

## SANDRA DIXON

### Living Our Truths and Reclaiming Our Voices as Black Women

It's a new day, Black women

Reclaiming our womanist rights, family-oriented and liberated from the ideology of Eurocentric feminism fraught with inequality and privilege juxtaposed to gender and race  
The complexity of our realities reflects the intersectionality of identities that we wrestle with in our daily lives both at home and in the workplace.

Collectively, our tripartite plight of racism, sexism, and classism is shared  
Yet, we strive to overcome society's systemic prejudice and microaggression  
Clinging to our faith for the strength and resilience to fight another day  
With hope that the pain of yesterday will bring us a ray of sunshine tomorrow  
Since weeping may endure for a night, but our joy comes in the morning.

Women of African descent, the rich history and legacy of our ancestors is there to guide us in forging our future  
With strong determination and tenacity, we hold steadfast and unmovable to the profound words of the activist Sojourner Truth—"Ain't I a Woman?"  
In our responses, we proclaim fearlessly with our voices and speak our truths, amidst the noises of western dominance, patriarchal subjugation, and systemic oppression.

Yes! We are women with hopes, dreams, and passion to break the glass ceilings and change the socio-cultural, economic, and geopolitical strata of society  
Our grit for passion and perseverance extends beyond the need for recognition  
It is rooted in our quest for social justice, equity, solidarity, and harmony  
We are no longer tolerated for our similarities  
But rightfully accepted and celebrated for our cultural differences.

Like George Floyd, we can't breathe, fearful of losing our sons to police brutality, wrongful accusations, racial profiling, and false imprisonment  
We are tired of being gaslighted from sharing our experiences of marginalization and discrimination with others who deem them frivolous  
We push back when our daughters are fetishized for their sexuality  
labelled as angry Black women for asserting themselves, or by speaking their truths and using their own voices.

Despite academic accolades and accomplishments, many cannot seem to transcend the systemic domination into and within the corporate sector.  
Often the ones in countless employment spaces who are ready to serve others in a multicultural society  
Seen as the minority who are always "less than" the majority.

Still, we fight on in the hope of a better day where our sacrifices will be noticed  
Seen as women with intrinsic values and limitless worth  
Standing unmovable and relentless in our proud roles as mothers, sisters, daughters, leaders, allies, accomplices, co-conspirators, colleagues, change agents, and friends  
Giving of our time, effort, skills, and expertise.

Asking for nothing in return  
Other than the validation of our humanity.

Strong Black women, we say, 'no more running from the racism we face and the hate we have to endure'  
Today, we make a conscious decision and take a courageous stand to stop the generational trauma inflicted by colonialism  
We look and listen for opportunities to create a movement not a moment to ignite social change,  
and lay a strong foundation for future generations to cultivate their dreams even in a society poisoned with hate, covert racism, and implicit biases  
We carry the torch of our ancestors high for all to see we are survivors who will not be shaken  
Come what may, we are brave warriors who will fight to the end to live our truths, to reclaim, to sustain and nurture our voices.

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De has analyzed women of the ancient period in India and compared with the present situation of women. She suggests up-gradation of women's lives in present times on socio-economic and political premises. She suggests that the level and position of women are different in different periods and various civilizations. Like other authors, Aparna De also claims that women in the early Vedic period in Indian history enjoyed high status. However, a decline in women's high level started in the late Vedic period and continued to decline further during other dynasties. The position of women reached an all-time low during the age of the Dharmashastras.

The practice of Sati became quite widespread. The Purdah system, prevalent among royal families and merchant classes before the advent of Muslims, spread to other types. Women's status continued to deteriorate during the age of Smriti (AD 500 to AD 1800) and Muslim rule until they almost lost all social status. Many factors were directly or indirectly responsible for the continuous deterioration of Indian women's position in medieval times. Early marriage became a rule to safeguard the honour and virtue of girls. Because of the Muslim invasion, the indigenous culture had been subjected to acculturation. The customs and traditions of Islam had made in-roads into the Indigenous culture.

On the other hand, Hinduism's values sustain the male supremacy over females, women's "mother wife" role in the private domain, and man's "public" role in economic and political spheres. De also blames the priestly class who

misapprehended the sacred texts and granted religious permission to discriminate against women. In the scholarly work "Labor Class of Women in Mughal India," Iftikhar presents the working-class women's contribution to medieval India before European colonization. In the political history of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the source material had just passing references to reflect women's social and economic life. Although some information is available regarding the kinds of work women did, a considerable amount of such literature has been addressed in the archival document *Abul-Fazal's Ain-i-Akbari* (1873). Almost every traveler commented on the daily life of women in India. This material's reliability is still questionable, but these accounts are considered an essential source of medieval Indian history. The pictorial evidence offered by illustrations and miniatures of the Mughal School of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries documented by the author portrays women's economic contribution. These illustrations suggest women's activeness in various middle-class professions, such as domestic work, entertainment, prostitution, and the service industry. There are accounts where the state even appreciated working women of medieval Indian society. Mughal Emperors have taken many steps to facilitate them. But in medieval India's patriarchal political history, there are only passing references to working-class women.

On the contrary, Koehler in "Female Entrepreneurship in Early Islam," provides a discourse on the absence of female business leaders and public life, as evident in