Tanisha Ford is an assistant professor of women’s, gender, and sexuality studies at University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Her book Liberated Threads uncovers how and why black women use beauty culture and fashion as a form of resistance and cultural-political expression. From the Civil Rights and Black Power era of the 1960s through anti-apartheid activism in the 1980s and beyond, black women have used their clothing, hair, and style not simply as a fashion statement but as a powerful tool of resistance.

Whether using stiletto heels as weapons to protect against police attacks or incorporating African-themed designs into everyday wear, these fashion-forward women celebrated their identities and pushed for equality. In this thought-provoking book, Ford explores how and why black women in places as far-flung as New York City, Atlanta, London, and Johannesburg incorporated style and beauty culture into their activism.