

To White Feminists

by Carol Camper

Ce manifeste d'une écrivaine lesbienne noire confronte le racisme des féministes blanches.

You just can't handle us having any real power.

YOUR RACISM IS SHOWING when we are invisible to you; an afterthought solicited to integrate your white organizations.

YOUR RACISM IS SHOWING when in frustrated anger, you

don't understand why we won't do your racism work for you. Do it yourself. Educate yourself. Don't ask another Black woman to explain it all to you. Read a book.

YOUR RACISM IS SHOWING when you pay too much attention to us. We resent your staring scrutiny that reveals how much we are oddities to you.

YOUR RACISM IS SHOWING in your cowardly fear of us; when you send someone else to talk to us on your behalf, perhaps another sister; when conflict resolution with us means you call the police. When you ignore what the police do to Black people and call them anyway, your racism is showing.

YOUR RACISM IS SHOWING when you eagerly embrace the lone Black woman in your collective, while fearing, resenting, suspecting, and, attacking a vocal, assertive group of Black women. One Black woman you can handle, but organized Black women are a real problem. You just can't handle us having any real power.

YOUR RACISM IS SHOWING when you comment on our gorgeous "ethnic" clothing or ask us why we wear dreads when we are perfect strangers to you. Would you do the same to a white stranger wearing Ralph Lauren and a page boy? These are also ethnic styles.

YOUR RACISM IS SHOWING when you demand to know our ethnicity, if we don't look like your idea of a Black person. We are not accountable to you for how our bodies look. And we don't have to be "nice" to you and tolerate your prying.

YOUR RACISM IS SHOWING when you insist upon defining our reality. You do not live inside our skin, so do not tell us how we should perceive this world. We exist and so does our reality.

YOUR RACISM IS SHOWING when our anger makes you panic. Even when we are not angry at you or your racism, but some simple, ordinary thing. When our expressed anger translates to you as a threat of violence, this is your unacknowledged fear of retribution or exposure and it is revealing your guilt.

YOUR RACISM IS SHOWING when you, by your interference, will not allow us to have our own space. We realize you never expected to be denied access to anything and any place, but sometimes you should stay away from Black women's spaces. You do not have to be there just in case something exotic is going on or just in case we are plotting against you. In these instances, you are not just uninvited guests, you are infiltrators. *This is a hostile act.*

YOUR RACISM IS SHOWING when you cry, "Reverse discrimination!" There is no such thing. Only privileged people who have never lived with discrimination, think there can be a "reverse." *This means that you think it shouldn't happen to you, only to the other people it usually happens to—like us.*

YOUR RACISM IS SHOWING when you exclaim that we are paranoid and expecting racism around every corner. Racism inhabits this society at a core level. If we weren't constantly on our guard, we, as a people, would be dead by now.

YOUR RACISM IS SHOWING when you

claim you have none. This economy and culture would not have existed without slave labour to build it. The invasion and exploitation of the Americas depended upon the conviction that people of colour were less than human. Otherwise, we could not have been so cruelly used. You grew up in a racist society. How could you not be racist? You cannot simply decide that racism is "bad" and therefore you are no longer racist. This is not unlearning racism. *Black people could not afford to be this naive.*

YOUR RACISM IS SHOWING when you think that all racists are violent, ignorant, card-carrying Nazis. You are fooling yourself, but not us, if you think that racism refers to the unconnected, isolated, "just-plain-mean" actions and attitudes of bad people. Most racists are nice folks, especially in this country. Racism is systemic and cannot be separated out from this culture.

We do not want to witness or dry your tears. Yes, racism hurts. It hurts you, but please do not entertain the notion that it hurts you as much as us. Racism *kills us* not you. Your tears will not garner our sympathy. We are no longer your property, therefore we will no longer take care of you. We don't want to see your foolishness, so take your racism work to your own place and do it there.

TO WHITE FEMINISTS, BE YOU LIBERAL, RADICAL, SEPARATIST, RICH, OR NOT—YOUR RACISM IS SHOWING. YOU CAN EXPECT TO HEAR FROM VOCAL, ORGANIZED BLACK WOMEN WHO WILL BE IN YOUR FACE ABOUT IT.

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