



Inequalities of Love: College-Educated Black Women and the Barriers to Romance and Family (Politics, history, and culture)

Averil Y. Clarke

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Inequalities of Love uses the personal narratives of college-educated black women to describe the difficulties they face when trying to date, marry, and have children. While conventional wisdom suggests that all women, regardless of race, must sacrifice romance and family for advanced educations and professional careers, Averil Y. Clarke's research reveals that educated black women's disadvantages in romance and starting a family are consequences of a system of racial inequality and discrimination. The author analyzes the accounts of black women who repeatedly return to incompatible partners as they lose hope of finding "Mr. Right" and reject unwed parenting because it seems to affirm a negative stereotype of black women's sexuality that is inconsistent with their personal and professional identities. She uses national survey data to compare college-educated black women's experiences of romance, reproduction, and family to those of less-educated black women and those of white and Hispanic women with degrees. She reports that degreed black women's lives include less marriage and sex, and more unwanted pregnancy, abortion, and unwed childbearing than college-educated white and Hispanic women. Black women's romantic limitations matter because they constitute deprivation and constraint in romance and because they illuminate important links between race, class, and gender inequality in the United States. Clarke's discussion of the inequities that black women experience in romance highlights the connections between individuals' sexual and reproductive decisions, their performance of professional or elite class identities, and the avoidance of racial stigma.

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