

Gender equality

[Sociology](#), [Racism](#)



Equality, as we know it today, has been formed and molded into an idea that is still changing. Government officials, laws, and most influentially, people of the United States, have aided in the prevention of oppression towards women of all races and classes. The efforts of these individuals are counteracted with instances throughout history to prove that these men and women are not treated as if there were an equal condition. There are many instances of discrimination still present today, and one place it is most relevant is in the workplace. Not only are workers separated by gender in their place of work, but also, many women are being segregated inside their own group by race. Suzanne Pharr's book *Homophobia, A Weapon of Sexism* as well as Alice Kessler-Harris's article, *The Wage Conceived* are prominent writings that prove this abundance of discrimination is still plaguing workplaces nationwide. The points of Pharr and Kessler-Harris are valued to question if women will ever escape the indecency of this injustice. Pharr believes that there are two main problems occurring that lead to women's internalized sexism. Commodification, the use of women's bodies and/or labor as a product to be sold or traded, is just the beginning. Throughout history, the female body has been seen as a product of this culture. Isolation, causing a woman's attachment to a man, also leads to a woman feeling inferior. These two points, as stated by Pharr, are oppressive forces which lead to women feeling subordinate and looking to men for power, also known as internalized sexism. Women's low self esteem is only furthered by their mistreatment in the workplace. Pharr's pyramidal graph demonstrates that white males are placed on the top of the pyramid, with white women following below, and then furthered by men of color and finally women of

color. This model of patriarchy is exemplified in the workplace, providing women with lower wages, worse working conditions, and more degrading jobs. Kessler-Harris looks to the "family wage" that society has created and points to its importance in the workplace. The most responsibility and obligation is placed on the father or husband only thwarting women's internalized oppression even further. This point can be used in conjunction with Pharr's patriarchal pyramid. Kessler-Harris and Pharr prove that this discrimination towards women in the workplace is only the beginning of many inequalities occurring inside the social category of women. While feminists and other activists have fought for equal rights, their motive is still taking place inside the work place only under different conditions. Not only have women felt subordinate to men, but also now there is an apparent division between the races of these women. Beverly Jones's article Black Female Tobacco Workers in Durham, N. C. is a relevant example to the numerous obstacles minority women have faced from this problem of equal rights. During the years from 1920 to 1940, the large tobacco companies opening in Durham, North Carolina posed many opportunities for guaranteed work for many to flee lower living conditions. Once these women arrived, they were only forced to face the harsh realities of inequality. These women of color were not only forced to work alone, isolated from other women, but they were also faced with the most taxing "dirty jobs" (FF 268). Black women were noticing this obvious mistreatment and the inequality between themselves and the working white women. White women's jobs were less risky and they were threatened with less health problems impeding the blending of the races of women. Tuberculosis and other impediments began

to cause more problems when it came to sufficing the "family wage." "The duality of their lives- workers of production and nurturers of the family- could be assessed as a form of double jeopardy" (FF 271). These black women were forced to work in such unbearable conditions already feeling inferior, suffering from the consequences of discrimination, and then were faced to provide a part of income for their families in the struggle for survival. This "double jeopardy" only adds to their internalized oppression and causes them to feel even more inferior inside and outside the home. According to Pharr's arguments, minority women are culturally expected to hold the low-end jobs of the economy, but society should not be this way. From the video "If Women Counted," Marilyn Waring states that the economy is a tool of people with power and allows for justifications for certain decisions. All in all, the economy and all of its players, corporations, lawmakers, and the government, is very subjective. What goes on inside these corporate giants is left to their discretion. Many of the workers, lower class, minority females are forced to deal with the repercussions of this economic system which is based on inequality. Women of color are left to rely on these demeaning jobs. Pharr and Kessler-Harris teach valid arguments about discrimination towards the female gender and the further discrimination of racial factors of females. These women of minorities are left with nothing but themselves and the pride in what work they can show. Providing to the "family wage," supporting a family in the household by doing daily chores, and battling with their own self-esteem and just the beginning of what these women deal with on a daily basis. Feminists have tried to focus on the equality of gender.

Now, it is evident that race amongst the gender issues needs a glimpse, and all people should find that this area of inequality is only waiting to explode.