

RACISM WITHIN FEMINISM

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SUMMARY

The product I created is slam poetry about racism within feminism. The aim of the product is to question the inclusion of women of colour in the feminist movement, analyse the intersection of gender and race, and introduce intersectional feminism as the solution to move forward. While some believe feminism stands for the rights of all women, it is argued that the movement is not inclusive. Thus, the main reason I chose this topic is that I have been questioning the development of the feminist movement in current times, and wanted to gain a better understanding of how it responds to intersecting factors like race. Mainstream feminism believes that all women encounter the same struggles and therefore fight together for women's rights. However, women have distinct variables that constitute their identities and therefore experience discrimination differently. In other words, it ignores that not only gender has a role in women's inequalities but other factors like race as well. On this basis, an alternative movement arose, intersectional feminism, which views the way in which women experience discrimination differently based on different layering and intersecting variables.

TOPIC

If you had asked me six years ago if I was a feminist, I would have confirmed without a blink of a thought. However, several factors around feminism have made me question the movement and how it is evolving in current times. Some months ago, my sister brought to my attention that there are claims of feminism being racist, which I was not aware of. Hence, after reflecting on it and struggling to draw conclusions, I decided to choose this topic as my final paper. Within the topic of feminism, I chose to focus on racism to help me gain an understanding and clearance of what I want to stand for, which resulted to be intersectional feminism. Consequently, this paper not only addresses racism, but reflects on the lack of inclusivity within the movement and its low intersectionality awareness.

RESEARCH PROCESS

The first step of the research process was to get familiar with the topic of racism within feminism by watching videos on YouTube and reading online articles, which gave me the certainty that there are claims that feminism is not inclusive, especially on the basis of race. Then, I began reviewing sources more in-depth, starting by researching the perspectives of women of colour on the topic. Some of the main highlights were that some women do not want to be associated with feminism because the movement has been marketed as white middle-class women and has shown to exclude women of colour in their fight for women's rights, such as with only white women getting the right to vote in America in 1920 and their voices dismissed by the suffragettes (Bannerji, 2020; Cargle, 2018; Global News, 2019; Waxman, 2020). However, the issue does not only remain with the historical background of feminism, its underrepresentation and its lack of inclusivity. A pressing issue within feminism is the lack of recognised intersectionality in women's identities and discrimination experiences (DeFelice, 2019). Mainstream feminism would support that all women fight for the same struggles, failing to see that other factors like race, which is another cause of discrimination, intersect with gender (Global News, 2019).

Consequently, I searched for arguments that analysed how gender and race intersect in discrimination. The first argument that I found was in a journal article by Kaylee A. DeFelice and James W. Diller (2019) in which the example of a study is given where they found that in elementary school, girls of colour received less frequently positive feedback than white girls, both compared to white and boys of colour. Secondly, in the first stages of the research, I had come across the argument that feminism places importance on the gender pay gap, but it fails to recognise the pay gap within gender (Huffpost, 2015). Hence, I searched for data that would support the claim and found that in 2019 the wage gap was 18%, but compared to white, non-Hispanic men, the pay gap for black women was 38% and for Latinas 46% (AAUW, 2020). Thirdly, to further argue the intersection of racism with gender discrimination, I found that even though opportunities for women in academia have improved, in many universities in the United Kingdom this applies mainly to white middle-class women (Bhopal, 2020). Furthermore, an example mentioned in class would also apply, where the same resumes from women are presented, yet there are 50% fewer call-backs with the more black-sounding names (Group C, 2022).

This lack of awareness of how race intersects with gender discrimination also led my research to arguments in which feminists are criticised for not supporting causes of women of colour, such as the Black Lives Matter (Cargle, 2018; Brewer & Dundes, 2018) or taken into consideration when voting for Trump, which more than half of the white women in the country did (NBC News, 2019). However, since most of the sources that I found were mostly based in the United States, I tried to look for examples from other countries and found several relevant sources from Spain. An example found was the comparison of two protests against abuse in 2016 taking place a few days after each other. The first one had thousands of people attending, whereas the second one had barely 300 people, with the difference that the first one involved the abuse of a white Spanish girl, whereas the second one did not (Buzon, 2018; Castro, 2021; López-Tomás, 2019).

Nevertheless, after researching arguments that support that race is overlooked within feminism, I searched for sources that would counterargument the claims. The most relevant arguments were found in an article written by Sonia Sodha (2021) in which she presents four main claims. Firstly, feminism should not be held accountable for racism towards women around the world. Secondly, making such accusations ignores the efforts of feminists to bring all women together regardless of race for the fight against gender inequalities. Thirdly, the best way to bring social change is by feeling a shared sense of injustice, rather than making women feel guilt and shame about their white privilege. Lastly, criticisms of white feminism reinforce the patriarchal forces, and therefore should not be spread. Consequently, as I did not share the beliefs of these arguments, to better understand how racism is not acknowledged and how whiteness plays a role in it, I looked back at the workshops that involved inclusion and racism discussions from our course. The few reasons why many diversity initiatives fail are because there is a lack of integrative practices and a lack of awareness, competency, and attitude to confront systems of power and privilege (Group C, 2022). Both of these reasons are also applicable to feminism, as Rachel Cargle said "If there is not the intentional and action-based inclusion of women of colour, then feminism is simply white supremacy in heels" (Cargle, 2018). However, as times mistaken, it is not to imply that the way to move forward is with white saviourism, where white people could end up doing more harm than help (Albanese et al., 2022). Instead, it should be a process of unlearning and relearning by listening (Global News, 2019), and acknowledging white privilege. The latter, together with the claims of racism within feminism often poses discomfort and denial from white women, but as it is explained in the book *White Fragility*, what we do with our discomfort is the key to moving forward (Diangelo, 2018).

Once I had researched both sides of the claim, I was leaning towards supporting intersectional feminism, which was a term mentioned in many of the sources that discussed racism and feminism. To understand first what intersectionality is, I looked for sources where Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term intersectionality, explained what it is. In short, it is a framework that examines the influence of interacting factors that are part of our identities (e.g., race, class, gender, and religion, among others) that intersect and therefore create different experiences, also of discrimination, for each individual (Lafayette College, 2015; TED, 2016). Applied to feminism, it would mean that it realises the multidimensionality of women's experiences rather than just having a single-axis analysis that only takes into consideration the factor of gender (DeFelice, 2019; Global News, 2019). Hence, intersectional feminism does not only address race, but also other factors for which women might feel excluded from the movement, such as class.

The last step was to make the poetry, which I recorded and introduced a song by the Major League Beats (2019) in the background.

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