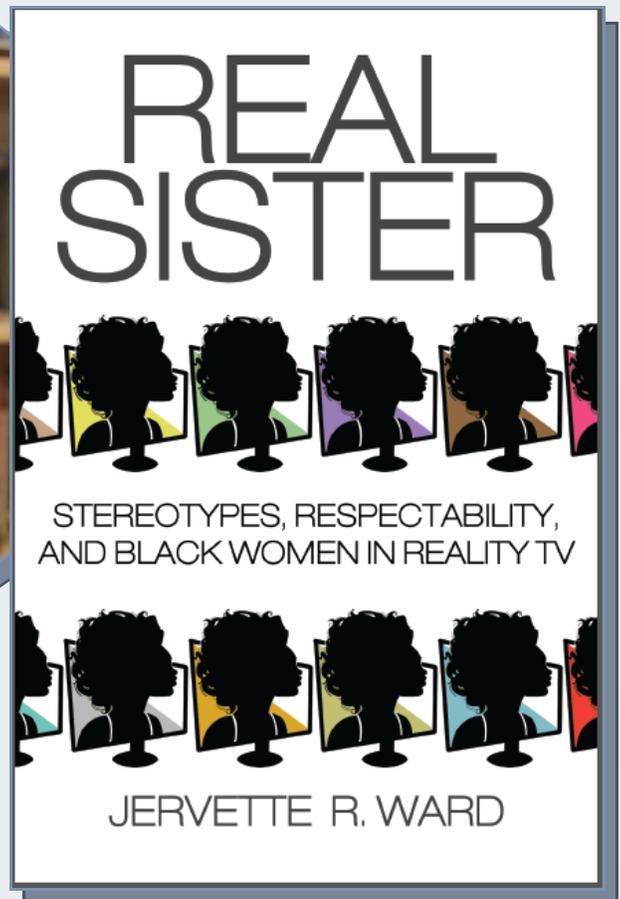


REAL SISTER

STEREOTYPES, RESPECTABILITY, AND BLACK WOMEN IN REALITY TV

JERVETTE R. WARD, PH.D.



Dr. Ward is the editor of *Real Sister: Stereotypes, Respectability, and Black Women in Reality TV*.

She is an engaging and thought-provoking speaker and scholar. Dr. Ward is available to speak at commencements, honor society ceremonies, writing workshops, founder's days, lyceum series, Black History Month events, and other occasions.

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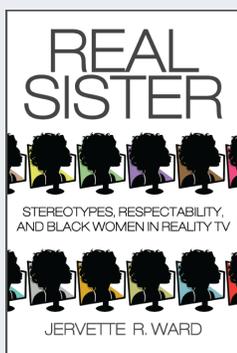
Dr. Jervette R. Ward is a Southerner who specializes in African American Women's Literature while living and working in the last frontier – Alaska. She was born in Memphis, Tennessee, but she primarily grew up in Jackson, Mississippi. Dr. Ward is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Alaska Anchorage, and she earned her Ph.D. in English – Literary & Cultural Studies from The University of Memphis. Her research and teaching areas focus on American Literature with an emphasis in African American Women's Literature. She has taught and published on Zora Neale Hurston, the addition of the African American characters to the Dick and Jane series, and Black women in slavery. She is the editor of *Real Sister: Stereotypes, Respectability, and Black Women in Reality TV* (Rutgers University Press, Fall 2015). Currently, she is writing a book in response to the book and film *The Help*.

REAL SISTER

From *The Real Housewives of Atlanta* to *Flavor of Love*, reality shows with predominantly black casts have often been criticized for their negative representation of African American women as loud, angry, and violent. *Real Sister* brings together ten female scholars from a variety of disciplines, in part to address legitimate concerns about how reality TV reinforces stereotypes, but also to inspire a positive and more nuanced conversation about the genre's representations and their effects on the black community.

The central aim of the book is not to argue for or against black reality television; rather, the goal is to inspire a more nuanced and scholarly discussion of the effects of reality television on the image of black women in society.

This book project stems from her Research Philosophy, which is to create texts that are helpful in some way to people in general both inside and outside of the Academy.



"Real Sister makes a significant contribution to existing scholarship by establishing links between depictions of black women in television and a longer-running history of representations of black women in literature and popular culture tropes."

-- Leigh H. Edwards, author of *The Triumph of Reality TV: The Revolution in American Television*



"A frank meditation on the images of black women in television's most dominant form, *Real Sister* exposes the ways in which the ambivalent pleasures derived from reality TV's obligatory train wrecks implicate black women as both victim and entrepreneur."

--Darnell Hunt, editor of *Channeling Blackness*

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REAL SISTER

Stereotypes, Respectability, and Black Women in Reality TV

Edited by Jervette R. Ward

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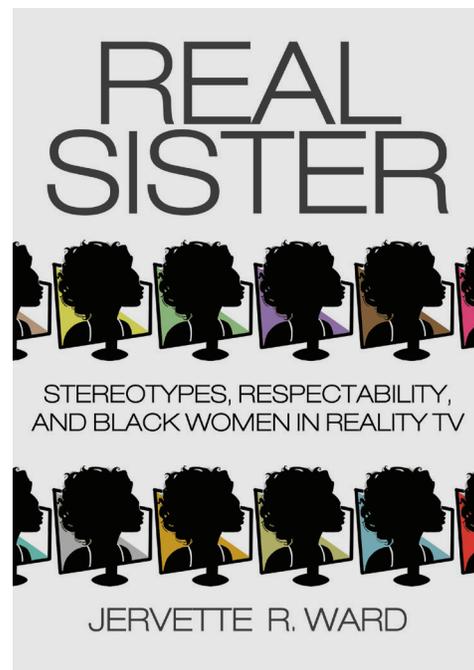
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From *The Real Housewives of Atlanta* to *Flavor of Love*, reality shows with predominantly black casts have often been criticized for their negative representation of African American women as loud, angry, and violent. Yet even as these programs appear to be rehashing old stereotypes of black women, the critiques of them are arguably problematic in their own way, as the notion of “respectability” has historically been used to police black women’s behaviors.

The first book of scholarship devoted to the issue of how black women are depicted on reality television, *Real Sister* offers an even-handed consideration of the genre. The book’s ten contributors—black female scholars from a variety of disciplines—provide a wide range of perspectives, while considering everything from *Basketball Wives* to *Say Yes to the Dress*. As regular viewers of reality television, these scholars are able to note ways in which the genre presents positive images of black womanhood, even as they catalog a litany of stereotypes about race, class, and gender that it tends to reinforce.

Rather than simply dismissing reality television as “trash,” this collection takes the genre seriously, as an important touchstone in ongoing cultural debates about what constitutes “trashiness” and “respectability.” Written in an accessible style that will appeal to reality TV fans both inside and outside of academia, *Real Sister* thus seeks to inspire a more nuanced, thoughtful conversation about the genre’s representations and their effects on the black community.

JERVETTE R. WARD is an assistant professor of English at the University of Alaska Anchorage.



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