



Knowing What We Know

Gail Garfield

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In recent years there has been an attempt by activists, service providers, and feminists to think about violence against women in more inclusive ways. In *Knowing What We Know*, activist and sociologist Gail Garfield argues that this effort has not gone far enough and that in order to understand violence, we must take the lived experiences of African American women seriously. Doing so, she cautions, goes far beyond simply adding voices of black women to existing academic and activist discourses, but rather, requires a radical shift in our knowledge of these women's lives and the rhetoric used to describe them.

Bringing together a series of life-history interviews with nine women, this unique study urges a departure from established approaches that position women as victims of exclusively male violence. Instead, Garfield explores what happens when women's ability to make decisions and act upon those choices comes into conflict with cultural and social constraints. Chapters explore how women experience racialized or class-based violence, how these forms of violence are related to gendered violence, and what these violations mean to a woman's sense of identity. By showing how women maintain, sustain, and in some instances regain their sense of human worth as a result of their experiences of violation, Garfield complicates the existing dialogue on violence against women in new and important ways.

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