

BOOK REVIEW/ COMPTE RENDU

Kendall, Mikki. *Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women That a Movement Forgot.* New York: Penguin Books, 2020, pp. 258, \$22.00, paper (9780525560562)

Since its inception, the feminist movement has greatly evolved in the scope of issues it addresses. Today, conversations about challenging wage-gap inequalities and advancing female representation in executive positions are at the forefront of the mainstream movement. However, in terms of benefitting all women equally, the feminist movement still has a long way to go. While the scope of issues addressed by the movement has changed over time, the focal point has not. Dominated by white feminism, the contemporary movement is not much different from its historical embodiments, where the needs and perspectives of white women are prioritized, and often at the expense of other marginalized groups. The title of Mikki Kendall's 2020 book *Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women that a Movement Forgot*, embodies this sentiment.

Hood Feminism offers a critique of how the movement operates in America today. The book argues that mainstream feminism is falling short in the scope of people it includes, and in the breadth of issues it covers. Because mainstream feminism centers itself largely on the needs of white women, the movement fails to address how patriarchal forces condition the lives of a wide range of marginalized women. For example, conversations at the forefront of the contemporary movement center issues such as wage-gap inequality and body hair. While these remain important issues for the feminist agenda, Kendall highlights that these conversations are occurring without regard for the women who have yet to secure basic elements of survival, such as access to stable housing and food. Kendall dedicates each of the 18 chapters to a specific issue where feminism is currently failing. Some chapters focus on the shortcomings of contemporary feminism's impact on specific issues, by dissecting the discourse to identify who is being left out of the conversation. For example, in the chapter "Black Girls Don't Have Eating Disorders," Kendall delineates how eating disorders experienced by those in marginalized communities, such as Black girls, trans and non-binary folks, and people with disabilities, are often rooted in structural factors that negatively impact identity and self-worth. Thus, while body-positive feminism has been present in the mainstream conversation, the impact of these structural forces is overlooked because

it centers on the experiences of white women. The narrow focus of the mainstream movement's discourse thus leaves many issues unaddressed by feminism, such as how racism and colourism shape eating disorders within the Black community. Other chapters, such as "Housing," identify areas that are currently outside the purview of the mainstream movement, building an argument for why the issue should be regarded as a feminist concern. With each chapter concluding with a discussion of how the movement can better address the matters outlined, this book is essentially a call to action.

Through an intersectional lens, Kendall reflexively situates herself in the writing, enhancing the piece with accounts of her own experience as a Black woman in America. With this, Kendall illuminates the nuanced ways that feminism is differently understood and embraced within her community. Kendall engages with Black feminist thought, which she characterizes as being rooted in an understanding of how white supremacy is linked to patriarchal ideals. Through this lens, she illuminates many cases where the mainstream feminist movement works to uphold white supremacy and to reinforce the privilege that white women have over their racialized female and male counterparts. Throughout the book, Kendall challenges the narrow boundaries of white mainstream feminism and pays homage to the many Black women before her who championed victories for women's equality, but who are largely forgotten by history.

In the introductory chapter, Kendall explains how feminism has always existed in her community, albeit differently than how it is understood by white women. She tells the story of her grandmother, who despite being a feminist role model for Kendall, would have never identified with a feminist label. This is because as a Black woman who grew up in the Jim Crow era, the feminist movement was not one that included her. In the ensuing discussion, Kendall provides an in-depth analysis of how and why feminism operates differently in the Black community, and other communities of color. For example, Kendall reflects on how the stringent gender roles that she faced as a little girl and the toxic masculinity that is seemingly present in gang culture have shaped her own interpretation of feminism. Within the mainstream movement however, white feminists have leveraged these experiences and community dynamics against Black women to question the authenticity and integrity of the Black feminist agenda. It is this failure of the mainstream movement to understand the complexities that race, class, and history have on marginalized communities that work to exclude women of colour in particular, from the feminist movement.

Kendall addresses these biases by highlighting the pervasive impact of white supremacy on communities of colour. For example, rigid gender roles are embedded in the conservative values that many marginalized

residents historically embraced in hopes of providing their children with better opportunities. Similarly, toxic masculinity has been shaped by the war on drugs and ensuing mass incarceration. Cultivated by what she refers to as a “twisted method of self-defence” (2020: 80), Kendall explains that Black men resort to this bravado in their communities to insulate them from the harms in the broader world. This explanation does not, however, excuse the reproduction of toxic culture derived from white supremacy in smaller communities like her own. Although these issues are likewise present in communities with higher socioeconomic standing, Kendall contends that they have a unique dynamic in communities of color, and thus must be solved internally. Kendall maintains that patriarchal structures can be dismantled and replaced only through a comprehensive understanding of the patriarchy, which acknowledges the history, violence, and trauma that marginalized girls and women face. This theme of change from within is woven throughout the book. In many chapters, Kendall emphasises the importance of treating those currently left out of the movement as self-determining agents. She also highlights that these individuals must be at the forefront of conversations about how issues concerning their communities are to be addressed. Here, Kendall draws a boundary for these communities. She clarifies that white feminists have no place addressing any issues on behalf of communities to which they do not belong unless specifically invited. In chapters concerning other shortcomings of the movement, Kendall pinpoints where white feminists need to step up and use their privilege to advocate for all women and reduce the harm done to others.

A core strength of this book is the positionality that Kendall offers and how the discussions extend beyond her own racial and middle-class locations to highlight how the movement leaves out a myriad of identities. In each chapter, Kendall discusses how the focal issue differently impacts other communities of color, the disabled community, LGBTQIA individuals, and a long list of others who are ignored by white mainstream feminism. She often approaches these issues intersectionally, considering how individuals marginalized by multiple identities are presented with unique challenges at their intersection. At the same time, Kendall never claims to understand nor know how to best solve the problems experienced by groups that are different from her own. She highlights the importance of this approach within discussions across various chapters that clarify how the White saviour mentality of many proponents in the mainstream movement rarely helps resolve any issues and, in many cases, ends up further marginalizing the very groups that white women are claiming to protect.

Kendall explains how accusations of being divisive have followed those who criticized the movement for leaving out certain groups. However, Kendall rejects this, because the alternative of doing nothing means

accepting that feminism can operate in ways that are antithetical to its supposed goals of equality for all. With Kendall citing examples of how mainstream feminism has been co-opted by white conservative women in politics to push anti-choice legislation, or by white female voters to defend electing President Donald Trump, the pitfalls of this movement as it stands today could not be clearer. *Hood Feminism* is written in the American context, but the structural forces driving the issues discussed are similarly present in Canada. Therefore, Kendall's advice and actionable steps are equally applicable to Canadian readers. With the breadth of topics covered and identities included, scholars at both the undergraduate and graduate level studying inequalities and intersectionality may be especially interested in *Hood Feminism*. The blend of personal experience and theory in Kendall's writing bridges the gap between the shortcomings of the movement and how it can improve. She offers a clear directive on how conversations can be constructed to push the movement forward. Because of this, *Hood Feminism* is also useful for organizational leaders seeking to inform their workplace policies with diverse perspectives. Whether it is a call to action to do work in your community (or stay out of the work being done in other communities), how to include diverse voices, how to lend your privilege to the benefit of others, or how to act in solidarity for other women, Kendall offers advice and clear, actionable steps for readers looking to make the feminist movement more inclusive.

For readers in the academy and business world alike, *Hood Feminism* is for those looking to have their own diverse experiences discussed and recognized in feminist discourse, and for white readers seeking to confront their privilege and to learn how to perform better allyship. This book is a refreshing take that identifies the limitations of the feminist movement without diminishing the various ways women in marginalized communities embrace feminist thought and use it as a tool for self-determination. With a piece for all identities, *Hood Feminism* highlights the work that must be done in solidarity by all feminists to make the movement one that reflects diverse backgrounds and that works to the benefit of all.

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