

THINKING GENDER IN *TRANSNATIONAL* TIMES

DECOLONIZING AND FEMINIZING FREEDOM

A CARIBBEAN GENEALOGY

Denise Noble



Thinking Gender in Transnational Times

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Gender theories have always been important, but no more so than now, when gender is increasingly acknowledged as an essential focus for economics, policy, law and development as well as being central to a range of fields in the humanities and social sciences such as cultural studies, literary criticism, queer studies, ethnic and racial studies, psychoanalytic studies and of course feminist studies. Yet while the growth areas for the field are those that seek to combine interdisciplinary theoretical approaches with transnational arenas of inquiry, or integrate theory and practice, there is currently no book series that foregrounds these exciting set of developments. The series 'Thinking Gender in Transnational Times' aims to redress this balance and to showcase the most innovative new work in this arena. We will be focusing on soliciting manuscripts or edited collections that foreground the following: Interdisciplinary work that pushes at the boundaries of existing knowledge and generates innovative contributions to the field. Transnational perspectives that highlight the relevance of gender theories to the analysis of global flows and practices. Integrative approaches that are attentive to the ways in which gender is linked to other areas of analysis such as 'race', ethnicity, religion, sexuality, violence, or age. The relationship between theory and practice in ways that assume both are important for sustainable transformation. The impact of power relations as felt by individuals and communities, and related concerns, such as those of structure and agency, or ontology and epistemology. In particular, we are interested in publishing original work that pushes at the boundaries of existing theories, extends our gendered understanding of global formations, and takes intellectual risks at the level of form or content. We welcome single or multiple-authored work, work from senior and junior scholars, or collections that provide a range of perspectives on a single theme.

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To my mother, Ivy May Pottinger-Noble, who refused to be crushed by the fear of racism or sexism and taught me to stand in the bigness of my history, culture and myself. To my ancestors on the slave ships. Some of us survived!

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As with writing any book, there have been many moments when this felt like a lonely enterprise, one that isolated me for long periods from family, friends and even life. Those are the feelings that one has when one is deep in the valleys, trying to scale the steep slopes of reading, data analysis and writing, rewriting and then rewriting again. And then one day you look up and find you have travelled so far up the mountainside and have re-emerged into the sunlight, able to see the process for what it really is—that is, one in which one was always surrounded by others and immersed in life. This book, like all books, would have been impossible without the community of scholars past and present, friends, family, adversaries and detractors. It is the realities of everyday life, the people in it, the complexities of the world and times in which the scholar lives that gives research meaning, relevance, importance and possibility. Writing a book takes place in the world, not merely in one's room or a library, or one's head. First, there is the world that formed the researcher and their choice of research topic. My world as a Black British woman scholar brought up in a Jamaican family living in London was shaped by my Jamaican parents' stories of 'back home', their pride in the dignity of Caribbean culture and Black history, and my mother's deep political commitments to anti-colonialism abroad and anti-racism in Britain. So I must thank my parents, Ivy Pottinger-Noble and the late Eddie Noble, who gave

me the gift of Black pride, in the face of all that would have us feel ashamed and underserving; survival, in the face of all that would tell us that Black lives do not really matter; and an indefatigable overcoming spirit, in the face of the obstacles placed in the path of individual self-fulfilment and collective Black liberation by racism and social injustices of all kinds. In particular, it is from my mother, and her unswerving passion for social justice and refusal to be brow-beaten by racism, patriarchy or British class elitism, that I acquired a sense of my deep embeddedness in a multigenerational community of warrior women of the Caribbean and African diaspora. It is the self-liberation ethos of these women that both inspired this research and provided its ancestral spiritual sustenance. One ancestral spirit that I frequently called on was that of my maternal great-grandmother, Vera Reid, a woman who died before I was born but whose picture was on my desk and accompanied me, in my bag, to my PhD viva exam. It is to the memory of these women that this book is dedicated, and it is to them that I give thanks, because in surviving capture, the Middle Passage, slavery, colonialism, immigration and racism, they impelled me to write this book, and provided an example and template of bold womanhood, both for me and for the women who participated in this study. I feel deep respect for, and give thanks to, the Black British Caribbean women who donated their time, experiences, knowledge and defiant womanish culture of freedom to this research. To those women, I hope I have represented you in ways that you recognize, and which will inform and be useful to you and others.

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