

BLACK WOMEN:

SISTERS OF STRUGGLE



IDA B. WELLS
- Photo -

STUDY GUIDE / COURSE OUTLINE
Cooperative Research Network in Black Studies

SISTERS OF STRUGGLE: BLACK WOMEN AND BLACK LIBERATION

There is no more important topic for study than women, and this is as equally true for Black women as for anybody else. And yet, without effort, especially on the part of women themselves, this study will not be undertaken properly, women will go unknown as before and the emancipation of women will be prolonged even more. This is a study guide to encourage the proper study of Black women.

This study guide is organized into three parts: topics 1 - 4 focus on Black womens experiences within the essential periods of Afro-American historical modalities (Africa, Slavery, Tenancy, and the urban experience); topics 5 - 7 focus on the developmental sex-role changes for Black women (growing up, courtship and marriage, and family-kinship networks); and topics 8 - 10 focus on movements and the politics of social change (the arts, politics, and protest). We have included a bibliography of general texts frequently used in Black womens studies, and a chart to see how all of these texts cover the ten topics of this study guide.

[Note to readers of 2nd draft: We need to locate more recent data. Can you help?]

The Cooperative Research Network (see page 15) has established a new work group, SISTERS OF STRUGGLE. The SDS is open to all sisters who agree with the objectives of the CRN, the general thrust of this study guide, and the general thrust of the text Introduction to Afro-American Studies by Abdul Alkalimat and Associates.

The particular problems and concerns of Black women must be discussed not as isolated questions, but as a part of the problems faced by all Black people. Over 52% of all Black people in the United States are women. Women play a special role in bearing children and in the family, and increasingly are becoming sole heads of households. However, Black women face greater discrimination than any other group in this society--in income, in job opportunities, in education, in holding political office, and in other areas of social life.

The oppression of Black women has its historical roots in the foundation and development of capitalism and imperialism in the United States. This special oppression is based on three things:

1. Most Black women are workers and are subjected to economic (class) exploitation at the hands of the rich. Black women have always worked and this more than anything else has shaped the experience of Black women in the United States. In fact, the work experiences of Black women make their concerns somewhat different from those of the women's liberation movement which seeks to get white women into the work place. Both Black and white women, however, share the demand of equal pay for equal work.
2. Black women, as do the masses of Black men, suffer from many forms of racist national oppression, like job discrimination and the denial of basic democratic rights.
3. Black women, like all women, face male supremacy (sexism) which attempts to put women into subordinate roles in a male-dominated society. This is reflected in the role of women in the Black family. In short, the oppression of Black women grows out of the same system of capitalism that exploits and oppresses the masses of Black people and everybody else, and it is buttressed by patriarchal ideology. The particular content of this oppression has been transformed as the experiences of Black people have changed from slavery to the rural experience to the urban experience. These three periods provide the historical framework for our analysis of Black women and the family.

Alkalimat and Associates,
Introduction to Afro American Studies, pp. 206-207.

BASIC BIBLIOGRAPHY ON BLACK WOMEN

A. Key Bibliographical References

1. Johnetta Cole, "Black Women in America: An Annotated Bibliography." The Black Scholar, March 1975, pp 16-28.
2. Lenwood G. Davis, The Black Woman in American Society: A Selected Annotated Bibliography. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1975.
3. Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds. But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Womens Studies. Old Westbury, N.Y.: The Feminist Press, 1982. See Section 6, "Bibliographies and Bibliographic Essays," pp 221-336.
4. Ora Williams, American Black Women in the Arts and Sciences: A Bibliography. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1978.

B. Main Anthologies

1. Toni Cade, ed., The Black Woman. New York: New American Library, 1970.
2. Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, eds., The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat, 1978.
3. Gerda Lerner, ed., Black Women in White America: A Documentary History. 1972.
4. La Frances Rodgers-Rose, ed., The Black Woman. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1980.
5. Mary Helen Washington, Black Eyed Susan.

C. General Works

1. Angela Davis, Women, Race and Class. New York: Random House, 1981.
2. Jacqueline Jones, Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present. New York: Basic Books, 1985.
3. Jeanne Noble, Beautiful, Also, Are the Souls of My Black Sisters: A History of the Black Woman in America. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1978.
4. Robert Staples, The Black Woman in America. Chicago: Nelson Hall Publishers, 1973, 78.

GENERAL OUTLINE

1. Women in Africa
2. Black Women in Slavery
3. Black Women in Tenancy
4. Black Women in the City
5. Growing up as a Black Woman
6. Courtship and Marriage
7. Family and Kinship
8. Black Women as Artists
9. Black Women in Electoral Politics

10. Black Women and Social Protest

1. WOMEN IN AFRICA

Womens lives in Africa reflect varied historical experiences: patriarchal patterns of traditional societies, colonized societies, independent neo-colonial societies, societies led by socialist oriented political parties, and liberation movements. Women, in every case, are the most economically exploited and socially oppressed of all groups. Over the long run, urbanization and industrialization create greater necessity to equalize opportunities for women in education and employment, thereby utilizing more effectively the labor of women for profits.

Throughout African history individual women have played key roles in state building and anti-colonial struggle (e.g., the Egyptian Queen Nefertiti and the Angolan Queen Nzinga. However, only as a result of influences from trade unions, liberation movements and socialist parties do women emerge as a social force for their own emancipation. The emancipation of women requires the liberation of society, modern technology, and new forms of collective responsibility in the social development of children. Moreover, the cultural hegemony of patriarchal rules will only be destroyed by an aggressive political struggle waged by an independent womens movement, including mass political education for women and men, and progressive women in 50% of leadership roles.

1. To what extent were women emancipated in traditional African society? To what extent were women liberated under colonialism? by major religions? by the post-colonial state in Africa?
2. What is the role of women in the movements to build new societies under socialism? Discuss the example of Angolan women.
3. What are the experiences of women in South Africa (Azania) today? How are they oppressed? How are they contributing to the liberation struggle? Deal with Winnie Mandela.

Maria Rosa Cutrufelli, Women of Africa. London: Zed, 1983.

Editorial Committee, ed., Women in Nigeria Today. London: Zed, 1985

*Organization of Angolan Women, Angolan Women Building the Future. London: Zed, 1984.

Winnie Mandela, Part of My Soul. London: Penguin Books, 1985.

Ivan Van Sertima, Black Women in Antiquity. New Brunswick, NJ: Transition Books, 1985.

* = required reading

2. BLACK WOMEN AS SLAVES

Women were slaves, and like Black men they were worked harder than at any other time in human history. The slave experience was especially brutal and inhumane for women since it transformed child birth into commodity production and institutionalized rape as legitimate ruling class recreation. Black women were also forced to serve whites as domestic servants and surrogate mothers (mammys). They had unity with white women as victims of patriarchy, but as slaves Black women were managed by white women as economic and racial "inferiors."

But Black women were also able to fight back, to develop a culture of resistance and to give leadership to escape. There are many examples of slave women physically fighting and dying to protect their children. Gutman gives evidence of slave resistance through marriage rules and naming practices by which an Afro-American culture was expressed. And, of course, political escape was led by field generals such as Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth.

1. What special features of slave exploitation and oppression were experienced by women?
2. How did Black women create and participate in an Afro-American culture of resistance?
3. Discuss examples of Black women who actively fought against slavery, especially Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth.

*Angela Davis, "Reflections on Black Womens Role in the Community of Slaves," Black Scholar, 3, No 4, (December 1971)

Herbert Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom (New York: Vintage Books, 1977)

Olive Gilbert, The Narrative of Sojourner Truth (New York: Arno Press, 1968)

Deborah White, Aren't I A Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South. New York: Norton, 1985.

Dorothy Burrham, "The Life of the Afro-American Woman in Slavery," International Journal of Women's Studies 1, 4, 1978, pp 363-377.

3. THE BLACK WOMAN ON THE FARM

During the period from the 1880's to the 1940's the majority of Black people struggled to survive as tenant farmers in the rural south. The family was the social unit of production and was led by the oldest male. This created the economic basis for strong family unity and clearly defined age/sex roles in family life. People needed each other for security, often including others such as extended family, even "fictive kin" (make believe family members). However, when without a male family head, Black women had to be strong enough to play both roles, often calling on older women (or the oldest female child) to "mother" the young while mothers provided economic security through gainful employment.

Sexual freedom was limited by the economic pressure to build strong family ties, so unwed mothers with their children were chastised but integrated back into the community and accepted. Illegitimacy was a foreign concept as every child was welcomed into a family. Black women were denied leadership roles in a patriarchal church but tended to dominate the cultural activity of music, food, and material culture (e.g., quilting). Black women were often in the forefront of struggle against racist oppression, e.g., Ida B. Wells set a heroic example with her anti-lynching crusade.

1. What is the relationship between tenant farming and family structure? Are women an economic asset to their husbands? Do women need men to survive?
2. What was the role of Black women in the church and "legitimate" cultural life? Did they suffer from male supremacy within the Black community?
3. Discuss the fight against lynching waged by Ida B. Wells. What specific problems did she face because she was a woman?

*Charles Johnson, Shadow of the Plantation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934, 1966) see part II "The Family," pp 47 - 102.

Alfreda Duster, ed., Crusader for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

Molly C. Dougherty, Becoming A Woman in Rural Black Culture. New York: Holt Rinehart, 1978.

Hylan Lewis, Black Ways of Kent (New Haven, Conn.: College and University Press, 1955) see chapter 4 "Courtship, marriage, and the Family." pp 82 - 113.

Dorothy Sterling, We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the 19th Century. New York: Norton, 1984.

4. BLACK WOMEN IN THE CITY

The urban experience of Black women has undergone extreme changes over the last 40 years or so. World War II led to a qualitative shift in employment, with Black women moving into clerical and factory jobs in unprecedented numbers giving security to family life (either two incomes for husband-wife duo or a livable wage for a single parent household.) However, since WORLD WAR II Black unemployment rates are double that for whites. Since then, the prison and military (wars) have crippled or limited the supply of men, and the welfare system has managed the social control function over women.

Increasingly Black women have been forced into being single parent heads of households, along with being on the bottom of most social scales, eg., income, employment, education, housing, health, in addition to which the violence experienced (rape, etc.) goes unnoticed. The majority of Black women are no longer domestic workers, but are firmly based in the working class, in industrial, clerical, and service jobs. On the other hand, Black women have been most politically active in the city context. From Black suffragettes to leaders of major organizations and institutions Black women have fought hard. This includes trade unions, community organizations, and civil rights organizations. A good example of poor Black women being organized is the National Welfare Rights Organization.

1. How did the experience of Black women change during the 1940's due to urbanization and industrialization?
2. Discuss the issues of the single woman head of household.
3. What was the National Welfare Rights Organization? What were its strengths and weaknesses?

Barbara Jones, "The Economic Status of Black Women," in James Williams, ed., The State of Black American 1983 (New York: National Urban League, 1983) pp 115 - 154

Bonnie Dill, "Race, Class, and Gender: Prospects for an All-inclusive Sisterhood," Feminist Studies 9, No 1 (Spring 1983) pp 131 - 150

Phyllis A Wallace, Black Women in the Labor Force. Cambridge, Mass.: M I T Press, 1980.

Jacqueline Jackson, "Black Women in a Racist Society," Charles Willie, ed., Racism and Mental Health. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1973, pp 185-269.

Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, "From Slavery to Social Welfare: Racism and the Control of Black Women," in Swerdhow and Lessinger, eds., Class, Race and Gender. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1983.

5. GROWING UP AS A BLACK WOMAN

Young Black girls learn about womanhood in a hurry -- taking care of younger siblings, seeing or hearing about adult sex in action due to crowded living quarters, being courted for adult sex at or before puberty, and vicarious adult experience based on TV, popular music, and candid discussions with adults. Also, sexual abuse is widespread in families, schools, churches, and recreational groups (girl scouts, YWCA, and camps, etc.). They are trapped in contradictory and self negating value systems -- on the one hand it is ok to "do it" (either voluntarily for fun or to seek acceptance) and on the other hand it is the greatest social crime in the community. Teen pregnancy is regarded as one of the major problems of this era.

Given the historical dynamic that has increased the single mother heads of households, and the widespread promotion of sexuality in society, to target the sexually active teenager as "culprit" is confusing the victim with the source of the crime. Mass education, health programs (pre and post natal care, including contraceptives), public child care and public abortion options are absolutely required. In the long run, the single Black mother (teens included) must organize into a viable political force to fight for their rights with these changes.

1. When little Black girls grow up how are their experiences different from boys? white girls? middle class Black girls from working class and poor Black girls?
2. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the public welfare system. Are children adequately cared for?
3. What is the issue of teen pregnancy? And what public policy should be made?

Margaret Spencer, Geraldine Brookings, and Walter Allen, eds, Beginnings: The Social and Affective Development of Black Children (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1985)

James Comer and Alvin Pousaint, Black Child Care: How to Bring up a Healthy Black Child in America. A Guide to Emotional and Psychological Development (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975)

Harriet McAdoo and John McAdoo, eds., Black Children. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1985.

Diana Slaughter, "Becoming an Afro-American Woman." School Review, Feb., 1972, pp 299-317.

Maya Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. New York: Random House, 1970.

6. MARRIAGE AND COURTSHIP

The nature of courtship and marriage is undergoing radical change. Marriages occur later and divorce is more frequent. Premarital sex is normal, and trial marriages (living together first) continues. Women are once again being forced to adapt to new conditions, in part as a result of new birth control technology, or abortion operations, or the conscious decision to postpone parenthood due to educational or job related plans. Furthermore, women and progressive forces are fighting to change the legal system, giving women more rights and control over their bodies (the right to an abortion and criminal statutes for all kinds of sexual abuse), more equality in relationships (economic rights with husbands, and rights in common law marriages), rights to independence (equitable no fault divorce and prohibition of sex discrimination on the job), and access to female lawyers, judges, and jury members.

However, Black men continue to play the dominant power role in courtship and marriage. Further, they are in a severe crisis based on unemployment, drug use, police terror, and Black on Black crime. In this context, Black women who seek love, security, and family life with Black men continue to catch hell. The solution on an individual level is between a man and a woman, but on a community/social level it can only be resolved as part of a social protest movement to solve these basic problems.

1. Are Black women equal partners in courtship and marriage? How do relationships represent a power struggle, and how do they represent equal democratic relations?
2. Tina Turner asks "what's love got to do with it?" How do Black women answer this question in explaining their relationship with men? What do you think?
3. Self help activities around rape, abortion, consciousness-raising, battered women, and self defense spread rapidly during the 1970s. How were Black women affected by these activities and what is the current status of such organizations in your community?

Maxine Alexander, Speaking for Ourselves: Women of the South. New York: Random House, 1984.

Diane K. Lewis, "The Black Family: Socialization and Sex Roles." Phylon 36, 221-237.

Robert Staples, The World of Black Singles. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981.

Anita Washington, "A Cultural and Historical Perspective on Pregnancy-Related Activity Among US Teenagers." Journal of Black Psychology 9:1, 1-28.

Joyce Ladner, "Teen Pregnancy," in The State of Black America 1986. New York: National Urban League, 1986.

7. FAMILY AND KINSHIP

The structure of the Black family is changing, but kin relations remain important adult support networks and serve the function of primary group socialization for the young. Family kinship involves ones ancestry (using family genealogy for ones historical identity) and living kin (using extended family kin relations as useful reference group - support network).

Every student in Black studies should trace both aspects of family structure, genealogy (back to the civil war, and if possible back to Africa) and living kin (to at least 2nd cousins). The main method should be interviewing the oldest family members about kin. Begin with your parents, then each of their parents (your grandparents), then each of their parents (your great grandparents). Get their full names, birth date and place, and add the date of death. The more you learn about your family the more historical identity you have, and can pass on to your children. Every child should be given a name that reflects their family history.

1. Discuss the meaning of family reunions? Geneological research? In what ways are they positive, and in what ways are they negative?
2. Why are female-headed households regarded as weak? Are they weak? discuss the impact of patriarchy, feminization of poverty, and teen pregnancy.
3. To what extent is the family a viable support network for Black women?

Elmer Martin and Joanne Martin, The Black Extended Family. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978

Carol Stack, All Our Kin

Robert Hill, The Strengths of Black families. New York: Emerson Hall, 1972.

James McGhee, "A Profile of the black Single Female-Headed Household," in James Williams, ed., The State of Black America - 1984. New York: National Urban League, 1984.

Walter Allen, "The Search for Applicable Theories of Black Family Life." Journal of Marriage and the Family, 40:1, 1978, pp 117-129.

8. BLACK WOMEN AS ARTISTS - WRITERS

Black women are the conveyor belts of Afro-American culture, both as creators and communicators of the culture of everyday life and in the creative arts as well. However, in the professional creative arts Black men have been the dominant force. Black women artists have had more opportunities in singing, dancing, and special material arts such as quilt making. Only recently have women been making advances as instrumentalists, composers, and writers of drama, and especially novels.

Black women authors have been published since the eighteenth century but it has not been until recently that these creative individuals became a part of the continuum of literary expression within the U.S. Issues such as caste divisions within the Black community, Black women as the 'mules of the world' and the sexual exploitation of Black women by Black and white men have been raised in novels, short stories and poems as authors attempted to explore in an artistic context the realities and ramifications of the oppression of Black women. Since 1950 there has been an explosion of literary expression which was suggested by the women writers of the Harlem Renaissance and which was possible with the economic and educational opportunities available after WWII. Poets and novelists have focused with increasing clarity on the historical violation of Black women, their strengths and future paths of collective growth. These themes have been vividly articulated and have served to destroy the stereotypes about Black women which had previously existed in American literature. Finally, as is true wherever the community lacks control, certain styles and writers have been promoted by the mainstream literary establishment as the artistic voice for all Black women. We must be conscious and supportive of those voices that authentically speak in our interest and not be misled by a madison avenue-type marketing strategy.

1. Why have Black women been able to make more achievements in the realm of everyday cultural life of Black people rather than in the professional "fine arts?"
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the major Black women writers today? Discuss Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Toni Cade Bambara, Margaret Walker, and Sonja Sanchez.
3. Are there class differences in the fictional treatment of Black women? What difference does this make?

*Mari Evans, ed., Black Women Writers 1950-1980: A Critical Evaluation (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1984).

Gloria Wade Gayles, No Chrystal Stair: Visions of Race and Sex in Black Women's Fiction.

Claudia Tate, ed., Black Women Writers at Work. New York: Continuum, 1983.

Trudier Harris, From Mammies to Militants: Domesticity in black American Literature. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982.

Amiri Baraka and Amina Baraka, eds, Confirmation: An Anthology of African American Women (New York: Quill, 1983).

9. BLACK WOMEN IN ELECTORAL POLITICS

Black women did not gain the right to vote in the way Black men did. Black men got the first installment of citizenship rights due to the 15th Amendment (1870) after the civil war and the 13th (1865, abolition of slavery) and 14th (1868, citizenship for Blacks). Black women got voting rights when white women did in 1920. In this instance (voting) the common experience of gender was more important than race or class.

Women play the major role of all volunteers in electoral campaigns (do the work!), but are severely underrepresented in leadership roles in political parties, being slated for and winning elected office. Black women account for 52% of the Black population. Black women tend to register in equal proportion as men but they have a greater propensity to vote (53 to 47% in the 1980 Presidential election). In 1982, there were 1,066 Black female elected officials (21% of 5,160 Black elected officials), in 1983, the total was 5,606; 1,223 were women. Black women, aside from being underrepresented politically, tend to be concentrated in office holding on public school boards (34%), alderpersons and city clerks (46%). Only 4 Black women have served in Congress. There has been one cabinet secretary, Patricia Harris. Twenty-seven mayors of mainly small southern towns are women. There are two Black women presently in Congress and only 83 Black women hold state elective offices.

1. How did Black women get the vote? Discuss the suffragettes and the Voter Rights Acts of the 1960s.
2. Compare the political behavior of Black women with white women, and Black men.
3. Why are Black women underrepresented in leadership positions in electoral politics? There is a new organization, National Political Congress of Black Women. What can they do to increase the leadership role of Black women?

Edward T Clayton, The Negro Politician: His Success and Failure (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co., 1964) see chapter 3 "The Woman in Politics" pp 122 - 148.

James Conyers and Walter Wallace, Black Elected Officials: A Study of Black Americans Holding Governmental Office (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1976) see chapter 4 "Sex Differences" pp 83 - 101.

Robert Allen, Reluctant Reformers: The Impact of Racism on American Social Reform Movements (Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1974) see chapter 5 "Woman Suffrage: Feminism and White Supremacy."

Claire K Fulenwider, "Feminist Ideology and the Political Attitudes and Participation of White and Minority Women," Western Political Quarterly, 34 (March, 1981) pp 17 -30.

Shirley Chisholm, Unbought and Unbossed, 1970.

10. BLACK WOMEN IN SOCIAL PROTEST

There is a great tradition of Black women actively fighting for Black liberation. At every stage of our history, the contribution of Black women has been indispensable for all progress. Further, as Black women have been responsible for rearing virtually all black children they have indirectly been behind all great leaders of Black social protest.

Within the black community sexism (male supremacy) has been a serious problem, and it has had a negative impact inside the black liberation movement as well. This problem is faced by women in all movement trends, Pan-africanism, nationalism, Marxism, and reformism. There is a common basis for unity, mainly against the societal forces of class exploitation and racism, but against male supremacy as well. There is a great need to build an independent broad based movement of Black women united around a program for the emancipation of women, the liberation of Black people, and the overall transformation of the U.S. to get rid of capitalist exploitation.

1. Discuss the role of Black women in the womens movement, labor movement, communist movement, and civil rights movement.
2. Is it possible to organize poor Black women? Discuss the national Welfare Rights Organization? Discuss union organizing of southern textile workers, and domestic workers
3. Discuss the gains Black women fought for and won during the 1960's? How are these gains being reversed by the Reagan government?

*Paula Giddings, When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America (New York: Bantam Books, 1984).

Virginia Blandford, ed., Black Women and Liberation Movements (Washington DC: Institute for the Arts and Humanities, Howard University, 1981) see part one with talks by Bernice Reagon and Fran Beal, pp 1 - 60.

Buzz Johnson, "I Think of My Mother": Notes on the Life and Times of Claudia Jones (London: Karia Books, 1985).

Carolyn Ashbaugh, Lucy Parsons: American Revolutionary (Chicago: Charles Kerr Publishing Co., 1976).

Johnnetta Cole, "Militant Black Women in Early U.S. History," Black Scholar, 9:7, April, pp 38-44.

Toward A Common Curriculum

The Cooperative Research Network is distributing study guides as part of a project in Black studies curriculum development. Our purpose is to help supplement our basic courses, to provide new courses, and to stimulate others to share their work in curriculum. These course outlines are available in bulk for use in the classroom. Single copies are free. Write for details.

Call for New Courses

The CRN plans to publish more course outline/study guides. We welcome suggestions or copies of existing material. Every guide published goes through a collective editorial process and is a collective product.

Acknowledgments This basic work in the development of curricula in Black studies was partially supported by a grant from the Fund for Improvement in Post Secondary Education. Support was also given by the Afro-American Studies Program of the University of Mississippi, the University of Illinois, and the Cooperative Research Network in Black Studies.

What is the Cooperative Research Network?

The CRN is a cooperative organization of Black studies professionals, committed intellectuals, and community activists. The CRN was developed to meet the most critical problem facing Black studies in the mid 1980s, the need for research programs. We have to stimulate collaborative team research so that our substantive theory and methodological technique will be able to fully capture the essence of the Black experience.

The overall development of Black studies has made advances through the standardization of basic professional norms. Members of CRN have contributed substantially to this in the areas of community service, journal publishing, curriculum, theory, and methodology. One of the purposes of the CRN is to maintain the distribution of material that defines the state of the art in Black studies.

Our most practical research tool is the Afro-Scholar Newsletter - a quarterly listing of professional meetings, published articles and books. Every serious student /researcher should subscribe because this is the best way to stay up to date.

The CRN is based on research work groups. Each group is working within the paradigm of unity, establishing a new data base, and reporting results at professional meetings of Black studies (e.g., College Language Association, NCBS, AUSA, NCOPS, etc.) and the mainstream professions of literature, history, sociology and political science.

The ideological mandate of CRN is

Academic Excellence and Social Responsibility

Interested scholars and students should write:

Cooperative Research Network
Post Office Box 7610
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CRN STUDY GUIDE ON BLACK WOMEN / Number 1
How to use this Study Guide

This study guide is designed for self study, study groups, and/or formal academic courses. It is part of a national campaign by Sisters of Struggle (SOS), a work group in Black women's studies of the CRN. People are encouraged to take this guide to their library and request the acquisition of these materials to provide a basic reference library in the area on the experiences of Black women. Every serious Black women intellectual-activist should acquire this material as part of an essential home library. Every Black studies program should have a course on Black women. Does yours? This study guide is available in bulk quantities for such use.

Also, this study guide serves as a recruitment process for Sisters of Struggle. This is a work group of Black women intellectual-activists who share an interest in clarifying the problems faced by Black women, and the solutions revealed by the historical practice of Black women in their fight for liberation. SOS will be active in all relevant conferences to build itself as a national network of relevant sisters in and of our struggle. Get in touch today:

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2. Black women, as do the masses of Black men, suffer from many forms of racist national oppression, like job discrimination and the denial of basic democratic rights.
3. Black women, like all women, face male supremacy (sexism) which attempts to put women into subordinate roles in a male-dominated society. This is reflected in the role of women in the Black family. In short, the oppression of Black women grows out of the same system of capitalism that exploits and oppresses the masses of Black people and everybody else, and it is buttressed by patriarchal ideology. The particular content of this oppression has been transformed as the experiences of Black people have changed from slavery to the rural experience to the urban experience. These three periods provide the historical framework for our analysis of Black women and the family.

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2. Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, eds., The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat, 1978.
3. Gerda Lerner, ed., Black Women in White America: A Documentary History. 1972.
4. La Frances Rodgers-Rose, ed., The Black Woman. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1980.
5. Mary Helen Washington, Black Eyed Susan.

C. General Works

1. Angela Davis, Women, Race and Class. New York: Random House, 1981.
2. Jacqueline Jones, Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present. New York: Basic Books, 1985.
3. Jeanne Noble, Beautiful, Also, Are the Souls of My Black Sisters: A History of the Black Woman in America. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1978.
4. Robert Staples, The Black Woman in America. Chicago: Nelson Hall Publishers, 1973, 78.

GENERAL OUTLINE

1. Women in Africa
2. Black Women in Slavery
3. Black Women in Tenancy
4. Black Women in the City
5. Growing up as a Black Woman
6. Courtship and Marriage
7. Family and Kinship
8. Black Women as Artists
9. Black Women in Electoral Politics
10. Black Women and Social Protest

1. WOMEN IN AFRICA

Womens lives in Africa reflect varied historical experiences: patriarchal patterns of traditional societies, colonized societies, independent neo-colonial societies, societies led by socialist oriented political parties, and liberation movements. Women, in every case, are the most economically exploited and socially oppressed of all groups. Over the long run, urbanization and industrialization create greater necessity to equalize opportunities for women in education and employment, thereby utilizing more effectively the labor of women for profits.

Throughout African history individual women have played key roles in state building and anti-colonial struggle (e.g., the Egyptian Queen Nefertiti and the Angolan Queen Nzinga. However, only as a result of influences from trade unions, liberation movements and socialist parties do women emerge as a social force for their own emancipation. The emancipation of women requires the liberation of society, modern technology, and new forms of collective responsibility in the social development of children. Moreover, the cultural hegemony of patriarchal rules will only be destroyed by an aggressive political struggle waged by an independent womens movement, including mass political education for women and men, and progressive women in 50% of leadership roles.

- Q
1. To what extent were women emancipated in traditional African society? To what extent were women liberated under colonialism? by major religions? by the post-colonial state in Africa?
 2. What is the role of women in the movements to build new societies under socialism? Discuss the example of Angolan women.
 3. What are the experiences of women in South Africa (Azania) today? How are they oppressed? How are they contributing to the liberation struggle? Deal with Winnie Mandela.

Readings

Maria Rosa Cutrufelli, Women of Africa. London: Zed, 1983.

Editorial Committee, ed., Women in Nigeria Today. London: Zed, 1985

*Organization of Angolan Women, Angolan Women Building the Future. London: Zed, 1984.

Winnie Mandela, Part of My Soul. London: Penguin Books, 1985.

Ivan Van Sertima, Black Women in Antiquity. New Brunswick, NJ: Transition Books, 1985.

* = required reading

2. BLACK WOMEN AS SLAVES

Women were slaves, and like Black men they were worked harder than at any other time in human history. The slave experience was especially brutal and inhumane for women since it transformed child birth into commodity production and institutionalized rape as legitimate ruling class recreation. Black women were also forced to serve whites as domestic servants and surrogate mothers (mammys). They had unity with white women as victims of patriarchy, but as slaves Black women were managed by white women as economic and racial "inferiors."

But Black women were also able to fight back, to develop a culture of resistance and to give leadership to escape. There are many examples of slave women physically fighting and dying to protect their children. Gutman gives evidence of slave resistance through marriage rules and naming practices by which an Afro-American culture was expressed. And, of course, political escape was led by field generals such as Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth.

1. What special features of slave exploitation and oppression were experienced by women?
2. How did Black women create and participate in an Afro-American culture of resistance?
3. Discuss examples of Black women who actively fought against slavery, especially Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth.

*Angela Davis, "Reflections on Black Women's Role in the Community of Slaves," Black Scholar, 3, No 4, (December 1971)

Herbert Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom (New York: Vintage Books, 1977)

Olive Gilbert, The Narrative of Sojourner Truth (New York: Arno Press, 1968)

Deborah White, Aren't I A Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South. New York: Norton, 1985.

Dorothy Burnham, "The Life of the Afro-American Woman in Slavery," International Journal of Women's Studies 1, 4, 1978, pp 363-377.

3. THE BLACK WOMAN ON THE FARM

During the period from the 1880's to the 1940's the majority of Black people struggled to survive as tenant farmers in the rural south. The family was the social unit of production and was led by the oldest male. This created the economic basis for strong family unity and clearly defined age/sex roles in family life. People needed each other for security, often including others such as extended family, even "fictive kin" (make believe family members). However, when without a male family head, Black women had to be strong enough to play both roles, often calling on older women (or the oldest female child) to "mother" the young while mothers provided economic security through gainful employment.

Sexual freedom was limited by the economic pressure to build strong family ties, so unwed mothers with their children were chastised but integrated back into the community and accepted. Illegitimacy was a foreign concept as every child was welcomed into a family. Black women were denied leadership roles in a patriarchal church but tended to dominate the cultural activity of music, food, and material culture (e.g., quilting). Black women were often in the forefront of struggle against racist oppression, e.g., Ida B. Wells set a heroic example with her anti-lynching crusade.

1. What is the relationship between tenant farming and family structure? Are women an economic asset to their husbands? Do women need men to survive?
2. What was the role of Black women in the church and "legitimate" cultural life? Did they suffer from male supremacy within the Black community?
3. Discuss the fight against lynching waged by Ida B. Wells. What specific problems did she face because she was a woman?

*Charles Johnson, Shadow of the Plantation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934, 1966) see part II "The Family," pp 47 - 102.

Alfreda Duster, ed., Crusader for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

Molly C. Dougherty, Becoming A Woman in Rural Black Culture. New York: Holt Rinehart, 1978.

Hylan Lewis, Black Ways of Kent (New Haven, Conn.: College and University Press, 1955) see chapter 4 "Courtship, marriage, and the Family." pp 82 - 113.

Dorothy Sterling, We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the 19th Century. New York: Norton, 1984.

4. BLACK WOMEN IN THE CITY

The urban experience of Black women has undergone extreme changes over the last 40 years or so. World War II led to a qualitative shift in employment, with Black women moving into clerical and factory jobs in unprecedented numbers giving security to family life (either two incomes for husband-wife duo or a livable wage for a single parent household.) However, since WORLD WAR II Black unemployment rates are double that for whites. Since then, the prison and military (wars) have crippled or limited the supply of men, and the welfare system has managed the social control function over women.

Increasingly Black women have been forced into being single parent heads of households, along with being on the bottom of most social scales, eg., income, employment, education, housing, health, in addition to which the violence experienced (rape, etc.) goes unnoticed. The majority of Black women are no longer domestic workers, but are firmly based in the working class, in industrial, clerical, and service jobs. On the other hand, Black women have been most politically active in the city context. From Black suffragettes to leaders of major organizations and institutions Black women have fought hard. This includes trade unions, community organizations, and civil rights organizations. A good example of poor Black women being organized is the National Welfare Rights Organization.

1. How did the experience of Black women change during the 1940's due to urbanization and industrialization?
2. Discuss the issues of the single woman head of household.
3. What was the National Welfare Rights Organization? What were its strengths and weaknesses?

Barbara Jones, "The Economic Status of Black Women," in James Williams, ed., The State of Black America, 1983 (New York: National Urban League, 1983) pp 115 - 154

Bonnie Dill, "Race, Class, and Gender: Prospects for an All-inclusive Sisterhood," Feminist Studies 9, No 1 (Spring 1983) pp 131 - 150

Phyllis A Wallace, Black Women in the Labor Force. Cambridge, Mass.: M I T Press, 1980.

Jacqueline Jackson, "Black Women in a Racist Society," Charles Willie, ed., Racism and Mental Health. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1973, pp 185-269.

Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, "From Slavery to Social Welfare: Racism and the Control of Black Women," in Sverdhow and Lessinger, eds., Class, Race and Gender. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1983.

5. GROWING UP AS A BLACK WOMAN

Young Black girls learn about womanhood in a hurry -- taking care of younger siblings, seeing or hearing about adult sex in action due to crowded living quarters, being courted for adult sex at or before puberty, and vicarious adult experience based on TV, popular music, and candid discussions with adults. Also, sexual abuse is widespread in families, schools, churches, and recreational groups (girl scouts, YWCA, and camps, etc.). They are trapped in contradictory and self negating value systems -- on the one hand it is ok to "do it" (either voluntarily for fun or to seek acceptance) and on the other hand it is the greatest social crime in the community. Teen pregnancy is regarded as one of the major problems of this era.

Given the historical dynamic that has increased the single mother heads of households, and the widespread promotion of sexuality in society, to target the sexually active teenager as "culprit" is confusing the victim with the source of the crime. Mass education, health programs (pre and post natal care, including contraceptives), public child care and public abortion options are absolutely required. In the long run, the single Black mother (teens included) must organize into a viable political force to fight for their rights with these changes.

1. When little Black girls grow up now are their experiences different from boys? white girls? middle class Black girls from working class and poor Black girls?
2. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the public welfare system. Are children adequately cared for?
3. What is the issue of teen pregnancy? And what public policy should be made?

Margaret Spencer, Geraldine Brookings, and Walter Allen, eds, Beginnings: The Social and Affective Development of Black Children (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1985)

James Comer and Alvin Poussaint, Black Child Care: How to Bring up a Healthy Black Child in America, A Guide to Emotional and Psychological Development (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975)

Harriet McAdoo and John McAdoo, eds., Black Children. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1985.

Diana Slaughter, "Becoming an Afro-American Woman." School Review, Feb., 1972, pp 295-317.

Maya Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. New York: Random House, 1970.

6. MARRIAGE AND COURTSHIP

The nature of courtship and marriage is undergoing radical change. Marriages occur later and divorce is more frequent. Premarital sex is normal, and trial marriages (living together first) continues. Women are once again being forced to adapt to new conditions, in part as a result of new birth control technology, or abortion operations, or the conscious decision to postpone parenthood due to educational or job related plans. Furthermore, women and progressive forces are fighting to change the legal system, giving women more rights and control over their bodies (the right to an abortion and criminal statutes for all kinds of sexual abuse), more equality in relationships (economic rights with husbands, and rights in common law marriages), rights to independence (equitable no fault divorce and prohibition of sex discrimination on the job), and access to female lawyers, judges, and jury members.

However, Black men continue to play the dominant power role in courtship and marriage. Further, they are in a severe crisis based on unemployment, drug use, police terror, and Black on Black crime. In this context, Black women who seek love, security, and family life with Black men continue to catch hell. The solution on an individual level is between a man and a woman, but on a community/social level it can only be resolved as part of a social protest movement to solve these basic problems.

1. Are Black women equal partners in courtship and marriage? How do relationships represent a power struggle, and how do they represent equal democratic relations?
2. Tina Turner asks "what's love got to do with it?" How do Black women answer this question in explaining their relationship with men? What do you think?
3. Self help activities around rape, abortion, consciousness-raising, battered women, and self defense spread rapidly during the 1970s. How were Black women affected by these activities and what is the current status of such organizations in your community?

Maxine Alexander, Speaking for Ourselves: Women of the South. New York: Random House, 1984.

Diane K. Lewis, "The Black Family: Socialization and Sex Roles." Phylon 36, 221-237.

Robert Staples, The World of Black Singles. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981.

Anita Washington, "A Cultural and Historical Perspective on Pregnancy-Related Activity Among US Teenagers." Journal of Black Psychology 9:1, 1-28.

Joyce Ladner, "Teen Pregnancy," in The State of Black America 1986. New York: National Urban League, 1986.

7. FAMILY AND KINSHIP

The structure of the Black family is changing, but kin relations remain important adult support networks and serve the function of primary group socialization for the young. Family kinship involves ones ancestry (using family genealogy for ones historical identity) and living kin (using extended family kin relations as useful reference group - support network).

Every student in Black studies should trace both aspects of family structure, genealogy (back to the civil war, and if possible back to Africa) and living kin (to at least 2nd cousins). The main method should be interviewing the oldest family members about kin. Begin with your parents, then each of their parents (your grandparents), then each of their parents (your great grandparents). Get their full names, birth date and place, and add the date of death. The more you learn about your family the more historical identity you have, and can pass on to your children. Every child should be given a name that reflects their family history.

1. Discuss the meaning of family reunions? Genealogical research? In what ways are they positive, and in what ways are they negative?
2. Why are female-headed households regarded as weak? Are they weak? discuss the impact of patriarchy, feminization of poverty, and teen pregnancy.
3. To what extent is the family a viable support network for Black women?

Elmer Martin and Joanne Martin, The Black Extended Family. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978

Carol Stack, All Our Kin

Robert Hill, The Strengths of Black families. New York: Emerson Hall, 1972.

James McGhee, "A Profile of the black Single Female-Headed Household," in James Williams, ed., The State of Black America - 1984. New York: National Urban League, 1984.

Walter Allen, "The Search for Applicable Theories of Black Family Life." Journal of Marriage and the Family, 40:1, 1978, pp 117-129.

B. BLACK WOMEN AS ARTISTS - WRITERS

Black women are the conveyor belts of Afro-American culture, both as creators and communicators of the culture of everyday life and in the creative arts as well. However, in the professional creative arts Black men have been the dominant force. Black women artists have had more opportunities in singing, dancing, and special material arts such as quilt making. Only recently have women been making advances as instrumentalists, composers, and writers of drama, and especially novels.

Black women authors have been published since the eighteenth century but it has not been until recently that these creative individuals became a part of the continuum of literary expression within the U.S. Issues such as caste divisions within the Black community, Black women as the 'mules of the world' and the sexual exploitation of Black women by Black and white men have been raised in novels, short stories and poems as authors attempted to explore in an artistic context the realities and ramifications of the oppression of Black women. Since 1950 there has been an explosion of literary expression which was suggested by the women writers of the Harlem Renaissance and which was possible with the economic and educational opportunities available after WWII. Poets and novelists have focused with increasing clarity on the historical violation of Black women, their strengths and future paths of collective growth. These themes have been vividly articulated and have served to destroy the stereotypes about Black women which had previously existed in American literature. Finally, as is true wherever the community lacks control, certain styles and writers have been promoted by the mainstream literary establishment as the artistic voice for all Black women. We must be conscious and supportive of those voices that authentically speak in our interest and not be misled by a madison avenue-type marketing strategy.

1. Why have Black women been able to make more achievements in the realm of everyday cultural life of Black people rather than in the professional "fine arts?"
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the major Black women writers today? Discuss Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Toni Cade Bambara, Margaret Walker, and Sonja Sanchez.
3. Are there class differences in the fictional treatment of Black women? What difference does this make?

*Mari Evans, ed., Black Women Writers 1950-1980: A Critical Evaluation (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1984).

Gloria Wade Gayles, No Chrystal Stair: Visions of Race and Sex in Black Women's Fiction.

Claudia Tate, ed., Black Women Writers at Work. New York: Continuum, 1983.

Trudier Harris, From Mammies to Militants: Domesticity in Black American Literature. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982.

Amiri Baraka and Amina Baraka, eds, Confirmation: An Anthology of African American Women (New York: Guill, 1983).

9. BLACK WOMEN IN ELECTORAL POLITICS

Black women did not gain the right to vote in the way Black men did. Black men got the first installment of citizenship rights due to the 15th Amendment (1870) after the civil war and the 13th (1865, abolition of slavery) and 14th (1868, citizenship for Blacks). Black women got voting rights when white women did in 1920. In this instance (voting) the common experience of gender was more important than race or class.

Women play the major role of all volunteers in electoral campaigns (do the work!), but are severely underrepresented in leadership roles in political parties, being slated for and winning elected office. Black women account for 52% of the Black population. Black women tend to register in equal proportion as men but they have a greater propensity to vote (53 to 47% in the 1980 Presidential election). In 1982, there were 1,066 Black female elected officials (21% of 5,160 Black elected officials), in 1983, the total was 5,606; 1,223 were women. Black women, aside from being underrepresented politically, tend to be concentrated in office holding on public school boards (34%), alderpersons and city clerks (46%). Only 4 Black women have served in Congress. There has been one cabinet secretary, Patricia Harris. Twenty-seven mayors of mainly small southern towns are women. There are two Black women presently in Congress and only 83 Black women hold state elective offices.

1. How did Black women get the vote? Discuss the suffragettes and the Voter Rights Acts of the 1960s.
2. Compare the political behavior of Black women with white women, and Black men.
3. Why are Black women underrepresented in leadership positions in electoral politics? There is a new organization, National Political Congress of Black Women. What can they do to increase the leadership role of Black women?

Edward T. Clayton, The Negro Politician: His Success and Failure (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co., 1964) see chapter 3 "The Woman in Politics" pp 122 - 148.

James Conyers and Walter Wallace, Black Elected Officials: A Study of Black Americans Holding Governmental Office (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1976) see chapter 4 "Sex Differences" pp 83 - 101.

Robert Allen, Reluctant Reformers: The Impact of Racism on American Social Reform Movements (Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1974) see chapter 5 "Woman Suffrage: Feminism and White Supremacy."

Claire K. Fulenwider, "Feminist Ideology and the Political Attitudes and Participation of White and Minority Women," Western Political Quarterly, 34 (March, 1981) pp 17 - 30.

Shirley Chisholm, Unbought and Unbossed, 1970.

10. BLACK WOMEN IN SOCIAL PROTEST

There is a great tradition of Black women actively fighting for Black liberation. At every stage of our history, the contribution of Black women has been indispensable for all progress. Further, as Black women have been responsible for rearing virtually all black children they have indirectly been behind all great leaders of Black social protest.

Within the black community sexism (male supremacy) has been a serious problem, and it has had a negative impact inside the black liberation movement as well. This problem is faced by women in all movement trends, Pan-africanism, nationalism, Marxism, and reformism. There is a common basis for unity, mainly against the societal forces of class exploitation and racism, but against male supremacy as well. There is a great need to build an independent broad based movement of Black women united around a program for the emancipation of women, the liberation of Black people, and the overall transformation of the U.S. to get rid of capitalist exploitation.

1. Discuss the role of Black women in the womens movement, labor movement, communist movement, and civil rights movement.
2. Is it possible to organize poor Black women? Discuss the national Welfare Rights Organization? Discuss union organizing of southern textile workers, and domestic workers
3. Discuss the gains Black women fought for and won during the 1960's? How are these gains being reversed by the Reagan government?

*Paula Giddings, When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America (New York: Bantam Books, 1984).

Virginia Blandford, ed., Black Women and Liberation Movements (Washington DC: Institute for the Arts and Humanities, Howard University, 1981) see part one with talks by Bernice Reagon and Fran Beal, pp 1 - 60.

Buzz Johnson, "I Think of My Mother": Notes on the Life and Times of Claudia Jones (London: Karia Books, 1985).

Carolyn Ashbaugh, Lucy Parsons: American Revolutionary (Chicago: Charles Kerr Publishing Co., 1976).

Johnnetta Cole, "Militant Black Women in Early U.S. History," Black Scholar, 9:7, April, pp 38-44.

Toward A Common Curriculum

The Cooperative Research Network is distributing study guides as part of a project in Black studies curriculum development. Our purpose is to help supplement our basic courses, to provide new courses, and to stimulate others to share their work in curriculum. These course outlines are available in bulk for use in the classroom. Single copies are free. Write for details.

Call for New Courses

The CRN plans to publish more course outline/study guides. We welcome suggestions or copies of existing material. Every guide published goes through a collective editorial process and is a collective product.

Acknowledgments This basic work in the development of curricula in Black studies was partially supported by a grant from the Fund for Improvement in Post Secondary Education. Support was also given by the Afro-American Studies Program of the University of Mississippi, the University of Illinois, and the Cooperative Research Network in Black Studies.

What is the Cooperative Research Network?

The CRN is a cooperative organization of Black studies professionals, committed intellectuals, and community activists. The CRN was developed to meet the most critical problem facing Black studies in the mid 1980s, the need for research programs. We have to stimulate collaborative team research so that our substantive theory and methodological technique will be able to fully capture the essence of the Black experience.

The overall development of Black studies has made advances through the standardization of basic professional norms. Members of CRN have contributed substantially to this in the areas of community service, journal publishing, curriculum, theory, and methodology. One of the purposes of the CRN is to maintain the distribution of material that defines the state of the art in Black studies.

Our most practical research tool is the Afro-Scholar Newsletter - a quarterly listing of professional meetings, published articles and books. Every serious student /researcher should subscribe because this is the best way to stay up to date.

The CRN is based on research work groups. Each group is working within the paradigm of unity, establishing a new data base, and reporting results at professional meetings of Black studies (e.g., College Language Association, NCBS, AUSA, NCOPS, etc.) and the mainstream professions of literature, history, sociology and political science.

The ideological mandate of CRN is

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Interested scholars and students should write:

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CRN STUDY GUIDE ON BLACK WOMEN / Number 1
How to use this Study Guide

This study guide is designed for self study, study groups, and/or formal academic courses. It is part of a national campaign by Sisters of Struggle (SOS), a work group in Black women's studies of the CRN. People are encouraged to take this guide to their library and request the acquisition of these materials to provide a basic reference library in the area on the experiences of Black women. Every serious Black women intellectual-activist should acquire this material as part of an essential home library. Every Black studies program should have a course on Black women. Does yours? This study guide is available in bulk quantities for such use.

Also, this study guide serves as a recruitment process for Sisters of Struggle. This is a work group of Black women intellectual-activists who share an interest in clarifying the problems faced by Black women, and the solutions revealed by the historical practice of Black women in their fight for liberation. SOS will be active in all relevant conferences to build itself as a national network of relevant sisters in and of our struggle. Get in touch today:

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SISTERS OF STRUGGLE: BLACK WOMEN AND BLACK LIBERATION

There is no more important topic for study than women, and this is as equally true for Black women as for anybody else. And yet, without effort, especially on the part of women themselves, this study will not be undertaken properly, women will go unknown as before and the emancipation of women will be prolonged even more. This is a study guide to encourage the proper study of Black women.

This study guide is organized into three parts: topics 1 - 4 focus on Black women's experiences within the essential periods of Afro-American historical modalities (Africa, Slavery, Tenancy, and the urban experience); topics 5 - 7 focus on the developmental sex-role changes for Black women (growing up, courtship and marriage, and family-kinship networks); and topics 8 - 10 focus on movements and the politics of social change (the arts, politics, and protest). We have included a bibliography of general texts frequently used in Black women's studies, and a chart to see how all of these texts cover the ten topics of this study guide.

THE TRIPLE OPPRESSION OF BLACK WOMEN, 1980

	White males	Black males	White females	Black females
Income				
Mean income for full-time workers	21,023	14,709	12,156	11,230
Education				
College (1 or more years)	37.9	22.1	28.8	20.6
Occupation				
Professional	15.8	7.8	16.9	13.2
Clerical and Sales	12.0	10.3	42.3	33.1
Blue Collar	45.3	56.3	13.7	15.3
Service	7.7	17.0	18.4	34.4
Unemployment (1981)	6.5	15.7	6.9	15.6

Source: Based on data in National Urban League, *The State of Black America*, 1983, pp. 113, 142, and 152-53.

[Note to readers of 2nd draft: We need to locate more recent data. Can you help?]

The Cooperative Research Network (see page 15) has established a new work group, SISTERS OF STRUGGLE. The SOS is open to all sisters who agree with the objectives of the CRN, the general thrust of this study guide, and the general thrust of the text Introduction to Afro-American Studies by Abdul Aikalimat and Associates.

