

Gender – fourth lecture 9/16

Slide 1

Time

Slide 2

Good morning, hope everyone is healthy and in good spirits.

This is now our fourth lecture in this IFA community course.

Our focus is on Gender. We have dealt with Color, Class and Culture. These presentations and discussion are available on my personal website, Alkalimat.org. video, all slides, text of my presentation, and commentary from the chat. Free to use, mash it up, share it widely

Now on to today.

It is clear that our task is both theoretical and ideological. We are summing up knowledge about the Black experience, bringing out conceptual clarity and the logic of historical development – theory.

But also, we are connecting this to the struggle for Black liberation from capitalist forms of captivity in our quest for freedom – we are also being ideological. To think about Black liberation from my point of view you can consult another set of lectures I gave in 2012. The link to the 10 lecture videos and slides will be in the chat:

<https://www.alkalimat.org/audioviz.html#thebox>

They are called the box lectures, because I was thinking out of the box.

We are dealing with what is and has been (theory), and, connecting it to what ought to be (ideology).

Slide 3

We will be covering these four themes.

1. What is gender? What is sex? Really, we need clarity on the difference between gender and sex.
2. The main content of this presentation will be about the experience of Black women, their history and current situation
3. We will also speak to the end of the binary, and the full continuum of sexuality, gender identity
4. Finally, we will conclude with some summary comments

The artist work on this slide is the great artist Elizabeth Catlett (1915 – 2012). She was active in sculpture, prints and painting. She also distinguished herself by being an activist in linking art to the fight against all forms of oppression.

Slide 4

This slide includes definitions to clarify our subject.

On the right, from the Yale School of medicine, the definition is on sex:

In the study of human subjects, the term *sex* should be used as a classification, generally as male or female, according to the reproductive organs and functions that derive from the chromosomal complement [generally XX for female and XY for male].

On the left from the World Health Organization on gender

Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time.

Gender is hierarchical and produces inequalities that intersect with other social and economic inequalities. Gender-based discrimination intersects with other factors of discrimination, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, age, geographic location, gender

identity and sexual orientation, among others. This is referred to as intersectionality.

The adinkra symbol on the slide is from Ghana: Mpatapo. It can represent gender equality, a symbol of reconciliation

Slide 5

This is a picture of these definitions. Contrasting the realm of biology with sociology.

At a biological level we are concerned with Chromosomes, reproductive organs, and hormones.

Gender is a social construct, shaped in a cultural mix of factors that lead to identity formation, preferences of life style and lovers

However, what we have to criticize in this slide of gender attributes is how they represent stereotypes – women as fragile and emotional and men as risk-taking and aggressive. And yet these stereotypes have been reproduced in how society has developed gendered roles.

We live at a time when all gender and sexuality roles and behavior is being improvised and created anew.

Slide 6

To start, our priority on gender is going to focus on Black women.

Workers produce the value that gives rise to products and profits. But women not only work, but also reproduce the workers. Women birth, raise, and care for the workers so they can go to work each day. But while *production* has been analyzed and re-analyzed, *reproduction* has gotten less attention. It's less visible, carried out mostly in the home. It's even lower status, commanding no wage. And it's carried out by people—women—who have been subjugated for ages. Perhaps the most widespread and degrading example in US history is the legal right of any

slaveowner, and in fact any white man, to rape women who were enslaved, or merely African American.

Wages for housework, welfare rights, family sick leave, parental leave, child care policies and other campaigns and reforms have brought these issues forward. Oxfam put a dollar value on all women's unpaid work worldwide during 2019: \$10,900,000,000,000, or close to \$11 trillion. So when women step up in the struggle despite all the odds, men have to make a space. "When you strike a woman, you have struck a rock," and change has to come.

This painting is by John Biggers (1924 – 2001), a great artist based for many years at Texas Southern University in Houston Texas. He was anchored in the iconography of the rural south as linked to the imagery of his travel in Africa.

Slide 7

Once again, when thinking about the historical experiences of Black women, we have to bring forward our model of the historical process.

Black women have been central to Black family life throughout this history, including all Black social institutions.

They have also experienced special forms of oppression and exploitation that must be understood in every part of this model.

The Black women has been the main vehicles for carrying forward culture that has sustained Black people, especially her role in the socialization of children

Slide 8

During slavery times, Black women were important for production and reproduction. She worked like men in jobs that produced wealth as well as birthing children. Also, she served to maintain the household quality of life of the slave owners. Her labor was exploited in three main

sectors of the economy: in the fields, in the slave owner's household, and in industry.

She also was used as a machine to birth additional slaves, her children, and then nurse maid her oppressor's children. This was a process that involved slave breeding coercion, and use as a sexual object by all men associated with a slave owning family. Also, as a gift for male visitors.

There is another aspect of this. African American women's roles as gendered laborers allowed them mobility and access to white slave owners spaces. This positioned them to refashion white enslavers sites of control and surveillance, into strategic geographies of resistance and survival, valuable in moments of rebellion.

Slide 9

Black women were involved in every way to resist the evils of slavery. This is exemplified by the anti-slavery work of women like Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman.

Tubman was regarded as a Black Moses leading her people out of slavery as part of the underground railroad. She helped about 70 people escape from slavery, family and friend, during approximately 13 trips to the slave state of Maryland.

She was a militant fighter. On June 2, 1863, Harriet Tubman, under the command of Union Colonel James Montgomery, became the first woman to lead a major military operation in the United States when she and 150 African American Union soldiers rescued more than 700 slaves in the Combahee Ferry Raid during the Civil War.

Everyone should know about the Combahee Ferry Raid

Slide 10

It should be clear to everyone that the rural life of Black tenant farmers - mainly sharecroppers – was not the freedom that people wanted. It was a step beyond slavery but not yet freedom.

The Black woman bore the burden of being a worker in the fields and in the home, with the added responsibility of the children. The family was the basis for economic security as all were needed to work.

The community as a whole was anchored in the church. Religion provided the cultural foundation for the negation of the negation. Racist terror was negating Black people, but their religion helped them overcome this. The church was joy and celebration, it was music and food, and it was leadership and storytelling.

Note the women in church wearing white. We wonder is this an African retention in honor of the Yoruba orisha Obatala.

Slide 11

The violence of the slave whip was replaced by the ropes of the lynching murder, a ritual of racist terror.

In the South, an estimated two or three blacks were lynched each week in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In Mississippi alone, 500 blacks were lynched from the 1800s to 1955. Nationwide, the figure climbed to nearly 5,000. Approximately 120 of those victims were Black women.

Ida B Wells was a Memphis based journalist who dared to fight against lynching. Wells was spurred to action when several friends of hers were lynched. Wells took it upon herself to investigate and denounce the lynching epidemic in the American South. She began to research the circumstances of lynching and record statistics on the frequency and nature of these heinous hate crimes. She published her findings in the newspaper *Memphis Free Speech and Headlight*. Many in the local community were outraged by this work. White mobs burned down the

newspaper office and threatened to lynch her. She bravely continued writing until the threats escalated so much that she migrated North.

She said the following: "Somebody must show that the Afro-American race is more sinned against than sinning, and it seems to have fallen upon me to do so. I felt that one had better die fighting against injustice than to die like a dog or a rat in a trap."

Slide 12

Black history changed. The process was mass migration from the rural agrarian south to the urban industrial north. Ida B Wells also made that move. After her relocation to Chicago in **1894**, she worked tirelessly to advance the cause of black equality and black power. Wells established the first black kindergarten, organized black women, and helped elect the city's first black alderman, Oscar Stanton De Priest in 1915.

Many African Americans in the South found themselves trapped in sharecropping jobs and other forms of debt peonage with no hope of improvement in their circumstances. Jim Crow laws kept them in an inferior position relative to white people, and they were denied political rights. There were more jobs available in the North, and, though racism was rampant, formal structures of apartheid were not as mandated there. Black people in the south embarked on the Great Migration seeking economic and social opportunity.

Slide 13

The main job Black women had was to be a domestic worker. Chicago is a good example. By 1870, for all workers, one in five Chicago households employed domestic workers, who accounted for 60 percent of the city's wage-earning women. Over the next half century, domestic service represented the leading occupation of all women in Chicago and the nation.

Already in 1900, African American women, only 4 percent of the wage-earning female population in the city, represented 30 percent of domestic workers, and their numbers grew over the next 40 years.

Racially excluded from most occupations, black women soon dominated the domestic service sector in Chicago. Despite limited options, black domestic workers still experienced an improvement in wages compared to similar positions in the South, where it took three weeks to earn the same amount as in one week in Chicago in the 1910s. In contrast to earlier domestic servants, black women were often married with children and hence preferred day work to a live-in situation. By 1920, more domestic workers were living at home than boarding with their employer.

While a step up economically from the South, Chicago nonetheless presented newly arrived African American domestic workers with difficult conditions. As late as the 1930s, domestic servants complained of employers offering day work to the lowest bidder at the notorious “slave pens” at the corner of Halsted and Twelfth Streets

Slide 14

During WWII when men went off to fight the war they were replaced in industry by women, whose stereotype was named Rosie the Riveter.

Black Rosies made up a large part of the African American workforce during World War II. Of the 1 million African American workers hired during the war effort, nearly 600,000 were women known as Black Rosies.

In addition to working in factories, many learned skilled trades and became experienced electricians, welders, railroad conductors and sheet metal specialists, to name a few. But industrial jobs weren't the only jobs that Black Rosies performed, they also worked as computer scientists and clerk typists.

Women were paid much lower rates than their male counterparts, despite their important roles. Black Rosies were paid even less.

Out of these conditions Black women emerged as leaders in the fight against all forms of exploitation and oppression. It is important to learn about some of the outstanding women in this regard. I will mention these four, while I am sure you can name many more, especially the women who distinguished themselves at the local level.

Fannie Lou Hamer

Addie Wyatt

Johnnie Tillmon

Shirley Chisholm

Slide 15

First Fannie Lou Hamer (1917 – 1977)

Ms Hamer grew up as a sharecropper in Ruleville Mississippi. Kicked off the plantation when she got involved in voter registration, she then joined in the fight with SNCC.

She became a founder and vice-chair of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. Ms. Hamer became an icon of Black rural Southern women standing tall in the fight for freedom. Her speech to the credential committee at the Democratic convention in 1964 changed how politics was going to work, especially in deep south states like Mississippi. She made racist barbarism transparent for all to see.

Slide 16

Second, Addie Wyatt (1924 – 2012)

During the 1970s she became a powerful figure in the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union. During this time, she worked

harder to create unions that were more inclusive of minorities. In 1972, she became the founding member of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists which was formed to ensure that black workers could "share in the power of the labor movement at every level." As chair of CBTU's National Women's Committee, Wyatt helped ensure that AFL-CIO affiliated unions opened leadership positions to women.

In 1974, Wyatt was a co-founder the Coalition of Labor Union Women in order to create a stronger, more effective voice for women in the labor movement. She said, "Racism and sexism is an economic issue. It was very profitable to discriminate against women and against people of color. I began to understand that change could come but you could not do it alone. You had to unite with others. That was one of the reasons I became a part of the union. It was a sort of family that would help in the struggle"

Slide 17

We've featured Fannie Lou Hamer representing rural southern Black women, Addie Wyatt representing urban industrial Black women, now we will feature Johnnie Tillmon

Ms Tillmon was born into a sharecropping family, ending up a single mom with six children. She faced job insecurity, but that did not stop her as she became an activist for change.

She and her friends founded Aid to Needy Children-Mothers Anonymous in 1963, one of the first grassroots welfare mothers' organizations. ANC Mothers Anonymous later became part of the National Welfare Rights Organization in 1966. George Wiley, a chemist and civil rights activist in CORE, became the latter's first executive director while Tillmon served as its first chairman. At its peak in the late 1960s, the organization had nearly 25,000 dues-paying members.

In 1972, Wiley resigned and Tillmon moved to Washington to become the organization's executive director. She served in this role until 1974, when the organization shut down due to lack of funds.

Slide 18

Finally, we will represent the power of Black women in politics by featuring Shirley Chisholm.

Shirley Chisholm was a Barbadian American, born and lived in Brooklyn, New York.

Chisholm was an elected member of the New York State Assembly from 1965 to 1968, then served in Congress from 1969-1983. Chisholm joined the Congressional Black Caucus in 1971 as one of its founding members. In the same year, she was also a founding member of the National Women's Political Caucus.

Chisholm began exploring her candidacy in July 1971 and formally announced her presidential bid on January 25, 1972, in a Baptist church in her district in Brooklyn. There, she called for a "bloodless revolution" at the forthcoming Democratic nominating convention for the 1972 U.S. presidential election. Chisholm became the first African American to run for a major party's nomination for President of the United States. Chisholm became the first woman to appear in a United States presidential debate.

Chisholm open the door for Black women to be key players in national politics.

Slide 19

Moving out of the cul-de-sac of a narrow Black nationalist patriarchy, Malcolm X embraced the dynamic of freedom by recognizing the key role of women for Black liberation.

He said: The most disrespected person in America is the Black woman, the most unprotected person in America is the Black woman, the most neglected person in America is the Black woman.

In fact, he elevated Black women into leadership position of the Organization of Afro-American Unity.

So, let's dig deeper into the exact nature of the oppression and exploitation face by Black women.

Slide 20

Our summation is that Black women face ripple oppression: class, color and gender.

Triple oppression, also called double jeopardy, Jane Crow, or triple exploitation, is a theory developed by Black socialists in the United States, such as Claudia Jones. The theory states that a connection exists between various types of oppression, specifically classism, racism, and sexism. It hypothesizes that all three types of oppression need to be struggled against at the same time.

We use concepts to isolate specific things, but in the reality we live everything is connected and interacts. All serious analysis takes every important aspect of reality into account. That's the case with Black women – all three of these aspects of her reality have to be examined – class, color, and gender.

So, let's first take the lens of a stratification approach to class.

Slide 21

Here we examine educational attainment. Note that African Americans have less than European Americans. 28% to 42%

For African Americans and Euro-Americans the women are more educated than the men. However, the difference is greater for Black people, 2% compared to 5%.

Black women are behind Euro-American women by 13%, but for men the difference is 16%.

The question is what difference do these differences in educational attainment make in terms of annual earnings.

Slide 22

A different pattern exists for earnings. Here the Men, Black and white, make more money than the women.

However, Black women are behind white women by \$8,000, while Black men are behind white men by over twice as much by \$18,800.

Also note that white women make more than Black men.

So we need to look at occupations.

Slide 23

Of course, the entire occupational structure is gendered. You don't have to guess what the numbers mean in this slide – the per cent female.

At the top are female jobs, and the male jobs at the bottom.

READ THE OCCUPATIONS

Black women are more concentrated even within this.

Slide 24

Where do Black women work? Black women are concentrated in education and health services. Black women are 14% of the total population in the US.

This slide shows relative under representation and an extreme form of concentration.

Slide 25

Black women have the burden of family survival

Black mothers are more likely than any other ethnic group to be their family breadwinner. For white it is 36.8%, for Hispanics 41% for Black women 68.3%. What is the condition of Black family life!

Again, women take care of the children and the elderly more than others.

Slide 26

The impact of single moms being the family breadwinner shows up in the poverty of Black families. Almost half (46%) of single parent families are classified as poor.

Single parenting in this slide is over whelming about women.

Of course there is a difference between being really alone and being in a network of caring supportive family and friends. No matter, the key is community and bonding social capital needed by all of us.

Slide 27

Now we want to shift in this discussion of gender to address the end of the limiting binary model of gender.

Now we have LGBTIQ+

LGBTIQ+ stands for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual and many other terms (such as non-binary and pansexual)

We are in the time when pronouns are a personal choice. Mine are he, him, and we.

Slide 28

This language is new, but the reality has always been with us.

This slide begins the recognition of well-known people who have lived outside of the binary.

From Left (top) Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, Miss Major, Lorraine Hansberry, Barbara Jordan, (bottom) Storme DeLarverie, Joan Jett Blakk, and Bayard Rustin

Slide 29

The public acceptance of this being out of the binary box has benefited from the public discourse of some of the impact writers and intellectuals of the 1960s. Here in this slide is the case of James Baldwin and Audre Lorde.

Baldwin said: Love him and let him love you. Do you think anything else under heaven really matters?

Audre Lorde said: But the true feminist deals out of a lesbian consciousness, whether or not she ever sleeps with women

They spoke and the public debate was on, and it continues today.

Slide 30

Homophobia is an attack on people who move beyond gender binary.

While homophobia is always associated with right wing extremism, it is found throughout the society even in progressive circles.

Gender equality is a human rights demand for all people,

Slide 31

One of the rising needs is to resist attacks on our Trans brothers and sisters who dare to negate normative expectations and delink gender from biological sexual identity.

In 2022, Alabama lawmakers passed anti-trans legislation that criminalized gender-affirming care and banned K-12 students from using restrooms consistent with their gender identity. LGBTQ+ organizers from across the state rallied for many years against these harmful bills and are still fighting to this day.

Slide 32

One of the strongest statements that helped organized Black women of all genders Combahee River Collective Statement – they took their name from that famous action by Harriet Tubman.

We are a collective of Black feminists who have been meeting together since 1974. During that time we have been involved in the process of defining and clarifying our politics, while at the same time doing political work within our own group and in coalition with other progressive organizations and movements. The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the **development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking**. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. As Black women we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face

Slide 33

Black women have always been an active force in the Black liberation movement.

Here in this slide, we feature Assata Shakur. She currently lives in exile in Cuba. She has been a member of the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army.

Sister Assata is an icon of resistance and stands with many who have shared the revolutionary hospitality provided by Cuba.

While men are often the face of the Black liberation movement it is important to use this image of Assata to remind us of the fact that as in most Black institutions, Black women have always been the foundation of what Black people do.

We can't discuss Black women without reflecting on how the abortion issue impacts them as it is one of the main policy issues today.

Slide 34

The Republicans gangstered the Supreme Court process by preventing Obama from an appointment, so Trump made three appointments and turned the court to a hard right 6-3 majority.

In 1973 the Supreme Court in the *Roe v Wade* decision legalized abortion for the entire country.

In a historic 2022 and far-reaching decision, the U.S. Supreme Court officially reversed *Roe v. Wade*, declaring that the constitutional right to abortion, upheld for nearly 50 years, no longer exists.

Writing for the court majority, Justice Samuel Alito said that the 1973 *Roe* ruling and repeated subsequent high court decisions reaffirming *Roe* "must be overruled" because they were "egregiously wrong," the arguments "exceptionally weak" and so "damaging" that they amounted to "an abuse of judicial authority."

This decision was a declaration of war against the rights of women to control their bodies, to have a basic freedom, a right.

How does impact Black women?

Slide 35

First, the vast majority of women want the right to have a legal and safe abortion, not mandated, but the right to have one if a women would so choose – her decision.

Black and Asian women are the most supportive of the right to a legal abortion – 67% and 68%

About 40% of women who get abortions in the U.S. are Black, and advocates say abortion bans will increase their health and financial risks.

This is serious.

Slide 36

Maternal mortality hits Black women hard. Check this slide.

The media maternal mortality rate in some developed countries 4.45 out of every 100,000 women.

The US rate is over four times that at 20 per 100,000

Black women are more than double that at 44 per 100,000

The current court decision banning abortion care is a death sentence for many Black women.

Slide 37

We have to also pay attention to domestic violence.

More than 40% of Black women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime, according to the Institute of Women's Policy Research's Status of Black Women in the United States. In comparison, 31.5% of all women will experience domestic violence. A report from the National Center for Victims of Crime found that 53.8% of Black women had experienced psychological abuse, while 41.2% of Black women had experienced physical abuse.

This is a problem within the Black community and is connected to the disruption of family life and the secure upbringing of Black children and their mental health.

Slide 38

In the big picture of the progress of Black women, it must be recognized that there has been great advances for Black women in political leadership today.

At the national level 29 Black women – all Democrats – serve in the Congress. Kamala Harris (D-CA) serves as vice-president. Ketanji Brown Jackson serves on the Supreme Court.

This is a picture of those who served in the 116th Congress, along with Kamala Harris and Ketanji Brown Jackson.

Slide 39

On the other hand, there are militant Black women leaders building movements for social transformation.

Tanya Lee or Left Roots

Jonel Edwards of the Dream Defenders

Kimberly Crenshaw of the African American Policy Forum

Samantha Daley of BYP 100

Tasneem Siddiqui of the Africa World Now Project

Shafeah M'Baliala of the Black Workers for Justice

Slide 40

OK, let's summarize the main points of this presentation on gender:

1. We must understand the difference between gender and sex
2. Black women have suffered in history: slavery, rural tenancy, and urban industry
3. Black women have been leaders in all sectors of society
4. Black women face triple oppression based on racism, classism and Patriarchy
5. We must defend our LGBTIQIA sisters
6. We must support Black women in electoral

positions and in mass social movements

Lets talk.