

Document Analysis: bell hooks



Source: bell hooks, *Aint I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, 1981.

Note: bell hooks was the pen name of Gloria Jean Watkins, an activist, author, and scholar of feminism, literature, and ethnic studies.

Initially, black feminists approached the women's movement white women had organized eager to join the struggle to end sexist oppression. We were disappointed and disillusioned when we discovered that white women in the movement had little knowledge of or concern for the problems of lower class and poor women or the particular problems of non-white women from all classes. Those of us who were active in women's groups found that white feminists lamented the absence of large numbers of non-white participants but were unwilling to change the movement's focus so that it would better address the needs of women from all classes and races...

From our [Black feminists] peripheral position in the movement we saw that the potential radicalism of feminist ideology was being undermined by women who, while paying lip service to revolutionary goals, were primarily concerned with gaining entrance into the capitalist patriarchal power structure. Although white feminists denounced the white male, calling him an imperialist, capitalist, sexist, racist pig, they made women's liberation synonymous with women obtaining the right to fully participate in the very system they identified as oppressive...

Individual black feminists despaired as we witnessed the appropriation of feminist ideology by elitist, racist white women... We could not even get a hearing at women's groups because they were organized and controlled by white women... White women liberationists saw feminism as "their" movement and resisted any efforts by non-white women to critique, challenge, or change its direction... It did not serve the interest of upper and middle class white feminists to discuss race and class.

THINKS Document Analysis

T (Topic)

H (Historical Context)

I (Intended Audience)

	Political
	Economic
	Social
	Religious
	Other

1. When was this document created and/or circulated? Who wrote it?

1. Who was the intended audience of this document?

2. What events were occurring during the time this document was written?

2. Whose voice or perspective is not shared in this document?

N (New Vocabulary)

1. What words are new to you or need to be defined?

K (Key Purpose)

1. How would you describe the author's perspective, or point of view?

2. Taking into account the author's perspective, why do you think this document was created? In other words, what is its purpose?

S (Significance)

1. List two things or ideas that make this document historically significant.

2. Provide one quote from the document that demonstrates why it might be considered historically significant. Explain your reasoning.



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Historical Causation

**Primary Cause/
Reason:**

Rationale:

**Secondary Causes/
Reasons:**

Directions: Label each cause. If possible, rank the secondary causes in order of importance (most important on top). Be sure to explain why you believe the primary cause is the most important.

Historical Event:

Black feminists break off the mainstream feminist movement into their own organizations.