



Online Book Reviews

In a Classroom of Their Own: The Intersection of Race and Feminist Politics in All-Black Male Schools. By Keisha Lindsay. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2018. 208 pp. \$14.95 (Ebook), \$24.95 (paperback), \$99.00 (hardcover).

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At the start of the twentieth century, more than 30 states in the United States offered free elementary education for children, and within 50 years these numbers increased. It has been only 65 years since the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision, and Keisha Lindsay's work *In a Classroom of Their Own* demonstrates that we still have much work to do to ensure public education at the K–12 levels for black children. Public education remains highly complex, political, and fraught with problems. There is no shortage of books that examine single-sex education, and most examine how single-sex education positively affects girls.

Lindsay's book is a much-needed contribution to the examination of education for black children. Her book is impactful with the focus on black boys and the support for all-black male schools (ABMSs). The book is divided into four chapters, with an introduction and a conclusion. Lindsay describes the backdrop to the support for ABMSs and how there are progressive possibilities for black boys at ABMSs. However, some of the arguments in support of ABMSs are problematic, and Lindsay uncovers these problems within her book.

Black children in the United States are more likely to face suspension from school compared to white children, yet they constitute a smaller percentage of the school-aged population. *In a Classroom of Their Own* offers statistics and more, as Lindsay details the ways in which ABMSs

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became popular. Lindsay does an admirable job conveying the complicated politics of ABMSs. She maps out how many arguments supporting ABMSs were conservative in nature, but meant to do right by Black boys. These arguments include the so-called feminized classrooms of public schools and the ways that black girls allegedly distract black boys from their education. The conundrum is how to balance the need for a better education for black boys in the face of institutionalized racism without only using conservative arguments to support this need.

Lindsay relies on policy discourse analysis in order to examine black male support of ABMSs. She explains:

I am especially concerned with how Black male proponents of ABMSs employ the narrative on endangered Black males for diverse political ends. Let me begin by detailing how these proponents use Black males' supposedly endangered status in ways that ignore the severity of Black women's and girls' own oppression within the classroom and elsewhere. (33)

Black boys are demonized in public-school environments. Their rates of placement in special education or punishment for minor infractions are markedly different than those of white boys. Black boys have historically found themselves treated with racism for merely existing in public schools, and their behaviors are treated as anomalous even when they behave similarly to white boys.

With the founding of ABMSs, the move to single-sex schools was predicated on how black boys are distracted by black girls in the coeducational environment and how the bulk of their teachers are white women. Although research about the efficacy of single-sex educational environments is wide-ranging, blaming black girls' presence pits black children against one another and does not effectively counter racism that all black children face. Lindsay explains that the culprit is institutionalized racism against black children, which targets black boys with masculinized racism. Masculinized racism causes their teachers to fear black boys from preschool up and to categorize black boys as a problem in the classroom. Black girls are also treated similarly in terms of punishment and suspension numbers.

Chapter 2, "Antiracist, Antifeminist Intersectionality," stands out as an expertly presented history of intersectionality. Lindsay notes that some tenets of intersectionality are being co-opted by supporters of ABMSs, who do not have a thorough understanding of intersectionality, in addition to their previously noted conservative arguments. Intersectionality as expounded by Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term, is not a

conservative theory but one that for decades has explained the particular ways that black women experience racialized sexism and more.

Lindsay is not against ABMSs and encourages them as long as they offer antisexist curricula and support progressive education for black boys. Public education is a right; however, institutionalized racism influences the ways in which black boys and black girls experience education in the United States. Lindsay details how public education is mired with problems from poor funding, inexperienced teachers, and heightened poverty. Coupled with neoliberal arguments supporting ABMSs, we can see why some want to support single-sex education.

The connection between masculinity and racism has caused significant heartache for black boys and their families. Masculinized racism curtails black boyhood by portraying them and their actions under a negative light. Black boys need a fair shot at education but face multiple roadblocks. The appendix includes an up-to-date list of ABMSs that have been proposed or established. We should not be surprised that during the last decade, more black parents are homeschooling their children for the same reason that others choose ABMSs.

In a Classroom of Their Own is interdisciplinary and is useful for reading lists in political science, gender studies, sociology, African American studies or black studies, and education. The book is suitable for both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Overall, Lindsay offers rich citations in each chapter demonstrating extensive research and expertise in this topic and many related areas. This book is a must-read for scholars interested in education, single-sex education, a history of intersectionality, and feminist politics.

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Vexy Thing: On Gender and Liberation. By Imani Perry. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018. 304 pp. \$26.95 (paperback), \$99.95 (hardcover).

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Imani Perry's *Vexy Thing: On Gender and Liberation* is a sophisticated mapping of patriarchy from the Enlightenment to the present. Perry