

The Relationship Between The Isms

Racism, Sexism, Classism, Ableism, Anit-Semitism, Ageism and Heterosexism (*see following definitions*) are linked because "all involved a negative prejudgement whose purpose is to maintain control and power"¹. Suzanne Pharr defines these social phenomena as each having the ability to control and destroy lives. They all work to establish a "defined norm" or standard of rightness under which everyone is judged. This defined norm is backed up with "individual and institutional violence" which makes the oppression possible. In North America our "defined norm is male, white, heterosexual, Christian, temporarily able bodied, youthful and has access to wealth and resources." This is not a conspiracy but the standard represents the majority of people who have the ability to exert power over others. The "defined norm" is a notion that all of us might accept and promote for various reasons probably connected to a sense of inferiority or economic vulnerability.

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¹ Blummenfeld W & Raymond D. (1988) Looking at Gay and Lesbian Life. New york: Philosophical Library. p.224