

## 'Black Woman Redefined,' by Sophia A. Nelson

"Dear Mrs. Obama, Do you have any idea what you mean to us? By us, I mean the strong, independent, accomplished black women of America. I suspect that on some level you do... but please allow me this small indulgence as I share with you how special you are to us.

What I am about to say may seem a bit much, but it is important that you know—that everyone know—how much you have changed and are changing everything for present and future generations of black women in this nation...

You humanize us. You soften us. You make us invisible no more. You made us approachable, feminine, sexy, warm, compassionate, smart, affirmed, accomplished, and fun-filled all at once. Your very nature most emphatically answers Sojourner Truth's 160 year-old question: 'Ain't I a woman?'

Yes, we are women, too."  
— Excerpted from the Prologue (pg. 1)

Recently, Congresswoman Michelle Bachmann lamented that the African-American

family had been more stable during slavery than it is today.

Although the Republican presidential candidate was soon pressured by blowback to distance herself from that insensitive remark, one cannot help but be alarmed by both the suggestion that blacks might have been better off in chains and by the verbal slap in the face of the millions of sisters doing their best to raise kids alone during this age of single-parent households.

Despite the fact that she is also a Republican, and that she campaigned for both Bush I in 1992 and for Bush

**Black Woman Redefined:**  
*Dispelling Myths and Discovering Fulfillment in the Age of Michelle Obama,*  
by Sophia A. Nelson

II in 2000 and 2004, Sophia A. Nelson, ironically, feels differently about herself ever since the election of a Democrat Barack Obama.

She gushes at length about how much the President's wife, Michelle, means to her in "Black Woman Redefined."

Nelson's heartfelt how-to strikes this critic as much an appeal to black female empowerment as a personal coming home party for a Prodigal Daughter possibly harboring regrets about her longstanding liaisons with arch-conservatives. For, she devotes the bulk of her book to debunking the sort of cruel stereotypes which the GOP has been fond of circulating for decades, like Ronald Regan's stump speech assailing the proverbial Welfare Queen riding around in a Cadillac and Andrew Breitbart's dissemination of a videotape deliberately doctored to make Shirley Sherrod look like a racist.

The author's aim, here, is to discourage anyone inclined to jump on the "sister-bashing bandwagon" which has enabled everyone from DJ Don Imus ("nappy-headed hos") to misogynist rappers to distort their image. "How is it that an



A fan congratulates Sophia A. Nelson

entire race of women—so successful, so beautiful, so intelligent, and so powerful—can be so devalued, vilified, neglected, unwanted, disliked, misused, increasingly misunderstood, and blatantly abused?" she asks.

The answer is complicated, and is arrived at via a combination of anecdotal evidence plus a collage of illustrative contributions from such luminaries as CNN's Soledad O'Brien and Roland Martin, documentary filmmaker Janks

Morton, Dr. Julianne Malveaux, NPR's Michel Martin, Democratic Congresswoman Terrie Sewell, Democratic Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr., actresses Kimberly Elise and Taraji P. Henson, and The View's Sherri Shepherd.

Besides writing what essentially amounts to a reverential thank you letter to Michelle, Nelson delineates what she calls the "five core goals" fundamental to blossoming as an accomplished black woman, namely, (1) creating positive multidimensional relationships; (2) establishing a satisfying career; (3) having a balanced and emotionally-rewarding life; (4) maintaining good health; and (5) achieving a spirituality that doesn't reject sexuality.

Ardent, inspirational, insightful and redemptive, "Black Woman Redefined" is likely the only positive book that's going to be published by a prominent Republican about anyone named Obama between now and Election Day 2012.



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