

HE'S having lunch with the boss: He's on his way up

HE'S getting married. He'll get more settled

HE'S having a baby: He'll need a raise

HE'S leaving for a better job: HE recognizes a good opportunity

HE'S aggressive

HE'S careful

HE loses his temper

HE'S depressed

HE follows through

HE'S firm

HE makes wise judgments

HE is a man of the world

HE isn't afraid to say what he thinks

HE exercises authority

HE'S discreet

HE'S a stern taskmaster

SHE'S having lunch with the boss: They must be having an affair

SHE'S getting married: She'll get pregnant and leave

SHE'S having a baby: She'll cost the company money in maternity benefits

SHE'S leaving for a better job: Women are undependable

SHE'S pushy

SHE'S picky

SHE'S bitchy

SHE'S moody

SHE doesn't know when to quit

SHE'S stubborn

SHE reveals her prejudices

SHE'S been around

SHE'S opinionated

SHE'S tyrannical

SHE'S secretive

SHE'S difficult to work for

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Promises Made

Ross Neely

When I was ten years old, I was out with my mother when she was suddenly targeted with a barrage of sexist words and violent gestures by a group of men outside a grocery store. Afterward, as *she* was comforting *me*, my mother—who always took care of everyone else, who had been surrounded by gender violence her entire life—turned and studied me with eyes I'd never seen and said: *Are you going to grow up to hate women like every other man?* Everything in my body froze, but I knew on some cellular level that I never wanted to be those men. I promised: *No, mom. I won't. I won't.*

When I was eleven, I already hated my body. I was too soft. I needed to be harder. I needed to turn my curves into straight lines and my smooths into sharps. Secretly, I wrote poetry and stories, and loved to sing. Outwardly, I played sports like football and tried to “pass” and be the “tough” guy I was expected to be. A year later, after some older boys beat me up to make sure I knew who was most “masculine” in my new neighborhood, I renewed my promise: *I will not do this to anyone else. I will not become these men.*

But I did. The messages I received as a child about what it means to “be a man,” and the rewards and punishments for “succeeding” or “failing” to perform the tough, confident, stoic, in-control masculinity I was taught, had taken their toll. When upset, I more quickly raised my voice with my mother than my father. My football coaches taunted us with the worst

insult of all, “playing like a girl,” and I responded with more aggression and toughness. I hung out at fraternity houses where gender violence was constantly reproduced and did very little to interrupt it. I dropped off my girlfriend at her poorly-lit house late at night and didn’t think to wait to make sure she got inside safely before driving away. My life was, and still is, shaped by white, cisgender (gender identity and expression are congruent with the dominant expectations of my birth-assigned sex), hetero-perceived male privilege that I rarely have to think about, but which is nonetheless ever-present.

Fortunately, I was introduced to women’s studies, gender studies and queer studies, and got connected with people from all gender identities who were taking action and leading the way to gender liberation. It is from their work and through their example that I slowly began to understand that genderism (gender oppression rooted in socially constructed categories of woman/man and femininity/masculinity, with power held by men/masculinity) is not just about the *interpersonal* violence of a few bad perpetrators, but more significantly about the access (or lack thereof) to the *institutional power* attached to these pervasive gender categories. In this way, I came to see that the personal is truly political and that every action I take as a cisgender man either reinforces or challenges the systems of gender oppression all around me. The lesson for me at the time: understanding and ending genderism is my responsibility.

Genderism and male supremacy shape men’s relationships with women and gender-nonconforming folks every day: the words we choose, how we position our bodies, the roles we take on, and our objectifying male gaze all make public spaces unwelcome or threatening to women. This is literally life and death—intimate partner violence is a leading cause of death for women 15–44, two million women a year are injured because of violence, a sexual assault occurs every two minutes, and one out of three women will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime. Genderism also shapes men’s relationships with other men through the subtle and explicit ways we feel coerced to constantly prove our masculinities to each other: the way I straighten my shoulders and lower my voice when I speak with cisgender men, the ways I’ve been afraid to tell my male friends and family that I love them, and the way I’m supposed to always project power and dominance. This side of genderism is why a two-year-old boy was recently murdered by his father for crying “too much like a girl,” and it’s why a seven-year-old boy had his arm broken because he wanted to be a cheerleader.

Organizing to understand, dismantle and transform the systems of male supremacy and the culture of gender violence we all live in has historically been constructed as “women’s work.” And while I absolutely believe that women and trans* (gender identity and/or expression are incongruent with the dominant expectations of birth-assigned sex) folks must lead and guide this work, leaving it here gives cisgender men an easy out and removes us from our responsibility to work for gender liberation. I identify as an aspiring ally to feminist, gender, and trans* justice movements—“aspiring” because I don’t get to decide if I’m being an authentic ally, the women and trans* folks I am in community with do. But being an ally cannot mean that I am working to paternalistically “save” others with my cis-masculine power. As I have learned from women and trans* activists, educators, organizers and scholars, I must work in honest solidarity (not charity) with gender justice movements, become aware of how I’m positioned within systems of power (gender, sexuality, race, class, dis/ability), and then use my privileged access to power in coalition with women and trans* folks to create change and liberate all of us from the poison of patriarchy.

Using what I have learned from trans-feminism, I know that while cisgender men certainly do not experience gender oppression, we are definitely dehumanized and harmed by it. All the stories that have been beaten into us about how to be men are simultaneously privileging and poisoning us, and beg the question why are we accepting this dehumanizing, violent, restrictive, brutal story about what we should do and who we should be?

Guided by the voices of feminist and trans* liberation movements, why don’t we write a different story—a new collective story about what cisgender men can be. At its best this new narrative of what it means to “be a man” would be one where true strength lies in being

vulnerable and in not always being in control or at the center. In this story, cisgender men are working daily to end genderism by pushing back on gender socialization, speaking up about gender oppression, and using our privilege to interrupt, agitate and create change. Importantly, this work is not just in public moments (where we get disproportionate amounts of praise for doing gender justice work), but in the quiet, private moments when no one is watching like speaking up when my male friend is using sexism to complain about his college professor, calling out a masculine friend who is objectifying his feminine partner, drawing attention to moments when men talk over women at staff meetings, and asking how my femme-identified partner feels, really feels, about the way I am treating her.

It is time (well past time, actually) to write a new story where cisgender men are constant and committed allies in ending gender oppression, and in the process are able to come back to our true selves and reclaim our true humanity. Over twenty years ago I made a promise to my mother, and though it's been a circuitous path and I've faltered many times, I will spend the rest of my life rewriting the story of what it means to "be a man," and by doing so work to honor that promise.

Note on the text: Trans* is used here as an umbrella term for people transgressing binary gender norms, and/or people assigned one gender at birth who now identify as another gender; this may or may not include a diverse range of gender experiences and self-determined identities such as transgender, transsexual, trans woman, trans man, two spirit, intersex, genderqueer, and many more.

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To Stop the Violence against Woman

Alice Walker

WOMAN

TO STOP THE VIOLENCE
AGAINST
WOMAN
WOMAN
MUST STOP THE VIOLENCE
AGAINST
HERSELF.

WE CAN BEGIN TO DO THIS
NOW, NOW THAT WE SEE
A SKY
AND NOT A ROCK
A STICK
OR A FIST
ABOVE ALL
OUR HEADS.

WOMAN
 TO STOP THE VIOLENCE
 AGAINST WOMAN,
 STOP THE VIOLENCE
 THAT YOU
 PERPETUATE
 AGAINST
 YOUR OWN
 SISTER
 WHO IS
 A WOMAN, YOUR OWN
 DAUGHTER
 WHO IS
 A WOMAN,
 YOUR OWN
 DAUGHTER-IN-LAW
 WHO IS
 A WOMAN,
 YOUR OWN
 MOTHER
 WHO IS
 A WOMAN.

WOMAN
 TO STOP THE VIOLENCE
 AGAINST WOMAN,
 STOP THE VIOLENCE
 THAT LIVES
 IN OPPOSITION
 TO YOUR LIFE,
 DEEP IN YOUR
 OWN TERRORIZED AND
 UNCHERISHED
 HEART.

WOMAN
 REMEMBER WHO WE ARE:
 NOT "GUYS"
 BUT
 THE MOTHER
 OF ALL
 LIVING.
 WE CREATE OUT OF OUR OWN BLOOD
 AND MILK
 THE CREATURES
 WHO OPPRESS
 US;
 WHETHER THEY ARE MEN
 OR
 OURSELVES.

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WOMAN

AWAKE!
ARISE!
STAND UP!

WOMAN

TO STOP THE VIOLENCE
AGAINST
WOMAN,
GET UP
ON YOUR PERFECTLY
UNBOUND
FEET!
WE HAVE LOST THE EARTH
LIVING ON OUR KNEES.

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National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health (NLIRH) Statement on Healthcare for All

National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health

The National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health (NLIRH) supports healthcare reform that will move our current system toward one that will improve the health, and well-being of all Latinas, their families and communities. NLIRH embraces a human rights approach to health care, ensuring that all health services are accessible, available, affordable, and of good quality for everyone. These services should be provided on an equitable basis, free from discrimination or coercion. Healthcare reform can take many paths, and it is important that the needs of all Latinas, including immigrant women, women of color and low-income women, are front and center.

NLIRH supports a system that includes all people, regardless of income, immigration status, or any other limiting factor. The current healthcare system leaves many Latinas falling through the cracks; 38% of Latinas are uninsured, the highest rate amongst all groups of women. Some Latinas may have an income too high to qualify for Medicaid, yet too low to afford private insurance. Many Latinas who would qualify based on income are not eligible. Among the ineligible are undocumented Latinas and legal permanent residents who have been in the United States for less than five years. This lack of access to healthcare contributes heavily to the health disparities that Latinas face, in turn affecting many other aspects of Latinas' quality of life.

It is important that such a system includes a full and comprehensive range of services, including coverage for family planning, abortions, prenatal care and preventive services.

Currently Latinas—especially low-income, uninsured and immigrant Latinas—face numerous obstacles to obtaining these services, including cost and lack of access. Under the Hyde Amendment, no federal funds can be used for abortion services, meaning that many women on Medicaid are unable to access a full range of options when facing an unintended pregnancy, and may turn to unsafe terminations if they do not wish to carry the pregnancy to term. This and other obstacles create a disproportionate burden of morbidity and mortality on Latinas.

Moreover, NLRH supports a system that is not only inclusive of all people and offers a comprehensive range of services, but is also one that emphasizes culturally competent and linguistically appropriate services. Comprehensive care is meaningless unless it is provided in a language with which patients are comfortable and accompanied by physicians and other clinicians that understand the needs of Latinas, immigrant women, and low-income women. Unless Latinas feel free of judgment, coercion and discrimination at our doctors' offices, health disparities will continue regardless of availability and access. Supporting health care reform that incorporates a human rights framework would ensure a holistic approach to the care needed for all Latinas to advance *salud, dignidad y justicia!*

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Heartbroken

Women of Color Feminism and the Third Wave

Rebecca Hurd

This essay isn't just about an adopted, woman of color feminist; rather, it is a story about how I came to believe that I was worthy of all of these identities. It isn't just a story about feminism or solely about adoption. It is an exploration of where the mind stops and the heart follows. . . . The struggle is not to find one place where I can exist, but to find it within myself to exist in all of these places, uncompromisingly. To live a life of multiplicity is as difficult as it is to write about it.

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 Growing up in a transracial adopted family, I was often confused by the images of the "normal, nuclear families." We didn't look like any other family I saw. I couldn't comprehend how I could love my family, feel accepted by them and believe that I belonged to them as much as my phenotypically white brothers. Yet every time I looked in the mirror, my reflection haunted me, because the face that stared back was not the same color as my family's. This awareness was reinforced by the sometimes brutal questions of others. I constantly had to explain that I really was my brother's sister. He was not my husband but truly my brother. I was not the foreign exchange student that just never left. Embarrassed by the attention, I tried to ignore the differences. I took the negativity and dissociation I felt and began to internalize the feelings. I fooled myself into thinking and acting the role of a "good little Asian saved from her fallen country and brought to the land of salvation."

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I began to believe the messages about being an Asian girl and about being adopted. This compliance was one of the only ways I learned to gain acceptance and validation as a child. I realized that my identity was being created *for* me not *by* me.

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When I would talk to my friends about it, they wouldn't and couldn't understand. I was told that I was making too big a deal out of being Asian and besides I *was* just like everyone else. They thought that I just worried too much. My friends went so far as to convince me by telling me that "I wasn't really Asian, I was white." But the truth couldn't be denied, just as the color of my skin couldn't either. . . .

I came across feminism as a first-year student at Ohio State University. I was extremely depressed at the time. Everything—my created identity, the world of whiteness that I knew, the denial of my race—that I had worked so hard at repressing and ignoring throughout my life was finally surfacing and emerging. I no longer had the validation of whiteness to protect my false identity. The world that I had understood was changing, and I was confronted with defining myself without the associations of my family and friends. I was forced to step outside of my white world, shedding my blinders to find that I wasn't white and that I had never really been so. The only illusion was the one that I had created for myself, the one that had found acceptance. But I was beginning to realize the cost of this facade.

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My first women's studies course focused on the history of the women's movement, the social context and the contemporary issues facing feminism today. We looked at issues ranging from violence to sexual orientation to women-centered spirituality to representation in music and film to body image. I began to recognize my extensive history of sexual, mental and physical abuse with boyfriends, and I started to comprehend the cycle of abuse and forgiveness. I was able to begin to stop blaming myself and shift the responsibility back to those who had inflicted the abuse. Initially I had disconnected the abuse from racism, even though it was heavily intertwined and simultaneous. It was just too large for me to understand, and it was still too early for me to grapple with race. I still was thinking that I just needed to become the "right" kind of Asian American and then everything would make sense.

I know that for a lot of women of color, feminism is perceived as being a white woman's movement that has little space or acknowledgment for women of color. I understand how that is true, but back then this class became a catalyst for change and healing. It was a major turning point in my life, where I was able to break my silence and find empowerment within myself and for myself. Women's studies offered me a place where there was validation and reason. I was uncovering and understanding how my own internalization was tied to ideologies of racism and sexism. Although the analysis of racism was somewhat limited in these courses, it served as a lead for future interests. Women's studies and feminism was a steppingstone toward striving for a holistic understanding of myself.

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But I left college feeling as though there was something missing to this feminism. Professors would talk about Black feminism or women of color feminism, but merely as another mark on their feminist timeline. Little time was dedicated to really examining the intersection of race and gender. Back home I went to my local new-age store (which also doubled as the feminist bookstore) and stumbled on *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (edited by Cherré Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa). It was the first time I had found a book that had the words "women of color" as part of the title. It was as if I had found the pot of gold at the end of the feminist rainbow. Even though I didn't find myself completely represented in the book, specifically because none of the

campus) contributors had been an adopted child, I did find my thoughts, anger and pain represented through the eloquent voices of other women of color. Their writings incorporated race and sexuality.

Reading this anthology, I realized I was entitled to feeling something other than apologetic. I could be angry. I could be aggressive. I could be the opposite of this little china doll that everyone expected me to be. Given my background, this book was life-changing. It represented one of the first moments where I could claim something that was mine; something different from my parents, my friends, my community; something other than whiteness. I remember sitting at the town beach on a hot and humid August day, flipping through the book, my mind exploding and expanding. As I sat there frantically reading, I recall looking up at the sun, closing my eyes and thanking the goddess that I had found this work. Through this discovery I had found that I was not alone. Not only was I feminist, but I was a woman of color feminist.

What makes my relationship to women of color feminism different from most other women of color is how and why I entered the conversation. I began looking at race through gender, where most have the reverse experience. This idea of entry point is crucial. I call myself a woman of color before I call myself an Asian American. It reflects how I have come to see myself and how I understand my own identity. The term "women of color" seems broadly inviting and inclusive while "Asian American" feels rigid and exclusive. Women of color feminism took me from being a victim to being a warrior.

I am now in an ethnic studies graduate program trying to explore if women of color are within feminism's third wave, and if so, where. I began this project as an undergraduate but I had hit a wall. It was difficult locating voices that represented generation X or third wave women of color feminism. Not much had been written, as our voices were just beginning to emerge. I found women of color feminists in alternative places such as zines, anthologies, magazines and pop culture. I felt frustrated that our voices were deemed not "accredited" enough to be represented in the mainstream.

I held a certain expectation for Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richard's book, *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future*. This book markets itself as being *the* text for the third wave of feminism, and I had high hopes that it would address issues of race, gender and class sexuality. Instead, I found the specific history of white (privileged) women. . . .

I found it astounding that there is no extensive discussion of women of color feminism. This indicates that Baumgardner and Richards feel as though this is a separate issue, a different kind of feminism. It is as if their work is the master narrative of feminism, with women of color feminism as an appendage. I had hoped that they would have considered such books as *This Bridge Called My Back* and Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* as groundbreaking, as they are deemed by most generation X women of color. These books were life-changing to me not only because their critiques have historical value, but also because what these writers were saying in the 1980s was still relevant in the 1990s. *Manifesta* is successful in creating momentum for young white women's activism through the attempt to move feminism out of academia and back into a social and political movement. But the book's greatest contribution was that it raised a need for creating a lineage for women of color feminism.

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What is it about the word "feminism" that has encouraged women of color to stand apart from it? Feminism has been indoctrinated into the academy through the discipline of women's studies. It has moved out of the social and political spaces from where it emerged. Women's studies have collapsed the diversity that was part of the feminist movement into a discipline that has become a homogeneous generality. For women in the third wave then,

one needs to have the academic training of women's studies to be an "accredited feminist." Once race is added to the complexity, many women of color feel as though the compromise or negotiation is just too high a price to pay to be called a feminist. Women of color's participation in women's studies and feminism still causes splintering in our identities.

Many women believe that there is a certain required persona to be a feminist. In the ethnic studies course "Women of Color in the U.S." at Berkeley, for example, students expressed feeling that they didn't have enough knowledge or background to be able to call themselves feminists. The students' comments reflect how many women of color find difficulty in accessing feminism. Often the response is that "feminism is a white woman's thing." Whiteness in feminism comes to represent privilege, power and opportunity. It rarely positions women of color as being as legitimate as the identities of white women. Women's studies has been accurately accused of treating race as a secondary oppression through offering courses about race that are separate from the central curriculum, while ethnic studies feels more comfortable as a place to discuss race and gender. Like in ethnic studies, women's experiences and histories still remain on the margins. Like women's studies, they too have had problems integrating gender into the analysis of race.

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Although I am a self-proclaimed woman of color feminist, I struggle with being an "authentic" woman of color feminist. Even though I realize it is self-defeating, I worry that other women of color will look at my feminism and judge it as being socialized whiteness and an effect of adoption. The roots of my feminism are connected to my adopted mother, although I am uncertain whether she would identify as a feminist. She was a woman who wouldn't let us watch the *Flintstones* or the *Jetsons* because of their negative portrayal of women, yet she unquestionably had dinner on the table every night for her husband, sons and daughter. Most important, she raised me to believe I could be whoever I wanted to be and in that a strong woman. If feminism has been bestowed onto me from my adopted mother, then I choose not to look at it as another indicator of whiteness or of being whitewashed. Rather, I see it as a gift that has shown me not the limitations of mainstream feminism but the possibilities of women of color feminism. People sometimes question my attachment to feminism. Despite the criticisms, it has served as a compass that navigates me away from paralysis into limitless potential.

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Women of color feminism has currently been reduced to a general abstraction that has flattened out difference and diversity, causing tension between women of color. Instead of collectively forming alliances against whiteness, women of color now challenge the opposing identities that exist under the umbrella term "women of color." It raises questions about entitlement and authenticity. It tries to suppress the heterogeneous composition of women of color feminism by trying to create a unifying term. Yet the differences of class, racialization and sexuality have arisen and persisted, challenging assumptions that all women of color are in solidarity with each other. We all come with backgrounds and histories that differ from one another and despite knowing this, we still maintain this ideal and creation of the authentic "women of color." The one that is the right class, the right race, the right sexuality. We must refuse being reduced to an abstraction. We must address the conflicts that have begun to fester paralysis instead of fostering change. But that also means that we need to revitalize women of color feminism so that those actions can begin to take place.

It is crucial to explore and expose the problems of women of color feminism, but we also need to be wary of what we are willing to sacrifice. I think a new, third space is being created in women of color feminism. Those of us who are not easily recognized and acknowledged as women of color are coming to feminism as a place to discuss the implications of invisibility. We are pushing, expanding and exploding ideologies of multiplicity

and intersectionality. We come as transracial adoptees, women of mixed race, bisexuals, refugees and hundreds of other combinations. For us, women of color feminism continues to be a living theory and a way to survive.

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Stop the False Race/Gender Divide

A Call to Action

Ann Russo and Melissa Spatz

Where do feminists stand on issues of race and racism? The 2007–2008 democratic primary struggle between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama brought out significant divides among feminists around gender and race. A small constituency of feminists garnered national attention by arguing that sexism trumped racism and that gender, not race, was the most enduring inequality. They argued that feminists must support Hillary Clinton because she is a woman who faced misogyny in her presidential campaign. Mainstream media took these ideas as if they represented most feminists and used them to fan the flames of a race/gender divide, harkening back to the divisive politics around suffrage in the late 19th and early 20th century. In the summer of 2008, we wrote this statement addressed primarily to white progressive and feminist activists to refuse such divisive and racist rhetoric and commit to coalitional feminist politics.

WE REFUSE . . .

We refuse a feminism that assumes that “women” are a homogeneous group. Women identify along a spectrum of identities, and gender is not always the most prominent one. Multiple systems of oppression and privilege, including racism, white supremacy, class hierarchy, religious intolerance, xenophobia, anti-immigrant policies, heterosexism, ableism and ageism shape women’s lives and experiences.

We refuse a feminism that pits sexism against racism, that claims that sexism is more entrenched than racism, and that the existence of sexism means that racism no longer exists. Sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression are interconnected. The misogynist spectacle against Hillary Clinton is tied to her white, middle-class heterosexuality, and differs from attacks on women who are not. We are dismayed that when media pundits frame Michelle Obama as an angry black woman, or as unpatriotic, or suggest that she should be the target of a “lynching party,” there has been no similar outcry by white feminists.

We refuse a feminism that claims to speak for all women, while denying and minimizing the ongoing legacy of white supremacy and racism in this country. This legacy includes the ways that women’s movements are embedded in white supremacist structures, ideas, and practices. We refuse to participate in organizations that demand allegiance to women

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