



When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America

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When and Where I Enter is an eloquent testimonial to the profound influence of African-American women on race and women's movements throughout American history. Drawing on speeches, diaries, letters, and other original documents, Paula Giddings powerfully portrays how black women have transcended racist and sexist attitudes--often confronting white feminists and black male leaders alike--to initiate social and political reform. From the open disregard for the rights of slave women to examples of today's more covert racism and sexism in civil rights and women's organizations, Giddings illuminates the black woman's crusade for equality. In the process, she paints unforgettable portraits of black female leaders, such as anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells, educator and FDR adviser Mary McLeod Bethune, and the heroic civil rights leader Fannie Lou Hamer, among others, who fought both overt and institutionalized oppression.

When and Where I Enter reveals the immense moral power black women possessed and sought to wield throughout their history--the same power that prompted Anna Julia Cooper in 1892 to tell a group of black clergymen, "Only the black woman can say 'when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole . . . race enters with me.'"

When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America Details

Date : Published February 27th 2007 by William Morrow Paperbacks (first published 1984)

ISBN : 9780688146504

Author : Paula J. Giddings

Format : Paperback 416 pages

Genre : Feminism, Nonfiction, History, Race, Cultural, African American, Gender



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Stacie C says

Everything has a historical context. It's important to understand and recognize that fact. All of the movements we're seeing today have a historical context. We'll take the Women's March for example. There was quite a bit of criticism leveled at the Women's March because of its approach to intersectional feminism and what that would mean moving forward. Those criticisms were valid and rooted in the history of women's movements. This book is a comprehensive look at Black women's participation in liberation movements throughout the history of the United States. It looks not only at their participation in liberation of women but their participation in the liberation of Black people as a whole. It also stresses that for Black women especially, the fight for equality has meant an assault from all sides. From white women not taking into account the issues important to Black women because they didn't want to focus on race, to Black men not concerning themselves with the uplifting of Black women in the fight and in many instances asking women to give up their independence in order for the man to have dominance.

I thought Giddings did a great job in structuring this book and in providing context for the information provided. The information is provided chronologically, which I found to be extremely helpful. In my opinion it's important to understand where you've been in order to appreciate where you're going. Diggings decision to provide everything chronologically made sense. Especially when patterns became obvious that regardless of the strides that had been made some of the same biases rear their ugly heads as time passes. This book as a whole does a great job of highlighting the work of Black women throughout history in many different forms and fashion. It takes a comprehensively look at the work that has been done and at the time of its original printing in the 1980s, the work that still needs to be done. If you're at all interested in the history of Black women and the work they've put in towards equality then this book is a great introduction. I give this book 4 out of 5 stars.

Rooks says

Really like a 4.5 due to the limitations of being written in 1984, but still.

Kim says

I read this book with my book club. It was outstanding to put together so many pieces of our history and our impact in America. I remember reading this book when it first came out many years ago - but experience and the current tensions in this country, make me understand and thirst for more accurate histories like this one.

Khemauset Ankh says

When and Where I Enter is a very informative book. Another story history doesn't tell in the mainstream. Black women weren't just collectively sitting around twittling their thumbs. We were doing it even while we raised other people's children, picked cotton and cooked dinner-our own and those other people's.

Raise hell Ida B.

Get that train to going Harriet

Go head on Anna Julia Cooper!

Sourjourner, honey chile, yes you is a woman!

We were, we are and we will forever be

You old hominid Eve mother who birthed us all, what did yr man call you? Surley not EVE or Lucy.

Thank you Paula Giddings for this gold-mine of a book. Thank you for telling me about my historical-self!

Hotep!, Ase! Amen!

Charmaine says

When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America, is a informational text which gives insight into the lives of African Americans during the 19th and 20th century. Paula Giddings writes about the historical events that shaped the lives of Ida B. Wells and Marry Church Terrell. When and Where I Enter shed light on different experience these women endured that eventually led to monumental changes in African American history. Giddings also writes about the dynamics of the African American household. She mentions several different reasons why African American homes are divided and torn apart by gender roles. While I was reading When and Where I Enter I noticed Paula Giddings use of imagery. When she described the incident of Terrell and Wells friends being hung for no reason I was able to feel the pain and anger through Giddings words. Also Giddings ability to make connections in her writing to issues that took place in the African American community in early 1900s to issues that still take place in today is another element I enjoyed. This is a great mentor text to show to my students to teach them how to make informational text meaningful. A way I would use When and Where I Enter as a minilesson is by having students think of a historical event and write about the event using their own understanding. Students will also be required to make self connections.

“for the Negro was famous then, as now, for spending his money for fine clothes, furniture, jewelry, and pianos and other musical instruments, to say nothing of good things to eat. Music houses had more musical instruments, sold on the installment plan, thrown back on their hands than they could find storage for.”

Randie D. Camp, M.S. says

Paula Giddings' book, When and Where I Enter, has been accepted and praised by several organizations, Black intellectuals, and feminists. The Women's Review of Books calls Giddings' work “the best interpretation of black women and race and sex that we have.”

In chapter six, ““To Be a Woman, Sublime’: The Ideas of the National Black Women’s Club Movement (to 1917),” Giddings shares with us the history of the Black women’s movement and their views on a number of issues. Giddings also introduces us to several Black women who were actively involved in this movement.

In chapter seven, “The Quest for Woman Suffrage (Before World War I),” Giddings highlights the significant differences between the White and Black quest for woman suffrage. In addition, Giddings draws our attention to racial tensions and strategies, critical suffrage activists, and details the major events of the Black woman suffrage movement.

Naima says

This is one of the best books I've ever read. So informative and so inspiring! This book spans from the 18th Century to the 1980s and follows different Black Liberation Movements. I recommend it for all!

Kijan says

I can't say enough about this text. I read this as an undergrad and learned SO MUCH about the impact of race on the women's liberation/feminist movement. Giddings does a sufficiently thorough job of laying out these considerations through the lives of two key women who were engaged in the struggle.

Allison says

A very insightful look at the intersection between race and gender, called intersectionality. Anyone looking at studying feminism needs to look at this ground breaking work on intersectionality.

Marjorie.harris says

In a technological age where we are inundated with self-help, self-analysis and self-assessment products, it is so much more helpful to read a perspective that shows African-American women where we fit outside of ourselves. That is, in the greater part of society - based on the sacrifices made by powerful women of color years before our existence. Professor Giddings is on the mark. Do you have any questions about your place at the voting booth... your university... in your profession? This book answers it all for you...

Carla says

Fantastic, should be required reading in high schools. And this topic would be a valuable part of any college education. (Although discussion of the oppression faced and accomplishments made by lgbtqia+/disabled/etc black women is glaringly absent.) I shouldn't be just learning these things in my late twenties. It's time US society woke up and acknowledged the most monumental changes in its history weren't made by white men.

Jocelyn says

The whole book is compelling and illuminating, but the chapters on the Moynihan Report and the failure of Shirley Chisolm's presidential campaign and the ERA are worth the price of admission alone.

blakeR says

I came to this book from a recent list of must-reads given by Ta-Nehisi Coates, and I'm glad to have been enlightened on the subject. From the title I was expecting more of a philosophical discussion, so I was surprised to encounter basically a straight history of the role of Black women in the struggle for racial and gender equality since the end of the Civil War. A good summary occurs at the beginning of the last chapter:

... At the turn of the century, Black women initiated social reform in Black communities when government fell short, and they created the means to educate their own. They went toe to toe with White feminists, defended themselves and the race, and did not hesitate to chastise the men who sought to keep them from doing so. In the process, Black women helped launch and sustain the modern civil rights movement. They also exposed the deep core of feminism, which went to the heart of women's rights: over their souls, their bodies, their families, their labor. And in the course of all that, Black women may be said to have provided the means to free everyone.

The Black woman was able to accomplish so much in those years because she had an unshakable conviction: The progress of neither *race* nor *womanhood* could proceed without her. And she understood the relationship between the two.

The information here is vital and impressively researched, though the book itself became tedious at times with the surfeit of names, dates and organizations being difficult to follow. I do still look forward to reading Giddings's later work, *Ida: A Sword Among Lions*, and I recommend this to any students (professional or otherwise) of the Civil Rights or Feminist movements.

Not Bad Reviews

@blakerosser1

Markeshia Ricks says

I've started and stopped this book a number of times since I bought it in 2014. This year, for Women's History Month, I determined to read it. And it is so good and so relevant for this historic moment of tension where the fight against systemic anti-black racism and for women's rights is back on the agenda. This book rightly ties the work and the roles that black women have always played to where they have always been -- at the center of it all. Black women are the links that hold the chains of both movements together because they labor under the double yoke of being black and female in a country that respects neither. This book was published in 1984 and so the last chapter is a short survey of what lies ahead in the 1980s. And my goodness

if what she foretold of that decade doesn't read like what is happening in 2018, I don't know what does. This is a must read as relevant today as it was then.

Cam says

This..taught me a lot. Like holy shit, I never heard of 90% of the women mentioned in this book and this is despite how enormous steps they've taken, the sacrifices they made and battles they fought. Goddamn, it took me a while to get through it, but I am glad I did.

Black women truly were the backbone, the driving force of progress in the US. Endless respect for that. I want these women taught in history and social science curriculums. It's important! I'm not American but it baffles me that women who influenced so much are left forgotten and ignored. Not only by historians, but feminists as well.

I'm Danish, so obviously American history wasn't something that was expanded on - my knowledge on US history is cursory at best, but my ignorance of these women and this part of history would be understandable. Americans not knowing their own history, tho - that's another thing. The whitewashing and the focus on men is infuriating.
