



Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred

M. Jacqui Alexander

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M. Jacqui Alexander is one of the most important theorists of transnational feminism working today. *Pedagogies of Crossing* brings together essays she has written over the past decade, uniting her incisive critiques, which have had such a profound impact on feminist, queer, and critical race theories, with some of her more recent work. In this landmark interdisciplinary volume, Alexander points to a number of critical imperatives made all the more urgent by contemporary manifestations of neoimperialism and neocolonialism. Among these are the need for North American feminism and queer studies to take up transnational frameworks that foreground questions of colonialism, political economy, and racial formation; for a thorough re-conceptualization of modernity to account for the heteronormative regulatory practices of modern state formations; and for feminists to wrestle with the spiritual dimensions of experience and the meaning of sacred subjectivity. In these meditations, Alexander deftly unites large, often contradictory, historical processes across time and space. She focuses on the criminalization of queer communities in both the United States and the Caribbean in ways that prompt us to rethink how modernity invents its own traditions; she juxtaposes the political organizing and consciousness of women workers in global factories in Mexico, the Caribbean, and Canada with the pressing need for those in the academic factory to teach for social justice; she reflects on the limits and failures of liberal pluralism; and she presents original and compelling arguments that show how and why transgenerational memory is an indispensable spiritual practice within differently constituted women-of-color communities as it operates as a powerful antidote to oppression. In this multifaceted, visionary book, Alexander maps the terrain of alternative histories and offers new forms of knowledge with which to mold alternative futures.

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Shannon says

Boo. A few ok chapters, but felt too pretentious overall. Trying to hard to be outside the box in my opinion.

ian says

If the presence of crossing in the title didn't communicate it, those four topics in the subtitle should indicate this book's sweeping quality.

I find myself looking for an argument here, a core, something to guide me; but this book is written in and as part of a tradition of women-of-color theorizing that tends instead to produce suggestions, to stimulate, rather than to tell people what to think. Because I understand this, and value the interpretative self-reliance such theorizing demands of the reader, I thought that if I just disciplined myself not to want the author to be in charge here, I'd get more out of the book. Still I can't find a reading strategy that works for me. I think it's because the book is uneven. It collects essays written from 1994 to 2004, which was a mistake, as the recent material is very much stronger and more provocative than the earlier. This is partly that the authors' thinking has deepened and partly that the mid90's essays I've already read are transcripts of talks rather than developments of talks. Both seem to exist primarily to communicate urgency about the need for feminism to take globalism seriously, to draw the connections between US practices and global situations. She's reminded me that the women who pack tomatoes from Mexico to Canada produce both economic and social theory as they organize for justice...but beyond the exhortation to academics not to forget that they don't own analytic activity, what does this accomplish? Is it a memorialization of these women's lives and labor, both physical and intellectual? A model of collectivism from which adjuncts in the academy could learn? I don't mind having to imagine such activism's value for myself, but dang it, I want Alexander to help out with some information, not least about what *she* thinks she is doing when she refers to such activism. Sometimes her rhetorical brilliance seems to me to be substituting for actual analysis. But she didn't promise analysis; she promised meditations. And so I return to wondering whether I'm just too much of an empiricist for this kind of work--a permanent hangover from my training as a historian, perhaps.

That said, when Alexander's good, she's breathtaking. More as I get further along.

Asali says

A work of genius. To be read and re-read for all time.

Hafsa says

An excellent work on transnational feminist theory. Chapters 3, 5, 7 are critical theory-wise. I liked how she called for an engagement for the sacred/spiritual for feminist theorists. In chapter 5, especially Alexander

counters the claims of cultural relativism and the traditions that mark the itineraries of modernity by offering a new way to theorize violence that does not fix violence in tradition alone. She discusses the regulatory practices of heterosexualization within three social formations: the colonial, the neocolonial and the neoimperial. She breaks down the boundaries between the three to make it possible to see that there can be no good heterosexual democratic tradition over and against a bad heterosexual primitive tradition and that the state and corporate interests play a role in the manufacture of citizenship through the prism of heterosexuality and the violent ways in which they engage homosexuality. Here, she breaks down the modernity/tradition divide which posits modernity as “better” or “superior”.

One of the strengths of this work is that Alexander makes use of a wide variety of examples in this section to support her thesis including:

- 1) the Feminist Majority and their role in the Afghan War
- 2) the war on terror
- 3) Structural Adjustment Policies
- 4) Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act of the Bahamas
- 5) Welfare politics
- 6) Same-sex marriage
- 7) Military Working Group and gays in the military

Definitely should be read by anyone interested in transnational feminism.

AJ says

this b00k rulez!

Vero says

I MISS YOU JACQUI!

Minosh says

I wasn't super into the first couple of chapters personally (the policy-heavy critiques of sexuality and nation) but the last two chapters make this book worth the price of purchase alone.

Tim Haslett says

Not since the early 1980s has there been a book that literally takes one's breath away. Prof. Alexander's new volume is profoundly spiritual at the same time it's grounded in a unique materialist feminism.

Its significance also lies in the book's manifestations of a real, 'material' hope. Being alive and politically conscious in the first decade of the 21st century is to be easily seduced by despair, it is also to be absolutely

at odds with terrible, counter revolutionary, antifeminist cultures.

Not for Alexander glib, soggy liberalism but a spirit that is courageous and awe-inspiring. In the book's third section, Alexander writes of 'returning' to the magnificent anthology, 'This Bridge Called My Back' and, following this essay, the book's most thrilling chapter, in which the writer conjures a new life force, one thoroughly rooted in both spiritual and secular lifeworlds.

As if this adjectival 'heap' of praise were not enough, Alexander's book render obsolete the common periodization of feminisms by 'wave'. It would not be inaccurate to say that 'Pedagogies of Crossing' is a epistemic rupture, demanding its readers to again grapple with feminist legacies from an entirely new standpoint. If you've not heard Prof. Alexander speak, I suggest you do so as soon as possible. The impact of her spoken word 'appearances' is incredibly powerful, almost mesmerizing. Her lectures too constitute an epistemological rupture, filling one with true hope.

Jade Metzger says

I refer to it often in my teaching and in my studies. She's poetic and in depth. Something worth reading and re reading

Ellen says

the 5 stars are for chapter 6, which might be my most favorite thing read in 2007. mindblowing. the other chapters have some gems but it's so covered in theory jargon that you'll have to dig a bit.

Kay says

REALLY dense piece of work, but after the first chapter you get into the flow of the Alexander's writing. The information is important, the presentation is thoughtful.

A. Breeze Harper says

And it is truly challenging and pushing me to the next level of my understanding and implementation of feminist theory and research!
