



# THINK LIKE A FEMINIST

**GLOBAL  
PLATFORMS**  
NETWORK FOR  
YOUTH-LED  
ACTIVISM

**act:onaid**



# THINK LIKE A FEMINIST

**Pick a card, read,  
reflect, and discuss!**

Think Like a Feminist is made for solo learning, group dialogues, or trainers leading workshops. Each card helps you unpack big topics and turn feminist ideas into everyday action.

*Illustrations are inspired by  
**Madhubani art**, a traditional folk style  
from the Mithila region of India and  
Nepal, traditionally created by women.*

**A project by Global Platforms**

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# UNPACKING FEMINISM

THEORIES

**There are many versions of feminism,** each shaped by diverse thinkers and activists contributing to an ongoing history of struggle and resistance. These ideas and movements continue to bring about profound changes in power dynamics globally, fostering greater equality, justice, and dignity for all.

Feminism encompasses **various theories and movements aimed at eliminating discrimination based on gender, race, class, and other forms of social exclusion.**

Throughout history, feminist activism has driven significant shifts in power, advocating for equality and justice for all.

**Since the 1960s,** many forms of feminism have emerged, often overlapping on key points.

**LET'S EXPLORE THE  
FEMINIST THEORIES  
THAT HAVE EVOLVED  
OVER TIME.**





# FEMINIST THEORIES

## LIBERAL FEMINISM

This feminism **works within mainstream society** to integrate women and address individual rights without challenging the system or the ideology behind women's oppression, as seen in the suffragist movement.

## CULTURAL FEMINISM

Cultural feminism **focuses on the essential differences between men and women**, with women seen as possessing superior virtues that promote unity and sisterhood. Advocates believed that if women were in power, the world would be better, leading some in the 1960s and 70s to support women-only cultures.



## RADICAL FEMINISM

Radical feminism **views patriarchy and sexism as the primary factors in women's oppression, transcending race, age, culture, caste, and class.** It challenges the system and ideology behind women's subjugation. Emerging from civil rights, peace, and liberation movements, radical feminism has shaped the theory and analysis that inspire global women's movements.

## ECO-FEMINISM

Eco-feminism **views patriarchy and its focus on control and domination as a source of women's oppression and as harmful to humanity,** all living creatures, and the Earth. With a broader analysis of power and often a spiritual perspective, eco-feminists link women's rights and empowerment to political, economic, social, and cultural factors that benefit all living beings and Mother Nature.



## BLACK FEMINISM

This theory **argues that sexism, class oppression, gender identity, and racism are interconnected, a concept known as intersectionality**, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Crenshaw highlighted that the experience of being a Black woman cannot be understood through race or gender alone. The Combahee River Collective (1974) stated that Black women's liberation requires ending racism, sexism, and class oppression, benefiting all.

## GLOBAL FEMINISM

Transnational or global feminism **examines how globalization and capitalism affect people across various identities**. It emphasizes intersectionality, recognizing inequalities among women. While global issues impact women differently, they are central to feminist social justice, requiring integrated approaches for lasting change.



## MARXIST AND SOCIALIST FEMINISM

This theory sees **women's oppression as rooted in global capitalist power**. While some feminists stress class, they view patriarchy as the main force behind women's subjugation.

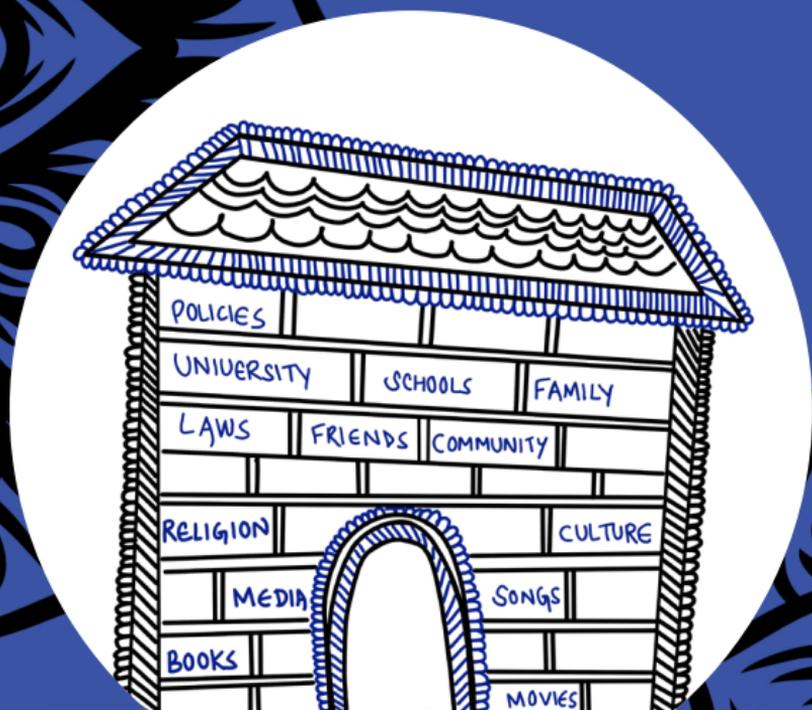
## VISIONARY FEMINISM

This theory, according to Bell Hooks, **challenging patriarchy, class, race, and other forms of oppression is essential**. Her approach centers on love, shared growth, and men's involvement in dismantling domination, ultimately leading to more free and equitable relationships.

## READING

**Feminist Theory:  
From Margin to Center**  
by Bell Hooks





**Patriarchy**

**PATRIARCHY** is a social system that positions men as dominant and grants them power over others, especially women, often upheld through control and various forms of violence. Alda Facio describes it as:

“

***A system where societal, economic, and political structures are shaped by sex-based power dynamics, institutionalized to reinforce the lesser value of women.***

***These systems work together to maintain male dominance and exclude or oppress based on perceived differences, benefiting a few powerful men.***

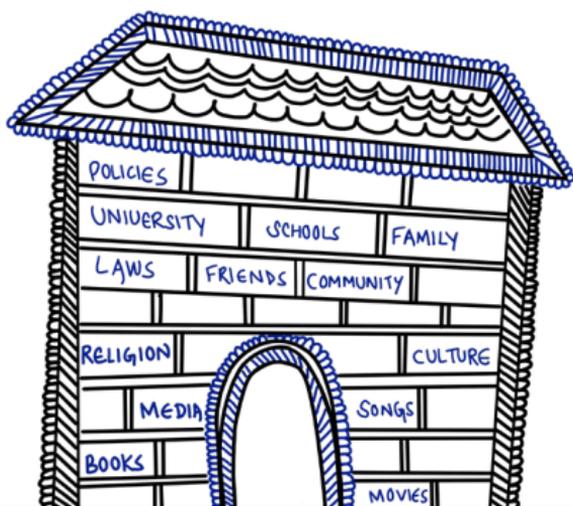
”

**BY UNDERSTANDING HOW PATRIARCHY  
SHAPES US, WE GAIN THE POWER  
TO CHALLENGE IT.**





# TOOL TO ANALYZE PATRIARCHY



## HOUSE OF PATRIARCHY

It is a tool that **visually breaks down how patriarchy operates across systems.**

It helps groups explore the societal conditioning of gender roles, analyze the patriarchy system, and reflect on how both large and small actions contribute to maintaining it.



# HOW

## DOES IT WORK?

- 1** **Reflect** as a group: Where do we learn about the world and gender roles? Which institutions shape these messages?
- 2** **Identify** key patriarchal institutions (e.g., family, religion, education, media) as pillars in the house of patriarchy.
- 3** **Examine** the “rules” each institution enforces about gender behavior, and how they shape what women and men can or cannot do.
- 4** **Discuss:** What do these institutions say about gender roles? How are behaviors enforced, and what happens when they’re challenged?
- 5** **Analyze** how these institutions are interconnected and their impact on our lives.



# TIPS ON PATRIARCHY



## RECOGNIZE DIVERSITY

Women's experiences vary by class, race, and more, but patterns remain.



## UNDERSTAND THE SYSTEM

See how institutions reinforce patriarchy as a system.



## QUESTION CHANGE

Patriarchy exists in both traditional and modern societies—don't assume it fades with change.



## **ACKNOWLEDGE SHARED IMPACT**

Patriarchy affects both men  
and women.



## **CHALLENGE EVERYWHERE**

Patriarchy exists in both traditional  
and modern societies—don't assume  
it fades with change.

[https://www.youtube.com/  
watch?v=H-9fTS5cAiA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-9fTS5cAiA)

## **READINGS AND VIDEOS**



**The problem with our  
patriarchal society**  
by Joana Flores

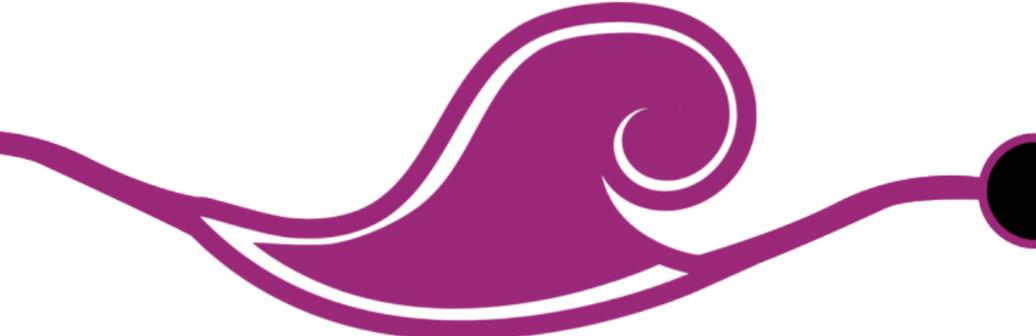


**What is Patriarchy**  
by Alda Facio



# UNPACKING FEMINISM

HISTORICAL  
WAVES



# THE FIRST WAVE

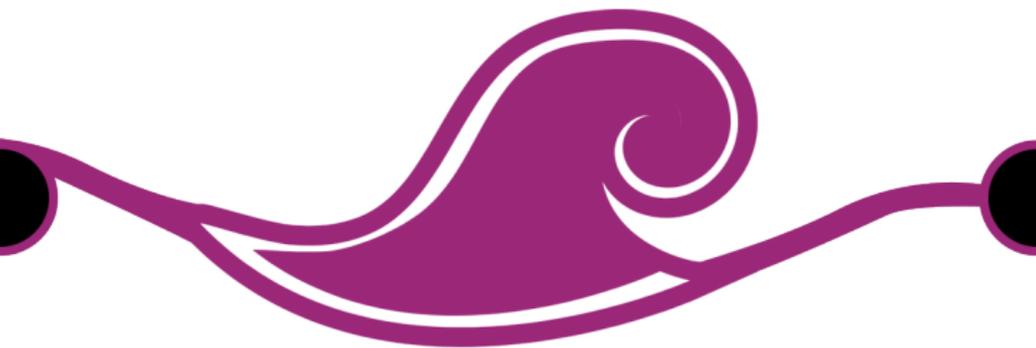
LATE 19TH CENTURY

**The first wave of feminism was the first significant political movement for women's rights in the Western world.**

In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* laid the groundwork. In 1848, a gathering of 200 women created 12 resolutions, including the right to vote.

Reproductive rights also gained attention. The movement led to the 19th Amendment in 1920, granting women the right to vote, nearly 20 years after New Zealand.

**The first wave aimed to establish women as humans, not property,** though its focus largely centered on white women's rights, an exclusion that would persist in feminism.

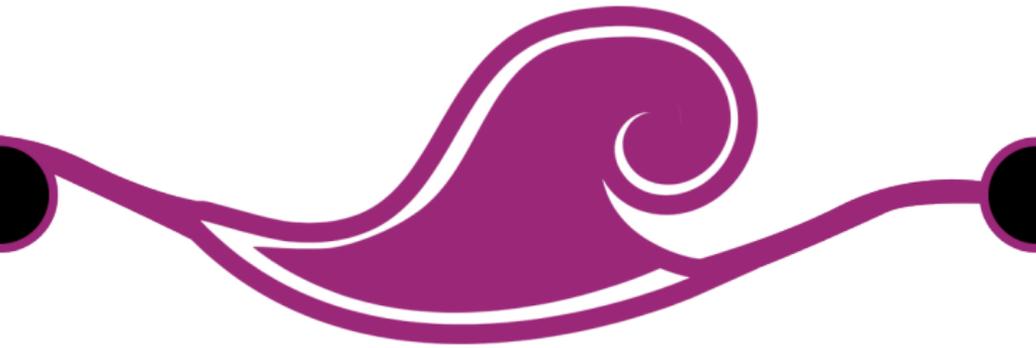


# THE SECOND WAVE

1960S AND 70S

The second wave of feminism, **expanded on the first wave by questioning women's societal roles.** Influenced by the Civil Rights Movement and anti-Vietnam War protests, activists focused on the systems of oppression. Key milestones included the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Roe V. Wade in 1973.

Three main branches emerged: **mainstream/liberal feminism**, which sought institutional reforms; **radical feminism**, which called for a complete societal overhaul; **and cultural feminism**, which highlighted a distinct female essence.



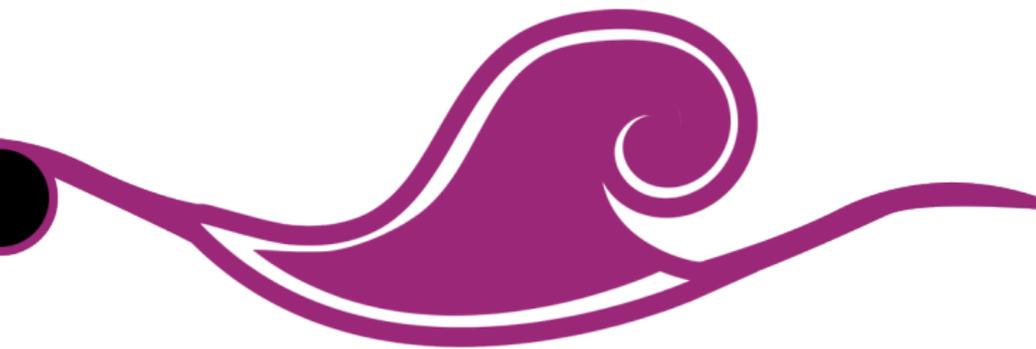
# THE THIRD WAVE

*1990S*

The third wave of feminism, **embraced individuality and rebellion, building on second-wave victories.** It was marked by reclaiming culture, with icons like The Vagina Monologues, Guerrilla Girls, and Riot Grrrls.

Women expressed their sexuality freely, challenging earlier feminist views on femininity.

This wave also highlighted race and introduced Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of "intersectionality" in 1989. Coined by Rebecca Walker in 1992, "third wave feminism" expanded globally, fueled by the rise of the internet and diverse feminist voices.



# THE FOURTH WAVE

## PRESENT TIME

The fourth wave of feminism **builds on previous movements but is marked by social media activism and a renewed focus on women's rights**, including the MeToo Movement.

It continues to emphasize intersectionality, critiquing the narrow focus of feminism that often overlooks the experiences of women of color and advocates for the inclusion of trans rights.

While diverse in its approaches, the fourth wave remains complex, with tensions between different feminist views, but its inclusivity strengthens the movement.



# TIPS ON FEMINISM



## THINK GLOBALLY

The concept of feminism grew in the Global North, though undocumented feminist movements already existed in the Global South.



## RECOGNIZE FEMINIST PLURALITY

People see feminism differently; sharing views builds understanding.



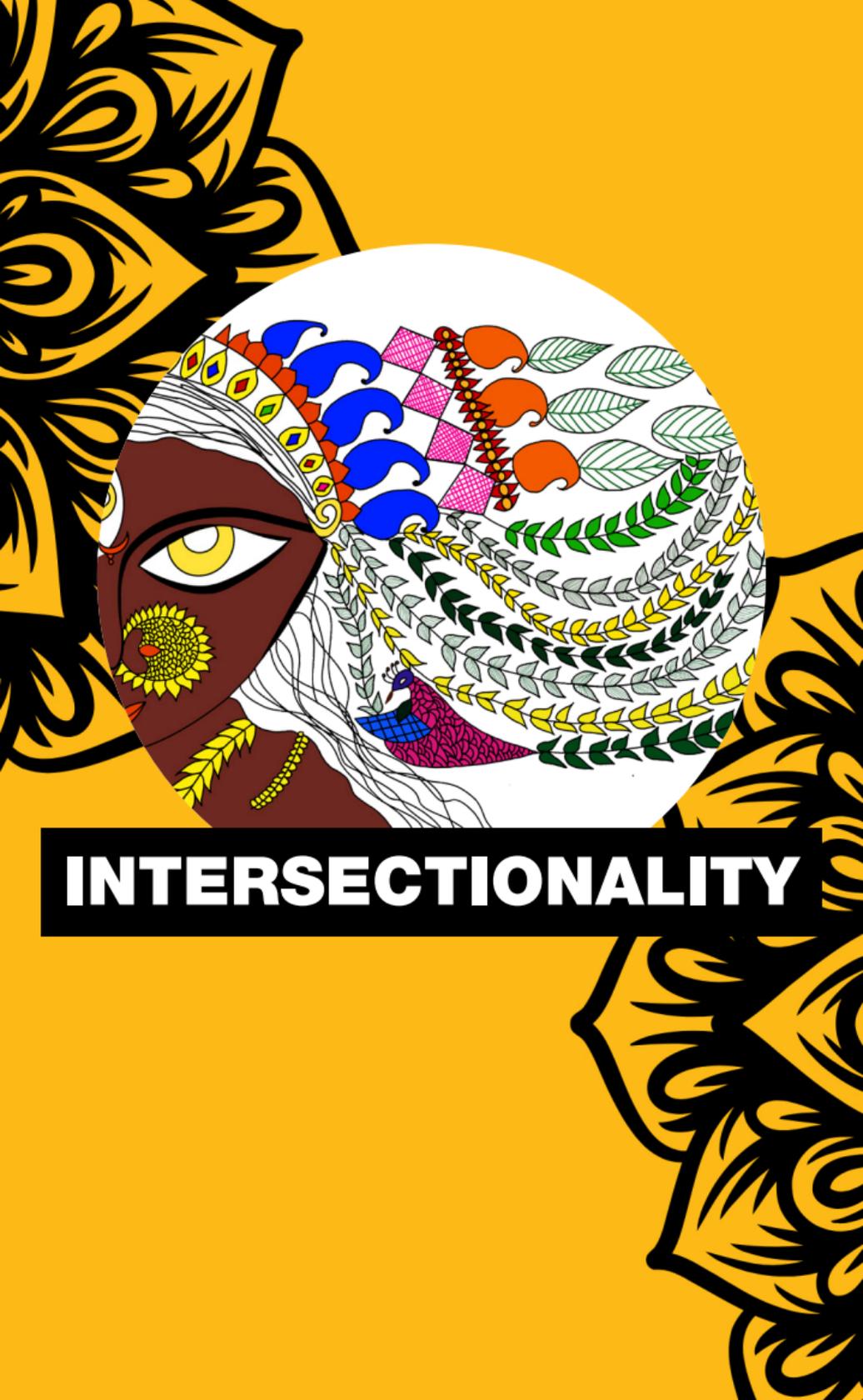
## STAY CONTEXT-AWARE

Feminism challenges power and patriarchy, with perspectives shaped by changing contexts and events.

## READING

**Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction**  
by Rosemarie Tong





**INTERSECTIONALITY**

# INTERSECTIONALITY

is a key tool for activists to reveal the unique struggles of marginalized groups and push for greater representation and inclusion.

While Kimberlé Crenshaw formally coined 'intersectionality' in 1989, Indigenous women in Bangladesh were already raising similar concerns in the early 1980s— **showing the idea was present long before it was named.** Crenshaw introduced intersectionality as:

“

***A framework showing how identities like gender, race, class, and ethnicity overlap and shape people's experiences of privilege and oppression.***

”

It also exposes the overlooked experiences within broader groups that claim to represent them but often ignore their specific needs.





# WHY

## IS IT IMPORTANT?

### UNDERSTANDING INTERSECTIONALITY

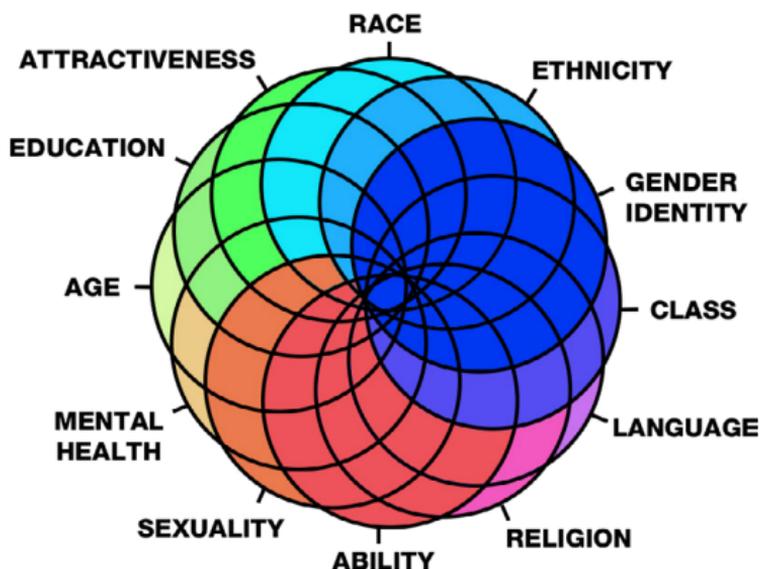
is important because **it highlights the multiple forms of discrimination and oppression that individuals from marginalized groups face.**

It pays particular attention to the unique challenges encountered by women of color, lesbians, trans women, and women from the global south. Intersectionality also examines the varying power dynamics and privileges within groups, such as among women themselves.

By recognizing both differences and commonalities, **it allows us to find points of unity and collective action, fostering a more inclusive approach to addressing social inequalities.**



# TOOL TO ANALYZE INTERSECTIONALITY



## THE CIRCLE OF DISCRIMINATION

One approach to analyzing intersectionality within feminist groups is by using the Circle of Discrimination tool. This reflective tool **helps facilitate discussions around diversity and inequality.**



# HOW DOES IT WORK?

- 1** **Create a safe environment for the group.** Once everyone is settled, ask participants to close their eyes if they feel comfortable doing so.
- 2** **Inform the group** that you will be asking questions relevant to their context and ask them to raise their hands if the question applies to them.
- 3** The first set of questions should **focus on personal experiences** of discrimination, specifically regarding intersecting identities.
- 4** In a second round, ask questions about **whether participants have ever discriminated against** someone else based on their intersecting identities.
- 5** After the exercise, **invite everyone to reflect** on the experience and share their thoughts.



# TIPS ON INTERSECTIONALITY



## RECOGNIZE THE IMPACT OF IDENTITY AND POWER

Discrimination can stem from aspects like race, gender, class, education, or ability. Every identity carries both challenges and privileges. Power structures reinforce these inequalities. Recognizing this is key to understanding social dynamics.

## READINGS AND VIDEOS



**The urgency of  
intersectionality**  
by Kimberle Crenshaw



**Intersectionality**  
by JASS, Furia Zine,  
Raising Voices



**BODILY AUTONOMY  
AND INTEGRITY**

# THE RIGHT TO THE AUTONOMY OF OUR BODIES

**It's about having the power to make our own choices about our bodies without fear, pressure, or violence.** It means bodily integrity—being free from any physical acts we don't consent to.

This idea goes beyond just sexual and reproductive rights. It includes being safe from violence, making our own decisions about our bodies, having access to good health care, and choosing when, where, and with whom we want to be intimate.

**BODILY INTEGRITY IS ABOUT DIGNITY,  
RESPECT, AND THE FREEDOM  
TO DECIDE FOR OURSELVES.**



# **YOUNG WOMEN'S** **BODILY INTEGRITY**

Bodily integrity means young women have **the right to control their own bodies, with their sexuality respected and protected.** It's not just about being safe from violence—it's also about making informed choices in relationships, sexual expression, and reproduction.

**To fully exercise this right,  
young women need access to:**

**EDUCATION**

**CONTRACEPTIVES**

**HEALTHCARE**

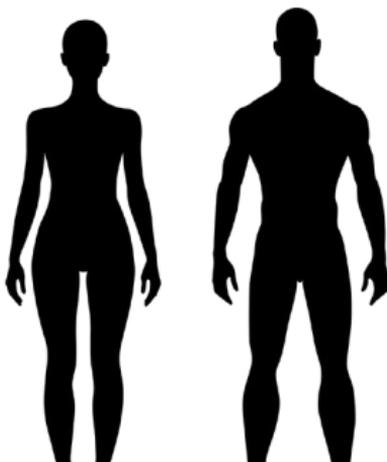
**MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT**

**NUTRITION**

**A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT TO  
EXERCISE THEIR AUTONOMY**



# TOOL TO PROMOTE REFLECTION ON BODILY INTEGRITY



## UNPACKING THE POWER OF OUR BODIES

To use this tool, have your group **draw a body map of a woman and a man**. Then, brainstorm images, proverbs, songs, films, etc., related to sexual or reproductive roles of girls, women, boys, and men.



# HOW DOES IT WORK?

After the exercise,  
**reflect on these questions:**

- Are there common themes or definitions for men and women?
- What do these 'stories' reveal about the attributes society values and expects from men, particularly regarding sexuality?
- What attributes are encouraged/discouraged in men?
- What do these 'stories' reveal about societal expectations of women, their bodies, and their sexuality?
- What attributes are encouraged/discouraged in women?
- Are proverbs about women mostly negative or positive? And about men?
- Do these proverbs apply to all women and men?

This reflection will help your group analyze **how stereotypes shape young women's realities and impact society as a whole.**



# TIPS

## ON **BODILY INTEGRITY**



### REDEFINE BEAUTY ON YOUR OWN TERMS

Society's beauty standards can harm self-esteem. Define beauty and sexuality for yourself, honor your healing, and recognize how control over women's bodies connects to empowerment and rights.

## READINGS AND VIDEOS



**My body is my own:  
What is bodily autonomy?**  
by UNFPA



**My body is my  
own publication**  
by UNFPA



**ADVANCING WOMEN'S  
RIGHTS TO ACHIEVE  
GENDER EQUALITY**

# ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY

means stopping discrimination that limits women's rights and ending gender-based violence, one of the most common human rights abuses. **Women's rights are human rights, including the right to:**

**LIVE FREE FROM VIOLENCE  
AND DISCRIMINATION**

**ACCESS PHYSICAL AND  
MENTAL HEALTHCARE**

**RECEIVE EDUCATION**

**OWN PROPERTY**

**VOTE**

**EARN EQUAL PAY**

Women and girls worldwide still face barriers to their rights. **Challenging gender inequality and harmful social norms is essential.**





# FEMINISM AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Feminism is essential to achieving women's rights, as it advocates for the political, economic, and social equality of all individuals, including those beyond the gender binary.

It critically examines and confronts discrimination in public, private, and intimate spheres, pushing for systemic change.

**Beyond legal reforms, feminism strives for the emancipation of women, seeking to dismantle oppressive structures.**

It also challenges the rigid notions of femininity and masculinity, rejecting the idea that these roles are biologically determined and mutually exclusive.



# **POLICY INSTRUMENT**

## **PROTECTING**

### **WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

The Convention on the **Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**, adopted by the UN in 1979, is an international treaty protecting women's rights. Often called the International Bill of Rights for Women, **it defines discrimination against women and outlines actions for its elimination.**

Countries that accept CEDAW commit to:

- **Integrating gender equality into legal systems**, eliminating discriminatory laws, and enacting laws to protect women.
- **Establishing institutions** to protect women from discrimination.
- **Ensuring the elimination of discriminatory acts** by individuals, organizations, and businesses.



# AN INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST APPROACH

The system often favors men, limiting women's access to opportunities and undervaluing their work, which is often unpaid or unsafe. Many women face violence and bear the heaviest burdens of unjust policies.



**Women must be central  
in challenging these injustices  
and driving social change.**



An intersectional feminist approach **shows how sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, and classism are connected**, highlighting shared struggles across women, workers, LGBTIQ+ people, and migrants. This builds solidarity and collective action.

Change isn't just about government policies.

**Hidden power, like corporations and international institutions, and invisible power, like cultural norms and patriarchal values, shape everyday life.**

Power dynamics within homes, workplaces, and communities often hold the deepest forms of oppression. **Laws against domestic violence exist, but unless attitudes and behaviors change, violence will persist.** For a truly just world, change must happen in policies, institutions, and the everyday actions and choices of all of us.

**ADVANCING WOMEN'S RIGHTS  
IS ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS.**

## VIDEOS



**History of  
Human Rights**

by United for Human Rights



**CEDAW**  
by UN Women



**TRANSFORMATIVE  
FEMINIST  
LEADERSHIP**

# TRANSFORMATIVE FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

encourages shared power, accountability, and the dismantling of hierarchies to promote equality, justice, and collective liberation. Srilatha Batliwala defines it as:

“

*Feminist leadership involves people of all genders working for social justice by challenging patriarchal values like domination, control, and competition.*

”

By challenging traditional power structures, feminist leaders inspire their teams with energy and passion to create real change. Organizations that follow this approach become **more effective, build committed teams, and align their actions with their values**, closing the gap between what they say and what they do.





# SITES TO PRACTICE FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

## FAMILY, CLAN, CASTE, TRIBE, OR COMMUNITY

Key areas **where grassroots feminist movements seek equality and transform institutions** affecting women's lives.

## THE STATE AND ITS VARIOUS ARMS

Feminist leadership **targets the state, legal systems, and policies** to address gender inequality and promote empowerment.



## MARKET AND PRIVATE SECTOR

Corporations **adopt feminist leadership practices to boost productivity** but ignore the deeper political and structural commitments behind them.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Feminist leadership **thrives in civil society**, with some organizations authentically embracing gender-sensitive leadership, while others do so superficially.

## CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

Feminist leaders **challenge gender discrimination in cultural and religious norms**, as seen with Indigenous Mexican and Roma women fighting patriarchy in their movements.



# TOOL TO REFLECT ON FEMINIST LEADERSHIP



## THE FEMINIST MURAL

The feminist mural tool is a good activity to create **a visual tribute to the mentors** your groups look up to or have helped shape your leadership qualities as feminist activists or leaders.



# HOW DOES IT WORK?

- 1** **Reflect** on influential women in your growth as activists or leaders.
- 2** **Identify** their names, countries, and qualities that inspired you. You can draw them and share these qualities with the group.
- 3** **Consider** these questions:
  - What leadership qualities are essential?
  - Which ones are most important?
  - What qualities do you have and want to develop?
  - What do these stories reveal about women's rights and feminism?

**This helps strengthen your own leadership and build effective, collaborative teams.**

# EMERGING YOUNG FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

Young feminists, especially from the global south, are demanding real leadership roles, not token representation, and pushing for young womxn's leadership at all levels.

They are rethinking organizing methods, with many choosing to operate outside traditional NGO models for political or personal reasons.

These leaders are calling for **genuine feminist governance, urging allies to shift power by giving them space, decision-making authority, and resources to set their own agendas.**

## READINGS



**Feminist Leadership for  
social transformation**  
by CREA



**Young Feminist  
Leadership Framework**  
by ActionAid Denmark



**POWER**

# POWER AND FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

All leadership is about power, and how we exercise power. In today's reality, power is defined as:

*The capacity of individuals or groups to decide and influence.*

Hence, power analysis and challenging power, particularly hidden and invisible power, are central to feminist leadership.

Unjust power relations manifest themselves at every level, from the household to the global. **Power works in many ways and can be:**

**VISIBLE**

**HIDDEN**

**INVISIBLE**





# THE MANY FACES OF POWER

Power is experienced differently by everyone. At the individual level, we can identify **four types**:

## POWER WITHIN

A person's sense of self-worth and confidence, believing "I can" and "I will."

## POWER OVER

A harmful form of power seen in oppression, subordination, and rights violations.

## POWER WITH

Building collective strength by finding common ground.

## POWER TO

The potential to learn, act, and share in life.

«**Power over**» is difficult to analyze because it's not always visible. Identifying its three faces helps:



## VISIBLE POWER

It is exercised through formal rules, laws, structures, and procedures such as parliaments, local governments, and councils of elders or village chiefs.



## HIDDEN POWER

Operates behind the scenes, influencing decisions to benefit the powerful, often excluding marginalized groups.



## INVISIBLE POWER

Shapes how we view the world through cultural beliefs and norms, like women feeling restricted by social expectations, even without legal barriers.



# TOOL TO ANALYZE POWER



## THE POWER AND POWERLESSNESS

To help your group analyze power from a feminist lens, your group can use this tool **to understand power more deeply, and to give everyone a space to uncover aspects of their own power.**



# HOW DOES IT WORK?

1

**Draw a line** down the middle of a piece of paper.

2

On one side, **illustrate** a time you felt powerful; on the other, a time you felt powerless.

3

**Share** what you're comfortable with.

4

**Consider** these questions:

- What made you feel powerless?
- How was power used to control or limit you?
- What gave you a sense of power, and why?
- How did you use your power to influence or change something?

# INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF POWER

It recognizes that gender alone doesn't define structural inequality. Power and privilege differ among women, shaped by class, race, age, sexuality, and other intersecting factors that can empower or marginalize in different contexts.

Unequal power between men and women stems from invisible forces rooted in patriarchal values and cultural beliefs, often most deeply felt at home. **Real change requires recognizing and challenging this invisible power.**

## READINGS



**Power and Powerlessness**  
by John Gaventa



**All About power**  
by CREA



# **PRINCIPLES AND VALUES**

**Values are ethical norms guiding behavior, while principles are norms guiding action.**

They overlap, with many principles derived from values. For example, equality and equity are both values and principles, while democratic, transparent actions are principles rooted in the value of equality.

Principles and values are crucial in conflict situations, whether within an organization or in response to external crises. Feminist organizations must clearly define principles to guide strategic choices during difficult times.

However, building consensus on values and principles can be challenging, as some feminist leaders may support certain rights but not others.

**VALUES ARE NOT JUST RHETORIC  
BUT AN ACTIVE PART OF  
FEMINIST POLITICS.**





# FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

## PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

ActionAid created feminist leadership principles to guide leaders, but **these must be rooted in an understanding of patriarchy and exclusion**; otherwise, they risk being used without challenging harmful norms.

### SELF-AWARENESS

**The ability to manage one's ego**, lead with empathy, and acknowledge both personal vulnerabilities and strengths, while valuing the strengths of others.

### RESPONSIBLE AND TRANSPARENT USE OF POWER

The practice of making clear, timely, and transparent decisions that align with the organization's mission and values, ensuring open communication of decisions and their rationale.



## **SELF-CARE AND CARING FOR OTHERS**

**Maintaining emotional and physical well-being** to renew compassion and inspire others, while fostering a supportive work environment, especially for caregivers.

## **ACCOUNTABLE COLLABORATION**

**Setting clear, shared goals and holding everyone accountable** for individual and team success, while addressing poor performance fairly.

## **DISMANTLING BIAS**

**Recognizing unearned advantages and challenging discrimination** in the workplace, while treating all equally.



## **RESPECTFUL FEEDBACK**

**Seeking and giving constructive feedback** for continuous learning and resolving conflicts through active listening and respectful communication.

## **INCLUSION**

**Creating an environment where everyone is heard**, respected, and successful, and addressing barriers to participation.

## **COURAGE**

**Embracing transformative change**, learning from mistakes, and overcoming defeatism or complacency to excel in the mission.



## SHARING POWER

**Creating space for others to lead, empowering teams, and trusting those in authority to guide decisions for the mission's benefit.**

## ZERO TOLERANCE

**Calling out discrimination or abuse of power, ensuring a safe environment, and upholding respect and accountability.**

## READINGS



**Feminist leadership for social transformation**  
by CREA



**ActionAid Feminist Leadership**  
by ActionAid



# **FEMINIST LEADERSHIP**

**IN PRACTICE**

At the most primary level, **transformative feminist leadership** is about ways of doing and enabling a myriad of things which are categorized as the different types of “work.”

**These practices fall into:**

### **VISIONING WORK**

Developing a theory of change and setting clear objectives.

### **POLITICAL WORK**

Assessing political contexts and opportunities, analyzing social power dynamics, anticipating reactions, and building alliances.

### **STRATEGIC WORK**

Developing and guiding strategies, monitoring implementation, evaluating impact, analysing gains and setbacks, revising direction and approach, etc.

### **RELATIONSHIP WORK**

Training others, mobilizing people, keeping energy and morale high, inspiring commitment, building alliances, and resolving conflicts.

## COMMUNICATION WORK

Covers internal and external communication, strategy, quality content, and use of media and technologies for effective outreach.

## RESOURCING WORK

Securing and sustaining financial and other resources critical to transformation, including donor relations, proposal writing, and networking for expertise, materials, and support.

## MANAGERIAL WORK

Seemingly routine but crucial for leadership, including transparent policies, resource management, legal and financial compliance, auditing, and reporting to stakeholders.

Many older feminist organizations struggle with leadership transitions due to a **lack of support for younger leaders.**

Some initiatives, like **ActionAid's Young Feminist Leadership Framework**, aim to address this and support multi-generational leadership.



# **EMERGING GOOD PRACTICES FROM YOUNG FEMINISTS' ACTIVISM**

**The Young Feminist Leadership Framework** highlights key emerging practices for young feminist organizing:

**Centrality of local context and community experience**

Organizing is rooted in local experiences. A leadership framework must reflect diverse approaches.

**Practice feminist governance and leadership within and beyond the NGO structure**

Young feminists are exploring alternatives to NGOs, emphasizing feminist governance and decision-making power.



**Deepen feminist partnership**

Strengthening connections with social justice movements and aligning around shared feminist values is key.



**Integrate a holistic safety, security, and protection framework**

A holistic safety framework is needed to address threats in both online and offline activism.



**Values-aligned fundraising and resource mobilization initiatives**

Fundraising should be values-driven and flexible, supporting young feminists as leaders.

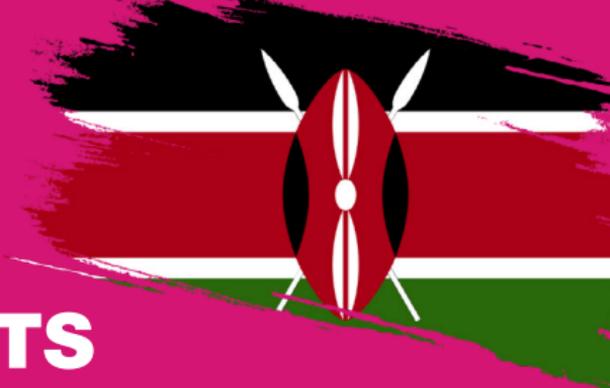


**Intentional power sharing in intergenerational dialogue**

Equitable, intentional intergenerational spaces are necessary for mutual learning and dismantling hierarchies.

CASE STUDY

# YOUNG FEMINISTS IN KENYA



**‘Feminists in Kenya’** started as an online movement focused on feminist discourse and organizing. They organized the **‘Total Shutdown Kenya’ march** in four cities, demanding government action on femicide and violence against women. They created a Memorandum of Demand for femicide to be declared an emergency and for a National Action Plan.

**“** *We are big on speaking truth directly to power and organizing in our radical ways that are tangible for the community.* **”**

FIK collaborates with feminist lawyers to challenge laws that oppress women and girls. They aim to disrupt the legal space with feminist politics.

“

***What makes us unique is we are using these radical ways and speaking our truth and being as vocal as possible without considering respectability and formalization, we are disrupting everything.***

”

Despite facing cyberbullying, FIK continues their activism, highlighting the need for stronger policies to protect women and gender minorities from online violence and state surveillance.

## SPOTLIGHTS



**Grlzwave**  
Young Feminist  
Movement



**FRIDA**  
Young Feminist  
Fund



**FEMINIST  
MOVEMENT  
BUILDING**

**To understand feminist movement building, it is useful to first consider movement building in general.**

## **MOVEMENT BUILDING**

is the process of organizing and motivating people to work toward a shared vision or cause that advances community change. **It begins with a powerful idea that inspires collective action and builds momentum to influence institutions of power.**

Feminist movement building applies these principles through the lens of justice, gender equality, and feminist perspectives. It creates inclusive and intersectional spaces where self-identified feminists, women, young people, and allies come together to address the complex issues that limit the progress of women and other marginalized groups.

**IT IS A COLLECTIVE PROCESS THAT MOBILIZES DIVERSE VOICES AND ACTIONS TO CHALLENGE INEQUALITY AND TRANSFORM COMMUNITIES.**



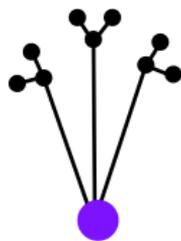


# HOW TO START A MOVEMENT?

The process of building a feminist movement involves clear, actionable steps and a shared vision for change. **Every major movement begins with one powerful idea and the determination to act, progress grows even from small steps.**

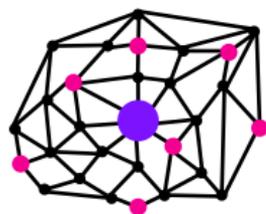
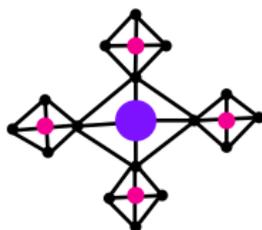
Successful feminist movement building **starts with understanding what the movement stands for, both personally and collectively**, through an intersectional lens.

It requires deep knowledge of the issues, awareness of existing power structures, and clarity on how desired changes will create positive social impact.



**ORGANISATION**

## NETWORK



**MOVEMENT**



# 6 STEPS

## ON HOW TO EFFECTIVELY MOBILIZE AND SUSTAIN A FEMINIST MOVEMENT

### ➤ 1ST STEP

#### Reflect on Core Values of the Movement

Clarify what your movement stands for and which feminist approach guides your work. Regular reflection ensures your actions stay intentional, intersectional, and aligned with a clear, actionable vision for change.

### ➤ 2ND STEP

#### Develop a Hope-Filled Narrative

Inspire belief in a patriarchy-free future by promoting a hopeful, collective vision. This narrative builds agency, unity, and patience as members work toward long-term transformation.



## ➤ 3RD STEP

### **Practical Equipping**

Equip members with knowledge of feminist theory and practical skills to represent and strengthen the movement. Ongoing learning and skills-building sustain confidence and effectiveness.

## ➤ 4TH STEP

### **Build Relationships and Redistribute Power**

Foster collaboration, solidarity, and shared leadership. Prioritize non-hierarchical structures where all members are empowered to lead and contribute to collective change.



## ➤ 5TH STEP

### **Grow the Movement Using Media**

Use media to raise awareness, challenge misconceptions, and advocate for change across local and national platforms.

## ➤ 6TH STEP

### **Reflect on Core Values of the Movement**

Secure essential resources through member support, partnerships, and funding to ensure sustainability.

## READINGS



**How Social Movements  
Build Power Through  
Intersectionality** by SSN



**Lessons on Transformative  
Movement Building**  
by Move to End Violence



**FEMINIST  
POPULAR  
EDUCATION**

## FEMINIST POPULAR EDUCATION

**(FPE)** forms the foundation for critical thinking and feminist leadership, movement building, power analysis, and development.

It addresses power dynamics of gender, race, and sexuality that often silence lived experiences, using transformative strategies for social change.

FPE **creates safe spaces** of trust and solidarity through sharing women's everyday experiences, using art, storytelling, theatre, and other creative methods to deepen understanding of power and privilege.

These spaces emphasize **reflection, dialogue, active participation, and practical solutions** while challenging assumptions and embracing diverse feminist perspectives.

THE BIG GOAL IS TO BREAK DOWN  
HOW POWER WORKS IN THE WORLD  
AROUND US AND SPARK HOPE, CHOICE,  
SELF-CARE, AND THE FREEDOM  
TO REINVENT YOURSELF.





# CORE TOPICS IN POPULAR EDUCATION

## RAPE CULTURE

A culture that **normalizes** sexual violence, blames victims, and protects perpetrators.

## CONSENT (FRIES)

- **Freely Given:** Consent must be given without pressure or manipulation.
- **Reversible:** Anyone can change their mind at any time.
- **Informed:** Consent requires honesty (e.g., using a condom as promised).
- **Enthusiastic:** Consent requires excitement and genuine interest.
- **Specific:** Saying yes to one act doesn't mean agreeing to others.



## MISOGYNY

**The hatred of women**, often internalized by women through societal pressures, influencing judgments about appearance or sexual behavior.

## SEXISM

**Discrimination based on sex or gender**, impacting women and marginalized genders most, while also harming men.

- **Hostile Sexism:** Negative views of women, seeing them as weak or manipulative, fueling violence.
- **Benevolent Sexism:** Viewing women as pure or innocent, rooted in the belief they are weaker.
- **Ambivalent Sexism:** A mix of benevolent and hostile sexism reinforcing harmful stereotypes.



## GENDER DISCRIMINATION

- **Institutional:** Affects systems like healthcare or education.
- **Interpersonal:** Happens in personal interactions (e.g., catcalling, abuse).
- **Individual:** Internalized sexist beliefs about one's own gender.

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

**Unwanted** sexual comments or actions.

## INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE

IPA occurs within intimate relationships, also called **domestic abuse**, and while anyone can experience it, women are disproportionately affected.

## SEXUAL ASSAULT

**Unwanted or coerced sexual contact**, with most survivors being female.



# TOOL TO UNPACK MISCONCEPTIONS

A tool to **examine gender inequality** and find ways to challenge harmful social norms.



## HOW DOES IT WORK?

1

**Ask** participants what the core topics mean to them and how they relate to FPE. Give a few minutes for personal thinking.

2

**Use questions:** What stands out? Why? How does this affect women? How can we address it?

3

**Explore** ways to challenge toxic masculinity, sexism, and harmful norms taught to boys, and how adults can change these behaviors.



**PERSONAL  
IS POLITICAL  
IN FEMINIST  
LEADERSHIP**

# THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

The slogan has been a key feminist principle since the second wave, **emphasizing how women's experiences challenge oppressive structures and reshape cultural understandings.**

This principle remains central to feminist leadership, as leadership is shaped by individuals' attributes, histories, and experiences. While feminism initially highlighted the importance of the self in social change, much early focus was on the work-family divide, self-care, and healing. However, over time, pressures caused many feminists to overlook these basics in their struggle for movement survival.

Recently, **feminists are revisiting the crucial role of the self in both leadership and social change**, highlighting its importance in leadership development.



# THE ROLE OF SELF

While the self includes many factors still to be analyzed, **the most important for leadership are:**

## PERSONALITY AND SELF-ESTEEM

Low self-esteem can make leaders insecure, authoritarian, threatened by others' abilities, and reluctant to share power. **These subconscious behaviors can create significant organizational challenges** and require structured support to address.

## HISTORY AND EXPERIENCE

Our experiences with power, both positive and negative, **shape our attitudes and often override intellectual understanding.** History also includes how these experiences foster insight, political savvy, and strategic skills.

## PERSONAL SOCIAL CAPITAL

**Our histories and experiences create social capital**—contacts, connections, and support networks—that serve as valuable resources in leadership roles.

## TALENTS, ABILITIES, INCLINATIONS

These are **unique qualities individuals bring to leadership**, such as a good sense of humor, strong communication skills, or artistic and musical talents.

## IDENTITIES

Our multilayered identities—**based on class, race, gender, ethnicity, ability, religion, and more**—shape our experiences of power. Whether as a rural Dalit woman, a sex worker, or a woman with a disability, these identities influence how we approach leadership challenges.

Recognizing the powerful role of the self is critical in the feminist leadership context because **women's psychic structures have been constructed** not only through the usual institutions, socialization processes and experiences (like family, school, peers, etc.), but also **through the particular nature of the patriarchal structures** in which they have lived and the oppressions they have consequently negotiated.



# TOOL TO ANALYZE LIVED EXPERIENCES

**Storytelling is a powerful form of resistance**, used by feminists to explore and analyze lived realities.



## HOW DOES IT WORK?

- 1** **Share** selected stories or encourage participants to share their own experiences, particularly related to feminist leadership and the role of the self.
- 2** **Identify patterns**, commonalities, and key insights across the stories.
- 3** **Debrief** by connecting personal experiences to the broader struggle for women's rights, highlighting feminism's challenge to patriarchy and structural inequality.



# TIPS ON FACILITATING STORYTELLING



## ENCOURAGE REFLECTION

Encourage participants to reflect on their situation, role in feminist leadership, and the value of collective action.



## USE CREATIVE METHODS

Facilitate storytelling through objects, drawings, or other creative materials to express and share experiences.

## READINGS



**The Power of Story**  
by Social Commons  
Change Library



**Feminist Leadership for  
Social Transformation**  
by CREA



**INTERGENERATIONAL  
DIALOGUE AND  
SPACE**

**“Personal is political”** reminds us that everyday choices are shaped by the larger systems around us. Many young people—especially girls—still grow up with expectations and norms shaped by long-standing power structures.

These social pressures and cultural norms don't just appear out of nowhere; they shape how we see ourselves and how others see us. And in many ways, **our personal experiences reveal the deeper realities of inequality, showing that what feels individual is often shared by many.**

**NO ONE'S IDENTITY  
EXISTS IN ISOLATION.**

**Intersectionality** highlights that some young people face overlapping forms of discrimination. To respond, we need inclusive approaches that reflect diverse realities and ensure every young voice is valued.





# WHAT IS INTERGENERATIONAL FEMINIST LEADERSHIP?

It engages diverse leaders and **activists across generations**, focusing on partnerships between youth and women in feminist movements. It aims to reduce discrimination by creating a common goal for all women.

This leadership model **promotes mutual learning, shared decision-making, and inclusive participation**, ensuring that the knowledge, experiences, and perspectives of both young and older women are valued.

It fosters safe, collaborative spaces where voices from different backgrounds and identities can contribute to feminist strategies and collective action, strengthening solidarity and sustainability within the movement.



# KEY PRINCIPLES OF INTERGENERATIONAL FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

## INCLUSIVITY AND CO-LEADERSHIP

**Embrace true inclusivity** by involving ethnic and religious minorities, male allies, LGBTQ+ and gender non-conforming people, and other historically marginalized groups in the design and implementation of all actions.

## YOUTH AGENCY AND SHARED POWER

**Recognize the expertise and agency of young people**, ensuring they share decision-making power equally with other leaders.



## **SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE SPACES**

**Create safe, accessible spaces for dialogue**, enabling diverse participation and story sharing, particularly for young women.

## **AVOID TOKENIZATION**

**Ensure young people are meaningfully included**, not tokenized, in leadership and decision-making processes.

## **INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION**

**Establish systematic links between formal and informal institutions** to support sustained collaboration and coordination between women and youth.



## KNOWLEDGE SHARING

**Share information and raise awareness about opportunities** for influencing decision-making, with a focus on young women's issues.

## MUTUAL RESPECT AND EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS

**Foster mutual respect and equitable partnerships** between women's and youth-led groups to ensure recognition, trust, and effective collaboration.

## READINGS



**Intergenerational  
Conversations**  
by Changing the Narrative



**Feminism is  
For Everybody**  
by Bell Hooks



**UNPACKING  
SEXUALITY**

**SEXUALITY** refers to your sexual feelings, thoughts, attractions, and behaviors toward others. It includes physical, sexual, mental, and emotional attractions, as well as preferences and desires.

It can take time to explore your sexuality, which is shaped by factors like friends, family, culture, and religion. Sexuality can be fluid and may change over time or in different situations.

Sexual orientation makes up a part of someone's sexuality, and sexuality is sometimes used interchangeably with sexual orientation. However, it covers more than just who a person is attracted to.

**REMEMBER,  
YOUR SEXUALITY  
IS UNIQUE TO YOU.**





# SEXUAL AND ROMANTIC ORIENTATION

**Romantic orientation** describes who you're romantically attracted to—who you want a relationship with—regardless of sexual attraction. **Sexual orientation** refers to who you're sexually attracted to and want to engage with sexually.

*Note: These terms can also describe romantic orientations by adding “-romantic” (e.g., heteroromantic, panromantic).*

## HETEROSEXUAL

Attraction to a **different gender.**

## HOMOSEXUAL

Attraction to the **same gender.**

## BISEXUAL

Attraction **to two or more** genders.

## PANSEXUAL

Attraction to **all genders.**



## BICURIOS

Curious about **multi-gender attraction**.

## QUESTIONING

**Exploring** one's sexuality or gender.

## ASEXUAL

Experiences **little or no** sexual attraction.

## DEMISEXUAL

Sexual attraction after forming a strong **emotional bond**.

## POLYAMOROUS

Open to consensually having **relationships with multiple people**.

## QUEER

Term for people with **diverse sexual orientations or gender identities**.



# GENDER AND SEX

The World Health Organization says sex is biological, while gender is socially constructed. **They note that people experience gender differently based on self-perception, expression, and behavior.**

## CISGENDER

Identifying with the **gender assigned at birth.**

## TRANSGENDER

Identifying with a **gender different from the one assigned at birth.**

## TRANSSEXUAL

A transgender person **who has undergone gender-affirming surgery.**

## NON-BINARY

Identifying **outside the male–female gender binary.**

## GENDERFLUID

Having a **gender identity that changes over time.**

## AGENDER

Not identifying with **any gender.**



## **BIGENDER**

Identifying as **two genders**.

## **POLYGENDER**

Identifying with multiple genders at once.

## **NEUTROIS**

Identifying as genderless or neither male nor female.

## **INTERGENDER**

Identifying somewhere between male and female.

## **DEMIGENDER**

Identifying partly with a specific gender and partly with another or none.

## **INTERSEX**

A biological sex variation where someone is born with physical traits that don't fit typical male or female definitions.



**UNDERSTANDING  
SELF-CARE AND  
COLLECTIVE CARE**

Feminist activists across the world continue to face shrinking spaces for resistance against oppressive systems of power.

**To remain resilient, many turn to self-care—intentional actions that nurture wellbeing and prevent burnout.**

Self-care allows activists to rest, reflect, and restore their strength, recognizing that caring for oneself is a necessary act of survival and resistance.

However, true sustainability comes from collective care. This approach expands self-care into a shared responsibility, acknowledging that our individual wellbeing is deeply connected to the wellbeing of our communities.

**WHEN WE CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER,  
WE BUILD NETWORKS OF SOLIDARITY  
THAT KEEP MOVEMENTS ALIVE,  
COMPASSIONATE, AND ENDURING.**





# PRACTICING SELF-CARE AND COLLECTIVE CARE

**SELF-CARE** involves more than personal comfort; it is a political act that **helps activists resist exhaustion, reclaim their energy, and continue their advocacy.**

By setting boundaries, practicing rest, and attending to emotional and physical needs, individuals strengthen their capacity to create change.

**COLLECTIVE CARE** turns wellbeing into a **shared responsibility**; supporting each other's safety, emotional health, and acts of resistance. How we show up may differ, but the goal stays the same: no one stands alone.

**Together, self-care and collective care form the backbone of feminist resilience and sustainable activism.**



# **TOOL TO STRENGTHEN WELLBEING PRACTICES**



## **WELLBEING PLANNING MAP**

This tool helps individuals and groups plan for wellbeing in any situation, from organizing events and engaging in critical conversations to navigating challenging or emotional moments.

**It encourages intentional reflection and preparation to ensure care and resilience before, during, and after activities.**



# HOW DOES IT WORK?

- 1** **Consider the situation** or event you're preparing for.
- 2** **Reflect** on what you might need to feel supported and grounded. Ask yourself:
  - What needs can I anticipate — heart, body, mind, or community?
  - What might be emotionally, physically, or mentally demanding about this situation?
- 3** **Map your support system** and identify who can help and how.
- 4** **Create an Action plan**, Outline simple, practical steps to meet each need before, during, and after.
- 5** **Reflect and adjust**, take time to check in with yourself and your community.

# THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE CARE

For those with marginalized identities, **discrimination creates daily harm** that individual care alone cannot heal.

**Collective care recognizes that systems are made of people—so social change requires shared responsibility.**

By offering help without waiting to be asked and fostering safe, inclusive spaces, we practice feminist values and sustain our movements for the long term.

## READINGS



**Love as the Practice  
of Freedom**  
by Bell Hooks



**Mental Health Strategies  
for Young Women During  
the Digital Age**  
by Utar Chadhav