

**GENDER EQUITY FOR ALL**  
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# **INTERSECTIONALITY**

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# INTERSECTIONALITY

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As humans, we are an accumulation of our diverse and distinct identities. These can include the color of our skin, sexuality, gender identity, religious identity, ethnic identity, or other identity we may hold.

Intersectionality—defined as the interconnected nature of social categorizations—is a major aspect of many individuals' identities. Some intersectional identities may be empowering or oppressing. Feminism has the ultimate goal of empowering feminine individuals and advocating for our rights. However, feminism has often been confined to a specific race or has made assumptions about the identities of women. This has failed to acknowledge the disparities among those who identify as female. Feminism must evolve in order to support the individuality of every woman. The history of feminism is no exception to this—second wave feminists, for instance, have long neglected and even discriminated against women of color.

An example of an intersectional identity is a South Asian woman, whose race and gender identity can be met with discrimination and injustice within society—because she is both female and South Asian.

Being a South Asian woman that grew up in a predominantly white community, I always found myself somewhat alienated. I was never necessarily bullied, but being a woman of color and the daughter of two immigrants, I had issues with fitting in with my peers. I often felt left out at the cafeteria table, where my peers had pizza for lunch, and I had ethnic food. Being in elementary school, my classmates were curious, and would ask, “What is that?” I would frequently have to explain what I was eating, and I’d even go so far as to hide my lunch to avoid questions. Certain occasions and things that others said to me ultimately left me feeling isolated and out of place.

The impacts of a society that discriminates against intersectionality aren’t just limited to one’s feelings towards their situation and identity. It can be seen that disparities within race, sexuality, and gender can lead to injustices with services as basic as healthcare, for instance. Racism is an issue that plagues countries across the globe, but it is both shocking and disheartening to see how this hatred seeps into the medical field as well. It is absurd to see that race, a social construct, can take years off of a lifespan. It is no surprise that a large number of minorities can be found in lower-developed communities, as it is incredibly difficult to break into a higher standard of living if there is a lack of job opportunities, efficient means of transportation, and adequate education within an area. It is a constant cycle, where one generation after another is unable to progress.

Gender discrimination and racial discrimination alone are already far too common, but for those who have identities that meet at the intersection of identities already subject to discrimination, we have an entirely different level of complex interactions filled with discrimination on a daily basis. To be a true feminist, be an intersectional feminist.

We have interlocking oppressions and intersectionality recognizes that. A Black woman, for example, faces the unique combination of both gender discrimination and racial discrimination. A trans woman faces both transphobia and sexism. A Muslim woman might face both Islamophobia and sexism.

Saying things like "I don't see color" denies the lived reality of intersectional oppression that people face, and as feminists, we have an imperative to be intersectional, be inclusive, and be anti-racists every single day.