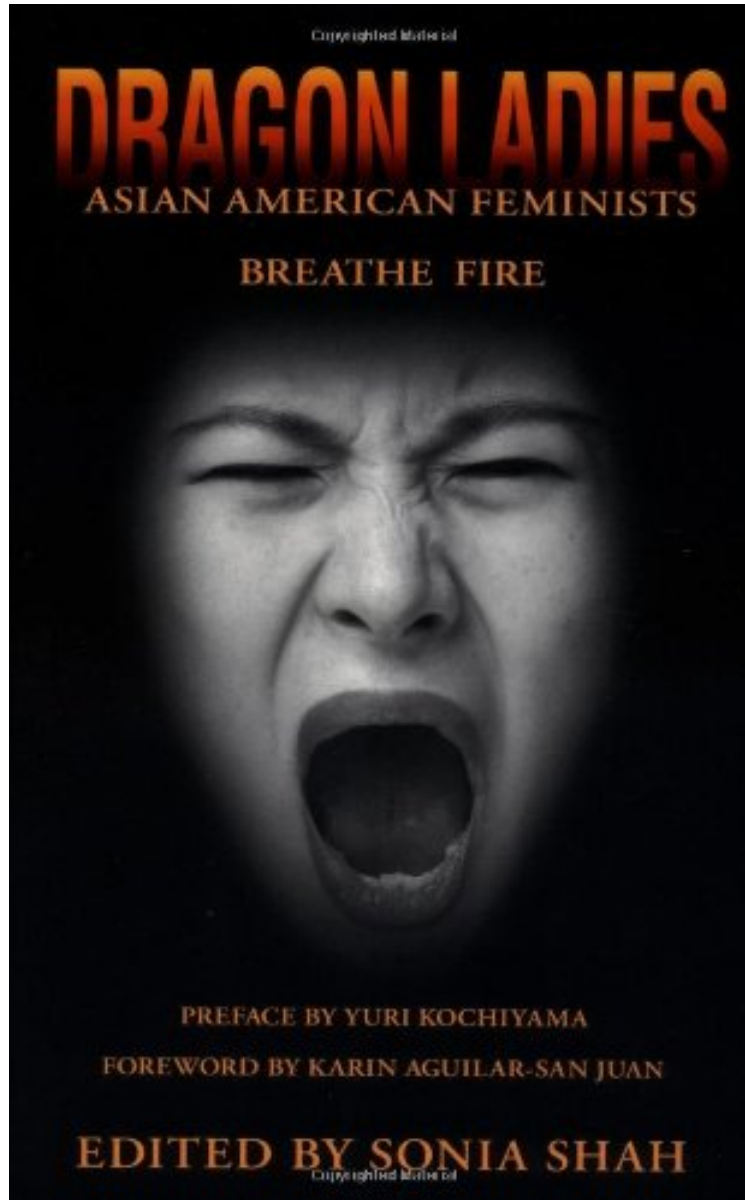


[Ebook free] Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire

Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. AN EXCELLENT COLLECTION OF POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES OF ASIAN-AMERICAN WOMEN By Steven H Propp Sonia Shah is an award-winning science

journalist; she has also written books such as *Pandemic: Tracking Contagions, from Cholera to Ebola and Beyond*, *The Fever: How Malaria Has Ruled Humankind for 500,000 Years*, *The Body Hunters: Testings New Drugs on the World's Poorest Patients*, *Crude: The Story of Oil*, *Between Fear and Hope: A Decade of Peace Activism*, etc. She wrote in the Introduction to this 1997 book, *Why publish a book on Asian feminism?* Many fine works on Asian American women have been published in recent years But this book is fundamentally different. It focuses explicitly on the political perspectives of Asian American women, describing a growing social movement and an emerging way of looking at the world: Asian American feminism. As I argue below, an Asian American feminist perspective---more than being Asian American or a woman---can animate and unite Asian American women into a lasting and fruitful social movement. (Pg. xii) She adds, An Asian American feminist movement is the ONLY movement that will consistently represent Asian American womens interests neither the feminist movement nor the Asian American movement have taken Asian American womens interests into consideration on their agendas An Asian American feminist movement is vital for the larger project of uncovering the social structure, with its built-in injustices and inequities, that affect us all My goal in publishing this book is to describe, expand, and nurture the growing resistance of Asian American women it provides a set of issues, terms, ideas, and stories for folks to talk about whether it is to debunk and decry them or to transform them into an agenda for action Asian American women are already making their movement happen. A different sort of Dragon Lady is emerging---not a cold-blooded reptile, but a creature who breathes fire. (Pg. xix) Articles in this collection include: *Strategies from the Field: Organizing the Asian American Feminist Movement*; *Redefining the Home: How Community Elites Silence Feminist Activism*; *Asian Womens Health: Organizing a Movement*; *Building Shelter: Asian Women and Domestic Violence*; *Breaking the Cycle: Women Workers Confront Corporate Greed Globally*; *Lost in Translation: Western Feminism and Asian Women*; *Bringing Up Baby: Raising a Third World Daughter in the First World*; *Searching for the Ox: The Spiritual Journey of an Asian American Feminist Activist*, etc. To give you an idea of the excellent material contained in this collection, here are a few quotes: Marriage is a political and not just a social act. While my statement is far from revolutionary, inside this home, I am a heretic. Convinced that marriage is solely a cultural event, the idea of such an institution being political is practically blasphemous Politics does not include all the ways in which power is maintained. In this house, the private ceremony of marriage is considered part of culture, rather than the public realm of politics. Why? Because it involves tradition, social customs, and intimacy (real or otherwise) between people. (Pg. 46) SEEMA: Do you think Asian American women should or can find a place within the established feminist movement? HELEN: It depends on the issue. There will be times when we can unite and work together, and times when we wont. There will also be women of color, Asian women, who choose to work within mainstream feminist organizations, who find that they can either create their own space, or find space, for them to be empowered and express themselves politically. Theres no reason not to. Affirmative Action is a good example. We cant assume that women who have directly benefited, personally even, from affirmative action and who calls themselves feminist will necessarily ally themselves with the interests of communities of color or Asian communities The hope is that even though we cant assume unity with white feminist, we can hope that because of their experience with gender oppression we may be able to reach a common understanding. That is the basis for us to try to work together. (Pg. 61) The model minority myth perpetuates the false notion that Asian American communities are generally wealthy, with broad access to health and other social services. This false assumption translates into little funding for services earmarked for Asian communities. Asian womens health needs, in particular, have not been identified as research priorities in any advocacy or policy arena. Improving Asian womens health requires organizing for change both within and outside of our communities, with an understanding of the global forces that impact our health. (Pg. 73-74) Mainstream U.S. feminist responses to the trade in women have been lukewarm at best. When Gabriela called on womens organizations around the world to put the issue of global trafficking of women on their agendas, the National Organization for Women (NOW) declined to do so, stating that it does not deal with international issues. The real issue may be that privileged women of the First World, even self-avowed feminists, are some of the primary consumers, and beneficiaries in this trade. (Pg. 147) Internal cultural critique does not, however, imply cultural betrayal, as the leaders of our immigrant communities would have us believe. Neither feminism nor activism are alien to our culture---they are nested within our heritage. We can draw strength from the tradition of the virangana, or warrior woman, which visualizes women as inherently powerful. In addition, the virangana is not marginalized in our natal societies. Rather, she is revered as a savior whom parents urge their daughters to emulate. Claiming this legacy for ourselves and our daughters would only help empower us. (Pg. 194) As an Asian woman, culture and history also inform my activism and my spirituality. I am connected to and affected by the history and experiences of my ancestors and my people. It has been a history affected by oppression, war, colonialism, and modern-day economic and cultural imperialism. The hopes, aspirations, struggles, and fears of my people, passed down from generation to generation, still live within my veins and haunt my subconscious dreams. Therefore, while I may Have a strong sense of my connection to the larger human family as a whole, I have chosen to base my activism and ministry within the Asian, refugee, and immigrant communities. (Pg. 210-211) This is an excellent, and very unique collection of writings; it will be of great interest to Asian Americans, feminists, women of color, and those just looking to broaden their perspective of this often-overlooked but crucially

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By Blue Jean Online
From Blue Jean Online
by Melisa Gao, Teen Editor

As soon as I picked up *Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire*, I knew I wanted to read it. The originality of the book's title and its unconventional cover immediately attracted me. And I was curious: just how many Asian-American feminists are there, anyway? As I began reading, I was caught off guard by the style and complexity of the writing. *Dragon Ladies* is a collection of essays written by various Asian-American activists—it's no light-hearted novel that you can breeze through. There's plenty of historical information, which can be dry at times (this could easily be used as a reference if you were writing a paper on feminists). But the majority of the essays contain thought-provoking discussions of serious issues that every young woman should reflect upon. The contributors take different approaches to their subjects, which range from sexuality to domestic violence to the plight of workers, but they share a passion for their cause that is evident in every word of the book. Having little experience in political activism, I enjoyed reading the women's anecdotes depicting their struggles and successes. The same conviction that makes the book worthwhile, however, may also turn off some of its readers. Even I, a liberal young Asian-American woman, found some of the essays too radical to be realistic. But the point of the book isn't necessarily to propagate these beliefs. As editor Sonia Shah explains in the introduction, "...[This book] provides a set of issues, terms, ideas, and stories for folks to talk about—whether it is to debunk and decry them or to transform them into an agenda for action." Even if the book doesn't inspire you to become politically active, it will at least make you ponder some significant issues and reexamine your own beliefs. Read *Dragon Ladies* with an open mind, and you will gain from it. Copyright 2002, Blue Jean Online

Showcases the growing politicization of Asian American women and their emerging feminist movement. These prominent writers, artists, and activists draw on a wealth of personal experience and political analysis to address issues of immigration, work, health, domestic violence, sexuality, and

.com Asian American feminism is a political hybrid linking very different cultures. "We all share the same rung on the racial hierarchy and on the gender hierarchy," asserts Sonia Shah, the editor of this appropriately diverse collection of writings. In it, Shamita Das Dasgupta and her daughter, Sayantani Das Dasgupta, comment on both raising and being third-world activists in the American Midwest, teetering outside the approved boundaries of largely white feminist groups and the Indian community. Margarita Alcantara, editor of the zine *Bamboo Girl*; Leslie Mah, lead guitarist of *Tribe 8*; and oxymoronic moderator Selena Whang explode model minority images with a freewheeling round robin on issues and events facing self-identified queer, punk Asians. Community activists Bandana Purkayastha, Shyamala Raman, and Kshiteeja Bhide expound on their agency SNEHA, which embodies the contradictions faced by Asian American feminists trying to empower women while respecting cultural traditions. *Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire* is raw and powerful.