



How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (Editor)

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The Combahee River Collective, a group of radical black feminists, was one of the most important organizations to develop out of the anti-racist and women's liberation movements of the 1960s and 70s. In this collection, founding members of the organization and contemporary activists reflect on the legacy of its contributions to black feminism and its impact on today's struggles.

How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective Details

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Download and Read Free Online How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (Editor)

From Reader Review *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* for online ebook

Samantha says

Even having just finished it, I am already excited to re-read. Learned so much! Writing too much would not do this book justice. Go read it instead. It's short enough you could finish in a day.

Becky says

I bought this book as a gift for my sister at her request and in doing so acquired the ebook for free - to my delight as the topic sounded highly interesting. I didn't realize that the bulk of the book was a series of interviews, but I learned a great deal from them. I'm not sure about how to rate this book because I too rarely read non-fiction, but I found it extremely well put together, informative, and motivating.

Nina says

"I'm not nostalgic. I'm looking back to mine the past for what it can help us with right now, and for what it can help us pass on and create. And I still feel part of creation. When people start talking about being an elder, I'm like, 'Yeah, but you know, don't be asking about some shit that happened thirty, forty years ago.' I have an eidetic memory, and I remember it exactly. But to me, that's not--I'm not nostalgic. It's like not then. What about right now? What about right now? That's me." - Demita Frazier

It's been forty years since the Combahee River Collective Statement was published. This book, *How We Get Free* includes an introduction by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, a reprint of the Statement, four interviews conducted by Taylor (one with BLM co-founder Alicia Garza and three with founding members of the Combahee River Collective: Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith, and Demita Frazier), and text of a speech that Barbara Ransby gave at Socialism 2017.

The interviews take up the majority of the book and they are so filling. It's not the cleaned up prose of a statement, speech, or auto/biography. It's pretty raw oral history. Ideas and history told and expressed with personality. These histories are personal and collective. Black women with radical politics will find the book to be both comforting (yes, that experience of isolation in your work is real) and energizing (how else does one keep going but to have sincere conversations with community).

If we read the title of the book as a question, the interviewees offer answers: economic analyses, anti-capitalist or socialist politics, building actions based on analyses, solidarity and coalition building, naming things (the history behind the phrase "identity politics" is included here), etc.

Read this.

-- also, since Taylor asked Smith about it, here's a podcast that features the correct pronunciation of Combahee (and a story of the raid: <http://uncivil.show/episode-the-raid....> h/t Akwugo Emejulu) --

BMR, MSW, LSW says

This is a short but packed history of the Combahee River Collective, an opening salvo for modern Black Feminist Theory.

The author speaks to the key players that created the CRC, and draws connections between the state of Black women 40 years ago and the same fights being handled by new generations of activists. Basically, none of us are free until all of us are free.

Recommended for scholars of feminist movements, and human rights struggles.

K says

It feels good to get back to reading after a two week hiatus. I really, really, really enjoyed this book. So many highlights and tabs, and writing in the margins after just one read. I totally plan on going back and re-reading. I really loved all of the interviews, but especially Barbara Smith's. I think the main things that you take from this book are the context in which Black feminism began, the importance of the Combahee River Collective, and how much their vision was an anti-capitalist/socialist vision. Required reading for non black feminists that claim to be "intersectional." Overall, a phenomenal book, and now one of my favorites.

Shirleen R says

Brief impression: Loved this collection. LOVED! Why? Back to basics. Back to fundamentals. Back to clear articulations of "what do we believe" and "why?" Sure, blame my displeasure with the ever-present market forces to brand "feminism" and even "black feminism" (a resistant concept from its inception). Maybe I'm a moody bitch, but I'm also tired of hot takes, sound bite, Twitter feminism -conceived in echo chambers, academic social rings, in her head and in isolation. I want a Black feminism that's rooted in HISTORY. A black feminism that walked amongst worlds in which Black women circulate. Or worlds Black women entered or re-shaped to survive. Black feminism that has no time for bullshit, that doesn't confuse naming elders to respect with name dropping, Black feminism not thirsty for approval now, or fixated on future posterity. Black feminism that is real, knows too much work to do to be caught up in those games.

HOW WE GET FREE is what I hungered for without knowing it. Substance. No filters. Depth. Length. Prof. Keeanga Yamahtta Taylor edited her long form interviews with key Black women organizers, women involved. This Princeton professor of African American studies is a brilliant thinker. The gift she gives her reader is to listen in her conversations, rather than assert a stamp or KYT brand in each chapter.

The Demita Frazier and Alicia Garza interviews stuck with me most. Actually, they all did. What I loved is the LENGTH of each chapter. 25-40 pages each of reflections, oral histories. These Black Women leader s and founders of these key organizations Combahee River Collective, or AAWDO, or National Black Feminist Organization or Black Lives Matter, don't just recount how their groups came into existence. Their activist journeys double as histories and lessons of how political organizing occurred - in Chicago, Oakland, Cleveland, Boston, North Hampton, wherever or whenever these interviewees took root. Another delight was

to learn how engaged and on top of 2018 Black pop culture were these CRC founders. Beverly Smith and Barbara Smith are writers, educators, organizers, scholars, publishers, mentors, public health educators, anti-domestic violence advocates. They've worked many occupations. Over their years, they've built coalitions, supported in solidarity other groups -- say union striking laborers in trade industries - . These women show up. They've always shown up, living that Audre Lorde saying that if one of us is not free, then none of us can be free.

I'm humbled to read their life experience. To learn how they've put Black feminism into daily practice. Read this book and pass it on, please! Or I'll send you short PDFs of the most lit sections. For example, when Alicia Garza goes in on how social justice groups even other men of color erased. Blackness and co-opted work of Black queer women in the early days of Black Lives matter.

Emily says

A fantastic collection of primary resources on the Combahee River Collective and it's impact on current queer, feminist struggles for black liberation.

Gretchen says

Yep, loved everything about this. Required reading for white feminists.

Ms_prue says

Some books are windows, and they show you something and it can move you deeply. And very rarely a books is a doorway, and open to reveal a whole new place you've never been before, with an infinite number of new paths to travel. This is a small book but a doorway nonetheless. Following the statement, there are a series of warm and insightful interviews, including some with the women who founded the collective. If you are new to feminism, you could skip every other text for the time being and start here.

Eric says

I found the interviews very interesting and found the personal histories of the women involved fascinating.

Bryan Cebulski says

I went into How We Get Free expecting a more historical approach, using the oral histories of Combahee's founders to weave a brief narrative about what the collective did and how it came to be. Instead we have a reprinting of the Combahee River Collective Statement and transcriptions of interviews with its members (as

well as BLM cofounder Alicia Garza). It isn't bad, but it makes me feel like this book was rushed to print. There are a lot of "I'm not sure"s and "I can't remember"s in the interviews, and they get in the way of the book's messaging. A deeper dive into the politics and history of Combahee would have resonated more strongly and for longer. This book feels very much of the moment. It's fine, but I hope it will be surpassed by much more comprehensive work in the near future.

How We Get Free's purpose is not so much to tell the story of Combahee as it is to connect it to activism today. To galvanize, invigorate the movement in a certain direction. That, I think, explains the feeling of it being rushed--because it really wants to speak to a very specific time and to a very specific audience. Which again I understand, cranking up the volume on Combahee's politics (which encompassed intersectionality before it was called that as well as anticapitalism and anti-imperialism) is crucial so that modern day activists can hear. But I don't think, or rather don't hope, that this will become the quintessential Combahee River Collection history source, because it's just not that in depth.

I. says

There's very little on lesbian issues which I find a little odd tbh. Really necessary book though.

Gabrielle says

4.5 stars. Full review this weekend.

Sian Lile-Pastore says

This was so great! I learned so much and my brain was fizzing!L
While it's about black queer women coming together in the 1970s it's also about the work we have to do today.
Loved it.

Lois says

This wasn't what I was expecting. This weaves the history in with the current political climate seamlessly.
