



Deconstructing Mainstream Feminism: A Critical Analysis Of Mikki Kendall's Hood Feminism

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Abstract

This paper examines Mikki Kendall's *Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women That a Movement Forgot* as a critique of widespread feminism and a call for a more comprehensive, equitable feminist movement. Through a close reading of Kendall's work, this paper argues that mainstream feminism has historically marginalized and erased the experiences of women of colour, poor women, and other vulnerable populations. By centering the voices of marginalized women, Kendall's *Hood Feminism* offers a necessary corrective to mainstream feminism and a vision of a more just and equitable feminist future.

Keywords: Mikki Kendall, Hood Feminism, intersectionality, mainstream feminism, feminism, women of color, marginalized voices, feminist critique, social justice.

I. Introduction

Mikki Kendall, a prominent voice in contemporary feminist discourse, has been making waves with her unapologetic and incisive critiques of mainstream feminism. Her book, *Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women That a Movement Forgot*, is a searing indictment of the ways in which feminist movements have historically marginalized and erased the experiences of women of color, poor women, and other vulnerable populations. By centering the voices and concerns of those most excluded from mainstream feminist discourse, Kendall's work demands a reckoning with the limitations of a movement that has often prioritized the interests of white, middle-class women at the expense of others.

Kendall's concept of "hood feminism" challenges traditional notions of feminism, arguing that mainstream feminism has often ignored the complex, intersecting oppressions faced by women of colour and poor women. Instead, she offers a vision of feminism that recognizes the ways in which racism, classism, ableism, and sexism are inextricably linked, and that centres the voices and experiences of those most marginalized. Through a series of essays, Kendall tackles issues such as food insecurity, housing precarity, and police violence, highlighting the ways in which these issues unevenly affect women of colour and poor women.

By highlighting the limitations of mainstream feminism, Kendall's work offers a critical intervention in contemporary feminist debates. She argues that feminism must be a movement that prioritizes the most vulnerable, rather than simply seeking to empower a select few. Feminism needs a reboot, one that acknowledges the complex web of oppressions women face. Kendall's work is a wake-up call, pushing feminists to own up to the inequalities within their own movements and strive for a more just future. This paper examines how Kendall's Hood Feminism critiques mainstream feminism and offers a more inclusive approach to feminist thought, one that recognizes the intersections of racism, classism, ableism, and sexism in shaping women's lives. Through a critical analysis of Kendall's work, this paper will explore the

ways in which hood feminism offers a necessary corrective to mainstream feminism, and what implications this has for building a more just and equitable world.

Mainstream Feminism: A Critique

Mainstream feminism has been criticized for its narrow focus on the concerns of white, middle-class, cisgender women, often leaving behind the voices and experiences of marginalized groups. This limited scope has resulted in a movement that prioritizes issues like glass ceilings and equal pay, while ignoring more pressing concerns such as food insecurity, gun violence, and housing injustice, which disproportionately affect marginalized communities.

By centring the experiences of privileged women, mainstream feminism has perpetuated systems of oppression and maintained the status quo. It has often partnered with corporations and institutions that perpetuate racism, sexism, and homophobia, rather than challenging these systems head-on. This approach has led to a feminism that is more focused on individual success than collective liberation, failing to address the intersecting forms of oppression that many women face.

Mainstream feminism's complicity in these systems has resulted in a movement that is often disconnected from the lived experiences of marginalized women. It has prioritized symbolic victories over substantive change, and has been willing to sacrifice the concerns and well-being of marginalized groups in the name of pragmatism or expediency. This has led to a feminism that is often more concerned with appearances than actual progress, and that fails to challenge the underlying structures of power and oppression.

II. Intersectionality and Hood Feminism

Hood Feminism by Kendall highlights intersectionality as a core idea. It's like, our identities are like threads in a fabric- they're all intertwined, and together they create our experience. Being a woman, belonging to a community, or being part of a certain group - it's the mix that shapes how we face challenges. By centring the voices of marginalized women, Kendall's work critiques mainstream feminism for its failure to account for the complex, intersecting oppressions faced by women of colour, poor women, and other vulnerable populations. For example, she highlights the erasure of black women's experiences with police brutality and mass incarceration from mainstream feminist discourse, despite the devastating impact on their families and communities.

Kendall's emphasis on intersectionality provides a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of feminist issues. She challenges dominant narratives around poverty and violence, arguing that they are not simply individual failures, but rather systemic issues perpetuated by racism, sexism, and classism. This perspective acknowledges that various forms of oppression overlap and intensify, resulting in distinct experiences of being marginalized.

By highlighting these intersections, Kendall's work demonstrates the limitations of mainstream feminism's focus on individual empowerment or single-issue politics. Instead, she advocates for a holistic approach that considers the multiple, intersecting identities and experiences of women at the margins. This involves centring the voices and perspectives of marginalized women and working to build a more inclusive and equitable feminist movement.

Kendall's intersectional approach also critiques the interconnected and mutually reinforcing nature of systems of oppression. According to her perspective, poverty extends beyond economic deprivation, intertwining with racial and gender disparities fuelled by systemic racism, sexism, and classism. Violence, too, is seen as a consequence of entrenched oppressive structures, rather than isolated incidents or individual flaws. By understanding these connections, Kendall's work offers a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of oppression and suggests ways to dismantle it.

III. Key Themes in Hood Feminism

Kendall's Hood Feminism sheds light on often-overlooked issues in mainstream feminist discourse. Food insecurity is a big deal, especially in low-income areas where people struggle to get healthy food. This leads to more health problems like diabetes and obesity. Kendall argues that food insecurity isn't just an economic issue, but a feminist one, as it disproportionately affects women and children.

Gun violence is another critical issue, often framed as an urban problem, but Kendall emphasizes its devastating impact on women of color. She notes that feminist discussions often overlook this, despite the trauma it inflicts on women and families.

Housing injustice is also a key theme, with discriminatory policies perpetuating segregation, poverty, and violence in marginalized communities. Kendall stresses that housing is a feminist issue, affecting women's safety, economic stability, and overall well-being.

V. Impact and Critique

Mikki Kendall's Hood Feminism has been a game-changer in feminist discourse, sparking crucial conversations about intersectionality, privilege, and the limitations of mainstream feminism. It's like she's highlighting the gaps in the movement, making space for voices that've been marginalized.

Some critics argue Kendall's work oversimplifies complex issues or neglects the intricacies of activism, which is a fair point. Others note that focusing on individual experiences can sometimes eclipse the structural forces driving oppression.

That being said, Hood Feminism is a vital contribution, offering a necessary corrective to mainstream feminism and envisioning a more inclusive, equitable feminist future. It's not about dismissing the existing movement but about broadening its scope.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, Mikki Kendall's Hood Feminism presents a piercing examination of mainstream feminism's shortcomings, underscoring the imperative for a more inclusive and equitable feminist paradigm. By foregrounding the narratives of marginalized women, Kendall's work not only critiques the myopic focus of mainstream feminism but also issues a clarion call for a feminist movement that acknowledges and addresses the complex, intersecting oppressions faced by women of colour, poor women, and other vulnerable populations. As a seminal work of feminist thought, Hood Feminism serves as a necessary corrective to the dominant narratives of mainstream feminism, offering a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of feminist issues. Kendall's intervention underscores the need for a feminist movement that prioritizes the needs and voices of those most marginalized, recognizing that the pursuit of gender equality must be inextricably linked to the pursuit of racial, economic, and social justice. Ultimately, Hood Feminism paints a picture of a feminist utopia where every woman's worth and dignity are celebrated, no matter her roots or identity. It's all about embracing inclusivity and recognizing the beauty in our differences.

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