

Doing Feminism: Teaching And Research In The Academy



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Black feminism in the academy

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to be a critical reflection on the author's position as a Black female academic in the academy, and comes from a motivation to raise Black consciousness about the importance of Black feminist scholarship.

Design/methodology/approach – The author identifies the unique position of Black feminism, which has had to define itself apart from second-wave feminism of the 1970s, which marginalised non-White women and the Civil Rights movement, which marginalised women. The oppression faced by Black feminists is apparent in the shifting platforms of identity that Black feminists occupy in the academy. Another obstacle is the restricted and incomplete picture of feminism in the academy, which sidelines Black feminist writing. One of the ways to raise awareness is to focus on the corpus of Black writing and to re-position it within academic core curricula, rather than relegating it to specialised courses.

Findings – It is found that Black feminism is marginalised in the academy in scholarship and representation. It is also found that students are more receptive to ideas about feminism when approaching the subject indirectly.

Research limitations/implications – One limitation of the study is an absence of theoretical literature from a UK context.

Social implications – The paper highlights the marginalisation of Black feminism in the academy. **Originality/value** – The subjects of "feminism in academia" and the representation of "Black and minority ethnicities in the Academy" have been explored in scholarship. However the combination of these terms, namely the role of the Black feminist in the academy, is a comparatively unexplored subject. Hence, the originality of this paper.

Keywords Black people, Ethnic minorities, Feminism, Higher education, Sex and gender issues, Academic staff.

Paper type Research paper

In this paper I want to reflect on my position as an Asian female academic in the humanities in a UK university, and to examine some critical issues that are central to the development of a Black feminist consciousness in the Academy[1].

My main objective is to examine the primary concerns of Black feminism and to discuss the marginalisation of Black feminist scholarship in the Academy. This marginalisation led me to investigate how it could be overcome in my own pedagogical practice by thinking about how to reframe strategies for teaching Black feminism in my subject areas, one of which is the history of art. In the history of feminism, Black feminism was a corrective to the master narrative of White feminism, where the latter purported to represent all positions in feminism. The diversity and richness of Black feminist thinking and writing is poorly reflected in curricula and this is due to a host of factors that include the under-representation of Black feminists in the workforce, restricted paradigms of knowledge and the presentation of a monolithic view of feminism as indicative of normative views.

My contention is that if the Academy is to fulfil its mission statements and achieve equality, then it has to deal with issues of diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities



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