

## ***BLACK WOMENS' ROLE IN THE ME-TOO MOVEMENT***

*by John Marshall*

In December I joined in a discussion of the book *Good and Mad* by Rebecca Traister, award-winning author who has written about women in politics, media, and entertainment from a feminist perspective. Attending were four women and four men. The women had read the book and three of the men had not. As can be imagined for those men it was an eye-opening learning experience.

*Good and Mad* has been described as “a vital, incisive exploration into the transformative power of female anger and its ability to transcend into a political movement.” Since the discussion, I have read the book. I was eager to read it to understand the raw, angry energy that currently affects every aspect of our politics and daily lives. Rebecca Traister repeatedly demonstrates the interconnectedness of the rights of women, workers’ rights, minorities, and immigrants.

One of the things that struck me was that the author brought in a range of voices – especially those of Black women. I often found myself putting the book aside to deal with my feelings about personal experiences. Traister writes about how much more difficult it is to navigate anger as a Black woman. She also expands out to investigate the racial divisions within mainstream feminism that many White feminists are only beginning to grasp.

Traister points out that as far as systemic oppression is concerned, there are a lot of similarities between racism and sexism. She makes continual reference to African American women and their contribution to the struggle. The author states that when a diverse group of women come together to discuss what must happen to create a more diverse leadership in government, White women remark that their non-White sisters have been angry about oppression for a long time. While White women have suffered from the effects of sexism, Black women have suffered from both sexism and racism. The situation has been described as the “double whammy.” For too long, many Black women had to settle for caring for White children, cooking, or doing housekeeping. White women have a different situation that left room for White males to come in and manipulate them. Many White women have praised White men who protect them while stifling their anger at White male sexual harassment and other bad behavior.

On the Sunday before New Year’s Day I joined a well-attended gathering of friends and members of the interfaith group POWER. I was greatly moved by the wonderful jazz music and gospel singing. At the closing the speaker said that the joy and inspiration exhibited at the POWER event was connected to how many have endured the pain of the Black experience. He asked those present to carry those feelings out into the future to continue to fight for racial justice.