

**TUDOMÁNYOS DIÁKKÖRI**  
**DOLGOZAT**

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*Az Interszekcionalizmus és a Fekete Külvárosok:  
A Fekete Nők Központi Szerepe a 2020-as és a 2024-es Amerikai  
Választásokban*

*Intersectionality and Black Suburbia:  
The Pivotal Role of Black Women Voters in the 2020 and 2024 Elections*

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## **Resume**

The objective of the present thesis is to demonstrate the stark contrast between the suburban experiences of Black women and their white counterparts and to advance the understanding of Black suburbia and the significant impact of Black women on their families and, by extension, on the social and political landscapes of the United States. By employing the concept of intersectionality, we can gain a nuanced understanding of the daily realities of suburban Black women, the obstacles they confront and also their voting preferences. The voting habits of suburban Black women have been the subject of analysis in the context of the two most recent election cycles in the United States, which helps us understand this complex issue. These analyses have concentrated on the observation that the participation of Black suburban women in the electoral process and their geographical location are frequently overlooked by media outlets. The research presented here draws on a variety of studies, articles, and exit polls from the past two presidential elections in the United States. I argue that the intersectional analysis of Black women's experiences in suburban areas, their evolving voter preferences in the 2020 and 2024 elections, and the portrayal of these issues in the media highlights the complex interplay of race, gender, and geographical location in shaping social and political landscapes.

Contents

Introduction ..... 1

1. Black Women and Feminism ..... 1

    1.1 Intersectionality ..... 3

2. Black Women in the Suburbs ..... 7

    2.1 Black Women Entrepreneurs ..... 10

3. History of Voter Choices for Black Women ..... 11

    3.1 Black Suburban Women’s Involvement in the 2020 Elections ..... 13

    3.2 Suburban Black Women During the 2024 Elections ..... 15

    3.3 Media Coverage..... 16

Conclusion ..... 18

# Introduction

In recent years, the political landscape of the United States has been profoundly influenced by the intersectional experiences of Black women, particularly those residing in suburban areas. The 2020 and 2024 presidential elections demonstrated the pivotal role that these women played as voters, reflecting a dynamic shift in political preferences and engagement. This thesis employs an intersectional analysis to examine the experiences of Black women in suburban areas, exploring how their distinctive perspectives and challenges have shaped their voting behaviour. Additionally, it analyses the portrayal of these issues in the media, emphasising the complex interplay of race, gender and geographical location in shaping social and political narratives. Through this lens, we gain a deeper understanding of the multifaceted factors that influence electoral outcomes and the broader implications for American democracy.

This study commenced with an investigation into the concept of intersectionality. This was followed by the collection of data on the subject of Black suburbia, with a particular focus on its significance in the evolution of Black families' lives. The aim was to highlight the central role of Black women in their families' lives. Subsequently, the electoral data from the 2020 and 2024 elections was analysed, with a particular focus on the experiences of suburban Black women.

## 1. Black Women and Feminism

Since its inception, feminism has achieved notable successes in advancing gender equality and improving social conditions for women. However, challenges and limitations have persisted within the movement, particularly regarding the inclusivity of diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. A historical glance to April 20, 1868, reveals one of the earliest documented feminist gatherings in the United States, where a group of women gathered at Delmonico's in New York City—then one of the most renowned restaurants—without male accompaniment. This event was groundbreaking, as it represented a bold step in visibility and independence for women, specifically for white, middle-class working women (Ewbank). However, the racial homogeneity of this early feminist cohort would foreshadow ongoing issues within the movement.

From its earliest days, feminism was predominantly represented by affluent white women, whose activism focused on securing the right to vote, access to education, equitable wages, and property ownership. While these aims were vital, they often overlooked the compounded struggles faced by Black women and other marginalized groups. Many Black feminists have argued that the feminist movement frequently failed to address intersecting oppressions tied to race, class, and gender, leading to a sense of alienation and exclusion (Breines). For Black women, the feminist cause extended beyond gender rights alone; it was also a fight against systemic racial and class discrimination.

Notably, Sojourner Truth, a former slave who became an influential abolitionist and women's rights advocate, brought attention to these intersecting issues. Her 1851 speech "Ain't I a Woman?" at the Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, underscored the unique challenges Black women faced and called for a broader, more inclusive feminist agenda. Truth's contributions highlighted the necessity for a feminist movement that could embrace diverse voices and address a wider spectrum of injustices, laying an early foundation for what would later develop into the intersectional approach in feminist theory.

Sojourner Truth's historic speech also served as a foundational influence for later scholars, such as Gloria Jean Watkins, known by her pen name, bell hooks. An influential American scholar and activist, hooks explored the intersections of race, gender, and class, drawing attention to the unique challenges faced by Black women. Her book, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, published in 1981, examines the pervasive oppression experienced by Black women under what she describes as a racist, misogynistic, and imperialist patriarchy. hooks contends that Black women have been systematically excluded from liberation by both the Black liberation and mainstream feminist movements—spaces where they might have expected solidarity. She argues that when addressing racial oppression, Black men tend to be the focus, while in discussions of gender oppression, white women dominate the conversation. Consequently, Black women are often marginalized, perceived as neither fully "women" nor entirely "human" within these frameworks. hooks critiques mainstream American feminism for its foundation in white supremacy, which she argues has limited the movement's inclusivity and effectiveness (Clarke).

The emergence of third-wave feminism in 1992, led by figures like Rebecca Walker, who established the Third Wave Foundation, brought a renewed emphasis on inclusivity and acknowledgment of the contributions of previous generations to women-centered social and

political gains. However, third-wave feminism has also been critiqued for overlooking the experiences of women of color, as the “wave” model of feminism is seen to center predominantly white perspectives. As Springer argues, to effectively address a broad spectrum of women’s issues, third-wave feminism must incorporate the history of resistance to gender violence among women of colour.

Despite these criticisms, the third-wave era marked a growing acceptance and integration of Black feminist perspectives, thanks largely to influential writers and scholars such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, Judith Butler, and Patricia Hill Collins. Crenshaw’s work on intersectionality, in particular, has been groundbreaking; her theory provided a framework to analyse how overlapping identities affect experiences of oppression and privilege. This concept became foundational to intersectional feminism, which seeks to address the unique challenges faced by individuals at the intersections of multiple marginalized identities, thus broadening the feminist movement’s reach and relevance (Feminism).

## 1.1 Intersectionality

This section comprises a selection of the most significant literature consulted in the preparation of this thesis. This article presents an overview of the theory of intersectionality, as developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, and examines its influence on the work of other scholars in the field.

The concept of intersectionality was first introduced in the late 1980s as a means of focusing attention on the issues of discrimination and social movement politics. “It revealed how monolithic perspectives impede legal reasoning, disciplinary knowledge production, and efforts to advance social justice” (Cho, Crenshaw, McCall 787). The term “intersectionality” is used to describe the ways in which different social identities, such as race, gender, class and sexuality, intersect to create unique experiences of oppression or even privilege. The concept was devised by Kimberlé Crenshaw with the objective of drawing attention to the shortcomings of certain frameworks that are unable to take into account the intricacies of lived experiences, particularly those of marginalised groups. The creation of this theory and the recognition of these intersections provide an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms through which systemic racism and oppression operate.

Kimberlé Crenshaw’s 1989 essay, “Demarginalizing the Intersections of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and

Antiracist Politics”, became a foundational text in the fields of critical race theory and feminist studies. It elucidated the ways in which the intersectionality of identities shapes the lives of marginalised groups, with a particular focus on Black women. Her work constituted an “explicitly interventionist response to the institutional and political discourses that largely ignored these issues” (Cho, Crenshaw, McCall 790). She examined legal cases in which Black female clients were unable to substantiate their allegations of discrimination, particularly concerning their exclusion from the workforce on the grounds of both their gender and their racial identity. The primary issue with these cases was not that judges failed to recognise these patterns; rather, it was that they failed to grasp the underlying web of sameness and difference rationales in antidiscrimination law. Discrimination cases involving Black males and White females were regarded as wholly encompassing and universal. Conversely, those involving Black females were perceived as partial and distinct from race and gender discrimination. Crenshaw posits that “Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often do not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender” (Crenshaw 140). The issue is that the existing legal system is unable to adequately address the issues of exclusion faced by Black women unless it undergoes significant reform. The experience of Black women is not merely the sum of racism and sexism; it is an intersectional phenomenon. Therefore, to adequately comprehend the subordination of Black women, it is essential to consider the nuances of intersectionality in the discourse.

Lewis (2013) posits that the concept of intersectionality is concerned with the social erasure of individuals who can be defined by multiple intersecting social identities. This includes the racialisation of whiteness and the longstanding historical development of racial categories. Her research is based on European society, where intersectional differences are also present, albeit in a manner distinct from that observed in the United States. Lewis argues for the retention of race and racial power as central analytical and political concepts in intersectional studies, while emphasising the necessity for an inclusive definition of intersectional subjects. This approach aims to guarantee that the experiences of marginalised groups are acknowledged and addressed.

According to Kimberlé Crenshaw, there are three main forms of intersectionality, these are social, political and structural intersectionality, and they are the subject of increasing research. Structural intersectionality informs positionality or how participants experience their social status—for example, with respect to gender, class, race, ethnicity, age, or

sexuality (Roth). Political intersectionality concerns the way the positionality of multiple disadvantaged groups shapes the construction of collective identities and how they affect the framing of agendas and the choice of strategies (Crenshaw 1252). It is meant to encompass the efforts to achieve inclusion and to mitigate power differentials within and between movements and organizations (Roth). The subject was discussed by Chun, Lipsitz and Shin in their 2013 article “Intersectionality as a Social Movement Strategy: Asian Immigrant Women Advocates”. The organisation in question is the Asian Immigrant Women Advocates. The authors examine the utilisation of intersectionality by social movements, with a particular focus on the Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA). They elucidate how AIWA, an organisation that provides support to low-wage Asian immigrant women, employs intersectionality to address the multifaceted oppressions these women confront, including racism, sexism and labour exploitation. Asian immigrant women in the United States who are employed in low-wage jobs that are socially devalued, such as garment sewing, nail care, and home care, are exposed to the consequences of colonialism, war, racism, sexism, and labour exploitation in their daily lives. Furthermore, AIWA employs intersectionality to facilitate a transformation in the identities of its members, from marginalised to empowered, while simultaneously providing a sense of self-representation and activism. Furthermore, the authors posit that intersectional approaches assist social movements by facilitating the formation of diverse identities that are more malleable. They also seek to enhance democratic processes and transform the unjust societal relations of our time through the application of these approaches. This article demonstrates how intersectionality can be a radical yet effective social strategy, particularly when organised by women of colour. (Chun, Lipsitz, Shin 917-924)

In her work, Catherine MacKinnon illustrates the application of intersectionality in legal analysis, with a particular focus on cases involving harms to women in minority communities. Her work illustrates the manner in which the analysis of multiple axes of power and inequality can be conducted through the lens of intersectionality. Additionally, she elucidates how this approach may be effectively utilized in a methodological framework. MacKinnon's approach is grounded in her dominance theory, which elucidates the systemic nature of gender oppression. She posits that intersectionality is a method that facilitates comprehension of the ways in which disparate forms of dominance, such as racism and patriarchy, converge. Some scholars argue that intersectionality should eschew essentialism. However, MacKinnon acknowledges that there are instances where essentialism can be

beneficial in elucidating the essence of oppression. One example for this is Professor Angela Harris's 1990 article, "Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory". Her theory has been mentioned beside Kimberlé Crenshaw's 1989 article.

Both Harris and Crenshaw drew explicitly on Black feminism, and challenged the marginalisation of Black women, Crenshaw's argument was not primarily rooted in anti-essentialism and the exclusion of particular identities, but rather was focused on how systems of power (re)produced racial and gender subordination by delimiting the scope of antidiscrimination law and discourse (Carbado, Harris 2199).

Harris's theory, on the one hand, criticises white feminists for essentializing women as white, and for theorizing sexism explicitly from the experiences of white women. On the other hand, she refers to MacKinnon's dominance theory as an instance of "gender-essentialism"- "the notion that a unitary, "essential" women's experience can be isolated and described independently of race, class, sexual orientation and other realities of experience" (Harris 585). Although Crenshaw does not adhere to the principles of essentialism, an analysis of her work reveals her intention to challenge the dominance of white-centric representations of gender. It is frequently asserted that anti-essentialism is an argument for intersectionality. When we examine the manner in which Harris elucidates essentialism and the way in which Crenshaw delineates intersectionality, some parallels can be discerned. The two studies are both based on Black feminism, and both suggest that general feminism is white-centred and one-dimensionally oriented. Additionally, both authors contend that white women are frequently represented as representatives of all women in white feminist discourse. They further assert that the prominence of white women in feminist discourse has the effect of marginalising the identities and experiences of Black women.

Intersectionality serves as a theoretical and practical framework that facilitates insights into the intricacies of social identities and the interconnectivity of systems of oppression. Given that the central analytical concepts are race, gender and class, it is evident that intersectionality is an invaluable tool for elucidating the nature of social inequalities. The pioneering approach put forth by Kimberlé Crenshaw continues to motivate scholars to extend the frontiers of intersectional analysis, thereby guaranteeing that marginalised groups are duly acknowledged and addressed.

## 2. Black Women in the Suburbs

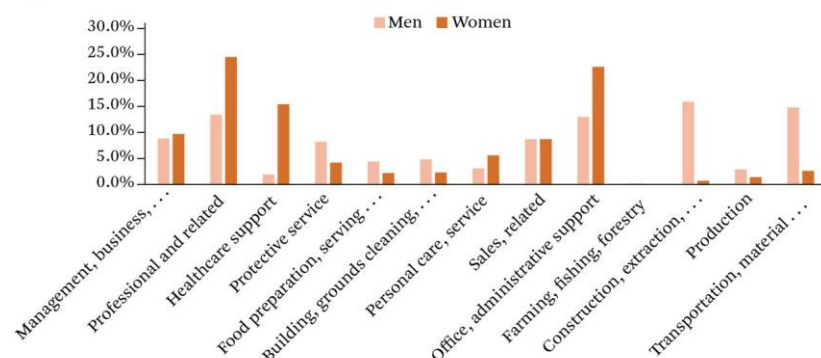
The impetus for my thesis was Orly Clergé's research on Black suburbia. Her 2023 article, "Intersectionality Matters: Black Women, Labour and Households in Black Suburbia", provides an in-depth overview of the lives of Black families in contemporary America, with a particular focus on the experiences of women in these families. The author examines the labour and household practices employed by Black women in order to maintain the suburban livelihoods of their families. The research was conducted over a period of two and a half years, during which time Clergé resided in Cascades, Queens, New York, and Great Park in Nassau County. These are archetypal suburbs, originally designed for white, middle-class families, but currently populated predominantly by Black diasporic families. Cascades is characterised as a suburb within an urban context. In 2008, over 75% of the population was of Black ethnicity, with a highly educated population, over 25% of whom held a bachelor's degree or higher. The median annual household income is higher in comparison to the median income of all households in the United States. In contrast, Great Park is markedly different. It is purported to be a racially integrated space, with one-third of the population identifying as Black, one-third as White, and one-third as Latinx. However, the Black population is concentrated in the northern sections. Great Park is regarded as a commuter suburb, with residents travelling to work outside the county or to New York City. The median household income of Great Park in 2012 was higher than that of Queens and Cascades, indicating that residents are considered affluent. The disparity between Cascades and Great Park can be attributed to property taxes. Clergé spent over a decade conducting this project, which entailed maintaining communication with the families she interviewed. She conducted sixty interviews with Black middle-class adults, with forty-three of them being women (Clergé).

It is a common misconception that Black Americans live in urban centres. The term “ghetto” is one that is frequently used to describe areas where Black people are confined to low-income housing, where crime rates are high, and where it is dangerous to venture outside. This appears to be a typical assumption. Indeed, there has been a long-standing trend of Black families relocating from urban centres. To provide further detail, Black Americans have historically resided primarily in the suburbs of major cities since the colonial era. However, following the 1960s, Black suburbanisation experienced a notable surge. In 1968, Congress enacted the Fair Housing Act, which prohibited discrimination in the housing market. While this legislation did not fully address the issue of inequality, it did considerably expand the freedom of Black families in determining their residential location and living arrangements. By the end of the 20th century, the Black population had experienced a notable increase in suburban areas. Between the years 1960 and 2000, the number of African Americans residing in suburban areas increased by over nine million. This growth was also made possible by the expansion of the Black middle class, which was able to afford to purchase homes in these areas without encountering legal or social barriers. The phenomenon was also influenced by the phenomenon of the so-called “Black Flight”. This occurred in the 1980s, when African Americans began to relocate from crime-ridden inner cities due to the proliferation of gang activities and drug use. This can also be attributed to the suburbanisation of employment opportunities and to the growing preference among Americans for suburban living. The phenomenon of Black Flight was followed by the process of gentrification, whereby affluent white residents returned to these inner cities in the 1990s, driving up real estate prices and forcing many Black people to relocate to suburbs (McDonald). The benefits of suburbanisation extended beyond mere financial considerations. For Black families, the quality of life was arguably the most significant advantage.

The composition of suburban Black families differs significantly from that of their White American counterparts. In most white, suburban households, the male figure is the head of the family unit, assuming the role of the breadwinner, while a Black suburban household is frequently headed by a woman. It would be of interest to examine the practices employed by these women to support their families in a suburban context, nevertheless, there is a distinct lack of interest from the media in this particular subject matter. The Black suburbs can be divided into different categories. These range from low-income suburbs located on the outskirts of urban areas to affluent exurban districts. Notwithstanding the pervasive inequalities in the United States, a subset of Black women were able to ascend to the middle class by attaining a

high level of education and income. The proportion of African Americans with a college degree increased markedly, from 10.9% in 1986 to 20.2% in 2011. Of these, two-thirds were women. Attainment of a higher education enabled Black women to expand their occupational opportunities. Nevertheless, a disparity in pay persists, with Black women earning less than their white counterparts and Black men. It is noteworthy that over 22% of Black women are employed by the government, in contrast to the 17% of white workers in the same sector. Despite occupational roles such as nurses, teachers and social workers, Black women are disproportionately affected by budgetary constraints, with a higher incidence of redundancy compared to their White counterparts (Malveaux). The Black suburban model is in stark contrast to the traditional, White American suburban way of life. In many cases, it can be argued that Black women assume the role of the primary decision-maker within the family unit. The archetypal model of the white middle class is that the husband is employed in either a blue-collar or a white-collar job. In contrast, the American Community Survey indicates that Black women are more inclined towards professional fields, such as healthcare and administration, whereas men are more likely to pursue careers in construction and transportation (Clergé, see fig. 1).

**Figure 1.** Occupation by Gender, Cascades, 2012



Source: Author's tabulation based on U.S. Census Bureau 2012b.

Note: The data presented is for all residents in Cascades. Because Cascades is predominantly Black, the assumption made is that the data largely reflects the experience of Black residents.

**Fig. 1.** Occupation by Gender, Cascades, 2012.

Source: Orly Clergé. "Intersectionality Matters: Black Women, Labor, and Households in Black Suburbia." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2023, pp. 95. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48717623>.

The aforementioned report indicates that in a Black suburban household, it is typically the female partner who is employed in a white-collar or pink-collar position, while her male

counterpart is engaged in blue-collar work. Notable examples of such combinations include nurse and mechanic, counsellor and foreman, and financial analyst and deliveryman. It is noteworthy that in numerous instances, even when the woman has a more senior role, the man in the blue-collar workforce continues to earn the same or even a higher income than his partner (Clergé).

The objective of the present chapter is to challenge the prevailing misconception that Black American families predominantly reside in urban areas with the male partner/father as the principal breadwinner. Instead, the focus is on elucidating the historical and legislative factors that have contributed to Black suburbanization. Only Clergé's 2023 article provides the basis for further investigation, examining the labour and household practices of Black women in suburban contexts. The study reveals the distinctive dynamics of Black suburban households, frequently led by women. It also examines the persistent wage disparities faced by Black women despite their educational and occupational advancements. The following section aims to highlight the role of Black female entrepreneurs.

## 2.1 Black Women Entrepreneurs

Educated, middle-class Black women earn less than their blue-collar male partners, and as a result, women in the suburban Black diaspora often take on second jobs to make ends meet. Residents of middle-class suburbs tend to earn enough money to live comfortably, but this is not the case for most Black households. Looking at single occupations obscures the multiple streams of income that allow middle-class Black families to thrive in the suburbs, especially in expensive global cities like New York. These second jobs can be almost anything for these women. Only Clergé has listed numerous side-occupations in her 2023 article for suburban Black women. One woman in her 50s works full-time as a nurse, and at weekends she works to expand her small business, a beauty salon, for which she has recruited women from her local church congregation. Another is a social worker who spends her free time baking and decorating cakes for all sorts of occasions. Many nurses care for the elderly in their neighbourhoods, teachers teach summer schools, and financial managers host private meetings in their homes (Clergé). According to GoDaddy's Venture Forward research initiative, by 2023 Black women became the fastest growing group of entrepreneurs, with their numbers doubling since 2019. Black women made up 10% of the entrepreneurs surveyed for the latest report, up from 70% before the pandemic. The research found that 15% of micro businesses are owned by Black people, and 68% of these are women. It also found that the majority of entrepreneurs

belong to Generation X, meaning they are between 40 and 50 years old. Orly Clergé's research, also published in 2023, is consistent with Venture Forward's research as she interviewed Black suburban households and many of them were also members of Generation-X. She notes that many of her Black female interviewees were owners of various small businesses or side hustles.

The lack of consistency in earnings among suburban Black women frequently results in the pursuit of supplementary employment opportunities to attain a more stable income. Such supplementary income is generated through the pursuit of additional employment, whether in the form of proprietorship or the delivery of community services. A growing body of research indicates that Black women are the fastest-growing group of entrepreneurs, with a significant proportion belonging to Generation X. This underscores the crucial role of diversified income sources in supporting middle-class Black families in high-cost urban centres like New York.

### 3. History of Voter Choices for Black Women

Black women voters have emerged as a significant and influential force in American politics, consistently demonstrating high voter turnout and a notable impact on election outcomes. Historically aligned with the Democratic Party, Black women frequently express support for candidates who advocate social justice, economic equality, healthcare access, and educational opportunities. The Democratic Party has consistently enjoyed the highest voter turnout among Black women since the 1980s (Zhang, see fig. 2). These issues have a direct impact on their communities. The significance of their votes lies not only in their numbers, but also in their capacity to mobilise and energise broader voter bases. As leaders in grassroots movements and voter registration drives, Black women play a pivotal role in influencing the political landscape. Consequently, their participation and support are indispensable for any party aiming for electoral success.

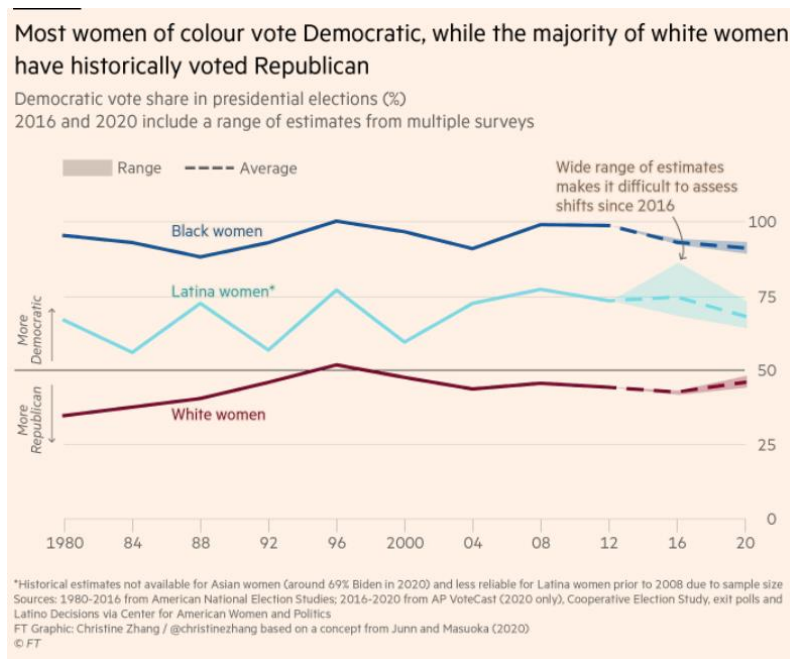


Fig. 2. Historic Voter Choice for Black Women, 1980-2020.

Source: Fox Zhang. “How a Coalition of Women Won it for Joe Biden.” *Financial Times*. 23 Nov. 2020. <https://www.ft.com/content/2b0eba6f-ba33-42e6-b49a-f7e53d67341f>.

The divergence in voting practices between men and women became a subject of interest for political analysts following the 1980s. “Women were voting for Democrats at higher rates than men, leading to the creation of a formal definition of a gender gap: the percentage of women voting Democratic minus the percentage of men voting Democratic” (Gillespie 39). It was hypothesised, that the aforementioned discrepancy was a consequence of the Republican Party's traditionally conservative stance on abortion and equal rights. But as these patterns persisted, scholars were eager to find further explanation for the phenomenon. The general consensus was that women typically prioritise issues that directly affect them as mothers and caretakers. It was also observed that, in general, Democrats have an advantage in these issues. The significant support for Democratic party among Black communities entails important gender differences. African American voters have been mostly supporters of Democratic party candidates ever since the New Deal and the Civil Rights Act. The Democratic Party has historically enjoyed a distinct advantage in the realm of civil rights legislation, a factor that has contributed to the consistent loyalty of Black voters to the party, especially Black women, who have been the most loyal supporters for two decades. During the 2016 elections, Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by nearly 3 million votes. However, she lost the crucial Electoral College vote, which ultimately decides who wins the presidency, by nearly 78 000 votes. “These nearly

78,000 votes reflect Donald Trump's margin of victory in the three states (Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania) whose electoral votes allowed him to surpass the 270 electoral votes needed to claim the White House" (Gillespie 42). The voter turnout in these states is disproportionately low, particularly in urban areas with significant Black populations. This raises questions about the Clinton campaign's ability to mobilize these voters and improve overall voter turnout.

Since the 1980s, there has been a greater propensity for women to vote for the Democratic Party than for men, which can be attributed, at least in part, to the conservative stance of the Republican Party on a number of social issues, including abortion. Black women, in particular, tend to prioritize issues that affect them as caretakers, which aligns them with the Democratic Party, which has a strong civil rights record. The 2016 election result, with Hillary Clinton losing the Electoral College despite winning the popular vote, demonstrated the necessity for more effective voter mobilisation in key states with significant Black populations.

### 3.1 Black Suburban Women's Involvement in the 2020 Elections

The 2020 Presidential Election demonstrated the significant influence that Black suburban women exerted on electoral outcomes, particularly within the context of a highly divided political landscape. These women constituted a formidable voting bloc, exerting a significant influence on the electoral outcomes in a number of pivotal battleground states. It is a well-established fact that the majority of American states adhere to a traditional binary political alignment, either Republican or Democrat. Nevertheless, there are a number of states in which the most intense competition occurs. These are the so-called battleground states, in which presidential candidates are required to exert at least twice the effort to secure the state's electoral vote. In the 2020 elections, the states of Colorado, Florida, Iowa, and Michigan were of particular significance. In Arizona, the results were particularly close, with Biden receiving 49.9% of the votes and Trump 49%. Similarly, Georgia provides an illustrative example of this significant electoral contest, with Biden securing 49.5% of the vote, and Trump getting 49.2% (CNN Politics). However, the Democratic Party achieved a particularly noteworthy victory in the state of Georgia during the 2020 elections. By securing a victory over the Republican Party, they were able to gain the electoral vote of the state for the first time in 28 years. The victory would not have been possible without the efforts of Stacey Abrams, a Black female political activist. In 2018, she ran for the position of governor of Georgia but was ultimately unsuccessful in securing the votes required for election. She proceeded to pursue her objectives by continuing her work of voter mobilisation and campaigning. As a result of her endeavours, she was able to

facilitate the registration of 800,000 new voters, which had a significant impact on the final outcome, with the Democrats ultimately outperforming the Republicans in terms of voter turnout (Rao, Laughland, Levine). Their participation was motivated not only by a commitment to civic engagement but also by a desire to address systemic issues that directly affect their communities. However, despite their mobilisation, the broader political framework often renders their needs marginalised. This is evidenced by the notion of ‘caretaker voting’ and the problem of the ‘trapped constituency’ (Ezie 705). The concept of ‘caretaker voting’ is used to describe the behaviour of Black women who vote in ways that safeguard the rights of others while simultaneously threatening their own political power (Ezie 707). The ‘trapped constituency’ phenomenon demonstrates a discrepancy between the political priorities of Black women and the parties they support, meaning that the fact that America has a two-party system, and the Republicans have branded themselves as the party of white identity, Black women feel as they have no other choice than to vote for the Democratic candidates.

As the trapped constituency thesis contends, the political establishment also appreciates that Black women lack viable alternatives. Therefore, in any given election year, Democratic Party officials can feel confident that Black women will not defect from the Party in any meaningful numbers (Ezie 706).

As previously stated, the suburbs played a significant role in determining the results of the 2020 presidential election. Over the past decade, there have been notable changes to the geographical layout of the United States of America. It was typical for more affluent, college-educated citizens to reside in the inner cities, while working-class people moved out to the rural suburbs. This resulted in large cities often voting for the Democrats and the suburbs for the Republicans. However, in the 2020 elections, it was the suburbs that provided the Democrats with a victory. The Democratic Party experienced the most significant gains in the suburbs, representing a shift from the 2016 elections, when the majority of suburbs were still aligned with the Republican Party. However, there have been substantial changes in the demographic composition of suburbs over the past five decades. The suburbs are not a homogenous entity, and do not conform to the largely white, middle-class ideal of the 1950s. The role of Black suburbs in the election outcome was instrumental, with the activism of Black women, who are typically highly educated and engaged in voter mobilisation and campaigns, being a significant contributing factor. The mobilisation of Black suburban women has become an increasingly vital area of study in order to gain insight into and enhance voter turnout in recent election cycles. For Black suburban women, the intersection of race and gender in electoral politics has

prompted the implementation of targeted outreach initiatives that address the specific barriers to participation, such as socioeconomic factors and educational disparities (Clergé). Consequently, when mobilisation efforts successfully engage Black suburban women through targeted messaging and educational initiatives, they can result in increased voter turnout, thereby contributing to a more representative democratic process in the United States.

### 3.2 Suburban Black Women During the 2024 Elections

The 2024 United States Presidential Elections represented a significant moment in American political history, with suburban Black women emerging as a crucial demographic group. The involvement of these voters had a significant impact on the electoral outcome, while also serving to illustrate the growing political influence and the issues that are of particular importance to them. In the 2024 elections, suburban Black women exhibited an impressive voter turnout. Motivated by a range of pressing issues, nearly two-thirds of Black women voters reported a greater determination than ever to cast their ballots. This surge in political engagement was driven by concerns over reproductive rights, racial justice, and economic stability. According to the Pew Research Center, Black Americans, including suburban Black women, accounted for 14% of eligible voters in the 2024 election (Maeze). Historically, Black women have been a dependable voting constituency for the Democratic Party. However, the 2024 elections revealed a more complex shift in political preferences among suburban Black women. Among Black women who voted for Joe Biden in 2020, one quarter indicated that they would either vote for Trump in 2024 (8%) or abstain from voting (14%) (Kearney et. al.). This change reflects a broader trend of political realignment and the increasing complexity of voter behaviour within this demographic. The issue of abortion rights proved to be a crucial factor in influencing the voting behaviour of suburban Black women. The tightening of abortion restrictions in several swing states rendered this an issue of critical importance for a significant proportion of voters. Suburban Black women, like their urban and rural white counterparts, were profoundly concerned about the implications of these restrictions on their rights and health. This concern manifested as a robust voter turnout, which conveyed a clear message to policymakers regarding the significance of safeguarding reproductive rights. Indeed, approximately one in five Democratic women voters and one in four women of reproductive age, regardless of race, identified abortion as the most significant issue to them (Krizinger et. al.). Additionally, the 2024 elections witnessed a noteworthy surge in the number of Black women seeking elected office at various levels of government. This increase in representation served to amplify the voices and concerns of suburban Black women, thereby ensuring that

their perspectives were included in the political discourse. According to the Center for American Women and Politics, approximately 90% of Black women voters supported the Harris/Walz ticket (CAWP). The presence of more Black women in elected positions also served as an inspiration for future generations, thereby demonstrating the importance of representation in achieving meaningful change. Despite feelings of disillusionment following the electoral outcome, many suburban Black women continued to play an active role within their communities. They persisted in their efforts to organise, advocate for, and mobilise voters around issues that directly impacted their lives. This ongoing commitment to community engagement serves to illustrate the resilience and determination of suburban Black women to effect change, regardless of the prevailing political climate. The participation of suburban Black women in the 2024 United States presidential elections served as an indicator of their increasing political influence and the crucial issues they advocate for. The high voter turnout, the shifts in political preferences, and continued community engagement demonstrate the dynamic and evolving nature of their political participation. As suburban Black women persist in asserting their influence and advocating for their communities, their role in shaping the future of American politics will undoubtedly remain significant.

### 3.3 Media Coverage

The participation of suburban Black women in the political sphere is frequently overlooked by media outlets, despite their significant engagement with the issues that shape their communities. Finding accurate sources for this research has been a great challenge. Following the 2020 elections, the significance of the suburbs was recognised. However, it was the White suburban electorate, particularly White suburban women, who were credited with the Democratic Party's victory. Black suburbs, and the women who were proved to have been deeply involved in the election were viewed as if they were invisible (Clergé). A review of the literature reveals that the number of articles published on this topic increased following the 2024 elections. It seems reasonable to conclude, that the defeat of the Democrats and Kamala Harris is the reason for this. The fact that Harris got accepted as a Presidential candidate was a historic first in the United States, since she was the first multi-ethnic Black women running for office. It was an inevitable consequence that the Black female electorate rallied behind her without delay, and that they were extremely disillusioned following her defeat (Barber). According to the exit polls following the election 92% of Black women supported Harris, while 53% of White women stood by Donald Trump. This result makes Black women feel as if they have to hold the line alone in America. It has been acknowledged that the act of voting is an

inherent responsibility; however, this does not necessarily results in tangible change within the system. “If we are to create real, sustainable change, then civic engagement has to become a year-round commitment — not a quadrennial event” (LeslieMac). Black women need to continue organizing locally, since that is how they can achieve their goals. Some Black women-funded organisations are Sister Love, Inc., in Atlanta Georgia under the leadership of Dazon Dixon Diallo, and Birth in Color RVA, in Richmond Virginia led by Kenda Sutton-El. These organisations work on health advocacy, organizing mutual aid networks during natural disasters, and fight against curriculum bans and book censorship. They deal with issues like maternal health, reproductive justice and HIV/AIDS prevention. Suburban Black women are aware of their intersectional background and positions, but they continue to fight for their rights even if they feel as if they are living in a “White supremacist hellscape” (LeslieMac, see fig.3).



Fig. 3. Black Women Watching the World Burn.

Source: LeslieMac. “I Can’t Watch the World Burn, Because the Fire Will Burn Me First” *Medium*, 26 Nov. 2024. <https://medium.com/@LeslieMac/i-cant-watch-the-world-burn-because-the-fire-will-burn-me-first-ae2fa7d68511>.

## Conclusion

The theory of Intersectionality has not only had a profound impact on understanding the challenges and hardships that Black women face in general, but also on interpreting complex issues concerning them, such as the societal position and voter preferences of suburban Black women. They are acutely aware of their multifaceted backgrounds, their integral roles within their families, and their significant influence on the political landscape of the United States. Their consciousness of their history enables them to maintain a focus on enhancing their own and subsequent generations' quality of life, through participation in public service. The transition to suburban living has had a profound impact on Black women's lives. They have enhanced their living conditions in a multitude of ways and established robust communities of their own. The majority of suburban Black women attained a high level of education, thereby facilitating their families' transition into the middle-class in the United States. In the context of the political landscape of the United States of America, it is evident that Black women have historically occupied a significant position in the process of decision-making. Nevertheless, suburban black women are even more engaged with these matters. They play an active role in voter mobilisation and campaigning, which can be attributed to the close-knit nature of their communities. Historically aligned with the Democratic Party, they have demonstrated their support for the party in the past two election cycles. The victory of Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election can be attributed, at least in part, to the support of Black women in suburban areas and in battleground states, which contributed to a Democratic shift in the electoral map. Throughout the 2024 electoral process, they remained staunchly aligned with the party and Kamala Harris. Despite the dearth of media coverage accorded to suburban Black women as pivotal figures in the political sphere, they persist in their efforts to secure their rights. In the wake of the Democratic Party's defeat in the 2024 elections, Black women have made a collective vow to persevere in their struggle against injustice and to continue to raise awareness about the multifaceted discrimination they face.

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