

September 2021

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Recommended Citation

Humin, Taylor (2021) "Beck, Koa. White Feminism: From the Suffragettes to the Influencers and Who They Leave Behind," *Feminist Pedagogy*. Vol. 1 : Iss. 1 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/feministpedagogy/vol1/iss1/8>

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White Feminism: From the Suffragettes to the Influencers and Who They Leave Behind by Koa Beck

Atria Books, 2021. 320 pp. \$27.00 hardcover. ISBN-13: 9781982134419.

So-named both because of its universalizing of the white female experience and its ultimate underpinnings of white supremacist ideology, white feminism has become a contemporary catch-all term for a feminist politics that is ineffective at best and harmful at worst. In *White Feminism*, Koa Beck historicizes and analyzes this strain of feminism which has dominated the gender equality movement since the onset of the Women's Suffrage effort in the United States. From her career as a writer and editor, largely spent at women's media outlets like *Jezebel*, *Vogue*, and *Marie Claire*, Beck's writing has the familiar style of women's journalism, which blends research and reporting with personal anecdotes and observations. Beck's lived experience as a self-identified queer woman of color and her personal and professional experiences, attending a private women's college and working the gender beat as a journalist, help shape her analysis. This carryover in tone creates a highly readable text, primed for the general reader who may be more familiar with the style of articles from *The Cut* or *The Guardian* than anthologies of feminist theory or journals of gender studies, which makes this ideal for an undergraduate audience.

The book is divided into three sub-sections. The first, "The History of White Feminism," aims to show the evolution of the ideology. Beck discusses the historic actions of multiply marginalized women in this section, such as Pan-Hispanic political organizers countering U.S. economic policies, Jewish housewives orchestrating a meat boycott, and transwomen leading queer protests in the build up to and wake of the Stonewall riots. But the popular face of feminism circles back to a decidedly white feminist face: the economically-sound, well-educated, professionalized woman; the suffragette of the early twentieth century, the mid-century feminist public figure, the contemporary She-EO.

Part Two, "White Feminism™: When the Movement Went Corporate," focuses on contemporary white feminism as both a brand and a professional lifestyle. Beck analyzes Lean In culture and the hustle porn, #GIRLBOSS mentality that renders every professionally successful woman—from award-winning actress Rachel Brosnahan, to ousted Thinx CEO Miki Agrawal, to Elizabeth Holmes, founder of the debunked and defunct Theranos—an instant feminist icon. By highlighting how corporate white feminism is ultimately a tool for maintaining the capitalist (and subsequently misogynistic and white supremacist) status quo, Beck also reveals who is left in the shadows: women of color, queer women, and other further marginalized women who continue to be the groups most affected by issues like job insecurity, workplace harassment, poverty, and hunger.

In the final section, "The Winds of Change," Beck explores how white feminism is beginning to be questioned and supplanted as the dominant strain of the feminist movement. She looks to women who have tried their hands at white feminism, such as so-called diversity hires who have been swiftly ousted for trying to make change or working mothers who have found little institutional support to help them actually "have it all." Beck's examples remind the reader that a feminism which helps individual women find their way into still male-dominated positions will not be the political movement that secures safety, sustenance, and security for women as a universally marginalized class. Part three does not abandon the professional sphere, but instead champions the application of a collective-minded feminist praxis in the workforce, in political activism, and in women's personal lives.

The text is meticulously researched and supported, a credit to Beck as well as her research assistant Priyanka Kaura and fact checker Laura Bullard. The diversity of references is one of the text's major strengths. At times, Beck draws from traditional academic and theoretical texts but most often turns to digital sources which are readily accessible to the public. One can easily imagine Beck's endnotes replaced with the embedded hyperlinks typical of online publications. *White Feminism* is very much entrenched in the *now* of fractured feminism, popular culture, and the contemporary media landscape. Betty Friedan, Susan B. Anthony, and Harriet Tubman appear in the same index as Simone Biles, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Kendall Jenner.

A hallmark of Beck's writing is her ability to make connections across time. She shows how material conditions for women have not changed as much as would be hoped, as readers can see the parallels between the experience of female factory workers in the time of the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire and conditions under which majority-female essential workers are laboring during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. She details early twentieth-century department store window displays selling suffragette fashions which prove a precursor to Etsy shops schilling feminist-branded merchandise today. And as these conditions persevere, so too do the failings of white feminism and the challenges imposed by its hegemonic ideological roadblocks: Alice Paul's segregation of the 1913 Washington Woman Suffrage Procession finds a contemporary parallel in white women pulling out of the 2017 Women's March after being admonished by Black feminists for the singularity of their activism. The conversation shifts from pamphlets to Facebook posts, but the debates remain the same.

Beck's message is ultimately one which prioritizes intersectional approaches and collective-minded action. While the final section provides Beck's own suggestions for a browner, queerer feminism, the book presents conflicts without easy answers. This text would be an appropriate starting point for students in entry-level courses in Gender, Sexuality, Women's, and/or Feminist Studies, prompting nuanced debates about both historical and modern topics. The book is at its best when Beck is critiquing the capitalistic nature of white feminism, and so would be good reading for college students likely preparing for eventual professional careers. *White Feminism* gives readers the opportunity to take stock of contemporary feminism and analyze their position within it, thus making it a particularly useful tool for students, equal parts challenging and inspiring.