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Black Women Always Build Something Deeper.

Because Feminism Will Never Be Enough.



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By Malik Shakur



Malik Shakur

The Illusion of a Universal Feminism

Mainstream feminism has often presented itself as a universal movement. In practice, its victories have too frequently centered on the needs, ambitions, and frustrations of White women. In contrast, Black women were expected to keep carrying burdens that no movement seemed eager to name.

Who Got to Rise, Who Had to Endure

White women were encouraged to break glass ceilings. Black women were often left to sweep up the shards.

Always Working, Rarely Seen

That contrast is not rhetorical excess. It reflects a long pattern in American life. Black women have always worked, often inside and outside the home. They have sustained families through economic instability, built institutions

where none existed, organized politically, educated communities, and carried responsibilities that others were free to debate in theory.

While feminism argued for equality, Black women were still fighting to be fully seen, even among feminists.

Recognition Denied, Strength Imposed

Instead of recognition, society offered a substitute: the myth of the Strong Black Woman. It is framed as praise, but it often functions as permission to neglect. Strength becomes the reason support is withheld. Resilience becomes the excuse to ignore exhaustion. Competence becomes the basis for impossible expectations.

Endurance Without Protection

The world celebrates Black women's endurance more readily than it protects their peace, intelligence, and ethics.

Punished for Being Fully Human

When Black women speak directly, they are labeled as angry. When they lead decisively, they are called intimidating. When they excel, their success is treated as unusual or suspect. Traits admired in others are often punished in them.

This is not merely biased. It is a refusal to grant Black women the full range of human complexity.

Appropriation Without Attribution

The problem extends beyond language. Black women have repeatedly created culture, style, political strategy, and forms of communal care that are later adopted, repackaged, and monetized by others with little

acknowledgment of their origin. What begins as survival within Black communities often becomes a trend elsewhere.

Too often, Black women are asked to produce value while others receive the credit.

Beyond Feminism: A Different Framework

That is why many Black women found greater truth in womanism than in mainstream feminism.

Womanism and the Whole Self

Coined by Alice Walker, womanism recognized something feminism often struggled to confront: gender cannot be separated from race, class, family, history, and community. Liberation is not simply about gaining access to institutions that excluded women. It is also about questioning whether those institutions were ever sufficient to begin with.

Womanism did not ask Black women to divide themselves into categories. It acknowledged the whole person.

Inheritance, Not Exception

I understand that inheritance personally. My great-grandmother, born in the aftermath of enslavement, became the first in our family to attend college. She taught enslaved children and their parents formerly to read, write, and do basic math. She believed advancement would come not from waiting to be included, but from building our own capacity, knowledge, and institutions.

Her vision still echoes through my family. It is one reason I was able to earn five degrees. What she built made later success possible.

That story is not exceptional in the way America often uses the term. It is part of a larger Black tradition of women creating futures under hostile conditions.

Building Under Pressure

Even now, Black women continue to anchor systems that do not consistently honor them. They are among the most reliable political participants in the country. In the 2024 election, roughly 92 percent of Black women voters supported the Democratic candidate, continuing a long pattern of political consistency that others rely on but rarely reward. They lead in education, entrepreneurship, public service, faith communities, and civic life. They are asked to stabilize families, workplaces, and democracy itself, often while receiving less pay, less grace, and less protection.

Essential, Yet Deferred

Yet they are still told to wait their turn.

No Invitation Required

The deeper lesson may be this: Black women have never needed validation from movements that recognized them late. They have always possessed the intellect, discipline, creativity, and moral force to define their own path.

More Than Enough

Mainstream feminism may still have uses. But it was never built with Black women in mind, and it has never been accountable to them.

White women were invited to shatter ceilings. Black women were expected to hold up the entire structure.

So they did something else.

They built their own.

And they will continue to build, vote, organize, and create with themselves in mind first, whether feminism catches up or not.

Race Politics Culture History Psychology



Written by The Color of My Politics

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The Color of My Politics is my satirical look as a Black man in America—educated enough to know the rules, wise enough to know they weren't written for me.

Responses (3)

Tom Mitchell

What are your thoughts?



Lakitha Tolbert

5 hours ago

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her own power. Power that isn't borrowed from men. Power that she built for herself.

When white women walk into a room, they walk in with... more

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Gail
2 days ago

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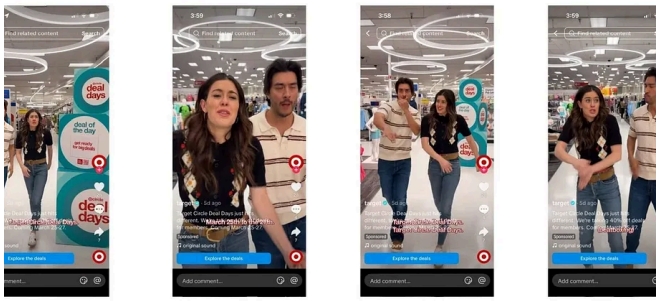

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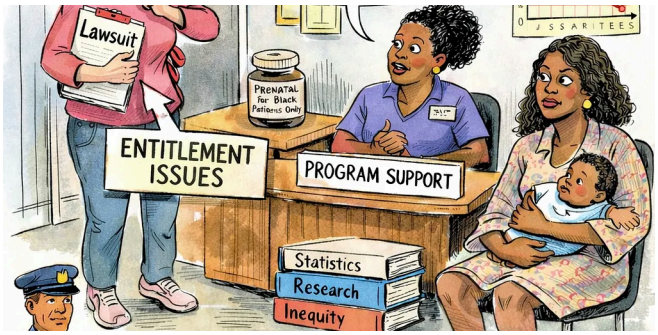

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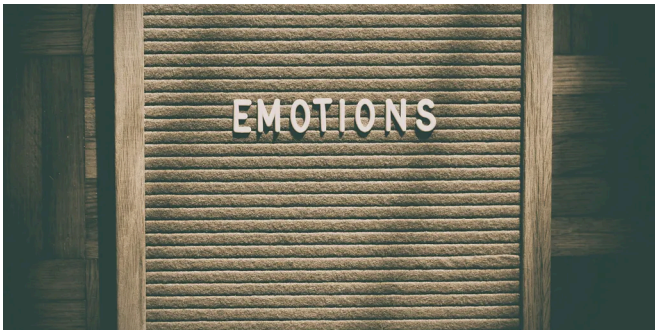

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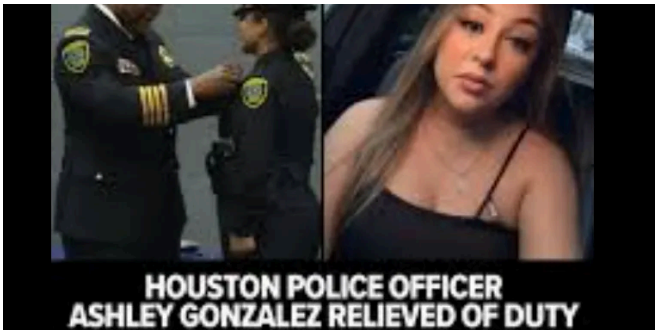

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