

Patricia Hill Collins. *Fighting Words: Black Women & The Search For Justice*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998). 312 pp., \$18.95 paper.

Collins' *Fighting Words* builds on her previous work, *Black Feminist Thought*, as she explores standpoint theory and "the outsider within" position and their usefulness for Black feminist thought. She structures her analysis by critiquing its effectiveness as critical social theory. For Collins, "critical social theory constitutes theorizing about the social in defense of economic and social justice." Because African American women and other oppressed groups seek economic and social justice, she posits that their social theories may generate new perspectives on injustice.

Using and problematizing Black feminist thought as a critical social theory, she explores three main questions: (1) "what issues does Black feminist thought confront as critical social theory?"; (2) "what issues does Black feminist thought raise for critical social theory?"; (3) "what contributions can Black feminist thought make to critical social theory?" Her aim is to use Black feminist thought to develop epistemological criteria for critical social theory.

Collins uses theoretical and methodological tools from various disciplines to provide a coherent analysis of Black feminist thought as critical social theory. While concerned about the efficacy of various social theories as theories, Collins is particularly concerned that social theory move beyond the abstract and make a difference in the pursuit of justice. Her analysis of social theory is embedded in social, political, and economic contexts. Her insistence on a situated analysis is related to her desire to make social theory accessible to a larger audience. She strides to write in a manner that is validated by the academy, while also making her work accessible to oppressed groups, who can make use of her research. Despite the difficulty of juggling these very different audiences, Collins manages to write a very readable and even enjoyable analysis of Black feminist thought.

While I am quite impressed by her well researched text, at times I desired a bit more from Collins. For example, her discussion of womanism and Black feminism was insightful and

intriguing, but I wondered why she did not address Clenora Hudson-Weems African Womanism, as many find this to be significantly different from Alice Walker's womanism. While I appreciated the inter-disciplinarity of *Fighting Words*, I wanted greater explanation of her decision to focus Part II on sociology, postmodernism, and Afrocentrism. Considering her many references to African American literature and the importance of avoiding ahistorical analyses, I hoped she would provide similarly detailed critiques of literary theory and history's roles in creating social theory.

Of course, I realize that one book cannot address everything, and ultimately, I find the text quite satisfying and thought-provoking.

Although Collins' primary focus is African American women, her work also contributes to thinking about other historically oppressed groups and the pursuit of social justice. *Fighting Words* should be considered for Women's Studies and African American Studies courses. The index, detailed notes, and well referenced bibliography makes it a very useful text.

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James P. Danky and Wayne A. Wiegand, eds. *Print Culture in a Diverse America. The History of Communication Series.* (Urbana: U of Illinois Press, 1998). 291 pp., \$49.95 cloth, \$27.95 paper.

This volume functions both in illuminating minority perspectives in print culture and describing and furthering the field of "print culture studies." The introduction then both discusses the structure and purpose of the field and argues that the book's contents challenge it in a variety of ways. Three thematic sections follow which cover, respectively, "lost" serials, the publishing industry, and written reconstructions of historical events.

The introduction provides a very complex and interesting view of this emerging field and its position in the academy. The editors suggest that scholarship in this area should focus on lit-