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Magazine: Alice: A Womanist Ethics Magazine

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1. “From womanish. (Opp. of “girlish,” i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, “you acting womanish,” i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous, or willful behavior. Wanting to know more and in great depth than is considered “good” for one. Interested in grown up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: “You trying to be grown.” Responsible. In charge. Serious.

2. Also: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women’s culture, women’s emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women’s strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: “Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?” Ans.: “Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented.” Traditionally capable, as in “Mama, I’m walking to Canada and I’m taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me.” Reply: “It wouldn’t be the first time.”


4. Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.”

Radical Subjectivity

The moral principle of Radical Subjectivity is described as a defiant posture and audaciousness, that comes with habits of serving inquiries about oppression and that aids black women to rise above their circumstances as marginalized; individuals it is the Spirit-filled boldness of black women of all ages that challenge racism, sexism, and classism.
Womanists critique that feminists are often portrayed as middle and upper class white women. Womanism focuses on the tridimensional oppression faced by black women: sexism, racism, and classism.

The womanist perspective recognizes that men have been in the oppressors in different scenarios throughout history for all women. They also recognize that women sometimes oppress each other. Womanists show solidarity with all people in their struggle against oppression and racism.

The media portrays feminists to be most concerned with the respect and interest in the rights of white women. Womanists always take into consideration the rights and needs of black, Latino and white women. It is universal.

Womanists embrace being female, while feminist tend to try to be less feminine.

Feminism is focused on female-centered issues, while womanism centers on black women and is concerned with all forms of oppression.
1983: Alice Walker coins the term "womanist"

1985: Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi published "Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English," which expand on the concept of womanism and give more credit to the movement by acknowledging the term "womanism"

1985: Alice Walker's novel "The Color Purple" is released as a movie; this is the first exposure of womanist themes to a broad audience
1993:
The term "womanism" is defined in the American Heritage Dictionary, giving it added recognition.

Clenora Hudsom-Weems coins the term "africana womanism," which is a form of womanism that focuses more on injustice in regard to race, lending more credibility to the term "womanism."

2017:
Solange Knowles refers to herself as a proud womanist in a Time Magazine interview, giving the term mass exposure.
Alice Walker

Alice Walker is responsible for coining the term “womanism.” Her definition is universally respected in the womanist community. Beginning at the age of 16, she was active in the Civil Rights Movement, working throughout the United States and even in Mississippi, where she worked with the NAACP Legal Defense fund. After suffering an eye injury at the age of eight that deeply affected her self-esteem, Walker found comfort in writing, which led to her finding her passion of writing. Throughout her career, Walker has written many novels, short stories, and poems; one of her most famous writings is *The Color Purple*, a groundbreaking work that sparked lots of controversy among African Americans because it brought attention to the domestic violence and sexist brutality within the community.

Katie G. Cannon

Rev. Dr. Katie G. Cannon made history in 1974 when she was the first African American woman to be ordained a Presbyterian minister in the United States. This was a driving force behind the importance she saw for womanism and letting the voices of African American women be heard within theology. She served as minister for seventeen years at Union Presbyterian Seminary, teaching, writing, and speaking about womanist theology. She founded the Center for Womanist Leadership at the seminary. Her works, such as *Black Womanist Ethics*, focus on a more expansive and diverse religious theology.
Rev. Dr. Emilie M. Townes is a scholar and leader in theological education. In 2008, she was the first African American woman elected as president in the American Academy of Religion. Since 2013, Townes has been serving as a dean at Vanderbilt Divinity School, being the first African American elected for this position. She is also a Professor of Womanist Ethics and Society at the school. She served as the President of the Society for the Study of Black Religion from 2012-2016. She is a well-known author and leader within the field of womanism, with one of her most notable works being *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, which details womanist ethics, as well as breaks down society’s production of evil and how this system can be dismantled.

Rev. Dr. Melanie L. Harris earned her PhD in Christian Social Ethics at Union Theological Seminary. She is an Associate Professor of Religion at Texas Christian University, where she teaches and conducts research. She is also a Founding Director of African American and Africana Studies at the university. She has published a number of articles and books, including one of her most famous works *Gifts of Virtue, Alice Walker, and Womanist Ethics*, where she breaks down Alice Walker’s definition of womanist and womanist ethics, drawing out the most vital points of womanist ethics. Harris’ writing is set apart from most womanist ethicists because she focuses on the importance of environmental justice and our relationship with the Earth, referred to as ecowomanism.
On August 19, 2018, Simone Biles wore a teal leotard to represent all the women who had been sexually abused by Larry Nassar at the U.S. Gymnastics Championships in Boston. Biles did so because she was critical of how former CEO of the USA Gymnastics Team, Kerry Perry, refused to offer up solutions to change the systemic problems. By doing so she represented that this type of abuse should never happen again. Nassar sexually abused over a hundred women during his time as the team physician for USA Gymnastics and Michigan State.

By doing this, Biles showed that the survivors of sexual assault were not alone. Biles is one of the survivors herself. When asked why she did it, Biles stated “[I]t is for the survivors, and I stand with all of them.”

By wearing the teal leotard and showing support for the other survivors, Biles demonstrates some womanist traits, such as how a woman can take back their own sexuality and not be ashamed of something in which they had no control. She also helps unite the community where this sexual assault took place. Biles is a person who stood up when their collective voices were not being heard. It was soon after this that Kerry Perry put in her resignation. These women are refusing to only be subjects of a crime and want changes to occur so the cycle does not stay the same. In this case, it seems like progress is being made by women uniting and refusing to be silent. 🌈
The 75th Golden Globe Awards were held on the night of January 7, 2018. That night, a special recognition was given to Oprah Winfrey. She was presented with the Golden Globes’ Cecil B. DeMille Award for Lifetime Achievement. The award is considered a huge honor, and Winfrey was the first African American female to receive it. In response, she gave an eight-minute acceptance speech that has been recorded and analyzed for the past year. The speech has been considered a teaching tool for both feminism and womanism, as well as a call to action for the world. It portrays the ideas of radical subjectivity by reinforcing the women are responsible, serious, and should not be considered victims of circumstance, and reinforces the ideas that women are strong and can do whatever they set their mind to. While further summary of the speech is possible, it is much more powerful in its original state:

Ah! Thank you. Thank you all. O.K., O.K. Thank you, Reese. In 1964, I was a little girl sitting on the linoleum floor of my mother’s house in Milwaukee, watching Anne Bancroft present the Oscar for best actor at the 36th Academy Awards. She opened the envelope and said five words that literally made history: “The winner is Sidney Poitier.” Up to the stage came the most elegant man I had ever seen. I remember his tie was white, and of course his skin was black. And I’d never seen a black man being celebrated like that. And I’ve tried many, many, many times to explain what a moment like that means to a little girl — a kid watching from the cheap seats, as my mom came through the door bone-tired from cleaning other people’s houses. But all I can do is quote and say that the explanation’s in Sidney’s performance in “Lilies of the Field”: “Amen, amen. Amen, amen.” In 1982, Sidney received the Cecil B. DeMille Award right here at the Golden Globes, and it is not lost on me that at this moment there are some little girls watching as I become the first black woman to be given this same award.

It is an honor, and it is a privilege to share the evening with all of them, and also with the incredible men and women who’ve inspired me, who’ve challenged me, who’ve sustained me and made my journey to this stage possible. Dennis Swanson, who took a chance on me for “A.M. Chicago”; Quincy Jones, who saw me on that show and said to Steven Spielberg, “Yes, she is Sophia in ‘The Color Purple’”; Gayle, who’s been the definition of what a friend is; and Stedman, who’s been my rock — just a few to name. I’d like to thank the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, because we all know that the press is under siege these days.

But we also know that it is the insatiable dedication to uncovering the absolute truth that keeps us from turning a blind eye to corruption and to injustice. To tyrants and victims and secrets and lies. I want to say that I value the press more than ever before, as we try to navigate these complicated times. Which brings me to this: What I know for sure is that speaking your truth is the most powerful tool we all have.
CELEBRITY SPOTLIGHT

And I’m especially proud and inspired by all the women who have felt strong enough and empowered enough to speak up and share their personal stories. Each of us in this room are celebrated because of the stories that we tell. And this year we became the story. But it’s not just a story affecting the entertainment industry. It’s one that transcends any culture, geography, race, religion, politics or workplace.

So I want tonight to express gratitude to all the women who have endured years of abuse and assault, because they — like my mother — had children to feed and bills to pay and dreams to pursue. They’re the women whose names we’ll never know. They are domestic workers and farmworkers; they are working in factories and they work in restaurants, and they’re in academia and engineering and medicine and science; they’re part of the world of tech and politics and business; they’re our athletes in the Olympics and they’re our soldiers in the military.

And they’re someone else: Recy Taylor, a name I know and I think you should know, too. In 1944, Recy Taylor was a young wife and a mother. She was just walking home from a church service she’d attended in Abbeville, Ala., when she was abducted by six armed white men, raped and left blindfolded by the side of the road, coming home from church. They threatened to kill her if she ever told anyone, but her story was reported to the N.A.A.C.P., where a young worker by the name of Rosa Parks became the lead investigator on her case and together they sought justice. But justice wasn’t an option in the era of Jim Crow. The men who tried to destroy her were never persecuted. Recy Taylor died 10 days ago, just shy of her 98th birthday. She lived, as we all have lived, too many years in a culture broken by brutally powerful men. And for too long, women have not been heard or believed if they dared to speak their truth to the power of those men. But their time is up. Their time is up. Their time is up.

And I just hope that Recy Taylor died knowing that her truth — like the truth of so many other women who were tormented in those years, and even now tormented — goes marching on. It was somewhere in Rosa Parks’s heart almost 11 years later, when she made the decision to stay seated on that bus in Montgomery. And it’s here with every woman who chooses to say, “Me too.” And every man — every man — who chooses to listen. In my career, what I’ve always tried my best to do, whether on television or through film, is to say something about how men and women really behave: to say how we experience shame, how we love and how we rage, how we fail, how we retreat, persevere, and how we overcome. And I’ve interviewed and portrayed people who’ve withstood some of the ugliest things life can throw at you, but the one quality all of them seem to share is an ability to maintain hope for a brighter morning — even during our darkest nights.

So I want all the girls watching here and now to know that a new day is on the horizon! And when that new day finally dawns, it will be because of a lot of magnificent women, many of whom are right here in this room tonight, and some pretty phenomenal men, fighting hard to make sure that they become the leaders who take us to the time when nobody ever has to say, ‘Me too’ again. Thank you.”  

Winfrey giving her iconic Golden Globes acceptance speech for the Cecil B. DeMille Award for Lifetime Achievement.
“I wake up every morning in a house that was built by slaves. And I watch my daughters, two beautiful, intelligent, black young women playing with their dogs on the White House lawn.” – Michelle Obama

"Being a part of this reemergence of a movement both pro-diversity and pro-woman is the best part of being a Black girl. It’s more than, ‘I stand for this because I should.’ I stand for this because this is part of who I am as a human being." – Robyn Rihanna Fenty

"I am a proud black feminist and womanist and I’m extremely proud of the work that’s being done. I’m a feminist who wants not only to hear the term intersectionality, but actually feel it, and see the evolution of what intersectional feminism can actually achieve. I want women’s rights to be equally honored, and uplifted, and heard... but I want to see us fighting the fight for all women — women of color, our LGBTQ sisters, our Muslim sisters. I want to see millions of us marching out there for our rights, and I want to see us out there marching for the rights of women like Dajerria Becton, who was body slammed by a cop while she was in her swimsuit for simply existing as a young, vocal, black girl. I think we are inching closer and closer there, and for that, I am very proud." – Solange Knowles
"It’s important to me to show images to my children that reflect their beauty so they can grow up in a world where they look in the mirror, first through their own families, as well as the news, the Super Bowl, the Olympics, the White House, and the Grammys, and see themselves….This is something I want for every child of every race, and I feel it’s vital that we learn from the past and recognize our tendencies to repeat our mistakes.” – Beyoncé Knowles-Carter

"Whenever a black woman speaks on anything she’s labeled as mad, angry or biter… I’m blessed and highly favored thanks to my amazing fans, but I’ll speak on whatever the f*ck I want to whenever the f*ck I want to.“ – Nicki Minaj

"This moment right here, me standing up here all brown with my boobs and my Thursday night of network television full of women of color, competitive women, strong women, women who own their bodies and whose lives revolve around their work instead of their men, women who are big dogs, that could only be happening right now.“ – Shonda Rhimes
In a world filled with twisted media, dirty politics, and celebrity gossip, many people are often misrepresented and misunderstood by society. Falsified stories are told using incorrect information and cultural stereotypes. Black women are arguably the biggest victims of this injustice. It’s time to take back your identity and tell the true history and experiences of black women. For years, black women’s stories have not been heard and appreciated. It’s time to make a change.

Womanists everywhere are working to unveil black women’s stories and the stories of their ancestors. They tell of the injustice, prejudice, and abuse women of color have endured in America. In her book *Mining the Motherlode*, Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas identifies this problem in our society and lays out a plan to combat it. Floyd-Thomas stresses the importance of Radical Subjectivity for women of color. By practicing Radical Subjectivity, women take back their identity by telling their own subjective truth. Floyd-Thomas explains the lesson of Radical Subjectivity and claims womanist authors do this often through their writing. She writes, “the intergenerational lesson of radical subjectivity is to wrest one’s sense of identity out of the hold of hegemonic normativity, as womanist ethicists show in their work can be done” (9). Like she says, we must take back our stories and our sense of identity from the pictures and stereotypes society has created for us.
Floyd-Thomas and other womanist ethicists pair Radical Subjectivity with Biomythography to speak out about injustice. Floyd-Thomas writes, “Biomythography is a method that is well suited for the task of charting black women’s radical subjectivity” (24). She then lays out the five stages of biomythography that must be used to accurately tell the story of black women. The five stages are articulation of embodied testimony, re-memory of disremembered memories, demythologizing of normative ideologies, interrogation of internalized oppression, and remythologizing of life story (24). Each stage is as important as the next. To redefine our identity, we must carefully tell the emotional experiences we’ve had while striving to define and identify ourselves.

We’ve gone too long conforming to and living with stereotypes and cultural norms that people in society, who do not know our true stories, created for us. It is time to tell our own truths and embody values that are important to us. Practicing radical subjectivity and biomythography, are the first steps in creating your own identity and becoming a womanist. So, speak out, stand up for yourself and what you believe in, take back your own identity, be YOU, be a Womanist. 

![Image of women uplifted in the air, possibly during a protest or rally.](image-url)
In 2015, Kyemah McEntyre created an African-inspired prom dress. After posting a photo on Instagram, her caption read:

“As an artist I have a completely different point of view compared to most individuals. I am extremely analytical and observant. Throughout the world, we have people who do not notice each others essence and humanity. We stunt our collective spiritual growth by allowing assumptions and stereotypes to cloud our mind and thus our physical reality...I believe that in order for society to gain a wider horizon, we have to be willing to acknowledge other people from differences, beliefs, morals, and values.”
This ties into radical subjectivity and womanism because part of the reason why McEntyre decided to make this dress is because she is looking for a place in the world. She calls for people to “acknowledge other people from differences, beliefs, morals, and values.” She also owns her own sexuality and ancestry in her masterpiece; she does not let the hegemonic normativity stop her from having her own identity. McEntyre makes herself at once an object of beautiful perfection, as well as presents a connection from which people can relate to her through her art: in this case which is the dress she wears. The popularity of this dress and what McEntyre has gone on to do with her art shows that her work is impactful and people connect with it.

McEntyre is now attending Parsons campus of The New School Of Design and has a website displaying her work so far. The website is titled The Mind of Kye.

McEntyre wearing a canvas gown that she designed and made herself at the BET Honors on March 5, 2016. She was an honoree.
South African Homemade Lemonade

Ready In: 23 minutes  Serves: 6

Background: Lemonade was a project released on HBO by Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter on April 23, 2016. It documented the struggles of womanism and the experiences of Black women. After an immensely positive response occurred, The Lemonade Syllabus was created by Candice Marie Benbow. Thus, lemonade is the perfect recipe to symbolize radical subjectivity within womanism. Lemonade represents the individual nature that is critical to womanism.

Ingredients:
• 1 cup sugar, reduce to 3/4 cup if you’d prefer it less sweet
• 1 cup water
• 1 cup lemon juice, freshly squeezed
• 1 handful raisins
• cold water and ice, so that you can dilute to taste

Directions:
• The secret to perfect lemonade is to make a simple syrup by dissolving the sugar in warm water so that it’s dispersed evenly instead of sinking to the bottom. So if you have a stove handy, heat the sugar and water in a small saucepan and stir until its completely dissolved; otherwise just stir very well.
• Extract the juice from the lemons. I use my Granny’s juicer but you can do this anyway you like.
• Pour the juice and sugar water into a jug, throw in the raisins and leave for a while, overnight if possible, to allow them to start fermenting and give it a fizz.
• Before serving add about two cups of cold water and a bag of ice to the jug — more or less, depending on how strong you want it to be. If the lemonade is still a little sweet for anyone’s taste, chuck a slice or two of lemon into the glass.
In the Kenyan language of Kikuyu, Irio just means "food." But in daily use, it means a quick dish of the region's staples: mashed potatoes, corn, peas, and greens. Irio is perfectly at home alongside roasted or grilled meats, but if you want some meatless protein, stir about a cup of frozen and thawed lima beans directly into the mash. This recipe is important because it reveals African traditions that were brought to America through slavery. Even if these recipes are not widely known, they are an important part of history. It is important that recipes such as this are not eradicated, but instead, spread.

**Ingredients:**

- 6 white potatoes
- 1 tablespoon watercress, chopped
- 1 cup cooked peas (either fresh or frozen will work)
- 1 cup cooked corn (either fresh or frozen will work)
- 1 -2 tablespoon butter
- salt and pepper

**Directions:**

- Peel potatoes and slice into thick wedges. Place in large pot of water and bring to a boil. Cook until the potatoes are tender but not falling into a mush.
- Pour off the water and begin to mash the potatoes by hand. Add in the watercress, peas and corn and mix everything until well combined.
- Season the mash with butter, salt and pepper to taste.
- Serve hot.
How Much of a Womanist are You?

Instructions: Answer the questions, add up your score, find your results!

1. What do you most value in life?
   A. Justice, spirituality, community
   B. Optimism, efficiency, determination
   C. Money, power, fame

2. What is your dream job?
   A. Historian
   B. Accountant
   C. Social Activist

3. What's your favorite color?
   A. Yellow
   B. Purple
   C. Lavender

4. Which famous person would you choose to be your best friend?
   A. Kylie Jenner
   B. Oprah Winfrey
   C. Alice Walker

5. What is your perfect way to spend a Saturday night?
   A. Hanging out with friends
   B. Going to a rally to support the clean energy movement
   C. Sitting at home and watching Netflix

6. What's the most important part of telling a story?
   A. Highlighting all the key events
   B. Accurately describing the experience and emotions of the main character
   C. Putting your own twist on it and making it interesting
Scores 17-21

**Empowered Womanist**

CONGRATULATIONS! You are basically the ~perfect~ womanist. You are proud of this theology and aren’t afraid to show it. You hold womanist values, virtues, and practices close to your heart. Alice Walker is probably your idol. Keep up the good work! You’re doing great, sweetie!

Scores 12-16

**Emerging Womanist**

You’re just starting out of a womanist. You know and value many of the basic elements and principles of womanism, but you still have a lot to learn. Keep learning, reading, and putting yourself out there in the womanist community and soon you’ll be a great womanist, too!

Scores 7-11

**Evolving Curious**

Unfortunately, you aren’t really a womanist. You do not place importance on the values that make up the womanist theology. No need to worry, there is no time like the present to start to learn. So, crack open a book, study those virtues and values, and eventually, you will be an empowered womanist!

Score Key: Q1: a=3, b=2, c=1; Q2: a=2, b=1, c=3; Q3: a=1, b=3, c=2; Q4: a=1, b=2, c=3; Q5: a=2, b=3, c=1; Q6: a=2, b=3, c=1
REVIEWS

Must Read List:
Radical Subjectivity Edition

Here’s the list of our favorite books that highlight and utilize Radical Subjectivity and Biomythography. The authors tell these stories using womanist methods and tactics to depict an accurate image of what life was like then, and is still like for women of color. These books will leave you feeling strong, confident, and powerful!

1. The Color Purple - Alice Walker
This classic novel by Alice Walker tells the story of a young black girl, Celie, living in the South in the early 1900s. She is faced with segregation and oppression and experiences physical, mental, and emotional abuse. Celie eventually learns the power of her own spirit and finds joy within herself. This book uses many womanist themes, values, strategies. It is known as one of the greats.

2. I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings - Maya Angelou
In her autobiography, Maya Angelou tells the story of her childhood, the oppression, prejudice, and abuse she endured. Maya finds her own inner strength and happiness through self love, good community, and literature. This novel is raw, emotional, and empowering.

3. Maud Martha - Gwendolyn Brooks
Another novel that stresses the importance of self love and inner strength, Brooks’s novel explores what black lives are like in a racist and discriminatory society. The book is based in Chicago and follows a young girl, Maud Martha, as she grows and comes into womanhood.

4. The Women of Brewster Place - Gloria Naylor
Following the stories of seven women living together in a city sanctuary, Gloria Naylor depicts a painful, yet loving tale of African women in America. This novel will have you feeling some MAJOR girl power.

5. Zami: A New Spelling of My Name - Audre Lorde
Lorde’s biomythography is powerful and moving. In Zami, Lorde shares the stories of how women have empowered her, as well as, her own stories to empower others. Zami is a true story of finding one’s identity.
What virtues do I need to focus on to be a womanist? Womanism is a movement that emphasizes the inclusion and well-being of all living beings, focusing on the experiences and contributions of black women within society that have often been ignored. If you want to exemplify this movement, focus on being aware of your thoughts and actions. Virtues, such as good community, accountability, generosity, and graciousness, are important aspects of your life. Make sure you are exemplifying them to the best of your abilities.

Why are the voices of women of color often unheard? How can I make my voice be heard? Black women deal with a tripartite oppression of racism, sexism, and classism, putting them in a position where their stories and experiences are often muted and unacknowledged. Historically, they have been seen and treated as inferior beings, and womanism is working to change this. Remember, when it comes to letting your voice be heard, do not back down. Use social media and other public platforms to help show people the value of womanism.

What is the benefit of womanism focusing so heavily on literature? Literature allows for the stories and experiences of oppression and hardships faced by black women to be heard and acknowledged by many. These women have an outlet to express themselves and have their stories and experiences validated. You should do the same!

Why should I be a womanist instead of a feminist? Womanism focuses on the stories and experiences of black women that are often forgotten or unheard and aims for inclusivity of all, including men who are sometimes seen as enemies in the feminist movement, the LGBTQ+ community, animals, and the Earth. Feminism is traditionally middle-class female dominated.
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"Womanist is to Feminist as Purple is to Lavender"

-Alice Walker