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Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology

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ENDING VIOLENCE

Review of **COLOR OF VIOLENCE: THE INCITE! ANTHOLOGY**
South End Press, 2006

What would it take to end violence against women of color?

This is a direct quote from the introduction to Color of Violence. After a sharp race & class critique of the anti-violence movement, the authors suggest we don't think about programs first. Instead, they say, let's start with this question: what would it take to end violence against women of color?

First published last year, the anthology is already into a second printing. South End Press sent me a PDF version for this review, but I don't recommend it. This is a book you have to feel in your hands because you're going to feel it everywhere else. It's broken into three sections: Reconceptualizing Antiviolence Strategies, Forms of Violence and Building Movement. However the introduction makes it plain that violence isn't just interpersonal. This anthology breaks down the politics behind systems of violence, both interpersonal and state based. Although poetry is sprinkled through the anthology, this collection is a well footnoted, well researched, well written assembly of thought.

Each article is centered on the specific experience and teases out the lessons learned. Those looking for cut and paste answers will be disappointed, but those hoping for some common principles will be rewarded. The book does push the boundary of political theory, evidenced by the question in the introduction. The challenge isn't implied, it's stated: If you're serious about ending violence and domination, put women of color at the center of the work. However, the collection does more than make a challenge. Women of color in this country have stated it for at least 300 years. The book goes a step further by recognizing the current objective conditions and providing direction. Although most articles do this, one in particular stands out for me.

Andrea Smith's article, "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of Color Organizing," dropped my jaw. In seven pages Smith outlines a way of thinking about white supremacy that includes the critiques of the Black/white binary paradigm without being stuck in the liberal "politics of inclusion." Her article weaves together the politics of fighting imperialism, heterosexism, white supremacy, and patriarchy all centered on the realities of the early 21st century. This article alone is worth the price of the book.

Undefined label

The problems within the collection are, I believe, more reflective of the problems of left politics today than any one particular issue by the writers. Throughout the book writers refer to movement. The introduction examines the anti-violence movement, one section is even titled "Building Movement," but at no point does the collection really go into depth on what a movement is and how do we get one. Elizabeth "Betita" Martínez's article, "Unite and Rebel! Challenges and Strategies in Building Alliances," centers more on alliance building and networking than examining the criteria of a social movement and the steps to help one emerge. This gap is understandable since the left treats the word "movement" as an undefined label to be placed on anything one wants to deem important.

The problems in the book are small and the benefits are great. I don't just applaud those involved, I breathe deeply and give thanks. These days when I think about feminism I usually ask myself, "I'm sure INCITE! has figured this out already. I wish they had a pamphlet." My bad for thinking small.

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