

# When racism and women's lives matter by traci west

[Sociology](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

College: WELFARE REFORM: In her book, Traci West, discusses the challenges faced by those at the fringes of society, and most especially black women. She profiles the lives of several black women who have undergone prejudice, violation and subjugation. Her choice of these subjects makes a big statement. Even in this society that claims to be highly tolerant, to be black is to be a little bit inferior, and to be female is not as exactly as to be male. But to be both<sup>1</sup>

Through these women, Traci shows us in a powerful way what it means to be marginalized. She shows us how racism can impact on public policy and practice. But above all, her positive conclusion shows us that this marginalization can be conquered. In it she presents cases that portray how these women have managed to overcome societal prejudice and mistreatment to discover their dignity and a better life. The way out of this cage, is through " liberation practice." <sup>2</sup>

The " liberation practice" is essentially a liberative method of Christian ethics. It recognizes hard work as the key to success, and not faith in handouts. It affirms that all men are created equal, and there is no basis for discrimination either along gender or racial lines. It recognizes unity in strength, and the audacity of hope in the worst of circumstances. <sup>3</sup>

This " liberating practice" finds agreement with the central theme in the documentary " 1967: Welfare, Poverty, Food Stamps, and Financial Aid" .

Like the indigent black woman in West's book, its main actors are black women, who organize a co-operative movement. Some of them even depend on welfare. Like their counterparts in Traci West's book, they are exploited economically, sexually and socially. The Darwinian concept of survival for the

fittest has consigned them to the lowest caste - until they decide to stand up for themselves. Together, they decide that they have to organize around their ability to become, and not around the dole. They set up a co-operative that cuts out the pound of flesh so voraciously demanded by the middleman. Suddenly, they are putting food on the table. Suddenly, they are riding on a new wave of self dignity, and proving critics wrong. At the end of the documentary, Traci West's theme of " liberating practice is affirmed". 4

The " liberating practice" is a positive statement. It soldiers on in the face of discouragement - didn't the man say the women will not make it; they just didn't have " enough" to succeed It recognizes that true empowerment cannot be achieved through handouts but through a commitment to fighting injustices that keep us down, through a commitment to become better. Both the film and the book, in their graphic description of the " liberating practice" show that in unity, there is certainly strength to defeat a common foe. The success of the women in the documentary only begins when they realize that it is by coming together that they can bring down the exploitative nature of the middleman. It instructive that their form of organization is a co-operative. 5

Through the " liberating Practice" it is possible to face down the main challenges of racism, sexual violation and socio-economic exploitation directed against minority groups such as women and blacks. 6

Footnotes and end notes: