

Building Womanist Coalitions: Writing and Teaching in the Spirit of Love

Gary L. Lemons, *editor*

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As womanist scholarship has blossomed and transformed nearly every liberal arts discipline, many scholars find themselves drawn to womanism and wonder if they can participate in its liberating spirit. The question of who can be a womanist has many different answers, ranging from limiting participation to only Black women all the way to including any who share its values and commitment to liberation for all people.

Gary L. Lemons's volume begins with this very question, necessarily so, to explain why he is an editor of a book on womanism as pedagogical methodology. He details his exposure to womanism and its transformative influence on his life and work. Blessed by AnaLouise Keating and other womanists to pursue editorial leadership of this volume, Lemons offers a moving description of womanism rooted in its historical and early literary beginnings. He emphasizes its grounding in the liberating force of self-love, which is the rejection of oppressive metrics of self in favor of a celebration of Black women's selves. For Lemons, the core of womanist identity is love, for self and for others, which his volume proposes as a pedagogical methodology for the transformative and transgressive classroom.

Building Womanist Coalitions features scholars from a variety of disciplines describing their encounters with common texts—particularly the works of Alice Walker and Audre Lorde, *This Bridge Called My Back* by Gloria Anzaldúa, *Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism* edited by Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman, and *this bridge we call home* edited by Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating—and how these have shaped them as scholars and teachers. Each contributor offers examples of womanism enacted in their classroom and its impact on students. From poets, thespians, theologians, and ethicists to historians, political scientists, lawyers, and activists, representing significant racial, regional, and age diversity, contributors demonstrate the power of womanist pedagogies in their disciplines and offer hope for its transformative role in human society.

Building Womanist Coalitions is a helpful resource for an instructor interested in better understanding womanism and incorporating womanist readings and or methodologies into the classroom. This book will no doubt encourage readers to dig deeper into womanist bibliographies in general and within their particular disciplines, and it provides concrete examples of womanist pedagogy embodied and practiced in the classroom.

For faculty in religious or theological higher educational settings, this volume consistently engages spirituality as a necessary component of womanism. It presents spirituality as separate from, though not altogether disconnected from, organized religion, and as essential to students' intellectual formation. Some contributors wrestle with the spiritual components of womanism, while others readily embrace its invitation into African and Asian faith practices.

For admirers of womanism who do not identify as womanist, this volume offers conversation partners from a variety of perspectives who share admiration for the transformative nature of womanism and seek to shape their teaching around its wisdom without violating its sacred boundaries. This book gives pro-womanists concrete ideas for sharing womanism with students appropriately and for deepening their own engagement with transnational womanism and its applications.