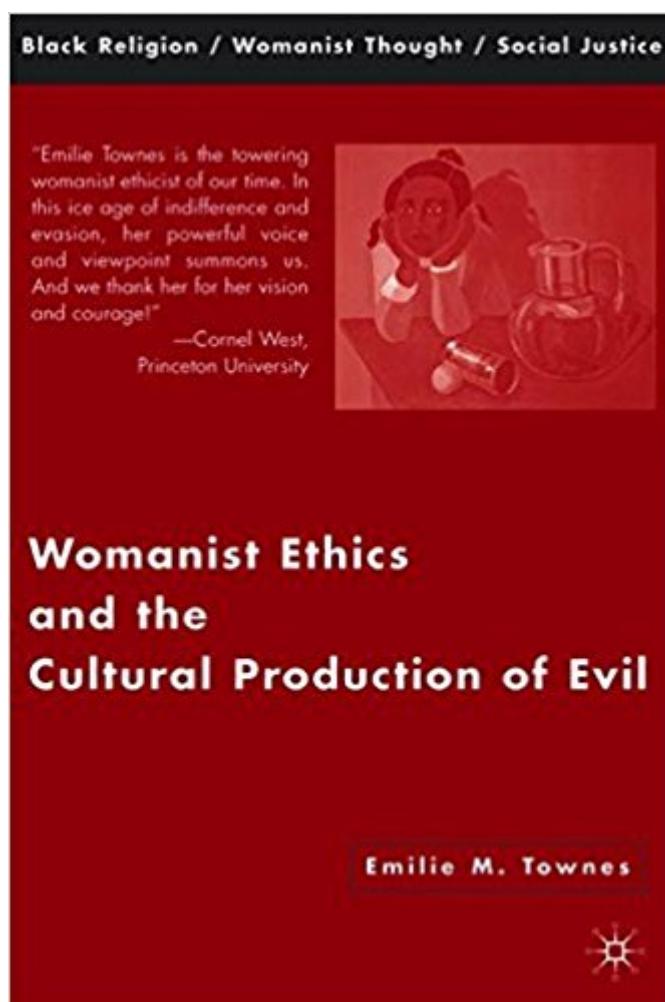


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# Womanist Ethics And The Cultural Production Of Evil (Black Religion/Womanist Thought/Social Justice)



## Synopsis

This groundbreaking book provides an analytical tool to understand how and why evil works in the world as it does. Deconstructing memory, history, and myth as received wisdom, the volume critically examines racism, sexism, poverty, and stereotypes.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

'Emilie Townes is the towering womanist ethicist of our time. In this ice age of indifference and evasion, her powerful voice and viewpoint summon us. And we thank her for her vision and courage!' - Cornel West, Princeton University, USA 'In this book Emilie Townes undertakes an extraordinary inquiry into the cultural production of evil that has aimed at defining African American women as morally depraved. More specifically, she defines cultural evil as a set of romanticized images and stereotypes that originate in the imagination of whites and thereafter transformed into cultural tools of disrespect and degradation. This is a uniquely rigorous study of the internal structure of systemic evil and its pathological products namely, mammy, Aunt Jemima, Jezebel, Sapphire, Tragic Mulatta, black matriarch, welfare queen, Topsy and others. The multi-dimensional character of cultural evil necessitates a variety of descriptive voices which the author expresses by writing as ethicist, historian, narrator, and poet. Most important, Townes also provides her readers with a cultural antidote for this excellent diagnosis of an enduring cultural disease.' - Peter J. Paris, Elmer G. Homrichausen Professor, Christian Social Ethics, Princeton Theological Seminary, USA 'Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil brings together powerful contributions that

rested separately in different venues. Studies of structural studies of evil are available but their interior worlds are typically absent. Those interior worlds productive of evil belong to cultural treatments that are often missing in the considerable body of sound theological accounts. The voices of those who endure structural and cultural evil, vividly captured here in history and memory, are neglected as major sources of salient knowledge in all too many accounts. But in these pages, all these weave the work together. It is hard to exaggerate the significance of this book, and easy to be grateful for it!' - Larry L. Rasmussen, Reinhold Niebuhr Professor Emeritus of Social Ethics, Union Theological Seminary, USA The work of a towering public intellectual! This book is a major achievement in the field of womanist ethics that draws into its orbit popular culture and Foucault, personal memory and public policy. Emilie Townes confirms her position as one of the nation's thought leaders and change agents.' Robert M. Franklin, Presidential Distinguished Professor of Social Ethics, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, and Former President, Interdenominational Theological Center

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Really good exposition and polemic.

Townes' major work, while fairly thin, is one of the most penetrating and leaned ethics texts I've come across. A concrete work drawing deeply from numerous disciplines, bringing many perspectives into dialog to scrutinize persisting cultural perversions that dehumanize and hamper justice. Perhaps the preeminent Womanist today, here she offers a shrewd exploration and analysis of the interior life of evil, its cultural fashioning and function here in US society and globally.

I purchased this book for an Ethics course. It was indeed thought-provoking and sparked quite a bit of interest in further exploring pervasive cultural evils in today's society.

I was forced to read this book in grad school at the University of Virginia. While Dr. Townes' excellent writing style and mastery of the English language makes reading her work effortless, her arguments are hardly based on any sort of scholastic standards of substantiation. A master of emotional hyperbole, her axioms are presumptuous and result in preponderance of gratuitous arguments. She rages against what she calls the "fantastic hegemonic imagination" (an imagined hegemony of white men that make cultural war on black women by creating stereotypes, reputations

that can't possibly be the responsibility of black women), yet somehow the irony is lost on her; that she, herself, by virtue of the fact that she is the dean of Vanderbilt's Divinity School, has her own hegemonic endowment and quite obviously, her own "fantastic hegemonic imagination." Not far into the book, the reader discovers what a fantastic imagination she truly has as she tries to convince us, with very little argument, that the fat black woman pictured on Aunt Jemima pancake mix is actually the attempt of white men to assuage their collective guilt over an antebellum campaign of miscegenation that, if done at the statistical rate she suggests, would have wiped out the entire African race on the American continent. Yet, she argues this is why a fat, sexually undesirable black woman is on Aunt Jemima pancake mix. And to think, all these years I thought it was just because fat black women had a reputation of being very good cooks. She never really explains how a young, sexy black woman on a pancake mix box would have sold more pancake mix, and this isn't the only argument she leaves unexplained. No, as a member of the American Academic Hegemony, we are all supposed to refrain from asking any questions and let the elitist academic hegemony tell us how to think. Indeed, she assumes a lot in this book, not the least of which is an audience that is so enthralled with her brilliance that we will all magically see the naked emperor's new clothes. The above example is just one of her assumptions that racism and feminism are the exclusive responsibility of white men and therefore the responsibility of white men to heal. Black women bear no responsibility for anything, including stereotypical collective reputation in culture, and the white male "fantastic hegemonic imagination" is the root of all evil. This is all explained in a completely gratuitous manner with no supporting argument whatsoever. However, supporting argument is unnecessary for her. After all, she is a black female hegemonic elitist and therefore we all must listen. The axioms, arguments, and conclusions in this book are laughable. This book would be better off in a graduate program for psychoanalysts to discover how a seemingly educated person could come to such ridiculous conclusions. Had I written the exact same words it would have never been published. When we critiqued this book in class and I made my comments, everyone looked at me like I was an alien and quickly moved on to celebrate this pseudo-academic work of shoddy scholarship that would receive an F for lack of substantiating argument in my undergraduate course in composition. I'd like my four hours back and a refund for my kindle version, please.

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