

The intersection of race and gender: How women of color experience double discrimination

A. Introduction

Thesis Statement: Women of color face distinct barriers in social, economic, and political spheres due to the effects of race and gender discrimination.

B. Historical Context

(i) Historical practices like slavery and colonialism systematically marginalized women of color.

Case Study: During slavery in the US, black women were forced into both physical and reproductive exploitation.

(ii) Feminist and civil rights movements often prioritized white women, sidelining struggles of black women.

Case Study: During March on Washington (1963), no black women were invited for speeches.

C. Social and Economic Impacts

(i) Persistent stereotypes and biases, such as "angry black woman", reinforce prejudices and limit opportunities.

(ii) Women of color earn significantly less than white men and women, limiting their economic mobility.

(iii) Women of color face unequal treatment in healthcare posing serious threats to their

lives.

Case Study: Black women in the US are 3 times more likely to die from pregnancy-related issues than white women.

### ▷ Political Marginalization

(i) Black women occupy a significantly small number of leadership roles in politics

Case Study: As of 2024, only 6% of US Congress members are women of color, despite making 20% of the population.

(ii) Women of color often struggle to have their unique concerns identified.

### ↳ Solutions and Remedies

(i) Enforce anti-discrimination laws and work place diversity initiatives.

Case Study: Companies with diverse leadership teams report 36% higher profits.

(ii) Increase access to healthcare and education for women of color.

Case Study: UN Women's "HeForShe" initiative has increased educational opportunities for 3 million girls globally since 2016.

(iii) Promote political representation and grassroots activism

## Fo Conclusion

The concept of intersectionality highlights the overlapping systems of oppression that create unique challenges for individuals who belong to multiple marginalized groups. Women of color, in particular, live in a world where racism and sexism intersect, amplifying the hurdles they face in their personal and professional lives. This term, introduced by Kimberle Crenshaw, explains how traditional approaches to understand discrimination often overlook the complexities of these dual identities. As Maya Angelou once said, "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you." For women of color, their stories reveal the distinct barriers they encounter in social, economic and political spheres due to the combined effects of race and gender discrimination.

The legacy of discrimination against women of color is deeply rooted in historical practices like slavery and colonialism. These systems of oppression not only targeted communities of color as a whole but also specifically targeted black women. These systems

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denied them autonomy and forced them to undergo labor and reproductive exploitation. This intersection of race and gender discrimination created a foundation of inequality that continues to affect women of color today. The impact of these historical injustices is still evident, as they shape access to resources, education, and employment opportunities, reinforcing biases and perpetuating poverty.

Similarly, the exclusion of women of color from historical movements, such as the feminist and civil rights movements, further compound their challenges. These movements often prioritized the concerns of white women, sidelining the unique struggles of women of color. For example, during the 1963 March on Washington, no women were invited to speak, despite their significant contributions to organizing this event.

Women of color were not only marginalized in older times but today as well. In today's time, persistent stereotypes such as "angry black women" is widespread in society and reinforce harmful prejudices that limit opportunities.

for women of color. These stereotypes not only affect how others perceive these women but also influence their treatment in professional settings, where they are more likely to be described as "angry" in workplace evaluations. For example, studies have found that Black women are 58% more likely than white women to be characterized in such negative terms, which can affect their career progression and overall professional relationships.

Similarly, women of color face significant wage disparities compared to white women which limits their economic mobility and contribute to broader socio-economic inequality. These wage gaps are not just a reflection of discrimination but also highlight the combined effects of race and gender in the labor market. Black women are often concentrated in low-wage jobs with little job security, fewer opportunities for advancement, and less access to benefits like healthcare and retirement plans.

Furthermore, women of color face significant barriers in accessing quality healthcare and education, resulting in disparities that affect their well-being and opportunities for advancement. For instance, black women

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are three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than white women. This disparity is linked to systematic racism in healthcare, where implicit biases among healthcare providers can lead to inadequate care and misdiagnoses. These biases not only limit their educational attainment but also their future economic prospects.

Women of color have not only faced challenges in social and economic domains but have been marginalized politically as well. Black women are significantly underrepresented in political leadership roles, particularly in the US. In the US, black women make up over 20% of the population but hold only 6% of the seats in congress as of 2024. This uneven representation means that their unique perspectives are often not adequately reflected in policy making and governance.

Similarly, black women often find it challenging to have their unique concerns addressed. In global forums, for instance, less than 20% of speakers are women of color, reducing their

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influence in shaping international policies and agendas.

Building on the systematic challenges faced by women of color, implementing effective solutions can provide pathways to real change. Firstly, it is crucial to enforce stricter anti-discrimination laws and implement robust workplace diversity initiatives. Companies that promote diversity report 36% higher profits compared to those that do not.

Similarly, it is essential to increase access to education and healthcare for women of color through targeted programs. For instance, initiatives like UN Women's HeForShe have helped increase educational opportunities for 3 million girls globally since 2016, illustrating the positive impact of focused efforts on removing barriers to access.

Last but not the least, supporting women of color in leadership roles is critical in ensuring that their voices shape policies and decisions. Organizations led by women of color, such as Black Lives Matter, have mobilized millions worldwide to challenge systematic racism and sexism, highlighting the power

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of grassroots activism and movement in driving change.

In a nutshell, it can be stated that women of color face a complex intersection of challenges due to the overlapping impacts of race and gender discrimination. These challenges include economic disparities, limited access to quality healthcare and underrepresentation in political and professional spaces. To address these issues effectively, it is essential for a society to adopt an intersectional approach that recognizes the unique barriers faced by women of color. By enforcing inclusive policies and empowering these women, we can work towards a more equitable world where all individuals have the chance to contribute fully to society.



