

**AFRICAN WOMEN, FEMINISM, and LIBERATION**

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Intersections: Black Women in the Atlantic World  
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# ABSTRACT

You will read about pre-colonial African women in this piece of writing and how they stood up to support their communities, were in general quite talented, and contributed to the development of Africa. Additionally, you will study about the colonization of Africa and the economic changes made to the continent by Europeans and other conquerors. Additionally, you'll see us contrast the three texts listed in the reference and explain how women fight for power both equal to and occasionally even greater than men and how women are portrayed differently in all three texts.

Many people instantly associate Africa with poverty, female subjugation, and just something wild, yet that is not the case now or even historically in precolonial Africa. Women were not oppressed at this period; in fact, they were practically on par with or above males. Women were involved in becoming empresses and leaders, for example, thus they had their own obligations. In ancient Europe, a “king” was actually a woman disguised as a male . Some of them even participated in combat alongside men as warriors. Women were responsible for a lot of the fantastic things that occurred in pre-colonial Africa. Women seldom hold political office in the modern world of the twenty-first century, yet in precolonial Africa, they were in charge of politics, military leadership, and entire armies. In Islamic nations like Mali, women did not become independent monarchs, but they nevertheless exercised significant influence as Queen Mothers. Even regular women had a significant role in these empires for instance, market women, controlled the regional commerce and were frequently financially independent . Keeping traditions alive and passing them on to future generations is a responsibility shared by women in pre-colonial Africa.

Respect must be paid for these women since many things we take for granted now are a result of them, and if colonization had not taken place in Africa, women would have improved through time and maybe spread to other parts of the world. Women were politically engaged in pre-colonial times as well. They were in charge of the household, which was a highly important job with a lot of authority. Elder women were able to speak up on a variety of significant matters affecting the family and community since authority and privilege were based on both age and gender. Women worked in both agriculture and the creation of crafts, contributing to the economy.

Several circumstances made the colonization of Africa by Europe "necessary. " The beginning of the industrial revolution, which brought about a swift shift in the socio-economic transition and innovation of the European countries, was remarkable among

the reasons. The country's agriculture was unable to keep up with the surge in output brought on by the industrial revolution. Agriculture was finding it more difficult to meet the demand for raw materials needed by the industries. The British were forced to hunt for more raw resources outside of their own nation as a result. drive them to Africa, one of the world's leaders in manufacturing raw minerals, as a result.

The problem comes in were Instead of entering and seeking to establish an agreement where both parties benefited from their needs and exchanges, they entered and essentially took over what had been established for years, changing their entire economy, their agriculture, and finally their entire structure. The Europeans were being quite egotistical; they seized control of what they produced, how much of it they produced, and even took control of their governments so that they could control the Africans even more. Everything that the men and women of Africa had constructed was destroyed when the Europeans arrived. They arrived and said, "Forget what they need; we'll take care of what we need." The collapse of various African colonial empires was largely caused by them being self-centered and prioritizing themselves. They gave up Africa's economic growth for their own. Because black and African visitors to Europe in the 21st century still face racial discrimination, it is not surprise that Europe uses Africa for their own gain and is self-centered. Despite being founded on the backs of those very same individuals, their countries are nonetheless incredibly bigoted. Despite being one of the most widely followed religions in Africa, Muslims are still not permitted to wear hijabs in public in France. This kind of conduct is not new in Europe, and it has to stop.

Women, African women, to be exact have been trying to find power and be as equal as men and sometimes even superior. In the three course text that we have been reading in our class, women are represented differently and have different stories. In the first out of the three course context that we have been reading for the class, the first one is specifically the topic of

our research paper which is “African Women, Feminism and Liberation”. The first course text is called *Women, Race and Class* by Angela Davis. This book talks specifically about how women had a liberation movement around the 1960’s. It all relates to how the United States has treated women, specifically black women during slavery. In relation to the other course texts, women, especially women in the United States, have been treated badly. They did not have equal rights that men had or even had rights in general. Around that time, women were expected to be housewives and housewives only. But in reality, that housewife idea only applied to white women. Black women were seen as men in a way, they were expected to be “field workers”. Slavery made it worse for black women. Especially during their pregnancy or when they gave birth because black women were not even seen as mothers but more as providers for the baby. They just wanted them to not feel as powerful to not have the idea that they are powerful. Women were treated badly around that time but black women were treated worse than white women. White women had an advantage which was their skin color but black women had no escape. Throughout the book, besides the slavery and negative things being done to women such as women’s suffrage, women in workplace and etc, positive things appeared. The women liberation movement also known as the women’s rights movement today appeared. They talked about the issues within the intersectional feminist and how it could be some solutions to those issues.

In the second course context, it is more related to the complex of how black women lived and were treated in the United States. The second course context is called *Ain’t I a Woman* by Bell Hooks. Throughout this book they presented different ideas and aspects of how black women were affected by actions done by other groups of people. They specially talked about how the women’s rights movement caused black women to be more armed than good for a variety of reasons. Similar to that, they presented many examples on how black women were during that time. During that time, being a woman was one thing but being a

black woman was another and completely different thing. Throughout the book, sexism and racism played a major role due to the fact that black women were not treated the way they were supposed to. Besides the fact that those negatives happened, the book was trying to find a way about black women being oppressed. A lot of people do not talk about it but oppression is a big thing and things right back to racism and sexism. Although a lot of negative things happened, in the book they still tried to figure out how oppression can be overcome etc which still relates back to the main topic of feminism and liberation.

In the third course text, they focus more on how the generation x women are more capable to take over the leadership. The third course text is called *Generation X: The Role of Culture on the Leadership Styles of Women in Leadership*. As was stated before, this book focuses more on how women from the 21st century are more capable to take control. I strongly believe that it has to do with the mindset and how women are built nowadays. They are not likely to let them take over them. In similarity to both of the other books, the idea of women trying to evolve and make things better for themselves still exists. In comparison, this book unlike others specifically talks about women in leadership but the other two texts were giving suggestions and how the women's rights movement was a thing. They did not mention women being in control and having leadership the way this book does. It is important to emphasize that women were still powerful back then because whatever movements they did allowed the future generation to stand up and put actions into wanting to become leaders and in control. The knowledge that women are gaining everyday is far more important than anything else because that is how they grow, learn, teach, and be in control. Women in leadership overall is important because representation matters. Anyone would want and like to see their gender or race being represented through leadership. People fail to understand that the reason why women want to be in leadership is because of representation. It may not be the main reason but it is definitely one of the main reasons. Seeing someone that looks

similar to you being in control motivates, makes, and pushes you to do better. It also helps the younger generation due to the fact that they would want to take actions as well.

In all three of these course texts, women were mentioned. The way they were mentioned, especially black women, is very important to remember. They all helped figure out a way into what women do today. Those three course contexts all have a similarity with women in power. No matter what position they were in, women were still in power. The idea that society made us believe that because women, especially black women, were not in control meant they were not in control has failed us to realize that it is a false statement. In all three of those course texts, women were powerful due to the simple fact that they were women. No matter what was going on, they were still standing fighting for their rights.

In Africa during the pre-colonized time females was not able to be sexual they had to be virgin until marriage they would've brought shame to the family. When looking back during the pre-colonial era women were looked upon as the alpha during those times and men would just listen to women and would have to follow orders from women. It states in this article "Africa had a high incidence of matrilineal descent, a social system that placed a woman and her female relations at the center of kinship and family, though male clan leaders influenced the arrangement of families through marriage.

Women used a variety of routes to exercise authority—through women's organizations, as spiritual leaders, and sometimes as queen mothers, advising male rulers and serving as co-rulers or regents". not only did women have most of the authorities, they also had to follow them. Even though African women were able to do things for themselves they still had to follow a certain system of ideas. One of these ideas was traditional family planning. Family planning was a way to make sure that the number of children that were being born was under control. The way they kept things like this under control was based off child spacing, virginity and breastfeeding. Once again even with the freedom African women had,

inequality still played a role in how they would do certain things, but this didn't stop them from fully having access to resources. This was because in some African societies women's interests were protected by male authority. Because the women were highly favored they were able to be more than just motherly figures. They were able to be queens, mostly before colonialism. Queen Mothers also had the right in some places to be able to decide what they wanted for themselves in life. Some women didn't cover their faces and things regarding marriage, divorce and working alongside men in palaces was their decision. African women were also involved in politics and wars.

All the things that African women did were different in other societies, especially in European areas. Feminism is the women rights ranges of socio-political movement that define and established the personal, economic, political, and social equality of the sexes. The feminism movement was a result of the Atlantic Revolutions because the idea of equality and liberty had women thinking they deserved rights equal to those of men. Women grew their mindset and finding a way to get more opportunities in societies, so did the feminism movement. The first feminist in the world was philosopher, Christine de Pisan, in late 14th and early 15th century in France. Women started to engage in cultivating food for their families between 65 and 80% of them.

The centrality of agriculture influenced the control of land and of labor by kin groups and clans, usually presented by male religion and political leaderships. Africa had a high incidence of matrilineal descent, a woman and her relations were placed in the center of kinship and family, though men were leaders of the families through marriage. This means women had their role in societies and families. Slaves within African were more likely to be women, a reflection of their productive contributions to their communities. Women were vulnerable to enslavement, and could be integrated into a new society while men were traded



or killed as enemies. The presence of European traders, missionaries, and officials increased throughout the 16th to 19th centuries, many women losing economic autonomy, power with the arrival of cash crops while continuing their work for their families.

women have occupied key roles in the developments that have shaped the course of African history. The turbulent years following West and Central Africa's initial contact with Europe were marked by the emergence of women revered for their formidable political skills and social vision. pre-colonial African societies and empires were extremely advanced in a variety of ways, and especially as far as women's rights were concerned.

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