



art by @actualfootageofme

# DEAR WHITE WOMEN,

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A letter reminding modern white feminist of their relationship with black women throughout history.

Written and curated by Rachel E. Cargle  
@1thatgotawayy

Dear White Women,

I am exhausted. Yet even in the midst of the troubled heart and mind I possess as a black woman in the United States, I have a bit of time and energy to tell you all about yourselves. To remind you of yourselves. To take a magnifying glass to very roots of how you got to where you are and how that relates to me, a black feminist.

I am writing this to you as an act of self care. As an act of self preservation. Please take note that this is not a service to you nor is it a gift. It is, most simply, a heavy load I must set it down, right here, right now in order to make room for something more.

I have developed a small community in the world of social media. Mainly consisting of you...white women, both from the US and internationally. I'm not sure how this happened or why, seeing that I am indeed a black woman in the United States. In the time that my community has grown I proudly have used this space highlight the experiences of marginalized groups. Specifically the black community.

*A note from Rachel:*



photo by: @mkrshoots

Yet and still there seems to be a disconnect. It is evident through conversation that there is a gap in understanding of the realities black women face in this fight. Our feminisms still aren't lining up. The social, political and economic advancement of women has mostly benefited a specific sector of the gender: white women.

So here in this space I want to hold a mirror, just for a moment to remind you of what your white skin holds when it comes into this ongoing discussion of intersectionality and feminist theory. But I also want you to use this mirror I'm holding to peek beyond your own reflection. I want you to consider and quite frankly internalize the history of the ways white and black women relate and how that very distinct relationship is reflected in society, specifically social justice and civil rights today.

While I have the time as well as the emotional and mental energy to do so I would like to lay a few things out for you to consider.

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# Americas Racist Roots



art by: Titus Kaphar

Dear White Women,  
As much as I know you'd like to romanticize the founding fathers and the development of our 'melting pot' of a nation, the facts stand that this country was built by slaveholders who regarded their slaves as inferior, childlike, untrustworthy and, of course, as property and could see no way for African-Americans to live in society as free people. They embraced the worst forms of racism to justify slavery. Thomas Jefferson who penned the phrase "All men are created equal" was a slave owner himself. He is quoted in his Notes On The State Of Virginia to say: "The blacks whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstance, are inferior to the whites in the endowments of both mind and body."

I want you to consider one thing in light of this. These men were married to white women. These white women had no concern for their "fellow women".

## Americas Racist Roots



Dear White Women,

They were comfortable in their own lives while female slaves were being beaten and raped in their own backyards by the men in their household. They sat and watched while black women slaves left their own babies on the floors of slave houses sipping on sugar water while they used their breast milk to feed white babies. They stood silent while black women wailed at the pain of working dawn to dusk with pained bodies and broken hearts. This whole time white women didn't "fight for what women deserve". It wasn't until their own comfortability got threatened that they felt the need to come together as "women" to support "justice for the female gender". Do you see why black women may be a bit apprehensive to trust you?

You can read more about the racist roots of American founding fathers here:

**The Founding Fathers  
and Slavery**

**Whitewashing  
History**

# White Feminism

Dear White Women,

White feminism is the space where white women fight for rights that benefit their personal agendas without regard for the ways marginalized women experience oppression within the same system.

For example, here is a truth for you: to celebrate the 19th amendment as the historic moment when which women could vote is to whitewash history. It is the moment WHITE WOMEN were allowed to openly and safely vote.

White feminism is no safe space for women of color and causes us much more damage than good. Take a moment to consider WHEN white women get involved in social justice issues. If and only when they are effected by whatever topic is on the table.

Intersectionality was word developed by black academic Kimberlé Crenshaw to address the ways that analyzing and discussing how oppression often intersects, creating unique and varied experiences of discrimination. Though a buzzword at the moment, the reality of its applied use in feminism has yet to be fully realized.

Learn more about white feminism here:

**We Need To Talk About  
White Feminism**

**What is White  
Feminism**

**So You Think You're  
Not A White Feminist?**

**White Feminism In  
The Digital Age**

# Systematic Racism

Dear White Women,

When the conversation around race comes up there is inevitably a person who insists that slavery has ended, racism is no longer an issue and black people must simply try harder. This stance not only shows a lack of knowledge around American history but also is a deeply dismissive attitude toward the ways that white Americans have contributed to the disenfranchisement of the black community.

Systematic racism is the practices and policies put in place by institutions that harm one group and help another. In this case we are talking the US government and the ways it harms black communities while helping the white population. Everything from opportunity for education, to ability to own a home, to access to quality medical care to mass incarceration. America is filled with little allies and avenues that ensure black citizens have no easy way to success and prosperity.

These resources offer more insight into the realities of systematic racism in the United States:

**What is Systemic Racism?**

**10 Signs of Institutional Racism**

**An Explanation of Systemic Racism**



# Dear White Women,



1. Recognize that even when your good intentions are truly good, that's totally meaningless. Try this on for size: when you accidentally step on somebody else's foot, you do not make your good intentions the focus of the episode. Instead, you check to make sure the other person is OK, you apologize, and you watch where you're going. You don't get annoyed with the person you stepped on because you caused her pain or declare that she is too sensitive or defend yourself by explaining that you meant to step to the left of her foot. When you crush another person's toes, everyone recognizes that your impact, not your intention, is what's important. It should be the same with words.

2. If you feel defensive when talking about race with a woman of color or reading about race in a piece written by a woman of color, assume the other person is saying something especially true. That is: use your defensiveness as a Bat Signal, alerting you to your own biases. Sure, yes, of course, the other person may have said something insensitive or unreasonable. But if you want to change the dynamics of the world (reminder: you're a feminist, so you do), assume your discomfort is telling you something about you, not about the other person. Then use those moments to listen more carefully.

3. Look for ways that you are racist, rather than ways to prove you're not. There are two key ideas here. First, you can't change behaviors you're not aware of, and if you're constantly trying to assure yourself you're not racist, you're going to miss the ways you are. Second, once you've accepted that you are, in fact, racist some of the time, it's a lot easier to drop the barrier of good intentions, let go of the defensiveness and take responsibility for your actions.

via: Sara Meilstien

4. Listen to people of color, even if you don't know many. A common suggestion for white people who want to get a clue is to simply listen. Which is a critical step, and it's especially important in your direct interactions with people of color. But what if none of your best friends are Black and you don't work with many people of color either? As I mentioned earlier, you can make sure you're taking in media created by people of color. You can also do a ton of thoughtful listening on Twitter – a medium that gives you legitimate access to the thoughts and conversations of people you may not know.

5. Use your feminist powers to identify instances when people of color are under-represented or misrepresented, and speak out about it. You're already in the habit of noticing when lists and groups include few or no women. Tweak your internal algorithm to notice when people of color are missing, too. Then say something.

You can read this full Article  
by Sara Meilstien [HERE](#)

# About The Author

My work is rooted in providing tools and resources allowing women and their allies to form valid opinions on the issues that matter to us. I believe in knowledge leading to action and I use this platform to both provide education and inspire meaningful conversation.

I'm an activist and writer. I am a passionate woman of color who is excited to share space with my community in order to continue in our collective pursuit for justice in our world.

I am currently living in NYC and attending Columbia University where I am studying in the field of anthropology and women's studies. I also serve on the young professionals boards of women based organizations such as the Ms. Foundation and Womankind.

I am the founder of State Of The Woman, a weekly newsletter roundup of international headlines on women's issues and I am one half of The Ripple, the activist collective founded by my friend Dana (@dothehotpants) and I.



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