
Sisters and Sistahs

Millersville University

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Dr. M. Cookie Newsom
newsom@email.unc.edu

A brief history of a tale of conflict and competition

- Black women arrived in America in 1619.
 - At the beginning black women and white women had similar realities.
 - Towards the end of the 17th century laws began to be developed that made the situation for black women quite different from that of white women.
 - Transitioning not only black women, but their offspring, to the status of slaves for life.
 - Things have not been the same between white women and black women since.
 - In many ways black women and white women have occupied the same country, but different worlds.

History and Contemporary Reality

- “Understanding why the experiences of African American women are different from those of other women and those of African American men is steeped in the historical progression and ideology of black people in the United States”... p. 19 , Hamilton, (2003).
- “There are many differences, both historically and in contemporary times, between the ways black and white women experience sexism in this country.” p.795, Simien and Clawson (2004)

The Intersection of Race and Gender

- This is at the crux of one of the main difficulties that impede cross racial relationships and friendships between white women and black women
- Many white women do not consider themselves white women, they consider themselves women, their gender trumps their race.
- Black women almost always consider gender **and** race.

The “Dual Oppression” Theory

- Tends to minimize the impact that race and racism have on black women
- Is often framed as “Yes racism is bad too, but let’s all work on sexism and get to that later.”
- Another manifestation of this is “ We are all women, we all have the same problems, we can work together on those and ignore race.”
- The fascinating tendency by some white women to blame white **men** for all oppression, including both sexism and racism.
- Engaging in one-upmanship oppression. “Sexism is more prevalent/worse than racism”

The Democratic Primary as magnifying lens

- Viewed by some women as evidence that sexism is, indeed, more prevalent and toxic than racism. But, is it?
- Questions about who women of color would vote for: A man of color or a white woman?
- Mainstream Media and quotes about “women” being upset that Obama had defeated Hillary. (“Women” and “white women” being used interchangeably. What does that make women of color?)
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So what can we do to make it better?

- Talk about it honestly, with each other and in writing.
- Understand that just because we do not have the same realities we can still find common ground for dealing with things like equity in wages, opposing sexual violence, promoting women's rights for all women, appropriate and affordable daycare.
- Remind yourself and others that despite the differences we still have more in common in many ways.