

Pace University

DigitalCommons@Pace

Student Zines

Dyson College of Arts & Sciences

5-2022

Black- Dalit Feminist Vision

Sydonie Bell

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.pace.edu/student_zines



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Bell, Sydonie, "Black- Dalit Feminist Vision" (2022). *Student Zines*. 2.
https://digitalcommons.pace.edu/student_zines/2

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Dyson College of Arts & Sciences at DigitalCommons@Pace. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Zines by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Pace. For more information, please contact nmcguire@pace.edu.



Black-Dalit Feminist Vision

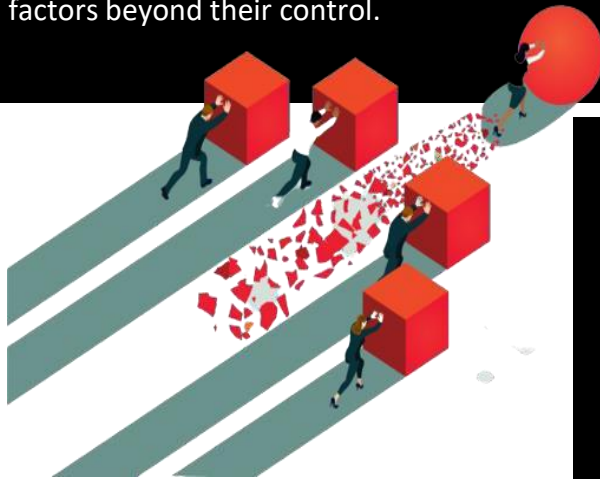
By: Sydonie Bell



How can Black-Dalit Feminist Solidarity Create Social Justice and Transformation?

INTRODUCTION

My name is Sydonie Bell, a Black Caribbean female. A dream of mine has always been to attend school in the United States and it is exciting that this is becoming a reality. However, in accomplishing this dream, comments often offered is that my efforts must be ten times greater than the average person. This has been simply because of my race, gender or the fact that I am not a US citizen. Therefore, in my personal experiences daily, intersectionality in race, gender and nationality can be explored. As such, although not previously thought of, I am able to visualize the connections between race and caste. This is as within both groups; individuals are limited by predetermining factors beyond their control.



ABOUT

This zine will typically focus on the intersections that exist between Black and Dalit feminism. It will take a trauma-informed lens to understand how transformation may occur in these spheres to get justice for those affected.

MESSAGE

Hopefully, through viewing this zine, readers may be able to:

- a) Understand the connection between race and caste
- b) Express knowledge of the relationship between Dalit liberation and Black Lives Matter
- c) Provide examples of Black-Dalit feminist solidarity

Race and Caste



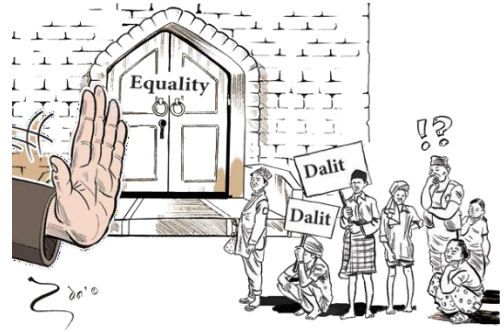
Both race and caste have been known to historically divide society. Race may be defined as a category of people who share certain inherited physical characteristics, such as skin color, facial features, and stature (*10.2 The Meaning of Race and Ethnicity*, 2016). Caste, on the other hand, refers to a hereditary system of social and economic segregation (*What is Caste?*, n.d.).

Through the definitions, a difference is already presented between the two as race seemingly deals with appearance whilst caste deals with one's position in society. In the United States, the caste status and inequalities have been extended into the society beyond South Asian communities. An Equity Labs survey conducted in 2016 revealed that 1 in 2 Dalit respondents live in fear of being revealed as part of that caste. Similarly, a survey of US adults of "Race in America 2019" reveals that 56% of respondents view being Black as a disadvantage. Therefore, it is evident that people struggle with accepting being a part of a race or caste-based system.

Dalit Liberation Movement vs Black Lives Matter

DALIT LIBERATION MOVEMENT

The Dalit Liberation Movement typically began in the 1920s through anti-caste movements. The term Dalit means 'oppressed', 'broken' or 'crushed' to the extent of losing original identity (*Dalits*, n.d.). They are referred to as losing their identity as they are often not recognizable as respectable members of society. As such, are otherwise referred to as "untouchables." Therefore, the movement symbolizes a need for change and removal of an oppressive caste system.



BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT

According to the Black Lives Matter website, the movement was "Founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's ¹murderer." The movement aims to eradicate white supremacy and violence directed towards Black communities. This is as Black individuals are often negatively viewed and as such, the movement aims to allow for them to exist freely and comfortably in society.

SIMILARITIES

- In both Black and Dalit movements, individuals of these groups are viewed as the "lowest" in society. A substantial portion of these groups suffer from poverty as they are often denied access to education and healthcare.
- Women of these groups are subject to lots of violence both sexually and physically.
- There is little support granted to these groups.

DIFFERENCES

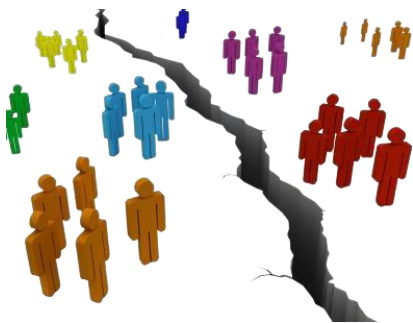
- The Black movement focuses on a division of society based on race (Black vs White) whilst the Dalit movement focuses on separation through status (Dalit vs Brahmin).
- The caste system of oppression is more specific to South Asian societies whilst racial oppression has a wider scope and is evident in multiple societies.

¹ A black, unarmed 17-year-old who was shot going to a convenience store by a White Hispanic man, George Zimmerman

Coalition between Black Lives Matter and Dalit Liberation



Black and Dalit groups are both marginalized groups in society. As such, they can both be seen to have little support and resources as they are often suppressed by groups who view themselves as superior. Therefore, to increase their reach and impact, both groups can collaborate and combine their available resources. This is as it is evident that both groups essentially want the same thing, that is, equality. For example, social media is a very popular and effective modality of activism, therefore circulating hashtags like **#BlackDalitequality** will help to spread awareness of the shared experiences of both groups.



Coalition is evident where there is connection between the movements. This is seen whereby activities in one group influences another to advance change. For example, the Dalit Panthers² is a movement which has been influenced by the

Black Panther Party³ in the 1970's. It was organized against the social classification system, thus enabling social justice.



Shared experiences of both groups help to build coalitions as understanding the root of the issues, along with shared perpetrators that keeps them oppressed will allow them to develop collaborative strategies. An example of this can be seen in The World Conference Against Racism in Durban in 2001 where Black, Palestinian and Dalit individuals were able to meet with governments to corroborate the process of the oppression experienced in these groups. This introduces a trauma informed scope as it considers those being affected to solve the issue collectively.

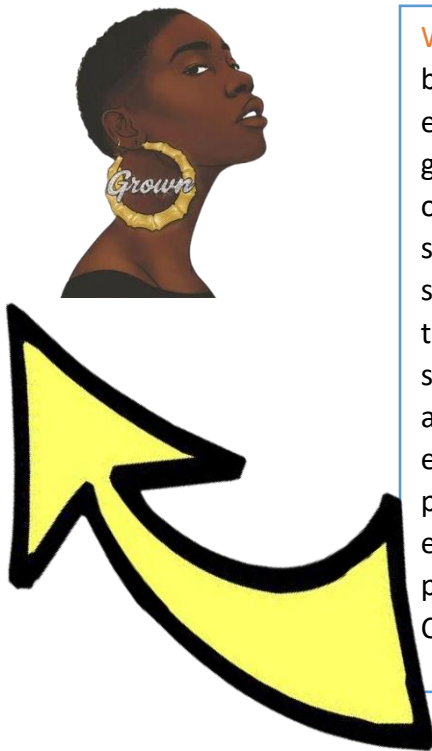
² Social organization created in 1972 to combat caste discrimination formed in Mumbai

³ Black power organization founded in 1966

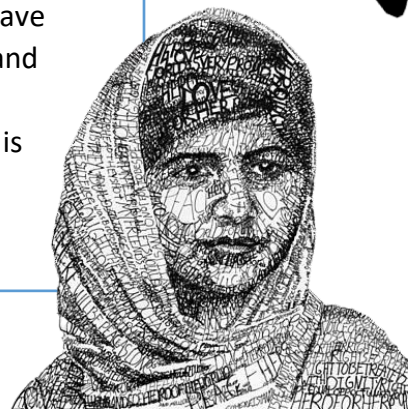
Trauma-Informed considerations for Black and Dalit groups

A trauma informed approach to improvement in a race or caste society may be seen to explore the idea of racism or casteism being deeply entrenched in the minds of people. Given this, it is necessary to **get rid of discriminatory practices** to advance social change and provide Dalits with the opportunity to creatively express themselves.

Transformative leadership, that is, encouraging individuals to be innovative and create change is important to be considered in Black-feminist solidarity. This may be attributed to the fact that women need to stick together to resolve all the trauma they experience. The “Me Too” movement and its hashtag which was created for Black and lower-class women by Tarana Burke is symbolic of this. It considers those affected by trauma as it offers support to women who have been least acknowledged in cases of sexual violence.



Working with young people helps to bring awareness to these issues at an early stage and allows the next generation to not be bound by the oppressive structures of these societies. As it relates to feminist standpoint, young girls should be taught to have powerful voices to speak out against instances of sexual assault. Not only that, be brave enough to reject advances and protect themselves from experiencing assault, which is prevalent in Black and Dalit Communities.



Seemingly Untouchable

by Sydonie Bell

They're deemed to be untouchable yet still they are abused

No worth given to them yet still they are used

They know the struggles exist but still move on

Because within lies an everlasting hope so strong

Perhaps they fear their strength within

As if it escapes, they are surely bound to win

Rising above all oppressive woes

Standing as tall as the tallest mountain goes



Sources

Capatosto, V. (2020). *A Brief History of Civil Rights in the United States*. Library.law.howard.edu; Howard University. <https://library.law.howard.edu/civilrightshistory/BLM>

Caste in the United States. (n.d.). EQUALITY LABS. <https://www.equalitylabs.org/castesurvey>

Dalits. (n.d.). Minority Rights Group. <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/dalits/>

Sampath, R. (2015, June 19). Racial and caste oppression have many similarities.

Theconversation.com. <https://theconversation.com/amp/racial-and-caste-oppression-have-many-similarities-37710>

Teodros, G. (2015, October 22). Connecting the movements for Dalit and Black lives. The Seattle Globalist. <https://seattleglobalist.com/2015/10/22/dalit-women-fight-caste-apartheid-black-lives-matter/43025>

10.2 The Meaning of Race and Ethnicity. (2016, April 8). Open.lib.umn.edu; University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing edition, 2016. This edition adapted from a work originally produced in 2010 by a publisher who has requested that it not receive

attribution.<https://open.lib.umn.edu/sociology/chapter/10-2-the-meaning-of-race-and-ethnicity/>

What is Caste? (n.d.). Dalit Solidarity Network. <https://dsnuk.org/caste-discrimination/what-is-caste/>