

SEXISM

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“Sexism feels like this big heavy weight that is everywhere . . . Sometimes, I don’t even notice and then, when I see it, it’s like another little bit of weight sitting on me that I didn’t even know that I had. . .” – 28-year-old South Asian woman conversation group participant

The COVID-19 pandemic has put women at the center of the most unequal recession in modern American history.² In addition, women of color are more likely to work in frontline service jobs that lack the ability to work from home, which has put them at increased risk of COVID-19, and in turn are more likely to lack paid sick leave when they do contract the virus.³ Yet the unique experiences of women with intersecting forms of marginalization have often been invisible throughout this pandemic.

For this report, we have chosen to apply an intersectionality lens to sexism as a form of structural bigotry to better illuminate the role of interlocking systems of oppression on the lives of women and girls. We highlight the various manifestations of sexism, including institutional, cultural, and individual forms of sexism. We describe the interaction between these levels of sexism to highlight the systemic nature of sexism and patriarchy in society. We focus on the impact of sexism on the lives of women and girls in the areas of employment, housing, education, healthcare and reproductive justice, family integrity, and police violence. Finally, we share solutions to dismantle sexism, patriarchy, and interlocking systems of oppression for the liberation of all women, girls, transgender, and gender expansive individuals in society.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a term coined by critical legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in her critique of antidiscrimination law, which often excluded Black women’s experiences at the intersection of racial and gender discrimination. Crenshaw asserted that Black women typically “experience discrimination as Black women—not the sum of race or sex discrimination, but as Black women.”⁴

Intersectionality situates the marginalization of women within a historical context of patriarchy, white supremacy, and class exploitation.⁵ For example, one 29-year-old Black participant mentioned their

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²Claire Ewing-Nelson, “All of the Jobs Lost in December Were Women’s Jobs,” *National Women’s Law Center*, January 2021, <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/December-Jobs-Day.pdf>.

³Whitney N. Laster Pirtle and Tashelle Wright, “Structural Gendered Racism Revealed in Pandemic Times: Intersectional Approaches to Understanding Race and Gender Health Inequities in COVID-19,” *Gender & Society* 35, no. 2 (March 2021): 168-179, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08912432211001302>.

⁴Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989): 149.

⁵Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 75-77, 95-96.

grandmother's experience at the intersection of multiple forms of marginalization and shared that it was impossible to separate the discrimination she faced based on gender from discrimination based on race, immigrant status, and as a domestic worker. In addition, a 57-year-old Black participant stated, "My experiences with sexism cannot be parceled out from being a Black woman." Intersectionality highlights the limitations of framing gender inequality as *only* sexism since this erases the intersectional effects of discrimination experienced by women of color and other marginalized women.⁶ An intersectionality lens illuminates interlocking systems of power and social inequality that negatively impact the lives of women and girls. Thus, applying intersectionality to a historical, legal, sociological, and psychological understanding of structural bigotry provides a nuanced framework to elucidate the impact of sexism on employment, housing, education, healthcare and reproductive rights, family integrity, and police violence against women and girls.

Manifestations of Sexism

Drawing on interdisciplinary scholarship, sexism manifests in all aspects of everyday life, from structural/institutional-level sexism to individual-level sexism. Throughout history, laws excluded women from an equal share of resources and power. For example, in the United States, women were not allowed to vote until the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920. As a result, patriarchal policies, practices, and structures have granted men power over women. In addition, historical and contemporary systematic practices have created a hierarchical society in which men have unearned privileges and women experience disadvantage.

Structural sexism has been defined as "systematic gender inequality at the macro level (U.S. state), meso level (marital dyad), and micro level (individual)."⁷ In addition, according to psychology scholar Jioni Lewis, sexism includes two interlocking components: (a) a structural mechanism of domination; and (b) a corresponding ideological belief that justifies the oppression of women based on their gender.⁸ This definition provides a framework to highlight the interlocking nature between the structure of sexism and the ideology of patriarchy. Moreover, Lewis described three manifestations of sexism: institutional, cultural, and individual (interpersonal and internalized).

Institutional sexism includes policies, practices, and norms that perpetuate inequality by restricting opportunities for women. For example, in the last several years, there have been several anti-abortion bills passed in various states that would severely limit access to reproductive healthcare, autonomy, self-determination, and economic security.⁹ Several participants identified attacks on reproductive healthcare as a form of systemic sexism, though the two concepts are often viewed legally and socially as distinct. In addition, the lack of legal protections for domestic workers or the sentencing disparity for sexual assault and rape represent institutional sexism.

⁶Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing."

⁷Patricia Homan, "Structural Sexism and Health in the United States: A New Perspective on Health Inequality and the Gender System," *American Sociological Review* 84, no. 3 (2019): 486, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122419848723>.

⁸Jioni A. Lewis, "From Modern Sexism to Gender Microaggressions: Understanding Contemporary Forms of Sexism and Their Influence on Diverse Women," in *APA handbook of the psychology of women: History, theory, and battlegrounds*, eds. Jacquelyn W. White et al. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2018): 382, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000059-019>.

⁹Jessica Arons, "Beyond the Bans: State Attacks on Abortion in 2021," *American Civil Liberties Union*, March 12, 2021, <https://www.aclu.org/news/reproductive-freedom/beyond-the-bans-state-attacks-on-abortion-in-2021/>.

Cultural sexism includes symbols and practices that are used to reinforce the notion that women are inferior to men. In addition, the societal messages, images, and media messages that assume women are naturally better caretakers, cooks, or house cleaners, represent cultural forms of sexism. For example, as one participant noted, the notion that feminism is “cute” and not to be taken seriously is a particularly ironic form of cultural sexism.

Individual sexism is the manifestation of institutional and cultural sexism in individual biases and prejudicial attitudes that denigrate women and view them as inferior to men in society.¹⁰ For example, the belief that only men could be competent CEOs of a large corporation or President of the United States. In addition to such overt sexist attitudes and biases, individual sexism can also include benevolent sexism, which includes stereotyping women as naturally suited for domestic work and caretaking or as needing protection.¹¹ It is also possible for women to internalize these sexist beliefs and prefer men as bosses or assume women are less competent as bosses. For example, a 47-year-old white woman participant described *internalized sexism* by discussing “how amazingly good the patriarchy is at maintaining itself and the internalized misogyny that women take on.” Interpersonal sexism includes communicating one’s biases or prejudicial attitudes (verbally or nonverbally) to a woman in an interpersonal interaction. This has also been described as everyday sexism (i.e., incidents that occur in daily life that represent interpersonal forms of discrimination)¹² or gender microaggressions (i.e., sexist slights and insults directed towards women).¹³

Taken together, much of the interdisciplinary research on sexism highlights the ways that sexism operates at multiple levels within society. Thus, it is important to better understand the systemic nature of sexism and patriarchy. Despite U.S. laws that make discrimination based on sex illegal, sexism is still structurally embedded within our institutions, organizations, policies, and practices.

Institutional Policies that Perpetuate Sexism

The late Ruth Bader Ginsburg is credited with dismantling laws that expressly required discrimination against women (and men), such as the rule that widows (but not widowers) could receive Social Security survivor benefits after the death of a spouse, during the 1970s. In the process, she also generated a new norm of constitutional review for sex-based laws, a heightened level of judicial scrutiny more demanding than applied to nearly all laws save those that discriminate based on race and few other characteristics. And, today, federal civil rights laws expressly bar sex discrimination at work, at school, and in housing, credit, and other public contexts.

¹⁰Lewis, “Modern Sexism to Gender Microaggressions,” 382.

¹¹Peter Glick and Susan T. Fiske, “An ambivalent alliance: Hostile and benevolent sexism as complementary justifications for gender inequality,” *American Psychologist* 56, no. 2 (2001): 109-118, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.2.109>.

¹²Janet K. Swim et al., “Everyday Sexism: Evidence for Its Incidence, Nature, and Psychological Impact From Three Daily Diary Studies,” *Journal of Social Issues* 57, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 31-32, <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00200>.

¹³Derald Wing Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation*, (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2010).

Despite these advances in formal equality, laws continue to perpetuate sexism, explicitly and otherwise. A few examples follow; they are not exhaustive but intended to counter the narrative that gender-based discrimination and violence *only* operates at the individual level and thus can only be addressed via individual responses, not institutional ones. Laws that expressly discriminate remain, particularly ones that target Black women or other women subjected to discrimination based on intersecting axes. They include exclusions from civil rights laws themselves. In 1935, for example, Congress passed the National Labor Relations Act, which protects the freedom to organize. But not everyone is included in the Act's definition of "employees." Rather, Congress expressly excluded workers in "domestic service" (historically enslaved Black women and, later, their descendants) as well as agricultural laborers (historically enslaved Black men and, later, sharecroppers). When many women, particularly Black women, remain subject to de jure exclusions from job protections that others take for granted as the baseline of American work, such exclusions can operate as vestiges of slavery and carry deep meaning. In today's economy, gig workers, franchise workers,¹⁴ home health care workers, servers, and other groups too often remain excluded from basic workplace protections. While equal footing under law won't liberate us from patriarchy, *the lack of formal equality* perpetuates sexism, misogynoir, and patriarchy.

Other institutional policies are often dismissed as trivial: daily distinctions by sex for honorifics (e.g., Mrs.) and school dress codes, two examples common in the workplace and schools. Indeed, they are so common that they don't register as sex classifications at all. For example, as a white woman participant put it, sexism is "invisible" and the idea that we are beyond sexism is pervasive. Yet these silent norms operate as part of "everything we do, every way we breathe, all systems that we're a part of..." to the detriment of women and girls (and people of any gender). For example, the requirement in some places that girls wear skirts to attend school¹⁵ serves as a constant form of "stereotype threat"—reminding girls that they are girls, that their sex matters to how they learn, and reminding boys and adults to treat them as girls. And these reminders have particularly severe consequences for Black girls and other girls of color, who are disproportionately punished for transgressing norms about how girls are expected to look and behave.

Civil institutional norms perpetuate conditions where gender-based violence can flourish and entrench stereotypes about women's experience and credibility. In the workplace, for example, the so-called "tipped" minimum wage requires women servers to "smile and act pretty" to bring a substandard wage up to the bare minimum other workers can be paid; workers who are paid a substandard wage experience greater sexual harassment,¹⁶ often racialized sexual harassment, on the job.

¹⁴Gillian Thomas and Ria Tabacco Mar, "McDonald's Can't Dodge Responsibility for Sexual Harassment at its Restaurants," *Fortune*, August 16, 2021, <https://fortune.com/2021/08/16/mcdonalds-sexual-harassment-lawsuit-aclu-womens-rights-project-gillian-thomas-ria-tabacco-mar/>.

¹⁵Galen Sherwin, "Dress Codes Forcing Girls to Wear Skirts Are Up for Debate at Appeals Court," *Teen Vogue*, March 11, 2021, <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/dress-codes-girls-forced-wear-skirts>.

¹⁶A. Elaine Lewis, "Who Is at Highest Risk of Sexual Harassment?," *American Civil Liberties Union*, last modified January 18, 2018, <https://www.aclu.org/blog/womens-rights/womens-rights-workplace/who-highest-risk-sexual-harassment>.

Entrenched resistance to formal equality is another indication of patriarchy's deep roots. Today, there is no federal constitutional provision expressly barring sex discrimination. And, while the ERA has been ratified by the requisite 3/4 of the states, some states have purported to rescind their ratifications—a step no state has taken with respect to any proposed constitutional amendment other than those that would advance equality for women (ERA) and formerly enslaved Black people (Reconstruction amendments).

Impact of Sexism on the Lives of Women

Employment

The gender wage gap is one of the most tangible reflections of systemic sexism against women. In 2020, women earned 82 cents for every man's dollar; the gap widens for marginalized subgroups of women, including Black women (63 cents), Indigenous women (60 cents), Latina women (55 cents) and transgender women (60 cents). The gap persists even when women are engaged in the same occupation as men.¹⁷ For example, one participant, a Black woman college professor, recalled learning that she was paid 30% less than a comparable man at the same academic institution. Others echoed finding out that they were “grossly underpaid” after learning what men in equivalent roles were paid.

Professions engaged in caregiving and other forms of paid labor traditionally performed by women, such as teaching, are systemically underpaid compared to other forms of work requiring a similar degree of education and skill. Gender-based harassment and assault are used as a tool to exclude women from well-compensated jobs—such as firefighting, historically performed by men—and to keep women doing “women's work.” What is more, many forms of “women's work”—particularly work historically performed by enslaved Black women—remain excluded from overtime, minimum wage, and other pay protections. Women may also be pushed out of the paid workforce altogether by the lack of childcare, particularly affordable childcare; pregnancy and lactation discrimination; sexual harassment and assault; and other forms of sex-based discrimination. Finally, many forms of caregiving remain entirely uncompensated based on the expectation that, as one participant put it, “women should be caregivers and it should be unpaid labor.” In other words, women should do it for free.

Housing

Poor women, particularly poor women who exist at the margins (e.g., women of color, women with disabilities, immigrant women), need safe and stable housing to survive and, indeed, to thrive. Yet half a century after Congress passed the Fair Housing Act, numerous barriers remain, including entrenched residential segregation; redlining and reverse redlining (predatory lending and targeting for abusive financial products); tens of thousands of reports of housing discrimination each year; rampant sexual

¹⁷“The Wage Gap,” *National Women's Law Center*; Aryn Fields, “Human Rights Campaign Foundation Releases New Data on the LGBTQ+ Wage Gap,” Human Rights Campaign, last modified January 19, 2022, <https://www.hrc.org/press-releases/human-rights-campaign-foundation-releases-new-data-on-the-lgbtq-wage-gap>.

harassment by housing providers;¹⁸ so-called “crime-free housing” that excludes women who call 911;¹⁹ to name just a few. Regulatory tools to enable the federal government to affirmatively further housing opportunity has been eroded. The COVID-19 pandemic helped many to see evictions and our nation’s housing crisis as a systemic problem rather than an individual one, yet renters who have been evicted—disproportionately Black women—can be locked out²⁰ of subsequent housing opportunities. This can subject families to cascading negative effects including disrupted schooling, lost job opportunities, and transportation challenges that can continue for years if not decades.

Education

All women and girls deserve to attend schools that provide a safe environment that is conducive to learning and prepares them for college and their future careers. However, there are several gender inequities within the educational system, including gender-based stereotypes that steer girls away from certain majors and future career paths (e.g., STEM careers), sexism and differential treatment from teachers in schools, sexual harassment and assault, differential access to quality education, differential access to athletics, and issues with single-sex education.²¹ Experiences of sexism, gender discrimination, gender microaggressions, and sexual harassment are commonplace for girls in the K-12 education system as well as women within higher education. For example, about 50% of students in grades seven through twelve are sexually harassed in any given school year, and more than one in five girls ages fourteen through eighteen have been kissed or touched without their consent; within higher education, more than 60% of college students experience sexual harassment, including one in four women and one in four transgender or gender nonbinary students.²² Sexual harassment and assault are severely underreported, and even incidents that are reported historically have been subject to legal standards that allow schools to ignore some reports or to treat sex-based harassment and assault less seriously than other forms of discrimination.

There is also a “leaky pipeline” for girls who are marginalized in multiple ways. Research indicates that some girls are especially at risk of being pushed out of the educational system, including girls of color, pregnant and parenting teens, poor and working-class girls, and girls with disabilities. For example, studies have shown that Black and Latina girls are often over-disciplined in schools, such as receiving harsher punishments for the same infractions compared to their white female peers.²³

¹⁸Linda Morris and Sandra Park, “Safe at Home: Fighting Against Sexual Harassment in Housing,” *American Civil Liberties Union*, last modified October 1, 2020, <https://www.aclu.org/news/womens-rights/safe-at-home-fighting-against-sexual-harassment-in-housing>.

¹⁹Sandra Park and Linda Morris, “Dialing 911 Can Get You Evicted,” *American Civil Liberties Union*, last modified September 22, 2020, <https://www.aclu.org/blog/womens-rights/violence-against-women/dialing-911-can-get-you-evicted>.

²⁰Sophie Beiers, Sandra Park, and Linda Morris, “Clearing the Record: How Eviction Sealing Laws Can Advance Housing Access for Women of Color,” *American Civil Liberties Union*, last modified January 10, 2020, <https://www.aclu.org/news/racial-justice/clearing-the-record-how-eviction-sealing-laws-can-advance-housing-access-for-women-of-color>.

²¹“100 School Districts: A Call to Action for School Districts Across the Country to Address Sexual Harassment Through Inclusive Policies and Practices,” *National Women’s Law Center*, last modified April 2021, <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/100SD-report-5.3.21-vF.pdf>.

²²“100 School Districts,” *National Women’s Law Center*.

²³Jamilia J. Blake et al., “The Role of Colorism in Explaining African American Females’ Suspension Risk,” *School Psychology Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (September 2017): 119, 123-25, <https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000173>; Cecile A. Gadson and Jioni A. Lewis, “Devalued, Overdisciplined, and Stereotyped: An Exploration of Gendered Racial Microaggressions Among Black Adolescent Girls,” *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 69, no. 1 (2022): 14-16, <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000571>; Monique W. Morris, *PUSHOUT: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools* (New York: The New Press, 2016).

Health Care and Reproductive Justice

There are several key issues related to gender equity in health care, health systems, and health outcomes for women. Women have experienced longstanding discrimination in health care with insurance companies charging more for women's health services or denying coverage altogether. Women also experience sexism and discrimination by physicians. For example, studies have found that physicians often minimize women's concerns, don't always provide the most effective medical treatment, and even provide lower Medicaid reimbursement for female-specific procedures.²⁴ We also know there is a long-standing history of forced sterilization of women, particularly women of color and women with disabilities.²⁵ Although women, on average, have a longer life expectancy than men, women experience more chronic illness and disability compared to men.²⁶

There is a large body of research on the impact of sexism on the health and well-being of women. Research has found that experiencing gender discrimination is associated with a range of negative health outcomes among women including: depression, anxiety, chronic stress, gastrointestinal symptoms, headaches, and poorer self-reported physical health.²⁷ Women of color also experience intersectional discrimination (i.e., gendered racism) that has a negative impact on health including depression, anxiety, traumatic stress, self-reported physical health, and poorer reproductive health.²⁸

The fight for reproductive justice is a critically important health equity issue in the current sociopolitical moment. In the last decade, states have enacted more restrictions on abortion rights than in the previous decade.²⁹ The right for women to have bodily autonomy and make their own health decisions is essential to gender equity. These laws are a direct attack on women and all birthing people, but they have a disproportionate negative effect on women of color, poor women, trans and nonbinary people, women with disabilities, and adolescent girls and young adult women who all face greater barriers to accessing reproductive health care. Another key issue is maternal mortality and morbidity. For example, Black women are three times more likely to experience life-threatening pregnancy complications and nearly four times more likely to experience preventable pregnancy related deaths.³⁰ We also see comparable gendered racial health inequities for Latinx and Indigenous women. Women of color also experience

²⁴Homan, "Structural Sexism and Health," 487-88.

²⁵"Forced Sterilization of Disabled People in the United States," *National Women's Law Center* (2021): 8, https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/%C6%92.NWLC_SterilizationReport_2021.pdf.

²⁶"Chronic Debilitating Conditions in Women," *Office of Research on Women's Health, Women's Health in Focus* 4, no. 4 (2021): 3, https://orwh.od.nih.gov/sites/orwh/files/docs/ORWH_Fall2021Newsletter508.pdf.

²⁷Homan, "Structural Sexism and Health," 487-88; Swim, "Everyday Sexism," 31-32; Elizabeth A. Klonoff and Hope Landrine, "The Schedule of Sexist Events: A measure of Lifetime and Recent Sexist Discrimination in Women's Lives," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (1995): 439-472, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1995.tb00086.x>.

²⁸Jioni A. Lewis et al., "Applying Intersectionality to Explore the Relations Between Gendered Racism and Health Among Black Women," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 64, no. 5 (2017): 481-83, <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000231>; Pirtle and Wright, "Structural Gendered Racism," 168-79.

²⁹Arons, "Beyond the Bans: State Attacks on Abortion in 2021."

³⁰Andreea A. Creanga et al. "Pregnancy-Related Mortality in the United States, 2011-2013," *Obstetrics & Gynecology* 130, no. 2 (August 2017): 366-373, doi: 10.1097/AOG.0000000000002114.

intersectional oppression (i.e., gendered racism or racialized sexism), which leads to chronic stress, and this in turn leads to increased risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, certain types of cancer, and poorer maternal health outcomes.³¹

Family Integrity and the New Jane Crow

America has a long and painful legacy of government practices that separated Indigenous and Black families, a legacy that lives on in today's child welfare systems. Our country's growing awareness of the myriad ways in which police and other criminal legal systems disproportionately surveil Black and brown men must be matched by an understanding of how child welfare systems disproportionately monitor and punish women,³² especially Black, Indigenous, and low-income women. It is no surprise that poor women, who are often subject to state monitoring via public benefits laws and the criminal legal system, are disproportionately placed into child welfare systems. As one participant raised by a single mother recalled from their childhood, so-called government "security nets" can lead to invasive state involvement, including the "child welfare system," in families like theirs. Once identified for family regulation, mothers of color fare worse than their white counterparts, leading to years of additional monitoring, surveillance, and, in some cases, family separation.

Police Violence

Nationwide protests against police brutality defined the summer of 2020 alongside the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet the impact of police violence on women largely centered on women and girls in relation to men, such as George Floyd's daughter or Eric Garner's mother. Left out of the conversation was police violence directly against women, particularly Black and Indigenous women. The shooting death of Breonna Taylor in the spring of 2020 galvanized some, but never gained a degree of traction comparable to killings of Black men. What is more, the national conversation around reimagining policing largely left out the specific ways that police violence impacts women, often by sexual assault. In the courts, remedies for sexual assault by law enforcement officers are often sharply limited,³³ even as compared to already meager avenues for relief afforded other survivors or victims of police violence.

Solutions to Dismantle Sexism

Dismantling Sexist Laws and Establishing Equitable Laws

Planning a path toward recovery requires a frank assessment of why women's status and wellbeing remains so precarious today and offers new opportunities to reimagine solutions. In other words, the picture of structural sexism may look grim, but it reveals some of the many steps we can— and must— take to dismantle barriers to gender equity and liberation.

³¹Donna L. Hoyert, "Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2019," *National Center for Health Statistics*, April 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/maternal-mortality-2021/E-Stat-Maternal-Mortality-Rates-H.pdf>.

³²Anjana Samant et al., "Family Surveillance by Algorithm: The Rapidly Spreading Tools Few Have Heard Of," *American Civil Liberties Union*, September 29, 2021, <https://www.aclu.org/news/womens-rights/family-surveillance-by-algorithm-the-rapidly-spreading-tools-few-have-heard-of>.

³³Angeline Cheek and Lucy Simpson, "We Need Accountability for Those Who Commit Violence Against Native Women," *American Civil Liberties Union*, October 18, 2021, <https://www.aclu.org/news/racial-justice/we-need-accountability-for-those-who-commit-violence-against-native-women>.

We recognize that legal equality alone will not lead to women's liberation, but that does not mean that we can ignore the work. To the contrary, as noted above, the lack of equality under law works its own harm, entrenching sexism and gender stereotypes. It is here that we may begin, grounded in an intersectional vision of gender justice and incorporating voices from fellow civil rights.

First, we must dismantle laws and practices that continue to discriminate against women. Here are just a few of the many issues that should be on our anti-sexism to-do list:

- End the exclusion from organizing, overtime, and other protections for workers in “domestic service;”
- Make existing laws against discrimination a reality for all workers, including workers subject to unfair labor practices by franchises, contractors, and others; and
- Withdraw double standards that subject reports of sexual harassment and assault to less robust or nonexistent responses.

Next, we must establish laws and policies that prohibit discrimination in the myriad contexts and forms women experience it, including by:

- Updating Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit sex discrimination in public places like restaurants, stores, and hotels;
- Adopting affirmative protections for pregnant and lactating workers who need temporary job modifications so that no one has to choose between a healthy pregnancy and a paycheck;
- Widening protections against harassment, including sexual harassment, to make the promise of the #MeToo movement a reality; and
- Reinstate robust protections for people including women, people of color, and other marginalized groups who have historically faced barriers to housing, and require affirmative steps to dismantle residential segregation that locks out women and children from communities of opportunity.

Finally, we must accept that structural problems limiting women's freedom and equity call for structural solutions increasing freedom and equity for all, such as:

- Provide regular, consistent support to families with young children, such as via a child allowance or by providing universal child care;
- Broader health care access for all and ensure that everyone has the dignity to make decisions about our own reproductive lives through making abortion care accessible and affordable for all by ending restrictions on Medicaid funding for abortion, enacting a federal bulwark against state bans on reproductive healthcare, and protecting maternal health, particularly for Black and Indigenous women.³⁴
- Ensure greater access to safe, affordable, and stable housing.

³⁴Georganne M. Usova, “President-Elect Biden's Reproductive Freedom To-Do List,” *American Civil Liberties Union*, November 12, 2020, <https://www.aclu.org/news/reproductive-freedom/president-elect-bidens-reproductive-freedom-to-do-list>.

Changing Sexist Attitudes, Behaviors, and Practices

Given that sexism operates at multiple levels in society, in addition to dismantling sexist laws and policies, we must also dismantle sexism at the individual and interpersonal level to ensure gender equity. Here are a few examples of ways to change sexist attitudes, behaviors, and practices:

- Raise all children to believe in gender equality by teaching positive and strengths-based gender role socialization and gender identity development;
- Engage in consciousness-raising groups to develop critical consciousness and sociopolitical development;³⁵
- Deconstruct gender stereotypes to reduce stereotype threat;
- Increase awareness about gender bias and bystander intervention;
- Provide sexual assault, harassment, and sexual coercion training in schools and workplaces;
- Transform health care systems to uproot medical sexism and gender inequities in healthcare.
- Implement organizational-level changes in healthcare, education, housing, employment, etc., to eliminate gender biases in policies, procedures, and practices, particularly those that have a disproportionately negative impact on women of color, women with disabilities, transgender women, and other marginalized groups; and
- Support education, training, and empowerment on sexism, gender equity, and liberation.

Resistance, Healing, Justice, and Liberation

“If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all systems of oppression. – Combahee River Collective³⁶

Many of our feminist foremothers exhibited tremendous strength and resistance to fight white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy.³⁷ Activism is essential to move us towards liberation. Engaging in resistance also requires us to create space for both individual and collective healing. Drawing on the work of liberation scholars, radical healing allows us to exist in the space between fighting interlocking systems of oppression and envisioning future possibilities for wellness, freedom, and dignity.³⁸ In addition, cultivating radical healing requires radical hope, which includes envisioning a world where

³⁵Roderick J. Watts, Matthew A. Diemer, and Adam M. Voight, “Critical consciousness: Current status and future directions,” *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 2011, no. 134 (Winter 2011): 43-57, <https://doi.org/10.1002/cd.310>.

³⁶Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*, (Chicago Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2017), 23.

³⁷bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman* (New York City: Routledge, 2014).

³⁸Bryana H. French et al., “Toward a Psychological Framework of Radical Healing in Communities of Color,” *The Counseling Psychologist* 48, no. 1 (January 2020): 14-46, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000019843506>; Shawn A. Ginwright, *Black Youth Rising: Activism and Radical Healing in Urban America* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010).

all women, including the most marginalized, such as Black transgender women, are able to thrive.³⁹ Many participants shared that the only way to envision a world without sexism is to dismantle all systems of oppression. Others highlighted the fact that true rest and healing will become possible only with liberation. As one participant said, “women, girls, transgender, and nonbinary people deserve rest too.” We must understand that the current conditions of structural sexism can change and reimagine new possibilities for justice and liberation in the future.

³⁹Jioni A. Lewis et al., “#SayHerName: Radical healing for Black women and gender expansive folx,” *Psychology Today*, May 16, 2020, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/healing-through-social-justice/202005/sayhername>; Jioni A. Lewis, “#SayHerName: The Impact of Gendered Racism and Misogynoir on the Lives of Black Women,” in *Making Black Lives Matter: Confronting Anti-Black Racism*, ed. Kevin O. Cokley, (San Diego: Cognella Academic Publishing, 2021).