



*Book Review*

Treva Lindsey. *America, Goddam: Violence, Black Women, and the Struggle for Justice*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2022. 342 pp. Hardcover \$24.95 (ISBN 9780520384491).

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*America, Goddam* is an innovative and descriptive exploration of the various forms of violence imposed on Black women and girls. It is controversial, brilliant, and profoundly valuable to its readers. In addition to showing how the state oppresses Black women and girls in various ways, Lindsey connects seemingly unrelated acts of violence, so that academic and general readers can easily understand the information presented. Nina Simone's famous "Mississippi Goddam," which portrays violence against Black people in America, serves as inspiration for *America, Goddam*. Lindsey draws on her encounters as a Black woman who has experienced violence in a society that has historically undervalued Black women. She also discusses how sexism, racism, misogyny, poverty, abolitionism, and transphobia are oppressive elements that Black women, girls, and gender-expansive individuals confront when striving to navigate life. Through an intersectional perspective, she highlights how their interactions with the

criminal punishment system and medical industrial complex are oftentimes dangerous encounters.

Within each chapter, Lindsey uses historical examples of violence against Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people, alongside her personal experiences, to convincingly demonstrate that we must acknowledge the extent of violence against Black women and girls in the United States. According to Lindsey, this is the first step in the fight for justice. To examine the specific ways that Black women and girls have been harmed and affected by violence, Lindsey does an outstanding job of blending her lived experience as a Black woman with archival research and historical context. Lindsey pulls no punches in her vivid descriptions of these various forms of violence, and her transparency may prove triggering to some. Her research intentionally centers the lived experiences of Black women and girls across time to highlight how these important narratives are obscured by many national media outlets.

*America, Goddam* contains a multi-dimensional description of police violence and how it disrupts Black life, but specifically how police power intrudes on Black girlhood and womanhood through surveillance, intimidation, and assault. Using N.W.A's "Fuck the Police," Lindsey unpacks how she came to understand the history of policing within Black communities. Through a contextualization of the history of policing in the United States, Lindsey highlights the connection between slave patrols and law enforcement. In addition, Lindsey also calls attention to scholars Andrea Ritchie and Kimberly Crenshaw, as she dives into a robust discussion of the #sayhername movement and how Black women, although not always highlighted within the media, are also killed by the police. #Sayhername holds a special place in this text. Lindsey calls on the names of the Black women and girls who have been victimized by white supremacy. Despite national media coverage of Breonna Taylor's murder, Lindsey points out that Taylor's death, along with many others, is not an exceptional occurrence; rather, it is an example of the larger underlying issues facing many Black women and girls in America. She bears witness and "with-ness" as she carefully and lovingly tends to their stories.

*America, Goddam* highlights the well-known case of Sandra Bland, a Black woman who died in police custody in July 2015. Although Bland's case was illuminated within the media, Lindsey compares her case to five other Black women, including Kindra Chapman, Joyce Curnell, Ralkina Jones, Alexis McGovern, and Rynette Turner, all of whom died in police custody during the same month. Doing so

illuminates Black women's experiences within carceral spaces and calls attention to how major media outlets glossed over their stories. Within this chapter, Lindsey also focuses on criminalized Black women, like Bresha Meados, Cyntoia Brown, CeCe McDonald, and Marissa Alexander, all of whom attempted to resist their victimization and were criminalized because of their resistance.

Chapter three, one of the more controversial chapters, explores how intracommunal violence functions within the Black community, and the ways that Black women and girls are vulnerable to sexual assault, rape, and other forms of intimate partner violence. Lindsey features rap artist Megan Thee Stallion in this chapter to demonstrate both the violence Black women face from within Black communities, as well as the lack of support they receive when they report such violence. While Lindsey does stress the importance of combating intracommunity violence, she is cautious with her language; she directly challenges the concept of "black on black violence, which is really a racist trope that was created by white supremacy" (p. 121). She uses cautious language, but is emphatic about the need for discussion of these subjects. As a Black woman who has personally experienced violence and watched intracommunal violence, Lindsey is aware that ignoring this component of violence puts the safety of Black women and girls in even greater danger.

In chapter four, Lindsey uses the coronavirus to illustrate how the medical industrial complex affects the Black community in general and Black women and girls in particular. She compares the "preexisting conditions" attributed to the high volumes of cases within the Black community to the unethical and outright racist practices at the inception of gynecology. Highlighting historical examples of abuse, such as Fannie Lou Hamer, and contemporary examples, such as Serena Williams, Lindsey argues that it is much easier to police individual people and tell them to do better than to challenge an entire system. While this chapter diverges from the earlier forms of violence, Lindsey makes a strong argument that medical violence and neglect present significant threats to the wellbeing of Black women and girls.

One of the more touching and heart-wrenching stories in *America, Goddam* is the story of Relisha Rudd, discussed in chapter five. As Lindsey examines the various forms of abuse that Black women and girls encounter on a daily basis, she demonstrates a pattern of neglect toward Black moms and girls that can result in death. Rather than exploring how Relisha's mother failed to protect her daughter, Lindsey

shifts the focus to the various moments that the government failed Relisha, her mother, and countless other Black women and girls. Overall, *America Goddam* is a phenomenal groundbreaking text, which at times makes the reader wonder if there is any hope for Black women and girls in America. However, rather than leaving readers hopeless, Lindsey ends on a positive note, filled with hope for the future. Invoking the fierce protest song by Nina Simone that inspired the title, *America, Goddam*, is a call to action for our journey towards a just future(s).