

Intersectional Feminism is for Everybody

Defining intersectional feminism

Feminism is “a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression.”
— **bell hooks**

Feminism is not about reversing oppression — it’s about ending it. For everyone.

“The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.”
— **Audre Lorde**

Intersectional feminism is not framed from a straight, white, cisgendered, binary female perspective.

Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term “intersectionality,” which she defined as “the theory of how different types of discrimination interact.” This has been applied to the feminist movement resulting in “intersectional feminism” — the type of feminism that hooks & Lorde were talking about, before we had this term for it.

Intersectional feminism recognizes that black women, queer women, trans women, differently-abled women, indigenous women, refugee women, women of color, poor women or women who have a variety of these and other identities, experience oppression or discrimination differently from women who do not share those same identities.

Why do we need intersectional feminism?

Acknowledging a wide variety of experiences of every unique individual and group of women is critical; unique experiences that differ based on race, class, sexuality, and gender identity and expression. There is no single female story.

“The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story... The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar.”
— **Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche**

Single stories: the welfare queen, the angry Black woman, the femi-Nazi, the man-hater.

More reasons that we need intersectional feminism include: systemic racism and the rise of white supremacy; ageism in the workforce and culture; pressure for young boys to adhere to “masculine” ideals; patriarchal oppression of all genders; an increasingly binary and unnecessarily gendered capitalist market; pervasiveness of scarcity and competition.

History & Context

A brief history of the feminist movement

“Waves” — The progression of feminist thought can be categorized into what are commonly referred to as the “waves” of feminism.

- **First wave:** Based around gaining the right to vote, tied closely to the abolitionist movement. See: Sojourner Truth’s [Ain’t I a Woman?](#)
- **Second wave:** Equal rights feminists and “radical” feminists. The first focused on workplace equality (primarily from a middle-class white perspective), while the latter focused building an alternative to the world’s patriarchal society. Think: Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* & Simone de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex*; Roe vs. Wade, ERA, Title IX. Some feminist activists overlapped heavily with the Civil Rights movement, the labor movement and LGBT movement. Trans women were often excluded.
- **Third wave:** Started in the 1990s, includes sex-positivity, body positivity, started to include more diverse perspectives and recognition of Black, poor, queer and trans experiences. Intersectionality became defined, acknowledging that the beliefs, language and focus of the previous waves of feminism did not acknowledge, consider, or include the lives of poor women, women of color, trans women and people of all genders. This movement also seeks to redefine womanhood and its imagery.
- **Fourth?:** Some people believe we are now entering fourth wave which focuses on public discourse — taking up public space and using social media as a tool for a more truthful and full representation of womanhood and feminism. Think: Slutwalks and the #MeToo movement.

Those who came before us to lay groundwork for what we do today. We believe it’s critical to honor and elevate the stories of those who have gone before us.

Feminist Oasis

We organize to cultivate feminist community, advance equitable practices and build sustainable alternatives to systemic oppression.

What we do:

- Lift each other up
- Learn from historical visionaries and leaders
- Challenge pervasive cultural messages
- Explore new ways of working and doing business

What we’ve done — a few examples from our first 8 months & 35 events

- Launch event: screening of Beyoncé’s *Lemonade* followed with a feminist theory discussion with local feminist scholars Dr. Aria Halliday and Dr. Courtney Marshall.
- Book clubs discussing modern feminist memoirs, feminist classics and fiction by women of color
- Thrown a networking party centered around feminist art with speed-networking via color-coded, values-based conversation prompts
- Hosted over 20 “Feminists, Waffles, Work” coworking sessions & workshops at Teatotaller
- Created & ran a “trade economy” booth at Portsmouth PRIDE
- Partnered with musicians, venues, film screenings, organizers and grassroots campaigns

What we’ve got coming up: feminist investing workshop, more coworking gatherings, art-making cozy parties, LGBTQIA+ clothing drive, feminist policy platform and business directory, growing our feminist library, Wikipedia edit-a-thon to add feminist history/herstory into our digital history books, etc. // Info & updates: feministoasis.com

The Importance of Language

A few examples of intersectional feminist terminology

→ Womxn

- ◆ **Definition:** A definition of women that explicitly includes not only cis women, but also trans women and femme/feminine-identifying genderqueer and non-binary folks. The older term “womyn” was historically used to exclude “men” and has a history of transphobia (See TERFs); we use “womxn” to underscore inclusivity.
- ◆ **Importance:** Transwomen are women. Nonbinary femmes who identify as women are women. Any other combination of gender identity and self identification you can imagine wherein someone identifies as a woman. For inclusivity, or to support and welcome all folks, we use the term “womxn”.

→ Intersectional

- ◆ **Definition:** “The theory of how different types of discrimination interact”
- ◆ **Significance:** Preservation of the importance of each individual’s and community’s reality

→ BIPOC

- ◆ **Definition:** Black, indigenous, and people of color.
- ◆ **Significance:** It’s used to help center discussions and work related to racism on people who tend to be marginalized when the term POC is used. For example, POC can refer to anyone who has Black or brown skin (or who identifies as a person of color). But, in general, Black Americans have enormously different histories than do those people who have come here voluntarily.

→ Nonbinary

- ◆ **Definition:** a person who identifies outside of exclusively binary definitions of male or female.
- ◆ **Significance:** Limitation to the binary perpetuates white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. By acknowledging and amplifying the stories of nonbinary folks, we help break down binary assumptions.

→ Pronouns

- ◆ **Definition:** A noun phrase that refers to any one individual
- ◆ **Significance:** Pronouns are the simplest way for each individual to express and/or acknowledge one another’s gender identity. Remember, folks don’t ‘prefer’ their pronouns - they are not a suggestion or preference and you should refer to someone as whatever pronoun they ask to be referred to as

→ TERFs

- ◆ **Definition:** Trans-exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs) are an extreme group who exclude and deny the identity of trans women.
- ◆ **Significance:** TERFs focus on genitalia and strictly-defined binary gender as prerequisites to inclusion in their feminism.

Why it’s so important

It’s about calling everyone in, using inclusive language, and calling out hate speech.

- Inclusive language erases the dangerous narrative that there is a single story
- Inclusive language signals that everyone is supported and they matter
- As we call out hate speech more consistently, we can shift culture & change socially accepted norms

Beyond language into action

Using “feminist” or “feminism” should come with the acknowledgement that it is an ongoing commitment, not a title or badge of honor. Dismantling systemic oppression is uncomfortable work that we must commit to staying with.

The key to moving forward is what we do with our discomfort. We can use it as a door out — blame the messenger and disregard the message. Or we can use it as a door in by asking, *Why does this unsettle me? What would it mean for me if this were true?* — Dr. Robin DiAngelo, [White Fragility](#)

Why we're needed as activists and what we can do

Why we're needed

- We still need to fight for intersectionality
 - ◆ 53% of white women voted for Trump
 - ◆ TERFs exist, white supremacy is rising, all genders need our support and inclusion, ageism and ableism are still rampant, Black people and trans people are being murdered
- We still live under a white supremacist capitalist patriarchy
 - ◆ [Mortality rate of African-American mothers](#) is three times that of white mothers
 - ◆ Roe vs. Wade is at risk
 - ◆ Trump's [gag rule](#)
 - ◆ Trump's [military trans ban](#)
 - ◆ [The gender tax](#) & [the pink tax](#)

What we can do // Your call to action

Public sector — Policy & Politics

- Midterms!
 - ◆ Register to vote and vote; register your friends to vote and make sure they vote
 - ◆ Learn about elections across the US that can tip the scales and support those candidates — share on social media, donate, knock on doors, make phone calls, talk to your neighbors, colleagues, friends and families.
- Call your reps and ask them to reject Trump's Global Gag Rule & ask that they not accept Brett Kavanaugh as a Supreme Court Justice nominee

Private sector — Business & Nonprofits

- Donate to your local abortion clinic
- Support businesses who don't wait for legislative change to enact feminist policies
- Support businesses & initiatives led by people of color, LGBTQIA+ people, differently-abled people, people in marginalized age groups (older and younger)

Personal — Education, Alignment, Amplification & Activism

- Continue to read, learn, and hold discourse on stories that differ from yours
 - ◆ Less cable news, more journalism
 - ◆ Fact check posts on social media before sharing them
- Make a conscious effort to improve your personal dedication to inclusivity & alignment of your business and personal actions with your intersectional feminist values
 - ◆ Add your personal pronouns to your email signature & IRL intros
- Use your voice, platform and privilege to amplify the voices of underrepresented & marginalized folks
- Join a grassroots movement
 - ◆ Become a Feminist Oasis member or subscribe to our emails
 - ◆ Join the #Fight4Her campaign & follow Population Connection
 - ◆ Share contact info with and stay connected to the folks in this room! Grassroots efforts can make real change. Supporting one another can make true impact.

** ACTION — Conversation wall **

- ADD an action you commit to doing; TAKE an activist name you commit to learning more about.