

## OVERCOMING THE LIMITATIONS OF AFRICAN FEMINISM AND BLACK FEMINIST STANDPOINT THEORIES

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### ABSTRACT

The attempt to decolonize feminism underpins a Black feminist standpoint theory. No history of feminist movements is complete without mentioning Black women's early concerns and activism. To this present day, the oppression of Black women and women of color remains an important discourse in feminism. This paper underscores the importance of a feminist standpoint theory developed to remedy Black women's challenges. The paper aims to develop a more encompassing theoretical framework for the struggles of Black women, including African women, against the operations of oppression. In developing a robust standpoint theory, the paper proposes redefining both Black feminism and African feminism through the critical lens of intersectionality and transnationalism. This purported framework does not intend to replace a feminist standpoint theory but seeks to amplify it. Essentially, this paper examines the implications of the proposal at hand through the writings of feminist theorists and practices of feminist solidarity efforts in better shaping our understanding of women's experiences in the world around us. The paper shows not only the significance of infusing elements of intersectionality and transnationalism into Black feminism and African feminism but also its necessity in overcoming the limitations of Black feminist standpoint theories.

**Keywords:** Marginalization, Transnational Feminism, Epistemic (In)justice, Gender Justice, Multicultural Feminism.

### INTRODUCTION

There is no generally agreeable definition of what feminism is. The term was introduced in France in the 1880s and gained prominence among women's movements in the United States between the 1970s and late 1980s (McCann and Kim 2017). A good point of departure for the definition of feminism is that it is a political movement for women's causes and many other women-related or women-motivated concerns or issues. Nevertheless, feminism is contextual;<sup>1</sup> It means different things to women of different ages, eras, and histories. Contemporary feminism may not concern itself with issues of first, second, or third-wave feminism. However, every dimension or form of feminism is born out of the same underlying purpose—the fight for women's rights or against women's inequality. Women have always fought for recognition and against marginalization. The societal status quo is that which is marked by oppression and discrimination toward women. Feminism has been construed as a sad reality where women do not perform or go beyond their

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<sup>1</sup> Chimamanda (2017) reiterates this conception of contextual feminism in *A Feminist Manifesto*, where she stresses that to be a feminist requires the effective use of two feminist tools (on matters of subject and object): yes, I—subject do matter, and yes, it—object matters to me. For Chimamanda, a feminist is a person whose choices matter equally as others, irrespective of their gender in society. The word “equally” is also contextual according to the given situation, just like feminism. However, equality remains the same for all.

traditional roles in society. For instance, it is commonly believed that feminism has no place in Africa but rather a Western import or influence on the African culture, but this is not historically correct. Cultural practices among Africans are also often cited as a major reason why feminism cannot thrive in Africa.

Although feminism is not about men, it is not against men either, or threatening the place of men in society. The world would not be better if women were not. Feminism attempts to give women an equal place in society. The world is not the same for women as men. They face more oppression in society than men. Africa shames a woman who is not conventional, and the world largely reduces women's agency. In Western societies and more developed terrains, there is not much of a limitation for women. However, look at the world around you and notice many things women get the short end of the stick: income, politics, positions of authority, sciences, health, and even domestic situations. Mohanty asserts that “being a woman in the world we live in today indicates political consequences that have unjust and unfair effects on women depending on their race or class” (2003, 3).

Not only in this 21st century, but it has always been the case that some groups of women are more marginalized and oppressed than others. Miranda Fricker points out that epistemic injustice is one of the central effects of oppression (McCann and Kim 2017). For a long period in history, sexism in science led to scientific facts that were biased. Questions were raised about whether women could be subjects of knowledge or inquirers of scientific knowledge (Harding 2004). Women’s experiences and contributions to producing relevant knowledge were sidelined in favor of men’s. Feminists, therefore, sought a theory that bridges the inequality gap between men and women in knowledge production. Thus, feminist standpoint theory developed as an alternative to addressing inequality in knowledge production (Gurung 2020). As such, one of the basic tenets of feminist standpoint theory is that feminism, or the recognition of the diverse experiences of women, improves knowledge.

Feminist standpoint theory (FST) claims that those who suffer inequality in society and are marginalized may have an epistemic advantage as better knowers than those who belong to a privileged class because of their subjection to experiences of oppression (Wylie 2012). Marilyn Frye contends that oppression possesses both systemic and structural injustices as it places limits and constraints on people’s lives by virtue of their identities or associations. As there are different identities, categories, and associations in society, such as race, gender, sexuality, and class, there are different forms of oppression. Conversely, epistemic justice values people's realities, worldviews, and lived experiences and takes them as a means of knowledge production. As such, feminism is an important epistemic justice movement<sup>2</sup> as it seriously considers women’s lived experiences and circumstances as a vital part of human history, knowledge, and existence in its struggle against exclusion, domination, and marginalization for a better understanding of the world. FST, as a theory, values the experiences of such oppressed groups and seeks to empower them (Harding 2004). However, FST does not claim that oppressed groups have epistemic advantages in every situation, as social location is not always relevant to producing certain

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<sup>2</sup> “Feminism is an epistemic justice movement. It seeks to change the world by building knowledge of our world(s) from the perspectives and lived experiences of those who variously live their lives within the social category of women” (McCann and Kim 2017, 1).

knowledge (Intemann 2010). Early standpoint theorists considered class difference or location the most significant factor in producing knowledge, but recent theorists ranked race and gender as the most important social locations (Harnois 2010). FST was developed in response to second-wave feminism, which largely ignored the integration of Black women's issues into feminist movements by failing to recognize the significance of race and class in mitigating the oppression of women. FST is not only a theory of epistemology but also a political tool and a methodology. One strong criticism against feminist standpoint theory is that it is highly subjective as it gives too much importance to the experiences of the knower, who is prone to errors from cognition (Hawkesworth 1999).

### **Decolonizing Feminism: The Historicity of Black Feminism**

The social status of white women has never been the same as that of Black women in the United States (Hooks 1982). Some white women did not consider challenging male dominance until the possibility of the feminist agenda to do so because it was not as threatening to them as it was to Black women (Hooks 1984). Black feminism is the standpoint where Black women had a voice amidst racial and gender discrimination, but their voices came with further concerns (Harnois 2010). The inclusion of Black women in relevant discourse during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was still very limited, even though their works were represented. Still, the issues concerning Black women were not often discussed, and the attitudes of white feminists toward them were racist (Collins 1996; Hooks 1982). In fact, the word "woman" was synonymous with white women among white writers, such as in one of the works of the historian Barbara Berg (Hooks 1982). Black women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century recognized this detriment. They fought for racial equality for Black people, even though they had suffered sexism from Black men in the past, in a bid to reclaim their femininity and rights (Hooks 1982). Black women had fought for women's suffrage while facing racial discrimination. However, the contributions of Black feminists will eventually become lost or unacknowledged at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. White women continued to personalize the feminist movement with their agenda, even though they urged Black women to join and support the movement (Hooks 1982). The exclusion Black women faced at the hands of white feminists ensured the creation of their own groups, such as the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), to fight for their rights. As such, feminism becomes decolonized by focusing on the lives of Black women who are faced with multiple levels of discrimination on race, gender, class, and other identities (Wing 2003).

There is no way the history of Black feminism will be talked about without mentioning the problems that led to it, such as sexism, racism, classism, slavery, white supremacy, and patriarchy. In accounting for Black women's experiences, Hooks (1982) points out that it is erroneous to say, as most feminists did at the time, that the problems Black women faced were predominantly caused by racism, not sexism. Sexism had a great impact on Black women during the period of slavery and continued after abolition. The famous speech, *Ain't I A Woman?* which the born-enslaved Sojourner Truth, who later became free, delivered in 1851, talked about the peculiar sufferings and deprivation of the rights of Black women in the hands of white men, which was unlike anything white women or Black men experienced. Black female slaves were often sexually assaulted and victimized by white male patriarchs. Rape was a term that applied to white women only; Black women cannot be raped. The Black woman was constantly dehumanized. If they refused to be sexually exploited, they were brutally punished (Hooks 1982). Stereotypes against Black women, for instance, that they are sexually loose, started during slavery (Hooks 1982). Sexual exploitation

of Black women continued after the abolition of slavery, and it critically contributed to the devaluation of Black womanhood. This occurrence was pervasive throughout the history of Black women. Davies and Munro (2013, 86) assert that “oppression does not only manifest in discrimination but also exploitation and marginalization, among other things.” Iris Marion Young’s classification of the five forms of oppression includes powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence, in addition to exploitation and marginalization (McCann and Kim 2017).

### **Black Feminist Standpoint Theory and the Three Waves of Feminism**

Sandra Harding is credited with coining the term standpoint theory as a theory of knowledge (Gurung 2020). Standpoint theory rejects science’s acclaimed objectivity, which marginalizes women’s experiences and “emphasizes women’s experiences as knowledge” (Gurung 2020, 107). According to standpoint theorists, marginalized groups are advantaged in knowledge production and are more impartial than those who constitute authority or dominant groups (Gurung 2020).

Black feminism is sometimes used interchangeably with Black feminist standpoint theory. Black feminism gained prominence in the late 20th century when Black women began to lend their voices to a collective Black feminist standpoint about Black women. Angela Davis, Alice Walker, and Audre Lorde were prominent figures of Black feminism in the 1970s who were responsible for a breakthrough representation of Black women in dominant discourses in the 1980s and 1990s (Collins 1996). Black feminists felt the urge to pursue the cause of Black women in women’s movements because feminism at that time had been construed in the US as a movement for white women only. Therefore, Black feminism became the term that addressed the issue of racism in feminism and “challenged the assumed whiteness of feminism” (Collins 1996, 13).

The first and second waves of feminism largely ignored the struggles of Black women in women’s movements. What followed was a period of resistance and clamor against the operations of sexist and racist oppression toward Black women. First-wave feminism is the term used to delineate the first major collective women’s movement in the United States and Europe from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Whelehan 1995). Although the right to vote in elections was extended to women in the United States at the end of the first-wave feminism, it was in no way a complete suffrage, as many Black women still faced several hurdles that prohibited them from voting. The first wave also succeeded in gaining women’s right to higher education, but women remained largely marginalized in many other areas (Jenainati and Groves 2007).

Second-wave feminism fought against the operations of sexism that were responsible for giving men privileges in society. During this period, women challenged the patriarchal representation of what it means to be a woman, their sexuality as pandering to men’s sexual needs, their reproductive rights, and the traditional roles of women in society being grounded in domesticity and motherhood. Gradually, significant improvements in women’s lives were made at the turn of the 21st century (Whelehan 1995). Early feminists engaged in discourse centered around abortion, contraceptives, domestic labor, and family. Becky Thompson (2002) argues that the conception of hegemonic feminism prevents us from seeing that multicultural feminism was on the rise during the second wave. Women of color and anti-racist white women fought in coalition to end multiple forms of oppression (McCann and Kim 2017).

Smith (2000) argues that Black feminism has always fought issues that affect not only Black women but all women. Black women during the second-wave feminism stressed the importance of affirmative action in employment to address the prevalent discrimination and inequality against all women, especially Black women in the labor force who were mostly unpaid or underpaid even after the Civil Rights Act (1964) was passed (Taylor 1998). This premise set the stage for the third wave of feminism in the 1990s. Third-wave feminism began with the interests of legal theorists and activists such as Kimberlé Crenshaw and Rebecca Walker. They examined the various issues and varied forms of oppression—thereby embracing intersectionality—that concerned Black women, women of color, as well as other marginalized identities, which had placed them in a disadvantaged position. For instance, the airline industry had policies that discriminated against and prevented Black women from being hired (Taylor 1998).

### **Critical Race Theory vs Standpoint Theory**

Critical race theory (CRT) concerns itself with the relationship between various social constructions, such as race, racism, and power (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). It examines the social interaction between race and racism in society. CRT started in the 1970s when legal activists and scholars pointed out that new theories and strategies were needed to advance the promising but delayed agenda of the civil rights era of the 1960s (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). Standpoint theory puts forward that social situations construct knowledge. For standpoint theorists, when knowledge is produced from the perspective of women's experiences, it is a less partial and distorted account of women's and men's lives. However, standpoint theory is not just a perspective but an understanding of perspectives and experiences. It looks at how the interplay of power relations, social structures, and locations affects knowledge production (Intemann 2010). To produce knowledge, it is important to understand the experiences of marginalized people. Standpoint theory prioritizes the collective experiences of a group or community over the individual and holds it as an important feature for attaining a standpoint (Intemann 2010).

Applying these two theories helps us develop a feminist standpoint theory with the understanding that social constructions like racism, classism, and sexism can drastically affect the accurate production of knowledge. Thus, FST's claim that oppressed groups have an epistemic advantage in the production of knowledge is once again crucial here as communities that do not reinforce or reproduce negative socializations such as racism, sexism, and classism but fight against them stand a better chance of obtaining objective or true scientific knowledge than communities that do (Intemann 2010).

### **Black Feminism and Intersectional Feminism**

Intersectionality was coined by the legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Her first usage of the word was to make visible the multiple levels of oppression and discrimination that Black women workers faced at General Motors (Evans and Lépinard 2020). Crenshaw recognized that the system of oppression against them was based on the overlapping identities of race and gender. Black feminism, therefore, becomes a precursor of intersectionality. Collins and Bilge (2006, 129) define intersectionality as “a way of inquiring and understanding the complexities in the world and human experiences whereby many interconnected social and political factors shape and define those experiences—politics define identities.” Black feminism is the term that allows African American women to point out that the issues affecting Black women in the United States are part of the struggles for the emancipation of all women. Black feminism prevents feminism from

becoming whitewashed (Collins 1996). Therefore, the importance of Black feminism becomes the creation of a Black women's movement that protects Black women and, by implication, all women from being exploited and controlled by oppressive racial and sexist structures in society (Collins 1996).

When intersectionality is applied to feminism, it challenges and helps us avoid feminist movements being personalized with the oppression of one race or another. Audre Lorde is credited with saying that all women do not suffer the same level of oppression just because they are women (Segal 1999). Nevertheless, every form of oppression against any woman is an oppression against all women. Through intersectionality, all forms of oppression against any or all women become interconnected or overlap with the forms of oppression suffered by other women, which in turn causes the systems of oppression to be addressed and dismantled collectively. The discrimination suffered by the most marginalized women should be centered and positioned at the forefront of the struggle against all operations of women's oppression for intersectional feminism to be effective. While Black feminism is a standpoint theory, intersectionality assumes the position of a critical race theory. Interestingly, intersectionality as a theory is rooted in feminism, and there is no intersectionality without feminist activism (Evans and Lépinard 2020). Therefore, it is through feminism that standpoint theory can become a spectacle of diverse standpoints or possess multiple social positions (Intemann 2010).

### **The Gendered and Economic Oppression of the African Woman**

In response to a friend's question on how she could raise her girl child to become a feminist like her, Chimamanda wrote a letter containing a feminist manifesto detailing fifteen suggestions. In that piece, there are several important talking points for intersectional feminism. For instance, in the piece's third, tenth and eleventh suggestions about gender roles and the conventionality of social norms, Chimamanda reckons that for a girl child to be nurtured into a noblewoman, her gender roles should neither be limited nor should her gender expectations exceed those of the boy child or a man—as practiced in many African cultures or homes. Domestic tasks such as taking care of a child, cooking, and house chores are not the sole responsibilities of a woman, as they are commonly expected of a woman in the African home rather than being gainfully employed. In the fourteenth and fifteenth suggestions of the feminist manifesto, Chimamanda contends that the girl child needs to be taught about her differences and oppression in society. In her fifth and ninth suggestions, Chimamanda mentions that a girl child should also be a good reader, as she must possess extensive knowledge to make sense of her identity if she is to change her world. The societal expectations and the cultural or religious beliefs in the traditional roles of women and other demeaning factors such as gender-based violence in African societies are deep-rooted hindrances to African women's economic development and active participation in the labor force and other areas such as healthcare and education, leading to a significant disproportion in gender parity rate, especially in Central and Western Africa (Sqalli et al. 2023).

Through feminist solidarity practices of Egyptian feminists, which were marked by the influence of the commercially thriving economy in Egypt at the time, Angela Davis, during her visit to Egypt, realized that achieving gender justice for African women cannot be done without empowering them with economic and material resources (Salem 2018).

### **The Nonautonomous Misrepresentation of the African Woman**

In Africa, a woman not only lacks autonomy but is also underrepresented. Her autonomy and representation are usually beyond her control. The African woman is expected to be grounded in modesty, while the freedom to express herself is beyond the conservatism she must maintain. Her body should conform to Western beauty standards in the modern world, but her morals are expected to align with her African roots. Her body is therefore a product of contradiction, yin and yang, a push and pull with no balance. However, these contradictions did not exist before Africa's encounter with Western civilization. The conception of traditional gender roles in Africa, which was once harmless,<sup>3</sup> combined with the subordination and oppression of women, informs much of the present-day feminist struggles in Africa. The society the African woman now lives in is highly patriarchal. The societal expectation of women is that of subordinates when it comes to affairs of the state and their household. The social constructs of gender<sup>4</sup> and the patriarchal system allow for the domination of men over women, where men are portrayed as natural-born leaders capable of holding and wielding power, thereby becoming the social norm for women to follow their lead (Mill 2008, 27). In most African societies, the significant progress women have made toward equality is constantly being rescinded by such things as reactionary patriarchy and global economic crisis,<sup>5</sup> which affects women, most especially women in the Global South. In South Africa, for instance, the African National Congress (ANC),<sup>6</sup> which had once promoted gender inclusion<sup>7</sup> during the apartheid and post-apartheid period, reverted to a male-dominated leadership structure.

Beyond borders and in the global space, Black women, African women, and women of color, in general, are often misrepresented by the Western world and mainstream feminism by no other than white women or white feminists. Angela Davis acknowledges that such misrepresentation leads to further oppression of Black women (Salem 2018). Angela Davis recognized how gender

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<sup>3</sup> While there were gendered roles in pre-colonial Africa, women were not subjected to a form of dominance by men.

<sup>4</sup> Oyeronke Oyewunmi (1997, 10) contends that "gender, being a social construction, is also a historical and cultural phenomenon. Consequently, it is logical to assume that in some societies, gender construction need not have existed at all."

<sup>5</sup> The practise of reactionary patriarchy, a push-back of traditional gender roles on women, limits the participation of African women in all job sectors and industries (King 2009).

<sup>6</sup> The ANC (founded in 1912 as a non-violent movement geared toward liberation) has been the ruling party in South Africa since the country transitioned to democratic rule in 1994 after lengthy years of racial segregation and oppression, infamously known as apartheid.

<sup>7</sup> South African women significantly contributed to anti-apartheid and advocacy efforts for South Africans' equality through their active participation in mobilized actions. As a recognition of their struggles as well as the impact of senior women members of the party, gender equality was seriously considered during ANC's party formation (Brechenmacher and Hubbard 2020, 20). Regardless of the class structure of mostly male senior leaders, the ANC gave equal opportunity to women within the party. Still, this same structure hindered any significant non-sexist progress within the movement (2020, 19).

oppression intersects with other forms of oppression, such as class and race, to create multiple levels of marginalization for the Black woman, which led her to favor a more nuanced understanding of the unique experiences of women across different cultures in challenging various and collective struggles of Black women. Thus, there is a need for resistance against the systemic inequality, marginalization, and oppression of black women and women of color in our societies, which is aimed at promoting a more inclusive, progressive, and safer environment for these women.

The knowledge of the intersecting experiences of marginalized women is important in shaping our society for the better. According to Crenshaw (1995), there are three intersectional ways in which women of color are marginalized. When it comes to identity politics, women of color are marginalized within feminist discourse as well as antiracist politics. Women of color suffer from structural intersectionality—the location of their place (class) in society, making their experiences of domestic violence and rape, for instance, worse than those of white women. In representational intersectionality, the cultural representation of women of color is lacking, which leaves them out of the discourse of popular culture. Crenshaw's mapping out the legal inadequacies concerning women of color is important in empowering their voices and eliminating the injustice that pervades such communities through active legal representation, awareness, solidarity, and advocacy efforts. The unique experiences of these women should be acknowledged and prioritized in all legal situations, and their rights should be recognized.

In the Global South, in countries such as Bolivia, South Africa, Tunisia and Uganda, women have increasingly participated in politics and political parties through coalition-building efforts by women's groups, the commitments and demands for gender inclusion and equality or the promotion of women's leadership positions by political groups (Brechenmacher and Hubbard 2020, 2–12). Although in the early years of ANC, gender issues were not central. However, in the 1980s, women associated with the movement began raising awareness of the forms of oppression at the intersection of race, gender, and class. For instance, a thirty per cent gender quota was demanded by women members of the ANC during their transition from a national movement to a political party. Brechenmacher and Hubbard (2020, 21–24) mentioned that through coalition-building efforts and advocacy efforts against the apartheid system and during the post-apartheid period, setting their affiliations or political differences aside, South African women from different parties, networks, and groups came together<sup>8</sup> recognized and challenged their shared experiences of marginalization.

### **Transnationalism within African Feminism**

The term “transnational” is defined as the movements, experiences, identities and realities of people, their ideas, as well as resources across geographical borders (McCann and Kim 2017). For a long time, African feminists unsuspectingly engaged in transnational practices that promoted universalist frameworks within feminist movements and theories. During Angela Davis's trip to Egypt in the 1970s, she discovered that Egyptian feminists had been involved in feminist solidarity efforts with international organizations and women's movements in the global space in their fight

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<sup>8</sup> Due to their coming together, the Women's National Coalition (WNC) was formed in 1992 (Brechenmacher and Hubbard 2020, 24).

against capitalism and imperialism following the shift from the recognition of women's rights in the previous economic conditions of the country to an open market system which neglected women's development. Consequently, the Egyptian feminists shifted their solidarity efforts from a shared material analysis to a shared cultural analysis of gender oppression. These practices continued into the 1980s and beyond. However, solidarity efforts between African women and women of the Western world, particularly white women, faced many difficulties. As such, Angela Davis admonished the Egyptian feminists to turn away from solidarity efforts based on shared womanhood as it is unprofitable to Black women and African women because of the conception of a "universal sisterhood"<sup>9</sup> which they had subscribed to, with the influence of Western feminism was based on common oppression, hierarchies and excluded black women from feminist issues (Salem 2018).

To achieve true transnational feminism, the notion of sisterhood, which assumes no competition and hostility between groups of women, must be fostered among all races (Hooks 1982; Hooks 1984). Emphasis is placed on solidarity, resistance, decolonization, and intersectionality for effective transnational feminist practices, and African feminism, like any other feminist movement, is crucial because it exposes us to transnational feminist perspectives that are often overlooked or not raised by mainstream feminism. There is a need to challenge Western narratives and other dominant structures because the multiplicities of inequalities and oppression exist due to dominant structures across borders.

### **Epistemic Problems for a Feminist Standpoint Theory**

The feminist standpoint theory is an essential framework for promoting racial and gender justice. FST challenges dominant structures that often lead to the erasure of marginalized experiences. The social institutions that shape women's experiences are structured in dominance (Tomlinson 2019). To challenge the structural subordination, marginalization, and exclusion of women's lived experiences in producing knowledge, FST adopts a standpoint for all women, often misconstrued by many as a universal perspective. Thus, a common critique of feminist standpoint theory is that it has some epistemic concerns stemming from an essentialist viewpoint. Post-modern feminists argue that no single or universal women's experience could lead to true knowledge. They argue that a Black feminist standpoint theory will always run into an essentialist problem of bias since it holds that the social position—standpoint—of the subject of knowledge determines the object of experience (Intemann 2010).

Although FST does not "claim that women have a distinct way of knowing from that of men as many critics have interpreted its thesis to be" (Intemann 2010, 783), we remain confronted with gender and sexual differences between men and women as well as differences between the experiences of every woman or group of oppressed people, which has serious implications for epistemic knowledge. FST is often guilty of essentialism as it neglects the diversities of women's experiences in accounting for epistemic knowledge and proceeds from a linear perspective of women's experiences or oppression, even though many defenders and theorists of the feminist standpoint have denied such a socially located perspective (Intemann 2010).

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<sup>9</sup> Angela Davis calls such a conception of sisterhood a myth, and Bell Hooks claims it is false and deceptive with no regard for the different intersecting forms of oppression (Salem 2018; Hooks 1984).

### **An Intersectional Theory**

Smith (2000) contends that eliminating racism among white women is a problem white women must unpack themselves, and Black women should continue demanding such accountability from them. Intersectionality seeks to elevate the experiences of the marginalized. An intersectional theory for Black feminism implies the elimination of the negative socializations and biases that affect Black women in advocating for their empowerment. An intersectional theory can be used to strengthen Black feminist standpoint theory. Mahuya Pal and Beatriz Nieto-Fernandez (2024) assert that intersectionality is relevant for transnational feminism because it engages with the structures of domination that exist at a singular level or as copious structural levels of oppression. An intersectional Black feminism should, therefore, aim to better understand Black women's experiences to situate them as subjects of knowledge. However, precautions must be taken to avoid oversimplifying these experiences, as there are complexities and nuances that we must pay careful attention to. Thus, there is a need for not only an intersectional Black feminist standpoint theory but also a transnational one. At the crossroads of intersectionality, feminist standpoint theory requires an understanding of the plurality of women's experiences, especially the unique experiences, challenges, and complexities of Black women, in identifying the numerous tools of oppression against them. Intersectionality acknowledges that there are multiple levels of oppression through the interplay of a combination of social factors such as race, class, sex, and gender, among others.

Intersectionality and Transnational Feminism developed almost simultaneously. Both transnationalism and intersectionality partly developed as a reaction to the limitations of three-wave feminism. However, the formulations of these frameworks were used long before the terms became popularized or attributed to such frameworks (Molony and Nelson 2017). Molony and Nelson (2017) state that Sojourner Truth, who was a slave abolitionist, for instance, must have employed the concepts of intersectionality and transnationalism in her famous speech (1851) to argue that she is a woman and, therefore, her identity should be recognized as one and treated equally regardless of her being Black and her origin as an African American. Transnational feminism is a valuable tool in dismantling the operations of oppression that women face across borders. Thus, oppressed groups are situated better for epistemic advantages in producing accurate or objective knowledge because of the diversity of their social locations. Transnational feminism is necessary for decolonizing feminism further and decentralizing or challenging dominant Western structures. The experiences of African women and Black women globally have been shaped and are continuously being shaped by factors resulting from colonialism and neocolonialism. Nationalism encourages solidarity and coalition building among the marginalized experiences of several cultures, thereby leading to a more inclusive global feminism. Framing FST around intersectionality grants FST the disposition to move beyond the problem of essentialism, leading to a more nuanced standpoint. However, Evans and Lépinard (2020, 33) argue that transnational advocacy, meant to bring inclusiveness, runs the risk of "essentializing the intersectional identities of marginalized groups", leading to oversimplifying their experiences. Subjectivity also poses problems for transnationalism, where diverse cultural experiences often lead to distinct interpretations and experiences of the world. Nevertheless, transnational advocacy can be an effective tool for social change if it avoids the snares of essentialism and subjectivity, among other things. Feminist standpoint theory adopts a more diverse and multifaceted approach to women's experiences within the frameworks of intersectionality and transnationalism.

## CONCLUSION

An intersectional and transnational outlook to resolving some of the challenges of Black feminism and African feminism is not a new approach. Nevertheless, intersectionality and transnationalism work best for our discourse because they are complementary frameworks that offer FST a more complete understanding of the experiences of marginalized groups, some of which were highlighted or mentioned. These frameworks are not without their problems, but we cannot keep proposing alternative frameworks to counter all the possible problems we can think of, leading to an unending paradox of problems. Using intersectionality to aid a feminist standpoint theory could lead us to more accurate knowledge production when we consciously eliminate or limit the biases and oversimplification that come with theorizing evidence of knowledge. Centering different cultural and subjective experiences can increase our shared understanding of human existence, experiences, histories, and cultures, challenge dominant narratives, and empower marginalized groups whose voices have been previously silenced, thereby enabling more accurate knowledge production. A redefined FST model for Black and African feminism will aid marginalized voices in speaking about their experiences without misrepresentation or exclusion by dominant groups, ultimately leading to greater resistance and liberatory efforts. As such, all forms of oppression of women, especially the most marginalized women, can be challenged contextually and beyond borders, transnationally. True Feminism should seek to disrupt a hegemonic feminist subject,<sup>10</sup> which often tends to misrepresent, underrepresent, or universalize the experiences of various women

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<sup>10</sup> Women's experiences are not and should not be made general as there are intersecting social categories in the analysis of gender, such as race, nationality, and class (McCann and Kim 2017).

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