

Nowadays, Feminism is prevalent. Ranging from Beyoncé's popular show at the 2014 Video Music Awards, where she danced in front of the term "feminist," to Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg's famous brand of "lean in" feminism, to the #MeToo movement, feminism has become very popular.

But, often time, feminism in typical culture privileges the stories and viewpoints of stars and women who are rich, white, or both. However, in order to really practice comprehensive feminism, it's important to accept intersectionality. That signifies taking into account how social class oppression, and racial oppression, intersects with and support the oppression of women. This is where the chapters to Thick come in handy. Using author Tressie McMillan Cottom's African American, working-class origins as a kickoff, they reveal to you the reason why the only means to defeat the patriarchy is to defeat racism and capitalism as well.

Chapter 1 - Thick description enables Tressie McMillan Cottom both to accept her unique view and to show the world where she lives in.

On one occasion at a bar, a man came to meet Tressie McMillan Cottom, and the two of them began to talk. Right before the man asked for her contact number, he said to her, "Your hair thick, your nose thick, your lips thick, the whole thing about just thick."

These words weren't only true of McMillan Cottom's look – it referred to her existence, as well. All through the author's life, people had made her feel as though she was a lot – thick where she ought to have been thin, more when she ought to have been less. This was particularly true of her relations with white teachers, white classmates, and white people as a whole.

For such a long period, McMillan Cottom attempted to change herself. She attempted to shed weight and controlling her behaviors. However, when an editor believed that even her writing to really thick –really difficult to be simply categorized as academic, literary, or common writing – she got an understanding. In order to truly express herself, she had to quit attempting to fit in; rather, she chose to accept her thickness.

By doing that; also, McMillan Cottom used her thick description, an idea she came across while working in the social sciences, to understand her viewpoint. Thick description is the concept that so as to know social actions, we have to know its circumstance. For instance, a woman that is shedding tears at her mother's burial signifies something totally different from a woman that is crying with happiness at her daughter's high school graduation. In the thick description, McMillan Cottom eventually discovered a label as complex as her position.

McMillan Cottom's essays represent thick description by using the research ideas and approaches of the social sciences to explain actions in context. Although, more than that, they reveal the word according to her own personal definition as well– using her status as a “thick” black woman as a lens we use to read the world. That lens is a significant one since McMillan Cottom's social position as a black woman shows much about the community where she stays.

In the history of America, this could perhaps be the ideal time to be a black person; however, black women are still very more likely than the other societies in America, to die at a younger age, earn less profit, go through police violence, and be disciplined by social policy.

Meaning, thick description lets McMillan Cottom accept her thickness in all its difficulty, and show a lot about American society currently.

Chapter 2 - People that are poor use money on status symbols in order for them to belong and have access to opportunities.

The family's neighbor of Tressie McMillan Cottom had an issue when she was still a kid. She had been deprived of the child care welfares that she badly had to take care of the grandchild that she looked after. The neighbor was not able to persuade the staff at the social service agency that she had the right to and required the benefits.

The mother of McMillan Cottom's then decided to assist the neighbor. One day, she wore one of her expensive clothes– a camel-colored cape and she wore matching slacks and knee-high boots. She coiffed her hair and she wore pearl earrings. After dressing up, she went straight to the social service agency with the elderly neighbor in tow. In her reputable, fancy cloth and

communicating with her best type of the Queen's English, she succeeded to get, in one afternoon, the welfares that the elderly neighbor had not been able to get in a year.

That day, McMillan Cottom learned a significant lesson from observing her mother. If you don't have money and you are black, you need to dress properly and speak properly to the opportunity of accessing welfares and opportunities. This the reason why people that are poor use their money on status symbols – they want to be part. Being part of the appropriate group at the appropriate time can signify the disparity between being employed and unemployed, between housing and homelessness, between a great job and a bad job.

And this is particularly correct for black people and women specifically. They're judged by a different and reliably stricter set of principles than that applied to white men. Hence, for these people, getting the "right" status symbols is particularly significant. Although, getting those symbols, usually entails needs to spend money – money that they don't usually have.

Tressie McMillan Cottom particularly usually faced the reality of the lesson she'd learned from seeing her mother dress up. For example, while she was in college, a manager from the building complex that she worked at said to her that she was aware that she was "OK" since she was dressed in a name brand suit to her interview – the manager even inquired her about the designer. By putting on a costly suit, McMillan Cottom had indicated to the manager that, in spite of being a black woman, she "belonged" – she had good style– and hence, she deserved the work.

Just like lots of people from poor settings, McMillan Cottom knew that status symbols opened doors.

Chapter 3 - White men are offered more space in public speech not that they are worthy of it; however, because they are white men.

A conservative op-ed columnist at the New York Times named David Brooks wrote a column about sandwiches in the year 2017. The column consisted of 865 words. Meaning, the well-known newspaper offered Brooks an important piece of space to write about deli meat.

Now, assuming a black woman was the one that wanted to write about an everyday subject that was significant to her. Assuming she wished to write about the silk headscarf she sleeps with, or about the irregular trash collection in her area. Would the New York Times have offered her an entire column to write that? It's not possible. The reason is that by and large, it's white men only who can be mundane and mediocre and yet be offered abundant space to show themselves, and get the benefits of money and respect.

This as well indicates to a different reality – that though all of us are being obliged to pay attention to what white men think on a broad range of subjects, they're never forced to give back the favor. People read what Brooks wrote in the column about sandwiches in the New York Times, regardless of how mundane the column is, due to the fact that it's published in the New York Times. But, Brooks, is not obliged to deal with the feelings of black women's, basically because women like that are hardly offered the opportunity to express their issues– any of them – on the pages of respected publications.

As a matter of fact, it wasn't until the last two years that the New York Times eventually employed a woman of color as an op-ed writer, although the paper was established in the year 1851. That signifies that the times took 167 years to realize that the absence of the viewpoint of a woman of color among its roster of op-ed writers was a severe exclusion, particularly because the New York Times is a liberal-leaning newspaper which implied to speak to and represent every demographic group.

Also, even though an African American woman's viewpoint really enhances the Times' op-ed pages, certainly more than one time in the sea of numerous white men would be better still?

The prevalent omission of black women's voices from reputable publications, specifically, is indefensible, considering that black women have a lot to add to significant debates. Consider the present moment. As of late, there's been much attention in the news about the increase of fascism in different parts of the world. Wouldn't black women – who have stayed under fascist

policies such as Apartheid, slavery, and colonialism in the United States and abroad – have a lot to talk about regarding right-wing extremism?

Chapter 4 - Classism, sexism, and racism make black women seem as incompetent.

In 2017, when Serena Williams, the tennis celebrity had her first child, things went badly wrong; immediately after she gave birth, Williams had blood clots in her lungs and came really close to dying. However, what was even more disturbing was that her critical requests for serious medical attention were dismissed by staff initially.

Ultimately, Williams was provided with the required treatment to save her life. However, a lot of black women – unavoidably those without Williams' status – are not really fortunate. As a matter of fact, the medical system frequently neglects black women.

In the United States which is the richest nation worldwide, black women die as a result of childbirth at rates similar to those seen in very poorer nations, like Uzbekistan and Mexico. According to the US Centers for Disease Control, it was estimated that black women are 243% much likely to die as a result of pregnancy and childbirth-related causes than are white women.

What is the reason why black women fare really much worse? The answer is seen in the manners whereby the medical system, and the society at large, sees and treats them. Particularly, black women, and poor black women, are victims of racism, sexism, and –due to the continuous hindrances to economic opportunity that both black people and women go through– classism. As a result of these intersecting oppressions, they are seen to be very incompetent – even when we talk of knowing their own bodies.

What Serena experienced and the medical system's chronic dismissal of black women's signs and suffering are proven by Tressie McMillan Cottom's personal experience. When McMillan was four months pregnant, she started to bleed profusely and she was rushed to the doctor. At the hospital, she went through a long wait. When the doctor eventually came, he dismissed her bleeding as "spotting" and signified that it was because she was overweight.

The doctor then told her to go home. When she got home, she started feeling serious pain. She made a phone call to a nurse and told her about symptoms; however, once more she was dismissed. After three days of awful pain, she went back to the hospital. They found out that she hadn't been "spotting," and that the discomfort was as a result that she had been in labor for three days. She gave birth to her daughter, just for her to die a few minutes after being born.

As a result of McMillan Cottom's race and gender, that signified that medical staff saw and treated her as incompetent – even when it was about knowing her own body. And just like a lot of other black women, the cost she paid was a big one.

Chapter 5 - Regardless of the political moment, white privilege defends itself all the time.

Something remarkable occurred in the year 2008. A nation that was established on the enslavement of black people, and which kept on treating them as second-class citizens, choose a black president named Barack Obama.

A lot of people believed that Obama's election heralded a new age in American race relationships. If a lot of white Americans could vote for a black person, definitely something in the scenery of race in America had transformed. However, although Obama's election was an important typical win, a bit was different in white-black relationships. Young black men are still being murdered at increased rates by the police, and black people kept on to be considerably poorer than their white peers.

Instead of confronting white privilege, Obama's election exposed the manners in which that privilege is really flexible we talk of defending its own power. Obama was famous among white voters since he displayed their perfect selves back to them without confronting them to think of the manners in which they themselves add to structures of inequality and oppression.

White Americans accepted Obama since they trusted that he could transform the world without requiring that they as well have to change. Thus, Obama's election left the white privilege untouched – the benefits that white people get basically as a result of their skin color. What

another thing could explain that growth for African Americans grieving from systemic inequality and racial violence amounted to no more than a trickle, even with an alleged transformative black?

Immediately before the 2008 election, this irony was completely shown when, McMillan Cottom went for an occasion in support of Obama in a rich white area of Charlotte, North Carolina. What stood out for McMillan Cottom about that party was the irony of a largely white gathering coming together to back up a black contender in a white area that was shaped by racist housing limits set in place to make sure that black people are kept out.

Still, white America wasn't prepared to surrender its power and privilege, in spite of voting a black man into power— in 2016, this was something that was proven by Donald Trump's election as president. Although a lot of Americans were surprised by Trump's dominance, McMillan Cottom was not surprised. As a matter of, she had been anticipating it, and McMillan wasn't the only African American that was expecting it. Before the election, McMillan Cottom remembers talking about the actual likelihood of Trump's election with a lot of other African Americans.

Just like these African Americans, McMillan Cottom was aware that white privilege finds means to survive and flourish all the time, maybe via Barack Obama's presidency or the election of Donald Trump.

Chapter 6 - Black people that are top achievers are usually believed to be “special black,” instead of typical African Americans.

Tressie McMillan Cottom went for an academic dinner while doing her graduate studies at Emory University. The man that was sitting next to her questioned her where she came from. Her reply was— that she came from the state of North Carolina – actually that didn't satisfy him, since he insisted, “No, where are you from?”

The man's failure to admit that McMillan Cottom came from South indicates to a popular belief about successful black people. If you are black and you are successful—like McMillan Cottom,

who as at them, was studying at a reputable university for her Ph.D. – you probably must be some type of “special black” person, not a typical African American from the South, with working-class roots to boot.

For instance, in the United States, “special blacks” are usually conflated with black ethnics – people of African lineage who don’t have the same history of slavery as their African American peers. These black ethnics are commonly African immigrants, who, in higher education institutions, are usually more at an advantage over African Americans.

For example, a study that was conducted by Candis Watts Smith a political scientist shows that about 40% of positions at esteemed Ivy League universities go-to black ethnics instead of African Americans. During that academic dinner, the man’s persistence that McMillan Cottom has to be from a place aside from North Carolina showed his belief that as an intelligent and successful black woman, she possibly couldn’t be African American.

That dinner event wasn’t the only instance that a person attempted to make McMillan Cottom over into a different type of black. She remembers during a tea party, that one woman proposed to her that she should claim the Cape Verdean origin because she had the exact dark skin color with the people of that small island country found in the west coast of Africa.

Those kinds of recurring encounters prove to McMillan Cottom that, as a result of her social status as a top-achieving black woman, she is meant to crave a different type of blackness different from the one she was born with.

The actual risk in the concept of “special blacks” is that it proposes that not everybody deserves an opportunity. Say just “special blacks” worth privileges, then this strengthens the notion that “regular blacks” are worthy of being marginalized. This the reason why Tressie McMillan Cottom declines to classify herself as “special black;” rather, she classifies herself as black-black.

Chapter 7 - Black girls are very more likely to be abused since they’re considered to be adultlike.

Tressie McMillan Cottom has usually enjoyed reading the biographies of black women that stress inspirational role models. However, she has also found a disturbing pattern in these life stories. A lot of the black women that McMillan reads about have gone through some kind of sexual trauma when they were a child— either abused by a mother’s new husband, an uncle or a boy older at school.

Certainly, a number of men that McMillan Cottom grew up with displayed disturbing behaviors toward women. One time, McMillan male cousin defended the boxer Mike Tyson, who, in the year 1992, was found guilty of raping an 18-year-old woman in a hotel room. Her cousin claimed that the 18-year-old wasn’t a woman, but she was a “ho” – a belittling word similar to the word “slut.” In symbolizing the woman like that, McMillan Cottom’s cousin insinuated that the woman was worthy of the rape since she went to Tyson’s hotel room.

Certainly, the sexual abuse that black girls, as well as young women, face indicates the disturbing beliefs about them. For instance, in Monique W. Norris’s book that was written in 2015 titled *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in School*, the scholar and writer indicate that black girls are regularly viewed and treated more like adultlike than their white peers.

A survey report that was published in 2017 by the Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality also showed that most of the public consider that black girls require less safety and caring than white girls. In practice what this entails is that black girls are usually seen to be more mature than they really are, which entails that they are very much likely to be victims of sexual abuse. Still, this is another repercussion of the intersecting oppressions that both black girls and women experience.

Similarly, even the imperfect approaches used to prove abuse signify that black girls and women are usually ignored. Frequently, for example, the police make use of images to record the bruises that a domestic abuser inflicts on a woman or girl. However, what if your skin is really dark to reveal these bruises? Although bruises are very obvious on white skin, they are usually not visible on black skin, which entails that black women and girls may not be able to show the proof legally required to support their claims of abuse.

As a result, black women and girls are not just victimized by abusers; however by society as well that sees them as older than they really are, and a criminal justice system whose approaches make the abuse inflicted on them, not visible.

Chapter 8 - Beauty criteria reinforce white privilege by omitting blackness.

During the MTV Video Music Awards in 2013, Miley Cyrus the singer performed there. There was controversy regarding her performance not just because Cyrus – a young white woman – took an African American dance style called twerking; however, also because a lot of her back-up dancers were big-bodied black women.

These women that danced for her were downgraded to the background in the performance of a dance gotten from their culture. To even make the issue worse, Cyrus touched the bodies of these women in intimate ways – for instance, by placing her hands on the butt of one dancer, she strengthened the idea that black women were just props in her performance.

Cyrus' behavior shows how beauty criteria are made and reinforced by not including blackness. The bodies of the black female dancers in the performance were not signified to be viewed as beautiful. Instead, they were shown as a contrast to, and hence a reinforcement of, Cyrus' own blue-eyed, white-skinned, thin-bodied beauty. By doing that, the performance privileged Cyrus' appeal and beauty accurately by omitting the black bodies behind her.

The manner whereby black women are regularly omitted from the likelihood of being beautiful is shown in McMillan Cottom's personal experience. She describes how, since the time of her school days, her big, dark-skinned body was usually seen as ugly or wrong by white people that surround her. When McMillan Cottom was in sixth grade, a white teacher of hers said to her that her breasts, which were big for her age, were disturbing.

On a different incident, a white classmate showed his respect for a girl by stating, "that's an actual blonde," hence McMillan Cottom that "actual blondes" were more socially respected.

Certainly, when McMillan Cottom's got to high school, she could tell that being blonde, white, and thin signified criteria of perfect beauty that would usually omit her own body.

However, such beauty standards don't just omit black women. They reflect the inequalities of the current social status as well. The reason is that people who are seen as beautiful are offered more privileges, which tallies to more power in society.

Also, when beauty is related to whiteness, that signifies that people who are dark-skinned are deprived of this power and its associated benefits. This is the reason why black students are very likely to be disciplined than white students, black people are very likely to get more sentences for offenses, and black people are less likely to get married.

By placing whiteness as the perfect beauty, Cyrus' performance declared, instead of challenged, power structures. The reason is that beauty criterion doesn't just position blackness as unattractive, they consolidate white privilege as well.

Thick: And Other Essays by Tressie McMillan Cottom Book Review

In *Thick: And Other Essays*, Tressie McMillan Cottom accepts thickness not just as a physical feature of her own body; however, also as an intellectual lens in which to see her own personal experience as an African American woman. By doing that, she reveals how misogyny, racism, and capitalism intersect to marginalize the beauty of black women and at times their lives. Eventually, her essays propose that all of us should nurture our thickness – our ability to think about things in all of their difficulty –for us to better know the world. That is the only time can we make room for people who are at the margins of society.

Look for the voices of people that are marginalized.

In some way or another, you most likely gain from class, race, or gender privilege – or maybe from the entire at the same time. This is the reason why it's significant to look for and pay attention to the voices of the people who are not the same as you –particularly the voices of those who experience social oppressions like poverty, racism, and misogyny. That is only when

you become more conscious and more crucial of your own privilege and know how to come out to support and give space to the people who really require it.

<https://goodbooksummary.com/thick-by-tressie-mcmillan-cottom-book-summary/>