



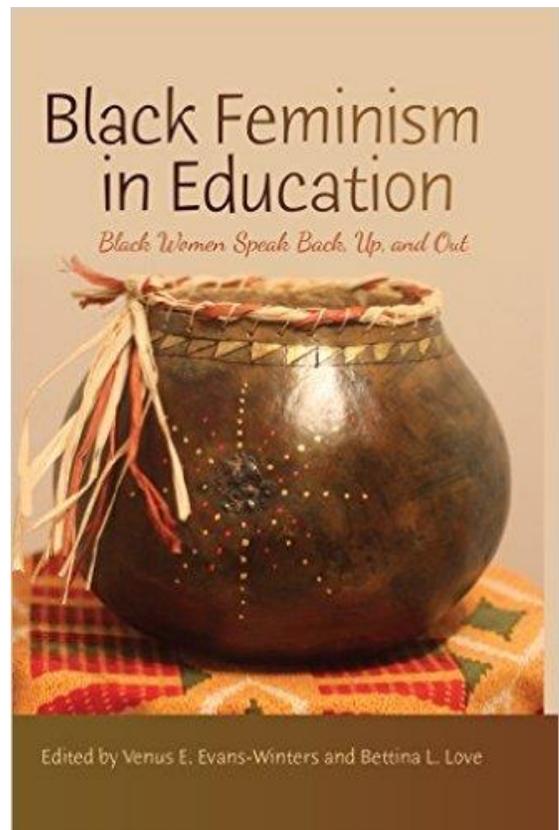
Evans-Winters, V. E., & Love, B. L. (Eds.). (2015). *Black Feminism in Education: Black Women Speak Back, Up, and Out*. New York: Peter Lang.

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In *Black Feminism in Education: Black Women Speak Back, Up, and Out*, co-editors Venus E. Evans-Winters and Bettina L. Love explore the impact of race, gender, and culture on education through the lens of Black feminist theory (BFT). BFT specifically addresses the overlapping, or intersectionality, of race, gender, and culture in context of social oppression and privilege. Evans-Winters and Love, Associate Professors of Education at Illinois State University and the University of Georgia, respectively, assemble chapters from the perspective of Black women educators, using an *endarkened feminist epistemology* (EFE) framework “to construct stories on educational transformation as raced, gendered, and culturally embodied work” (p. 1). Based upon the work of Cynthia Dillid, EFE refers to a way of knowing that is unique to the social position of Black women. The book chapters focus on a central idea of Black feminist thought in context of higher education and scholarship to marshal new methodologies, frameworks, and pedagogies



(p. 5). In this unique collection of narratives, the contributors explore and analyze the dimensions of Black female presence in academia and the distinct challenges faced by Black female students and educators, specifically highlighting themes of spirituality, identity, resilience, vulnerability, and human-kindness.

The book is divided into three sections: (1) Black Feminism and Intellectual Spiritual Pursuits, (2) Black Feminism in Educational Research, and (3) Responsibility for Who and What is a Black Feminist Educator? Section one expounds upon the theme of Black feminism and spirituality and explores “the ways in which researchers, teachers, and students make sense of, and explore their identities as “other” in a context that privileges whiteness, maleness, and Eurocentric ways of knowing and being” (Evans-Winters and Love, 2015, p. 5). For example, in chapter two, Muhammad, Tyler, Jones-Parks, and Chatman share personal narratives as Black female professors, the unexpected challenges they faced, and the spiritual resilience required to overcome oppressive obstacles. All the narrators expressed sentiments of “painful perseverance” as they reflected on their careers in higher education (p. 28) and highlighted feelings of marginalization and stereotyping in the workplace. Co-author Chatman describes how she was demeaned for her “fashionista style of dressing,” and ignored her colleagues’ comments in an effort to avoid being “labeled ‘Sapphire,’ the angry, loud-talking and emasculating Black woman” (p. 29). Although the acculturation of Blacks in America occasionally demands a silencing of self in order to avoid being labeled an unfit member of society, in this instance, Chatham attempted to be non-confrontational while also on the receiving end of racial stereotyping. This narrative in particular allows the reader to connect with everyday experiences and practices of oppression that are commonly dismissed and undervalued and

underscores the institutional biases and hidden-normative cultures in higher education.

Other chapters highlight the perspectives of Black female educators’ intersectionalities by explicitly relating to the numerical limitations of this population in the academy. Co-authors Russel, Hobson, Taliaferro-Baszile, and Wingfield explored different elements of self-development that illustrate the unconventional ways Black females engage in identity and cultural preservation. For example, the authors argue that women and racial minorities in education are less likely to be encouraged to enter science, technology, engineering, and mathematic intensive fields in both K-12 and higher education. Russel et al, explain that this traditionally results in Black women being among the least represented in more lucrative professions. A lack of racial representation in a particular professional field often deters individuals’ interest; Bryan and Ford referred to these students and professionals as the “numerical minority” and shared that these individuals often reported feeling “marginalized, alienated, and rejected” while in these settings (Bryan & Ford, 2014, p. 158). According to the authors, in order to combat the oppression accompanied by the Black race and female gender, Black women must acknowledge and accept the validity of their unique lived experiences in order to better advocate for racial and gender inclusion in academe.

Section two illuminates how the contested site of educational research serves as both “an opportunity for refuge and an act of service for Black women” (p. 5) and serves to validate the need of representation and exploration of the interactions of Black females in educational settings. Chapters by Roberta P. Gardner and Evan-Winters examine and support other ways of validating knowledge through the exploration of individual lived experiences. Their narratives used qualitative research paradigms to analyze

the impact of race, gender, and culture on identity development. In the context of remembering and the traumatic memory, or “speaking wounds,” of deep emotional, physical, spiritual, and ethical exploitation resulting from her intersectionalities Gardner centralizes her argument of validity on the idea of connectedness, understanding, and spiritual identity (p. 122). Within these principles, each individual’s life and perspective is valid and necessary for both the individual’s wellbeing and the wellbeing of the whole, through the provision of diverse opinions. Evan-Winters’s chapter followed a research theme, offering an in-depth examination of the theoretical composition of EFE. Emphasizing to the accessibility of EFE theory to diverse audiences, she argues for a collective investment in this theory in the overall fight against perpetuating White supremacy and male domination in society.

Throughout the book, contributions suggest that identity validation and identity preservation are a collective and shared responsibility requiring everyone to address their own self-consciousness. For example, a Black woman’s social identity must be acknowledged holistically by the Black woman *herself* as well as acknowledged, recognized, and potentially understood by other members of society; this validates and preserves the uniqueness of the Black women’s position in society. This theme is especially evident in the final section, which stresses how a Black woman scholar is a rarity, and as such, is in a position of great influence.

The foundational works of women scholars who came before undoubtedly inform and influence current scholars. A handful of these scholars include members of the second Black feminist wave in the 1960s: Barbara Smith, Alice Walker, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, and Angela Davis. These women activists coupled the objectives of the Civil Rights Movement with the specific oppressions faced by Black women during those years. In the following

decades, the Black feminist movement was extended by other scholars such as Audre Lorde (*Sister Outsider*, 1984), bell hooks (*Teaching to Transgress*, 1994) and Patricia Hill-Collins (*Just Another American Story*, 2012): These women’s works are associated with the current third-wave of feminism; one that works toward the validation of Black female success and education in modern America. *Black Feminism in Education* expands on this scholarly tradition, and its contributors inherently acknowledge Black women’s progression into higher education while also recognizing and furthering the agenda of racial and gender equity. This final section presents a call to action: Black women in the academy have a responsibility to speak to both their inclusion and exclusion in academe, as well as, transform education and social systems to reflect more egalitarianism.

Lastly, spirituality grounded in Christian biblical principles is a central theme throughout this volume, particularly in section three. Several authors reference their relationship with God as a personal and validating experience and suggest that spirituality had an overall positive impact on their successes and the growth of the Black community. African and African American historical perspectives sometimes reference Christianity as a conflicting force that accompanied slavery and racial oppression and, either intentionally or unintentionally, dismisses Christianity’s moral, ethical, and spiritual impact on Black individuals, families, and communities. In contrast, chapters “Can I get a witness?” and “Walking in the Spirit,” discuss trauma, marginalization, and collective fragmentation at the cultural, spiritual, and physical levels, as authors relate their resilience during adversity to their strong spiritual connections.

This book would appeal to Black females, students and teachers, working in academia as well as other educators, researchers, and readers seeking a greater

understanding of the Black female experience in education and society. The book provides a significant analysis of the unique experiences of educated Black women attempting to navigate a White-male privileged academic setting while maintaining personal integrity. While strong and well composed as a text on Black feminist epistemology in higher education, this volumen lacks K12 student and teacher perspectives and potential solutions to systemic issues in the U.S. context (i.e., racial profiling and stereotyping, deficit ideologies, and chronic education and economic disparities). Nevertheless, the narrative-style chapters effectively and creatively reiterate themes of otherness, togetherness, domination, resilience, knowledge and validity

making the central purpose evident throughout the reading. The research narratives use accessible and impactful language. The presence of religious references works well to accurately express the sentiments of the authors. For Black women in academe and Black students in education, the text supports the validity of Black women's unique lived experiences. By offering a unique perspective to teaching and learning based on *endarkened feminist epistemology* (EFE), *Black Feminism in Education* has the potential to help close knowledge gaps, increase social tolerance among individuals, and provide important lessons on inclusive and equitable education for all.

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## About the Reviewer

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