

GENDER & POWER: SUFFRAGE TO STONEWALL

Review:

- Gender as socially-constructed (Butler), but producing oppression (Frye)
 - Intersections of gender and sex (Crenshaw)
- Categories of “man” and “woman” are not historically-stable over time and space. Rather, these are constructs as well, and the categories “man” and “woman” are specifically *western* constructs (Thomas, Snorton).
 - The imposition of these binary gender categories (“man” and “woman”) as “natural” and “universal” is itself a form of oppression related to racism, colonialism, and state-making: why? Because it is imposing—with the force of physical violence—a system of gender unfamiliar to these societies as part of a larger form of genocide (Miranda, Thomas)
 - Medicine/science also had a role to play in maintaining these systems: racialized flesh exists before gender and race *motivates* the gendering of flesh (Snorton) as is visible in the case of J. Marion Sims.
 - It’s not that “we should want them to be considered Black women” but rather, “how is womanhood a white category that is defined in opposition to the enslaved Africans who had gynecological experiments conducted against them?”
 - Taking up Sé Sullivan’s provocation: “What is your gender? Who gave it to you?” The genders “woman” and “man” and the gender binary are given to us through processes of colonialism.

Guiding Question: *How did Emancipation result in a shift in understandings of the race and gender lines? How did this shape first- and second-wave feminisms? How did Black lesbians and the Gay Liberation Movement attempt to challenge this?*

Somerville, Siobhan B. 2000. “The Queer Career of Jim Crow” in *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press (pg. 39-76).

- Why do we analyze movies and media? They can show us the ideologies of the time period and how these ideas that impact our lives very directly were becoming crystallized.
 - We analyze *A Florida Enchantment* as a way to understand how, post-Emancipation, people were thinking about gender, race, and power.
 - *A Florida Enchantment* was made during a time of shifting gender and sexual norms:
 - This was made post-Emancipation, so the racial dynamics in the United States were shifting.
 - This was also made during the time of women’s suffrage (the movement for [white] women’s right to vote)
 - NYT Suffrage at 100: <https://www.nytimes.com/spotlight/women-suffrage-100?smid=rd>

- Related: reinforcing new tropes of the “aggressive” Black man (pg. 65) and the impossibility of “feminine” Black women (pg. 66)

Thompson, Betty. 2002. “Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism.” *Feminist Studies* 28(2): 336-360.

- Second-wave feminism as it was “most commonly remembered”
 - Liberal feminism: middle-class white women seeking equality (parity with middle-class white men)
 - Radical feminism: middle-class white women wanting gender separation from white men
- If we read Thompson’s account of second-wave feminism, we can understand what second-wave feminism was (or at least, what it was remembered as) and how women of color organizing challenged that.
- “Normative accounts of the Second Wave feminist movement often reach back to the publication of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, the founding of the National Organization for Women in 1966, and the emergence of women’s consciousness-raising (CR) groups in the late 1960s. All signaled a rising number of white, middle-class women unwilling to be treated like second-class citizens in the boardroom, in education, or in bed....For younger women, the leadership women had demonstrated in 1960s’ activism belied the sex roles that had traditionally defined domestic, economic, and political relations and opened new possibilities for action” (338).
- “...a telling of Second Wave feminism...focused solely on gender oppression. Although the late 1960s and early 1970s might have been the ‘heyday’ for white ‘radical’ feminists in CR groups, from the perspective of white antiracists, the early 1970s were a low point of feminism—a time when many women who were committed to an antiracist analysis had to put their feminism on the back burner in order to work with women and men of color and against racism” (344)
- “A second principle associated with liberal and radical feminism is captured in the slogan ‘The Personal Is Political,’....The idea behind the slogan is that many issues that historically have been deemed ‘personal’—abortion, battery, unemployment, birth, death, and illness—are actually deeply political issues” (347).

Combahee River Collective. 1974. “The Combahee River Collective Statement.” Republished in *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*. ed. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

- If we read the Combahee River Collective Statement, we also can come to understand some arguments happening in second-wave feminism
 - “The personal is political”
 - Gender separatism/Lesbian separatism
 - Issues of labor—feminist labor struggles may not have necessarily aligned with socialist labor struggles
 - Black lesbian organizing theorizes all at once

- In general: the Combahee River Collective arguments seem “basic” today, but in the context of second-wave feminism (which posited that *all women* needed to organize against a *common* enemy of patriarchy) it added an important wrinkle into those debates.

Marcus, Eric. 2019. “Marsha P. Johnson and Randy Wicker, from Interview with Eric Marcus” in *The Stonewall Reader*. Ed. The New York Public Library. New York: Penguin Books. (pg. 135-140).

- What was the Stonewall Uprising?
- What were the roots of the Stonewall Uprising? Resisting police brutality.
 - *Happy Birthday, Marsha!* (Amazon)

https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B07SBGR1YZ/ref=atv_dl_rdr?autoplay=1
- As Marsha P. Johnson shows us, transgender people (then identified as “drag queens” or “transvestites”), especially transgender people of color, have a central role in organizing for gay liberation and queer uprisings—particularly *because* what has been construed as “natural” has been a white, heterosexual gender binary. All of these things have been constructed as wrapped up together (think back to Somerville/Emancipation).
 - Return to Judith Butler: if you don’t conform perfectly to all three of these at once, you can be disciplined by the state (as we see in the forms of police brutality against “drag queens” and gay people at Stonewall).
 - Black and Latina trans resistance at Stonewall wasn’t the result of wanting “equality” with white men, it was the result of anti-police brutality (not wanting to be disciplined for their embodiment)

TAKEAWAYS

- After Emancipation, we see the “hardening” of these constructed categories of gender *and* race, and we see sexuality becoming something further-intertwined into these historical productions.
- First-wave feminism: women’s suffrage (1890s-1900s)
- Second-wave feminism: women’s rights movement (1960s-1970s)
 - Whose histories are we remembering?
- It is not so easy to disentangle race, gender, and sexuality because the white gender binary naturalizes heterosexuality and obscures the reality that it was put into place through a very difficult process of mythmaking and domination.