


Chapter 10

Redefining Global Pathways With Black Women's International Education Experiences

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ABSTRACT

Black women's participation in international higher education has historically been marked by systemic exclusion, yet they carved out spaces through dedication to education and racial justice. This chapter examines experiences from the late 19th century to the present, revealing how race and gender intersect to shape cross-border educational access. Despite structural barriers during the expansion of international higher education, pioneering Black women educators created alternative pathways outside traditional Western frameworks. Mary Church Terrell and Anna Julia Cooper exemplified strategies connecting educational equity to international movements for racial justice. The chapter analyzes the emergence of international education, the development of Black higher education, women's educational expansion, and France as a safe haven for Black intellectuals. By centering Black women's voices through Black Feminist thought, emphasizing intersectionality and transnationalism, this work reveals how race, gender, and educational access intersect within international higher education.

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INTRODUCTION

For decades, there has been increased attention to the need for expanded frameworks in international higher education research (George Mwangi & Yao, 2021). Scholars have called for international higher education researchers to expand the frameworks and methods used to examine cross-border educational experiences (Cai & Leask, 2024; Marginson, 2022). These calls highlight the increasing diversity of international education and underscore the need for more nuanced research on how Black women experience international education abroad and global academic mobility, thereby ensuring equitable access and outcomes (Almassri et al., 2023). Despite this diversification, Black women remain significantly underrepresented in study abroad participation and in international educational research (Lee & Green, 2016). According to recent data, while women constitute the majority of study abroad participants, Black women participate at rates far below their white counterparts (Institute of International Education, 2025). Taken further, unfortunately, research on international education can itself reify inequity by centering Western and white dominant experiences as universal (Marginson, 2022). As such, international higher education researchers must be warned of the dangers of reinforcing dominant traditions that fail to address historical and contemporary exclusions and inflict harm on Black women and other underrepresented students (Hill & Helms, 2012).

In this chapter, I argue that Collins's (2008) Black Feminist Thought (BFT) can be expanded beyond a US-centric framework to encompass the transnational dimensions of Black women's educational experiences, highlighting the interconnections among global engagements with racial and gender justice. First, I trace the historical roots of Black women's active involvement in international education from the late 19th and early 20th centuries to the present day (Perkins, 2015; Perkins, 2024). Next, I examine how Black women have navigated and transformed international educational spaces, despite intersecting barriers of racial and gender discrimination (Evans, 2009; Owens & Rietzler, 2021). I will also show how pioneering scholars such as Mary Church Terrell and Anna Julia Cooper created alternative pathways for global engagement that challenged exclusionary institutional frameworks and connected struggles for educational equity to broader international movements for racial justice and decolonization (Perkins, 2024). Similar to earlier Black women educators, this chapter illuminates how the features of Black Feminist theory, including intersectionality, transnationalism, and centering marginalized voices, are essential for understanding and transforming international higher education (Collins, 1994; Lindsey & Gumbs, 2021). Black Feminist theory, particularly its emphasis on transnationalism, can provide a lens for interrogating the racism, sexism, and exclusion they have experienced historically and continue to face today (Collins, 2008; Umoren, 2018). I highlight the intersection of Black Feminist theory and the

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