

## Solidarity is for White Women

As feminism swept over Andover's campus this past year, it fueled heartfelt debates and meaningful discussions that have continued on to this day. Unfortunately, the movement's progression has also led to the isolation of African-American and Latina females from the discussion. While the attempts by "Feminism is Equality" to be intersectional and inclusive in its dialogue have been commendable, the movement has largely failed to make itself accessible to the African-American and Latina female communities at Andover.

Women of black and Latina heritage at Andover know that gender and race are bound together, so inherently to separate the two is to lose half of oneself in a way that feels not only uncomfortable, but also dishonest. Of course, race and gender are fundamentally intertwined for everyone, but their personal and cultural implications hold especially true for African-American and Hispanic women, whose historical oppression has placed them at the bottom rung of society in terms of systematic advantage.

Despite the diversity of the female community at Andover, as well as expressions of intersectional intent from many members, the voice of the "Feminism is Equality" movement has been used primarily to address and combat the plights of white women at Andover. Though invaluable to the social progress of our community, F=E and its participants have often unintentionally omitted the voices of women of color, resulting in a sense of exclusion that has discouraged many black and Latina women from participating in forums and discussions.

The discourse that regularly floods the "Feminism at Andover" Facebook page, for instance, lacks nearly any mention of race. Many feminists have addressed the topic of wage inequity by protesting that women earn 77 cents to the white man's dollar, but they have completely failed to acknowledge that this statistic refers to white women only. No one seems to address the fact that African American and Hispanic women make just 64 and 56 cents, respectively, and are therefore at an even greater socioeconomic disadvantage, according to the National Women's Law Center. Even black males only earn 73 cents to the white man's dollar, indicating that perhaps race, not gender, is the primary issue that true opponents of wage inequity should address.

Similarly, F=E conversations often revolve around the discomfort and disgust white females experience as a result of unwanted male attention. These complaints, while entirely valid, are often dismissive of or insensitive to the fact that standards of beauty on Andover's campus exclude black and Latina women from the hookup culture almost completely. When one simply wants to be considered attractive in the Andover community, it becomes difficult to sympathize with a woman who receives an excess of attention, however legitimate her complaints may be.

Ultimately, despite the passion that many girls of color have for gender equality at Andover,

differing opinions and experiences make it hard for there to be true solidarity within the movement. A sense of discouragement and exclusion has resulted in the isolation of many black and Latina feminists at Andover, and in our silence, the conversation has begun to center even more around white women.

Starting now, on the anniversary of the “Feminism is Equality” movement’s conceptual initiation, we must all work to end this vicious cycle. To address the lack of intersectionality in feminism, we must begin to confront the awkward elephant in the room: race. This article is not intended to attack the feminist movement or any white students on campus who identify as feminists. If anything, we commend what strides the movement has taken thus far. Nevertheless, all feminists at Andover need to go the extra mile to be inclusive and bold. We can and must shatter the silence.

Solidarity should not only be for white women. When discussing the hook-up culture, ask why everyone is not included. When questioning the pay gap, consider if your statistics apply to underrepresented women of color. And by all means, if you are not sure, ask a black, Latina or indigenous woman for her opinion. The best way to confront the issues facing all women today is through unity and the way to initiate true solidarity is simply to listen. It is time we create a unified and diverse legion of feminists on Andover’s campus.

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