 258

73. Being an accomplice means that white feminism will devote its platforms and resources to supporting those in marginalized communities doing feminist work. pg. 258

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THE MOST IMPORTANT QUOTES – (THE “THESIS” QUOTES).

- 1. But to paraphrase James Baldwin, to be aware of what is happening in this world is to be in an almost perpetual state of rage. Everyone should be angry about injustice, not just those experiencing it. And we can't afford to shy away from anger.**
2. *...what's left is the realization that they have wronged someone, that they have not been as good, as helpful, as generous as they needed to think they were all along. That's the point of this book. It's not going to be a comfortable read, but it is going to be an opportunity to learn for those who are willing to do the hard work.*
3. *What I do have is a deep desire to move the conversation about solidarity and the feminist movement in a direction that recognizes that an intersectional approach to feminism is key to improving relationships between communities of women, so that some measure of true solidarity can happen. Erasure is not equality, least of all in a movement that draws much of its strength from the claim that it represents over half of the world's population.*
4. *This book is about the health of the community as a whole, with a specific focus on supporting the most vulnerable members. It will focus largely on the experiences of the marginalized, and address the issues faced by most women, instead of the issues that only concern a few—as has been the common practice of feminists to date—because tackling those larger issues is key to equality for all women.*
5. *This tendency to assume that all women are experiencing the same struggles has led us to a place where reproductive health imagery centers on cisgender able-bodied women to the exclusion of those who are trans, intersex, or otherwise inhabiting bodies that don't fit the narrow idea that genitalia dictates gender.*
6. *Sometimes being a good ally is about opening the door for someone instead of insisting that your voice is the only one that matters.*
7. *Hunger is painful even in the short term. And yet we rarely speak of it as something for feminism to combat, much less as something that is uniquely devastating for women.*

8. *Mainstream feminism pays excellent lip service to the idea that poor women are supported, but in practice, it often fails to interrogate what constitutes support. Hood feminism as a concept is not only about the ways we challenge these narratives, it is about recognizing that the solutions to many problems—in this case hunger—can be messy and sometimes even illegal.*
9. *Poverty can mean turning to everything from sex work to selling drugs in order to survive, because you can't "lean in" when you can't earn a legal living wage and you still need to feed yourself and those who depend on you.*
10. *We could stop acting like food insecurity is a sin or a shame for any individual and treat it rightfully like an indictment of our society.*
11. *Statistically speaking, white men are most likely of all groups of men to commit sexual assault. But too often it is framed as though the attention of white men isn't dangerous for women who live outside that narrow range of protection white supremacist rhetoric affords some white women.*
12. *To quote Gwendolyn Brooks, "We are each other's harvest; we are each other's business; we are each other's magnitude and bond." But if we believe that only some people deserve safety, that the right to your own body has to be earned through adhering to arbitrary rules, then are we really seeing each other as equals? As human beings at all?*
13. *We have to ask why white undergrads said to researchers that they would be less likely to help Black women because they felt less personal responsibility for them. Or why they perceived Black victims as experiencing more pleasure in situations that they recognized as dangerous for white women.*
14. *True feminist solidarity across racial lines means being willing to protect each other, speaking up when the missing women are not from your community, and calling out the ways that predatory violence can span multiple communities.*
15. *When we frame the working class as only being white people in rural areas, when we talk about the economic anxieties of that group as justification for their votes in 2016 and 2017, we ignore the very real harm done not only to inner-city communities of color, but to all communities of color here and abroad.*
16. *It means understanding that housing is a crisis in urban, suburban, and rural areas and that the policies for one are not the policies for all. It means taking the approach that feminism can't afford to leave any woman behind—not cis, trans, disabled, poor, sex worker, you name it—and their housing has to be treated as a priority by every organization that advocates for the rights of women.*
17. *It means that feminist candidates for public office have to commit not just to doing the popular thing and supporting the middle class but also to rolling out measures to combat homelessness, from pledging to increase spending on low-cost housing to requiring developers to provide more than a token handful of units in luxury developments.*
18. *Mainstream white feminists will have to confront the racism of white women and the harm it does, without passing the buck to white men.*

19. *There's nothing feminist about having so many resources at your fingertips and choosing to be ignorant. Nothing empowering or enlightening in deciding that intent trumps impact. Especially when the consequences aren't going to be experienced by you, but will instead be experienced by someone from a marginalized community.*
20. *A hundred-plus years of history and day-to-day life teach marginalized women every day that making it easier for white women to become CEOs isn't the same as making life easier for all women.*
21. *We also need to stop normalizing hate and stop assuming hate speech is harmless, regardless of who it targets or who says it.*
22. *It's not a question of "Why can't they do what you did?" It's a question of "Why can't we give everyone else the same support and access?" That's the battle feminism should be fighting.*

23. *Feminism is the work that you do, and the people you do it for who matter more than anything else.*

24. *My feminism is rooted in an awareness of how race and gender and class all affect my ability to be educated, receive medical care, gain and keep employment, as well as how those things can sway authority figures in their treatment of me.*

25. *No problem like racism, misogynoir, or homophobia ever went away because everyone ignored it.*

SOME OF THE KEY CONTENT AND IDEAS FROM THE BOOK

- **About the author:**

- grew up poor, Black, under multiple “threats”
- Army veteran
- two college degrees; Masters in Writing and Publishing, DePaul University
- *The hood is my home, and always will be, but I am deeply aware of the way that my privilege in being able to code-switch and to see and mimic middle-class manners has given me access.*
- *This veneer of respectability that came from getting more education and being able to write professionally is nice. I like knowing that people will listen to what I have to say, but I’m always aware that people don’t usually listen to the Black girls like me, and that even now some will carve out a space for me that is separate from the other people like me.*
 - *I’m a feminist. Mostly. I’m an asshole. Mostly. ...the fact that I am not nice is often brought up. And it’s true: I’m not really a nice person. I am (at times) a kind person. But nice? Nope. ... But niceness is more than helping; it is stopping to listen, to connect, to be gentle with your words. ...I reserve nice for people who are nice to me or for those who I know need it because of their circumstances. ...But my lane is different. I’m the feminist people call when being sweet isn’t enough, when saying things kindly, repeatedly, is not working. I’m the feminist who walks into a meeting and says, “Hey, you’re fucking up and here’s how,” and nice feminists feign shock at my harsh words.*

- **{Let’s start with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs, and how white feminists and Black feminists might be at different places on the hierarchy...}**

- Self-actualization
- Self-esteem
- Love/Belonging
- Safety
- Physiological}
- *Instead of a framework that focuses on helping women get basic needs met, all too often the focus is not on survival but on increasing privilege. For a movement that is meant to represent all women, it often centers on those who already have most of their needs met.*
- *This book will explain how poor women struggling to put food on the table, people in inner cities fighting to keep schools open, and rural populations fighting for the most basic of choices about their bodies are feminist concerns...*
- ***While the problems facing marginalized women have only increased in intensity, somehow food insecurity, education, and health care—beyond the most basic of reproductive needs—are rarely touted as feminist issues. It is past time to make the conversation a nuanced, inclusive, and intersectional one that reflects the concerns of all women, not just a privileged few.***

- **The most vulnerable:**

- Black women
- Black LGBTQ people; especially women; especially trans women...
- *Trans women are often derided or erased, while prominent feminist voices parrot the words of conservative bigots, framing womanhood as biological and determined at birth instead of as a fluid and often arbitrary social construct. ...Trans women of color, who are among the most likely targets of violence, see statistics that reflect their reality co-opted to bolster the idea that all women are facing the same level of danger. ...support from mainstream white feminists for the issues that directly impact trans women has been at best minimal, and often nonexistent.*

- **Some of the “problems”**
 - food; physical safety; sexual safety; mental health safety; shelter; discrimination; bullying by white people; by teachers); police “brutality”
 - *Food insecurity and access to quality education, safe neighborhoods, a living wage, and medical care are all feminist issues.*
- **The angry Black woman; angry for legitimate reasons...**
- **Gun Violence:**
 - *many women, especially those from lower-income communities, face gun violence every day. The presence of a gun in a domestic violence situation makes it five times more likely that a woman will be killed. Women get killed by these guns because they are available, because their partners are violent, because an accident with a gun is more likely to be fatal, because of a dozen mundane reasons made worse by the availability of weapons.*
 - *Girls drop out of school at nearly the same rate as boys in an effort to avoid having to pass through places where shootings are common—that is, in an effort to survive.*
 - *A twelve-year-old girl was shot on her porch a few blocks from my house while I was writing this chapter.*
 - *It’s a public epidemic that we ignore. Every state, every city, and every income level has been impacted by gun violence.*
 - *Gun-related deaths are now the second-leading cause of death for American children, who are fourteen times more likely to be killed with guns before age fifteen than children in other high-income countries.*
- **Impossible demands...**
 - *Code-switching elders teach us to make calls with our best “white girl” voice, but for those who can’t manage to mimic that speech pattern, or who can’t maintain it, that accent means the loss of opportunities.*
 - *The emotional labor required to be respectable, to never ruffle anyone’s feathers, to not get angry enough to challenge much less confront those who might have harmed you, is incredibly onerous precisely because it is so dehumanizing.*
- **The intersectional approach to feminism:**
 - *Intersectionality isn’t a convenient buzzword that can be co-opted into erasing Professor Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, who coined the term to describe the way race and gender impact Black women in the justice system. An intersectional approach to feminism requires understanding that too often mainstream feminism ignores that Black women and other women of color are the proverbial canaries in the coal mine of hate.*
- **Be a feminist. And...Be an accomplice.**
 - *Being an accomplice means that white feminism will devote its platforms and resources to supporting those in marginalized communities doing feminist work.*

- **The book:**

- Introduction
- Solidarity Is Still for White Women
- Gun Violence
- Hunger
- Of #FastTailedGirls and Freedom
- It's Raining Patriarchy
- How to Write About Black Women
- Pretty for a . . .
- Black Girls Don't Have Eating Disorders
- The Fetishization of Fierce
- The Hood Doesn't Hate Smart People
- Missing and Murdered
- Fear and Feminism
- Race, Poverty, and Politics
- Education
- Housing
- Reproductive Justice, Eugenics, and Maternal Mortality
- Parenting While Marginalized
- Allies, Anger, and Accomplices

SOME LESSONS AND TAKEAWAYS

- #1 - Real world worries, about safety, and hunger, and poverty, are concerns for every feminist to adopt.
- #2 - Black women are the ones who should determine what Black women feminists should be concerned about and focused on. Only Black women!
- #3 - White supremacy and white nationalism are real, and dangerous, to Black people; especially Black women.
- #4 - Black women, at times, have to make "unacceptable" choices, out of necessity. Have more empathy, and a lot more understanding.
- #5 - A reminder: read more books that teach you in new ways, while taking you outside your comfort zone.