



## **Race, Gender, and Power in America: The Legacy of the Hill-Thomas Hearings**

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# Race, Gender, and Power in America: The Legacy of the Hill-Thomas Hearings

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The shock waves from Anita Hill's testimony at the Senate confirmation hearings of Clarence Thomas continue to reverberate. *Race, Gender, and Power in America* is a powerful collection of essays that examines the context and consequences of that controversy. Edited by Hill and Emma Coleman Jordan, Professor of Law at Georgetown University Law Center, and including the first published essay on the episode written by Hill herself, these essays explore the volatile politics of race and gender, and the unique challenges faced by African-American women.

Among the distinguished contributors are Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton; playwright/actress and Stanford University Professor Anna Deaveare Smith; and Chief Judge Emeritus A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr. of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. In addition, this collection brings together for the first time many of the direct participants in the hearings, including four members of Hill's emergency legal team: Professor Charles J. Ogletree, Jr. of Harvard Law School; Professor Judith Resnik of the University of Southern California Law Center; Susan Deller Ross, Director of the Sex Discrimination Clinic at Georgetown Law Center; and volume co-editor Emma Coleman Jordan. Jordan's essay examines how Thomas used the "lynching" metaphor to evoke a false racial memory of innocent black victims of vigilante violence. The lynching metaphor succeeded in branding Hill as a race-disrespecting traitor who was willing to "air the dirty linen" of sexual misconduct by breaking a powerful racial taboo against exposing black men to flawed justice. In "She's No Lady; She's a Nigger," Adele Logan Alexander scrutinizes the devastating, centuries-old stereotypes of African-American women as mindless, untrustworthy, and sexually insatiable. Hill examines the institutions of patronage and marriage, demonstrating how, as a professional African-American woman with no official Senate sponsor, she confounded the assumptions by which lawmakers are accustomed to assigning credibility and status. "In going before the Committee, I came face to face with a history of exclusion from power," she writes. Charles R. Lawrence views the controversy as Act One in a three act morality play starring Clarence Thomas, William Kennedy Smith, and Mike Tyson, and Harvard's Orlando Patterson maintains that it is black men, even more than black women, who suffer the consequences of strained gender relations. Looking to the future, Robert L. Allen describes his encouraging work with the Oakland Men's Project, and offers a prescription for ending sexual harassment and the system of sexism that underpins it.

*Race, Gender, and Power in America* is provocative reading for everyone concerned about the fault lines of race and gender threatening to rupture our society.

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