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## Kendall, Mikki. Hood Feminism: Notes from the women that a movement forgot.

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Kendall, Mikki. *Hood Feminism: Notes from the women white feminists forgot*. Penguin Books, 2020. 287 pp. \$26.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780525560548

In *Hood Feminism: notes from the women white feminists forgot*, Mikki Kendall offers a sharp, urgent critique of mainstream feminism from within. In doing so, Kendall advocates an intersectional approach to mend and nurture relationships between communities of women. By weaving personal narrative with insightful critical analysis, *Hood Feminism* reads as both memoir and manifesto, a necessary call to action to show up for marginalized women. We can achieve this, Kendall argues, by focusing on broader issues that most women are faced with, instead of concentrating on issues that only bother those already holding privilege. Kendall focuses on a range of topics from gun violence to housing to highlight how mainstream feminism ignores the fact that marginalized women experience life at the intersection of class and race, and not just as women. Moving forward, feminism must be more nuanced, inclusive, and attuned to the realities of women of color. Her words urge us to do more, to make it a priority to do this crucial work so that everyone can access meaningful support without the additional obstacles of racism and classism.

*Hood Feminism* reads as a collection of eighteen short essays each focused on a different theme, ranging from ‘Black girls don’t have eating disorders’ to ‘Parenting while marginalized’. Whilst each essay has a distinct focus, Kendall’s critique of mainstream feminism permeates each chapter. She determines that feminist issues should be inclusive of food insecurity, poor health, unsafe living environments, and public education. Each essay is packed with examples of how marginalized women navigate these issues with the lacking resources and constrained choices available to them. For Kendall, “hood feminism” is the recognition that lots of women make “messy” (p. 36) choices to survive which are rarely supported by mainstream feminism.

Situating the text within experiences of marginalized women, Kendall tackles issues that have been deemed economic or health crises, and re-writes them as specific concerns for feminism. For example, gun violence is positioned as an inherently feminist issue because black women face disproportionate exposure to intimate partner violence, as well as police violence. Where weapons are involved, black women do not just bare witness, but are victims of gun violence. Coupled with Kendall’s reflection on her own experiences of an abusive marriage, this chapter powerfully exposes the failings of white, mainstream feminism in not doing more to address the impacts of gun violence on marginalised communities.

Similarly, in the chapter ‘Hunger’, poverty is discussed as a pointedly feminist issue because of the uniquely devastating effects hunger has on women. This chapter juxtaposes poverty and hunger with the concerns of mainstream feminism. Kendall argues that hunger is rarely discussed in the context of women’s poverty because for many white feminists, their privilege means that they have little experience of the long-term effects of poverty. Again, mirroring her own experiences of raising a son following separation from an abusive husband, Kendall weaves the personal into the political to passionately convey how basic human needs must be embraced by mainstream feminism so that everyone can access the means to survive.

Underpinning these arguments are the notions of solidarity and respectability. These principles serve as a foundation to the critique of mainstream feminism and are carried throughout each chapter. Kendall argues that respectability politics “discourage us from addressing the needs of sex workers, incarcerated women, or anyone else who has had to face hard life choices” (p. 4). The purpose of exposing respectability politics, and the purpose of the book, is to highlight how women do not need to be respectable to be valued. Solidarity, for mainstream feminism, hinges on women’s adherence to a life path dictated by white cisgender men. What *Hood Feminism* highlights is that solidary needs to encompass all women no matter how respectable they may or may not be in the eyes of patriarchy. Solidarity would recognise

the marginalization that happens between women and would work to focus on the concerns of the most vulnerable.

With a compelling narrative and energetic flow, this book would be useful to undergraduate students undertaking courses in Women and Gender Studies, or Sociology. Whilst some of the themes in this book could be discussed in more advanced classes on feminist theory, the clarity in which Kendall advocates an intersectional approach makes this book suitable for introductory courses. The breadth of themes discussed means that this book could be assigned to modules which discuss a range of social inequalities, to help students develop an awareness of intersectionality and the importance of learning from marginalized perspectives.

Its usefulness for educators more broadly is abundantly apparent; the chapter named “Education” demands that we make education valuable as well as accessible. Feminist educators are reminded that they need to make conscious choices to use their privilege to protect vulnerable students from institutional discrimination in education. As Kendall notes, “It’s true that the victims of police brutality in schools, the school-to-prison pipeline, and pushout practices are more likely to be students of color” (p. 202). Educators can stand up to discrimination amongst students and challenge institutionalized racism. Kendall highlights how this intersectional approach can improve education for marginalized students, especially girls of color.

Although Kendall does not position herself as a “nice feminist” (p. xv) her words are undoubtedly generous. Kendall’s critiques allow space to reflect, grow, and change within our feminist movement and whilst it is not her responsibility to make us improve, her words are motivating. Whilst the style is engaging, the content is purposefully challenging as it asks us to confront internal divisions and be wiser, more empathetic feminists. This book is an excellent example of how the personal is political, and of the necessity for critique from within the feminist movement. It demands that feminists confront failings to work towards transformation. In doing this, mainstream feminism can more adequately support feminist work that is happening in marginalized communities.