

Review of *HOOD Feminism: Notes from The Women That a Movement Forgot* by Mikki Kendall

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In *Hood Feminism*, Mikki Kendall critiques mainstream feminism arguing that the feminist movement does not focus on the basic needs of all women. Kendall defines feminism as “the work that you do, and the people you do it for who matter more than anything else” (Kendall, 2020, p.xiii). She focuses on the experiences of marginalized communities and the issues they face as the key to the equality of all women. In eighteen chapters Kendall engages with topics including gun violence, hunger, education, housing, colorism/racism, and reproductive justice. The text represents a critical, meaningful critique of mainstream feminism as a call to action for it to respond to all women’s needs.

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Hood Feminism by Mikki Kendall offers a critique of the feminist movement, broadly arguing that mainstream feminists do not focus on meeting basic needs as a feminist issue. “I do have 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” (Kendall, 2020, p. xvi). Scholars of feminist work collect ideas and assumptions and transform ideas about how the world sees and interacts with all women. One of the foundational texts for mainstream feminism (also referenced by Kendall as white feminism) Hughes (2002), examines feminist theory exploring the varied meanings of equality, difference, choice, care, time and experience. The issue with the Hughes (2002) text is that it fails to deconstruct the meaning of equality through the norms and power structures that currently exist to change the meaning of equality through the integration of difference. In this book *Hood Feminism*, Kendall advocates for equality, moving the conversation forward regarding solidarity and the feminist movement by highlighting an intersectional approach to feminism. The text offers a critical and meaningful critique of mainstream feminism or white feminism, which focuses only on issues concerning white women. In this review, I offer an overview of

the text’s key points followed by the implications of this book.

The book begins with the experiences Kendall had with her grandmother. Throughout the book, Kendall engages in discussions of various familial encounters to establish a foundation for how her experiences have shaped her beliefs surrounding feminism. Kendall describes her grandmother as a woman who always worked, had a belief in the importance of education, and instilled the importance of survival and taking care of those you love. Kendall highlights that her grandmother taught her to be critical of any ideology that claims to know what is best without considering the wants and needs of those who are represented. Kendall learned through her various familial experiences that the performance of being good, fitting in, or sticking to the status quo does not protect from sexism, racism, and other violence. Ultimately, performativity to fit in or to fit into the expectations of others became harmful to Kendall’s wellbeing. The purpose of this book was to showcase the meaning of feminism to encompass issues that impact all women from poverty to criminal justice, to living wages, protection for immigrants, LGBTQIA issues, and voting rights for all.

In the critique of mainstream feminism described by Kendall as white feminism, Kendall argues that solidarity is still for white women, asking other women to wait longer for equality, because white women need it (equality) more. However, solidarity only comes from a mutual relationship between equals. Mainstream feminism is instead marginalizing as its rhetoric is rooted in biases, such as racism, ableism, and transmisogyny. Women can help or harm under the guise of feminism.

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Therefore, mainstream feminism must confront the issues that impact marginalized communities which also impact all women. Following are the ways in which Kendall presents a pathway for mainstream feminism to confront issues facing marginalized communities.

First, the movement must address domestic violence, rape, and hate speech. This begins with doing the work to make everyone safe from gun violence. There is a disproportionate number of women of Color who are victims. Women, children, and LGBTQIA individuals are subject to high levels of gender-based violence. Also, abuse extends to disabled women and children who are vulnerable to violence from their caregivers. There are more and more murders and deaths among trans individuals and an epidemic of femicide (the murder of women) globally. "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. It's time to treat gun violence like a feminist issue- not just when it plays out in domestic violence or mass shooting but also when it impacts marginalized communities. We will either work to make it possible for all of us to be safe from gun violence or none of us will be" (Kendall, 2020, p. 29).

Secondly, Kendall addresses the crises of hunger and housing. Food insecurity is viewed as a shame or sin for those who experience it, instead of an indictment of our society. "Food is a human right" (Kendall, 2020, p. 45). Access to nutritional food is important for all. Just as food is a basic need, so is the right to fair and affordable housing. As feminism advocates for abortion rights and equal pay, access to food, low -cost housing and rent control are equally important.

Third, there must be acknowledgement of colorism/racism and reproductive justice. Colorism is a global issue with roots in slavery and colonialism. Colorism is a cultural institution that offers positions of privilege for those with lighter skin (Kendall, 2020). Colorism and racism use skin color as a criterion for determining how a human being will be treated. Women of Color are subject to differential treatment based on their skin color and are also impacted by the myths that surround their strength, specifically Black women. Skin color and these harmful myths impact the inequitable healthcare for communities of Color. "That old rhyme about whose skin color was acceptable still applies: If you're black, stay back; If you're brown, stick around; If you're yellow, you're mellow; If you're white, you're all right." (Kendall, 2020, p. 106). Inequitable healthcare leads to reproductive injustice. Re-

productive justice encompasses, woman's right and access to affordable birth control, healthcare, and other resources for women's health. Reproductive justice is also connected to the needs of trans, nonbinary, and intersex individuals in a world that only caters to the needs of cis-middle class white women (Kendall, 2020). This justice is about agency and autonomy and should open opportunities for non- traditional families such as individuals with disabilities and LGBTQIA individuals to have and create families without discrimination and challenging barriers. "In order to adequately address the needs of the girls and women who deal with the consequences of what amounts to a full- scale public health crisis every day, mainstream feminism has to be listening, advocating, and providing resources" (Kendall, 2020, p. 16).

Finally, education should be a feminist issue. "It's not enough for feminism to advocate for educational access; it must also push to make education valuable for all" (Kendall, 2020, p. 203). Resources and treatment of students are not equal across our educational systems. Discrimination of students of Color manifests in classroom expectations and disciplinary actions. Black students for example are suspended and expelled at 3 times the rate of their white counterparts (Kendall, 2020). There are also disproportionate consequences for students with disabilities. There is inadequate teacher and adult support within the school particularly for students of Color. There is also an issue with schools that are underfunded, understaffed, and lack needed resources particularly in marginalized communities.

In reviewing this text, I see the stark criticism of mainstream feminism and the call to action for feminism to address issues faced by all women. The implications of this text are clear. I see the implications for this book as a call for feminists to reexamine their purpose and impact related to erasure, privilege, and equality. Social constructs contribute to the erasure of the issues and needs of women of Color, persons with disabilities, LGBTQIA individuals, or any group seen as 'other'. The needs of these individuals are overshadowed by the needs of a cis patriarchal hetero capitalist society. Mainstream feminism must engage in the work of private and public policy on all forms of violence for all groups, create opportunity for access to adequate quality and quantity of food, and embrace all women limiting the impacts of respectability politics, which is the "attempt of marginalized groups to internally police its members to keep them in accordance with dominant cultural norms" (Kendall, 2020, p. 3). Mainstream feminism must acknowledge that privilege comes in the

form of race, class, and patriarchy and do what must be done to reduce the increase of privilege and decrease the impacts of oppression. Feminism has the means to empower and uplift all women. Finally, as Kendall says, “equity is good, but equality is better” (Kendall, 2020, p.133-134). The movement has the means to take on marginalized communities that affect all women, not just women of Color. The movement must engage with education, violence, hunger, housing, reproductive justice, colorism/racism, and others.

Overall, this book serves as a critique and a call to the feminist movement to live up to its claim as a movement for all women. The book engages with the erasure of issues that impact marginalized communities, privilege, equity and equality, and ultimately social justice.

This book is an important read for anyone who wants to understand better how to create a socially just world for all. This book is the first step for anyone who calls themselves a true feminist, a supporter of the feminist movement or an ally to those humans who are seen as other.

References

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