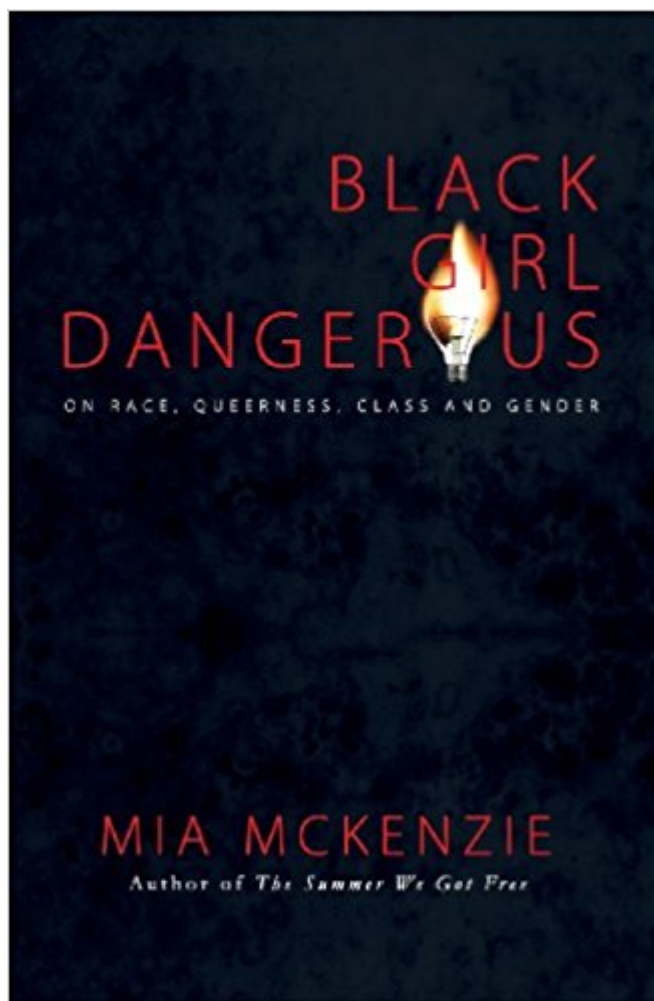


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Black Girl Dangerous On Race, Queerness, Class And Gender



Synopsis

Mia McKenzie, creator of the enormously popular website Black Girl Dangerous, writes about race, queerness, class and gender in a concise, compelling voice filled at different times with humor, grief, rage, and joy. In this collection of her work from BGD (now available only in this book), McKenzie's nuanced analysis of intersecting systems of oppression goes deep to reveal the complicated truths of a multiply-marginalized experience. McKenzie tackles the hardest questions of our time with clarity and courage, in language that is accessible to non-academics and academics alike. She is both fearless and vulnerable, demanding and accountable. Hers is a voice like no other. "One of the most provocative and insightful writers of our generation." -Aura Bogado, Colorlines "A fierce voice among a generation of queer and trans folk of color." -Janet Mock, New York Times Bestselling Author of "Redefining Realness" "Tough-love activism at its best-straightforward, challenging, whip-smart, and uncompromising." -Andi Zeisler, Bitch Magazine

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a white girl who was under the impression she wasn't oppressing people, this book made it painstakingly clear I have a lot to learn, and a lifetime of understanding in front of me. Mia writes with a clear poignancy and force that one has to reckon with. I loved this narrative on the life I live, on the life people of color live. Read it. Hopefully it will change your world too.

Mia McKenzie's deafening and defiant Black Girl Dangerous, a collection of essays previously published on the author's blog, focuses primarily on the intersectionality of

gender, race, and sexuality through the eyes of a queer black feminist. An ode to breaking silence, BGD attempts to normalize the serious discussion of controversial topics, insisting that we must address the things we do not want to acknowledge. Its value as feminist discourse is undeniable. The primary strength of BGD lies in its voice. McKenzie is not afraid to say exactly what she means, and this fearlessness is evident throughout the book, particularly in sections examining white privilege. She acknowledges that these are things that need to be said, regardless of whether they are too harsh or too accusatory—“an opinion that is not widely held in today’s society. If one’s privilege must be called out, then that person needs to focus more on what they are doing wrong and how they can begin to change and utilize that privilege in a positive way; unfortunately, it is much more common for these people to become offended and defensive, a phenomenon McKenzie makes sure to highlight. Her demonstration of refusing to be gentle and not hurt anyone’s feelings is an aspect of BGD that is remarkably refreshing. Furthermore, her pieces on self-love and strengthening communities resonate with emotion—her desire for marginalized women to embrace themselves is palpable. These sections are especially welcomed as intermediaries between heavy analyses of violence, racism, sexism, and homophobia. Organizing BGD in this way, to offer reminders to love oneself even when surrounded by bigotry, increases its realness. One aspect of BGD that detracts from its effect is its nature of containing transcribed blog posts without including the comments they originally elicited. Blog-style communication hinges on feedback from readers, and neglecting to offer the conversations which resulted from the original pieces takes away from collection’s authenticity. Without the insight that past commenters provided, McKenzie’s arguments do not reach their full potential; in a compendium that is so grounded in intersectional communities, the absence of their presence is a distinct oversight. Despite its minor shortcomings, McKenzie’s unapologetic pieces offer a modern and necessary lens to the field of women’s studies, especially when considering the feminist movement’s history of racial erasure. As we move further into the 21st century, it is becoming increasingly imperative for us to expand our definitions of “feminism” to include and endorse marginalized groups of people. In order for women’s studies to evolve into truly encapsulating intersectionalities, dialogues like those found in McKenzie’s anthology must become more common and less stigmatized, and for this to occur, BGD and works similar to it need to become a staple in feminist discourse and women’s studies classrooms.

Black Girl Dangerous is a collection of work from writer Mia McKenzie’s blog and website.

Each piece offers a reaction to personal observations, conversations, and current events that represent broader social disparities from the writer's perspective. BGD is a powerful contemporary work of social dissidence, central in which is a focus on the roles gender, race, class, and sexual identity play in forming an individual's sense of self-worth, personal freedom, and social agency. Spoiler: If you're a person of privilege who feels a little fussy about marginalized people speaking up for themselves, BGD will be an uncomfortable read. It might, though, prove to be the perspective-altering reality check you most need. Mia McKenzie allows her own experiences as a queer person of color to illustrate the ways in which inequalities permeate into the most intimate and defining aspects of a person's identity. McKenzie's works were written for an online audience between 2012-2014 and typically have an implied assumption that readers are up-to-speed on the news stories or social movements that are central to her discussion. For this reason, McKenzie's commentary is to be understood at times within the specific context that it was written, as an immediate and unapologetic response to an evolving event or discussion. Some of the most compelling moments in BGD are those in which McKenzie strives to empower others who, like her, experience multiple layers of discrimination and exclusion. The tenderness with which she speaks about self-love as an act of resistance is both inspiring and heart-wrenching. For the most part, though, this collection can be characterized as a determined affront to the ways in which white people earnestly deny their own privilege while they dominate every position of power, every conversation, and justify excluding, devaluing, and erasing the lives of people of color. McKenzie uses highly controversial topics, such as the Newtown shooting, to expose the hypocrisy of white liberals, and includes tongue-in-cheek instructions on how to oppress white people as a way of illustrating the fallacy of "reverse-racism". In this aspect, BGD is set apart from any other collection or essay I have ever read. Potentially, the confrontational tone present in some of the book might be interpreted as resorting to "call-out" rhetoric, further disengaging those to whom the criticisms are intended. McKenzie, in fact, addresses this critique and defends her approach in one of the selections. There remains to me, however, a small degree of ambiguity on this point. Ultimately, this book provides a sound voice of clarity in a society that remains constantly embroiled in tensions created by systematic inequalities. The direct and unpretentious manners in which topics related to women, gender, and sexuality studies are explored with depth also makes Black Girl Dangerous a useful teaching tool for students and activists. My own perspective having been dramatically expanded, I would definitely recommend this book.

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