

Summary and analysis no name woman by maxine hong kingston, both ain't i a woman ...

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Both Ain't I A Woman by Sojourner Truth and No Name Woman by Maxine Hong Kingston deal with the costs of being a woman, especially a woman of color or a woman in a deeply patriarchal society. I am not a first generation immigrant and, while I feel solidarity for Truth, I don't feel that my racial identity now keeps me from the sisterhood, though I do see conceptually that black women are often not represented by feminists or by other women. But I do know what it is like to be excluded from the sisterhood and I do know what it's like to know that the plans around my birth were very different from the reality.

Ain't I A Woman is a classic of what bell hooks might call “ intersectionality” or intersectional research. As Truth was writing, woman's liberation efforts were beginning. She delivered her speech at the Woman's Convention in Akron. Women were beginning to respond to the mistreatments of chivalry and the way that they were infantilized by the dominant rhetoric, but Truth pointed out that both white men and white women assumed things that excluded systematically a black perspective. Truth had never known chivalry from men, at least white men: She had known the lash and starvation. She had never known being a domesticated baby factory: Instead, she was a career woman because she was a slave and she was not a mother of a troupe of children not because she didn't have those children but because they were sold into slavery. One could point out, bitterly, that even a black male slave would prefer to live like a white woman. Truth was making an

appeal for the sisterhood, the emerging feminist movement, to represent all women, and to bear in mind that what women need varies from group to group. I have known many a time where I felt excluded from a sisterhood that portrayed themselves as the archetype of femininity. Whether cheerleaders or well-meaning young feminists, I've seen people repeatedly act as if they were advancing "just us girls" when they were in fact trampling over me.

Meanwhile, No Name Woman discusses the story of an aunt who was brutalized by the villagers and killed herself, killing Kingston's cousin in the process, due to what appeared to be infidelity as the husband was away. She feels possessed by a ghost, the ghost of her aunt, who feels that Kingston should take her place. It wasn't the raid by the villagers but the forgetting in Kingston's opinion. I think that this story underlines that, many times, women and their plights are kept invisible and unspoken. Kingston's aunt was killed because of sexist attitudes about what women should do and be. She haunts us still because we, whether in China or America, have yet to make women not invisible. My father wanted a son: I'm the eldest of three daughters and the result of that attempt. My father loves me dearly, and yet I know that, for years, as he looked at me, he saw an unborn boy. That boy has haunted me: I can't do the things he could have been, I can't marry a beautiful woman (without being a lesbian) and bear him grandchildren with his Y chromosome.

The invisibility of the needs of women continues. My experience, like Truth

and Kingston's, is with being haunted by a spectre that should not be. And I think, like the drowned Chinese ghost, it might drag us all down.