

Choice Reads: A Book-of-the-Month Club

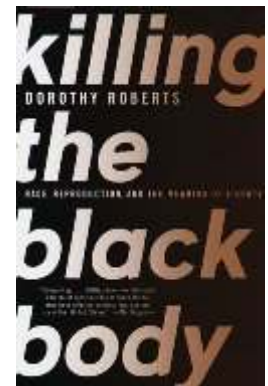
JANUARY 2009:

Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty

by Dorothy Roberts

Description:

Dorothy Roberts' passionate and well-documented book looks at a less-talked about side of the battle for reproductive rights: the history of the social and governmental control of African American women's bodies. Roberts, a law professor at Rutgers University, asserts that African American women have been engaged from the start in an ongoing fight to gain control of their reproductive choice. First, in the early days of American slavery, from control by white "masters" who forced slaves to produce children to work for them, and now, from government "solutions" to African American child-bearing like the distribution of the long-term contraceptive Norplant in African American communities. Roberts also takes the mainstream feminist movement to task for working mostly for the "negative right" of liberty, that is, the right of women to not have the government involved in their reproductive decision-making.



Reader's Guide:

1. Roberts argues that "regulating Black women's reproductive decisions has been a central aspect of racial oppression in America." Does she provide convincing support for that argument? Do other women of color have similar histories in the United States? Do poor women?
2. Roberts asserts that "racist birth control policies serve primarily an ideological function" and are not a literal threat to "Black survival." Is this true for Margaret Sanger's birth control movement? For the (forced) sterilization campaigns? For family cap policies and Norplant promotion associated with welfare reform? And if so, what is the "ideological function" of these policies?
3. What are the reasons that Roberts gives to explain why the Black community seems to use reproductive technologies less than Whites? Do you agree with her reasoning?
4. Roberts promotes a broader approach to reproductive rights and liberty. Do you agree?

If you would like to recommend a book, receive book suggestions directly, or meet to discuss books, please contact Pem at pem@prochoicemass.org or 617-556-8800 x14.

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