

JASS BIG IDEAS: FEMINISM



Shereen Essof

Our Feminism

[Watch on YouTube](#)

“At the heart of my understanding sits a feminism that feeds emancipatory struggles led by those who are most impacted by systems of oppression.”

[Shereen Essof](#), *JASS Executive Director*

Read an [interview](#) with Shereen Essof about JASS’ feminism.

IN BRIEF

Discrimination and inequity are integral to patriarchy – not accidental, individual, natural, or necessary, but, rather, essential to a whole system of beliefs that defines some people as less valuable than others because of their gender, sex or sexuality. Patriarchy works together with other systems that reinforce injustice and inequity, such as capitalism, neoliberalism, white supremacy, colonialism, and religious fundamentalism.

“The touchstone for all our work is women’s lives, experiences, and dreams. A woman’s heart, mind, and body absorb the grim reality of patriarchy. For deep and lasting change, women’s whole selves must be at the center of leadership and organizing, a principle that gives meaning to the phrase, ‘from survivors to defenders.’ When women are at the forefront of change, they don’t just address issues; they transform communities and systems.”

[Lisa Veneklasen](#), *JASS co-founder*

IN JASS

1. Feminism is plural and intersectional
2. Feminism is global
3. Feminism is visionary and transformative
4. Feminism is about power

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As a feminist movement-building organization, JASS helps strengthen and build the power of activists and organizations to challenge and transform deep-rooted systems of domination and inequity. We seek to:

- transform the structures that reproduce patriarchal systems – the family, culture, education, media, and the state
- challenge the narratives that replicate patriarchy
- counter the violence that patriarchy generates
- support the collective power of movements

IN ACTION



Kunthea Chan

Injustice is intolerable

[Watch on YouTube](#)



Srilatha Batliwala

Notes from a feminist grandmother

[Watch on YouTube](#)

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Daysi Flores

One with the earth

[Watch on YouTube](#)

IN DEPTH

JASS distinguishes the important work of building feminist movements from the work we do, which is feminist movement-building.

Building feminist movements: organizing around gender-equality goals

Feminist movement-building: bringing gender equality goals and feminist perspectives into all kinds of movements

1. Feminism is plural and intersectional

Feminism is not only about gender. We see identity and experience as shaped by intersections between gender and other aspects of identity including class, race, ethnicity, sexual identity, age, ability, religion, and location. Not all women or gender-nonconforming people have the same experience or deal with the same difficulties. And so – folded into the global fabric of feminism – we have a dynamic and constantly evolving spectrum of feminisms.

* Social justice feminism * Ecological feminism * Anarcho-feminism * Radical feminism
* Socialist feminism * Islamic feminisms * Catholic feminisms * Black feminisms * Queer feminisms * Liberal feminism

Read more about [Intersectionality](#) as one of JASS' Big Ideas.

2. Feminism is global

Feminism is – and has always been – global. Western feminist history traces three different 'waves' of political struggle over the last 150 years. But many streams of women's resistance from all over the world paint a far richer, more diverse history. While the word 'feminism' is relatively new, feminism is not. It is one of the longest social movements in history,

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stretching back in time and around the world. In many parts of the world, for instance, much feminism is shaped by decolonization and liberation struggles.

* Latin American feminisms * South Asian feminisms * Indigenous feminisms * African feminisms

All these feminisms challenge us to be more nuanced, to speak to the specific struggles of specific communities while not letting go of the common threads that unify us.

3. Feminism is visionary and transformative

Why do we believe this? Because, feminism:

- up-ends power relationships
- centers the lives and needs of those who are often at the margins
- integrates informal, reproductive, and care work in an understanding of economics
- challenges the ideas about gender, sex and sexuality that subordinate and control women, LGBTQI and others in order to uphold male supremacy

Transformative ways of doing and being, fed by feminism, include:

- [For a democratic, egalitarian and feminist constitution](#)
- [Zapatistas Revolutionary Women's Law](#)
- [Combahee River Collective](#)
- [We challenge the narrative of power](#) – *Excerpts from a thank you letter*

“Feminism is a place where you can dream a world that’s not been created.”

[Daysi Yamileth Flores Hernandez](#)

4. Feminism is about power

“Feminism goes further than other social justice ideologies because it ‘opens the door’ (to reveal inequality in the most private, intimate spaces), and ‘lifts the skirt’ (to look at power dynamics in the sphere of sexuality and sexual politics).”

Maggie Mapondera, quoting Srilatha Batliwala

“I want the authorities to understand that when we make demands we are not asking for charity. We are asking for justice, for our human rights. They are obliged to guarantee them, to respect them and abide by them.”

[Berta Cáceres](#)

Read more about [Power](#) as one of JASS’ Big Ideas.

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IN MANY VOICES

“What makes feminism transformative in the JASS approach is that it looks at feminism as an ideology and as a social change strategy that has opened the door and really examined how power operates in the most private, hidden, I would say policed spaces of society.”

Srilatha Batliwala

“Culture does not make people. People make culture. If it is true that the full humanity of women is not our culture, then we can and must make it our culture.”

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

“The greatest external threat to women (and by extension humanity) is the growth and acceptance of a misogynistic, authoritarian and violent culture of militarism.”

Amina Mama

“We need to recognise that the choice to love rather than despise each other is a political act. We need to keep expanding the feminist embrace.”

Jessica Horn

“I am inspired to act in the face of injustice, oppression and inequalities, and to speak out, and make demands to right the wrong done.”

Joy Ngozi Ezeilo

“I claim a Muslim and a feminist identity because I am an activist for a world where equal rights and opportunities will be for every human and not for a few.”

Mairo V. Bello

“Women aren’t free just because they are surviving, or even economically comfortable. They are free only when they have power over their own lives.”

[Shereen Essof](#)

“ALL of us have benefited from feminism, whether we think we’re feminists or not, and whether we believe in feminism or not.”

Srilatha Batliwala

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IN GROUPS

“The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”

Audre Lorde

To understand, challenge, and undo patriarchy, JASS shares a range of feminist group processes on the [We Rise website](#), including these key examples.

1. Feminism is plural and intersectional
[Master’s House: House of Multiple Oppressions](#)
2. Feminism is global
[Patriarchy: cases in everyday life](#)
3. Feminism is visionary and transformative
[‘Good’ women, ‘bad’ women](#)
4. Feminism is about power
[What does ‘feminism’ mean?](#)
[Sources of transforming power](#)

This [Big Idea - FEMINISM](#) - is online on the [JASS](#) (justassociates.org) site.
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