



ANU Women's Department

Intersectionality

Acknowledgement of Country

We wish to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the Australian National University stands, the Women's Department meets and this zine was published, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present and future. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

The aim of this Intersectionality Campaign has been to showcase and bring to light the diversity of the ANU Women's Department. Sharing these stories and experiences is particularly powerful given the long history of erasure of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the robbing of land and culture. 2017 marks the 50 year anniversary of the 1967 referendum, which recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as humans to be counted in the census for the first time. Yet, the struggle for recognition continues to be hampered by ignorance, paternalism, violence and erasure. The Women's Department is committed to welcoming Aboriginal women and non-binary people, and assisting in the fight for reconciliation.





Campaign by Janine Wan and Freya Willis
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Jharna Chamlagai, Julia Faragher, Juliette Baxter, Laura Perkov, Lucy Hull,
Mackinlay Tikoft, Naini Rautela, Natalie Ziegler, Nupur Apte, Olive Ivanoff,
Prisca Ochan, Priyanka Tomar, Sanjoli Banerjee, Siang Jin Law,
Sumithri Venketasubramanian, Tanika Sibal, Tracy Beattie, Vishakha Nogaja



What's the Women's Department?

The ANU Women's Department aims to represent, support and advocate for all ANU students who identify as a woman and/or experience oppression as a result of being perceived by others as a woman. This space welcomes trans women, and non-binary people who identify with the definition or find our services useful.

The Women's Officer for 2017 is Holly Zhang, and the deputies are Janine Wan and Freya Willis. The Women's Officer represents all undergraduate members of the Women's Department on campus, so if you have an idea, comment, question or concern, feel free to get in touch at sa.womens@anu.edu.au <3

What is Intersectionality?

Intersectionality is an analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which gender intersects with other identities and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of oppression and privilege. It starts from the premise that people live multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history and the operation of structures of power. People are members of more than one community at the same time, and can simultaneously experience oppression and privilege.

Taken from the Association for Women's Rights in Development
Intersectionality: A Tool for Gender and Economic Justice (2004)





Aditi Razdan

she/her/hers

When people ask me where I'm from I say 'Melbourne' but my family is from Srinagar in the Kashmir Valley, and you can tell I'm Kashmiri because

I'm really intense – I think it is genetic!

At the end of 2015, I went to J&K (the State of Jammu and Kashmir) for the first time. I went to a traditional, multi-day Kashmiri wedding. One of my cousins was saying that most of the time they are 'normal' in their everyday life but for the 10 days of the wedding they were completely Kashmiri. Part of it is simply adhering to cultural traditions of course, but it's also about loss. My family can't go back to the physical space of the Valley, so they hold onto the traditions with particular vehemence, and weddings are the culmination of all things Kashmiri. In parts of the ceremony the (rather intense) women would cry for their homeland and sing for its spirit.



Al Azmi

they/them/theirs

It might sound a bit cliché, but being able to explore and rediscover who I am has been one of the best parts of coming to Australia and being in uni with such such a diverse, vibrant community. I've found that carving your own space wherever you are works so much better than trying to fit in, and this means that I'm not required to discard pieces of me to fit in a box that I was never interested in in the first place!

It's taken a while, but I genuinely appreciate all the intersections that make me who I am now – Muslim, queer, non-binary, mentally ill – warts and all. I realise and am thankful for how lucky I am to be in an environment where I'm able to express myself fully without fear, and I want to work towards a world where that will be a reality for everybody. Clearly, there's a long way to go, but in the words of the sharply witty Terry Pratchett, "It's not worth doing something unless someone, somewhere, would much rather you weren't doing it."



Alana Cunningham

she/her/hers

I'm half Chinese, half Australian. It was great growing up because I got to experience a mix of both cultures. I would celebrate Christmas, but also Chinese New Year. But also, a lot of people now know I am half-Chinese because I don't look conventionally Chinese. I would sometimes get asked by people, like customers, where I was from - but they usually seem more curious than discriminatory. Sometimes there are underlying tensions between my parents' cultures. When I was 14, I was diagnosed with MS. The distinct cultural attitudes towards disease/disability were apparent. My Chinese side didn't want me to tell people - they meant it to protect me but there was some associated shame with the idea of having a disability. Having no visible symptoms, I kept my MS hidden for many years. But this year, I shared my story really publicly - I made a Facebook post and was one of the DSA's Spoon Stories. It was really overwhelming at first, but I wanted to start fundraising and getting involved in awareness and activism. I raised over \$1,000 this year and did the MS Walk. Next year will be the 10 year anniversary of my diagnosis. I have been thinking about doing the 10km run and trying to raise \$10k.



Anu Arvis

she/her/hers

My parents' beliefs and their social status were the leading force of my life growing up. I portrayed what they wanted to see in their daughter, there was no space for me to develop my own opinions or personality.

Moving away from them to New Zealand at 16 was probably the biggest step I have taken in my life. Being on my own really opened my eyes; I realised that I could be a separate individual from my parents and have my own dreams and aspirations. However, it was and still is hard finding and doing things that I enjoy and not feeling guilty about it.

My parents so often described the "perfect" woman to be a good cook, wife and mother. I know that a part of me still believes that there is no other future for me as a woman. Nevertheless, battle with myself everyday, I remind myself that I am more than just a "perfect daughter", I am who I am and I hope that my parents will soon be able to understand this.



Ariel Scott

they/them/theirs

I experienced the first 17 years of my life as a woman. At 17, I came to the realisation that I was gender diverse. Being perceived by society as a woman for both the first 17 years of my life as well as since, has impacted on how I experience gender.

I am not a woman. I identify with many of the experiences that women have. It seems strange to me that gender has such an impact on how we experience the world. I have noticed this a lot as an agender person, with the arguments around transgender, gender diverse, and intersex people. Transgender people are told to conform to their sex assigned at birth, whilst intersex people have coercive surgeries performed upon them to alter their sex.

Society has a strange obsession with gender, and enforcing gender norms and roles. I think it is harmful to say the least. Men, women, and transgender people can all reinforce these roles. But at what cost? How much does this hurt transgender, gender diverse, and intersex children, as well as those children who dare to cross the gendered boundaries?



Cat Yeong

she/her/hers

When I was little, I was told that I couldn't sit with my legs apart, because I had to be a lady and ladies do not act inappropriately. Yet when men act inappropriately, it is "just boys being boys". I was given constraints and barriers to live by, that my brothers did not have.

As a girl, I cannot leave the house alone. As a girl, I had to text the details about my whereabouts to my parents, because, as a girl, they are afraid of how the world is going to treat me. They are afraid, because they don't trust others to create an environment that is safe enough that their daughter can walk on the streets at night and not be scared. As a girl, I can see the disparity between the freedoms given to boys compared to girls. I can see the increase in fear of safety of girls, because boys are not told what that they cannot do.

As a girl, I hope the future at least, is safe.



Chloe Wong

she/her/hers

Since moving to Australia, I am often asked where home is for me, and truth be told, I don't really know how to answer that. Being born and raised in Singapore, and moving to Malaysia at 14, home is very much both. I never realised how much I didn't know about myself till I got here. I never realised how much being a woman of colour was such a huge part of my identity, and how everyone else saw me. Today, I still don't know exactly who I am, but that's okay, I still am learning. It's okay to still be figuring things out, you don't have to know everything.



Freya Willis

she/her/hers

Intersectionality to me is the experience of being invisible. I'm bi-sexual, but I'm pretty straight-passing. I'll be the first to acknowledge that this often gives me a lot of privilege. I don't face the same every-day discrimination or prejudice as many other minorities. But at the same time, it means I often feel like I'm not being my true self.

Most people assume I'm straight and that changes the way they treat me. They never ask me about the girls in my life. It can be difficult, more difficult than I expected, to correct people or make my bi-sexuality a more public part of my identity. There is always that fear of rejection or being treated differently.

Sometimes it makes me feel like an imposter. I spent a long time doubting if I was even Queer* enough to label myself Queer* and I still have to stop myself from opting out of Queer* spaces or talking about Queer* issues.



Gene Pinter

they/them/theirs

People have a lot more capacity for acceptance than you'd think; I won't deny there are some real sticks in the mud out there, but for the most part I feel like the general population is beginning to open themselves up to listening. Being non-binary isn't a completely foreign concept to a lot of people I interact with at uni, and the fact that I can casually tell someone my pronouns without having to go all Trans 101 on them is a tiny revolution in itself. Are there people who aren't cool with that? Of course, and there are going to be more - but then again, there are miles to go before I sleep.



Hero Cook

she/her/hers

I am not like a box of chocolates. You cannot look at my exterior and think you know me. You cannot pick and choose between my elements. I am not a mint woman one day, a hazelnut praline Australian another or a dark chocolate law student the next. I am the culmination of all my identities and experiences at once. And I have the right to alter these labels as I grow and change. So next time you see me, come say hi and get to know me, and you'll understand I'm much more like a delicious cake, with all my ingredients mixed together!



Iga Morzynska

she/her/hers

I often struggled to fit in and it took me some time to realise that femininity comes in all kinds of forms and shapes. People often make assumptions, thinking that it is up to them to define my identity. I still don't know how to walk in heels without instantly falling flat on my face, I often choose to wear a suit rather than a fancy dress, but it does not make me any less of a woman. Just like when I do decide to wear a dress and put makeup on, that does not give you permission to ask "Are you sure? But you don't look gay". Just because I do not fit into certain stereotypes does not mean I am anything less than what I identify myself as, and it is not up to you to question and define my identity. What being a woman means to me now is accepting myself for who I am, being confident in my sexuality and body, kind and respectful to women of all backgrounds, identities and beliefs. You don't have to fit into any stereotypes for your identity to be valid. You are enough and you are valid!



Janine Wan

she/her/hers

Before I came to Australia, I gave little thought to my identity and how it affects the way I move through the world. I lived a sheltered life - a cisgender woman attending girls' schools for most of my life, and part of the Chinese majority living in Singapore - a privileged enough position that I had the luxury of not actively learning about identity politics and feminism. Moving away from home when I was fifteen really opened my eyes and prompted me to analyse and critique everything I thought I knew - a process I now make sure to do, always. Keep an open mind, listen and learn, and you'll find that the world is far more complex than you once thought.



Jean-Luc Jirayut

she/her/hers or they/them/theirs

I guess growing up abroad and having to deal with the concept of being multi-ethnic has shaped my view towards gender. I grew up trying to conform to a prescribed view of masculinity, and inherently suppressing the inclination to express my femininity. However, much like being multi-ethnic, my gender and identity have remained the same. Rather, it has just become defined differently the more aware I have become of the possibilities of non-binary identities. In my experience, I would not say that being non-binary and transgender has affected who I am fundamentally, but has validated what I already know about myself. My experiences as a person of colour as well as being born between ethnicities and cultures have made me who I am today. Even though not all my experiences have been positive, it has made me value my friends and family.



Jessica Coote

she/her/hers

Growing up in Hong Kong, I was exposed to a melting-pot of cultures. Subconsciously, I gained an appreciation for how multiculturalism can positively impact and enrich a community. I now know that this environment changed me as a person, and as a young woman. Now living in Australia, I see fellow colleagues subject to harassment from the basis of lack of education; judgement from the basis of misunderstanding; and exclusion from the basis of misconception. I hope I can use my experiences to help educate our community about positive inclusion for all- with disregard for ethnic background, gender, sexuality, and religious affiliation.



Jharna Chamlagai

she/her/hers

I think it's important to show that to be an empowered woman, you don't have to fit in a certain box or tick certain criteria. There are so many associated with a person's identity that influence how we see ourselves and choose (or don't choose) to present to everyone else. As a woman of colour, it's especially important for me that I (and others) can draw on the intersectionality of culture and gender and sexuality to be empowered as it is something that influences my daily life.

In fact, myself and other women of colour will be exploring just how important it is to see people as complex individuals with complex experiences in our new radio show 'Oh, But Where Are You Really From?' coming second semester to Woroni Radio!



Julia Faragher

she/her/hers

There are many ways in which my identity as a woman intersects with my identity as an artist. My dream is to one day see my novel on the shelves in a bookstore, and it's disheartening to think about how lots of women still use male pseudonyms today. JK Rowling doesn't even have a middle name that starts with a 'K', her publisher just thought more children would read Harry Potter if they thought it was written by a man. I want to live in a world where people will interact with art regardless of whether it was made by a man or woman or any other gender identity. I want to be able to stick my name on everything I make because I'm proud of it and don't want to hide who I am.



Juliette Baxter

she/her/hers

In the past year I've become comfortable in identifying as a queer woman. I think especially in the so-called 'expat' communities I was a part of there was a strong sense of compulsory heteronormativity.

Therefore it took me a long time to confidently identify as queer. My dad was adopted and we only found out a few years ago that he is half-Chinese. For most of his life he didn't know who his biological parents were, nor did he didn't have a connection to his Chinese culture. He was the only person of colour in the country town where he grew up.

I don't really look Chinese, and growing up I was quite confused about that part of my identity. People would often say I looked like my dad, and I used to see that as a bad thing because it marked me as different.



Laura Perkov

she/her/hers

An important part of my feminism is looking outside of my own perspectives and experiences, challenging myself, and working to uplift others. Academically and personally, I aim to elevate and represent voices and stories that have typically been silenced or erased, particularly queer women, women of colour, non-Western women, and non-binary people - especially when they intersect and generate specific experiences of oppression. This led to my work in the Women's Department. I am currently the Secretary, and also run events for students who live off campus - living off campus comes with its own set of challenges that are not visible to other students, so I'm trying to raise awareness and alleviate some of the issues. I am also part of the founding team behind Restorative ANU, working to reform responses to violence on campus. I aim to make these spaces inclusive and understanding of not only what we have in common, but also how we differ.



Lucy Hull

she/her/hers

Being a girl is a relatively new piece to my identity. I have grown up presenting as a boy, and people may know me as Lewis. My experience of life so far has never felt congruent with how I wanted to experience it. The realisation that I wanted to change something so core to my identity was difficult to arrive at, but once I did I could finally see myself existing in the future, something that I was unable to do previously. Although on the outside I may not look like a girl yet, on the inside I am only feeling more comfortable with that part of my identity everyday. Figuring out that currently presenting as a boy does not detract from my identity as a girl made me feel like I could begin to live my life as I wanted to. I am fortunate enough to have an amazing support network; my family, staff members, health professionals, and friends are all there to help me through my journey right from the start. Live your life as you want to. Everyone should be allowed to make decisions and be supported in them. Even if there is some initial turbulence, living as yourself will be a positive change to your life, and I can definitely recommend trying to figure out who you really are and what you want to ultimately be.



Mackinlay Tikoft

she/her/hers or they/them/theirs

"We agree that all dogs are great no matter what they look like, why can't we think the same thing about people? I am comfortable being me, why does my assurance in how I choose to express myself make others uncomfortable?"



Naini Rautela

she/her/hers

Growing up I didn't think deeply about feminist values or cultural stereotypes. I put myself in the narrow bracket of an Indian- Australian woman and let that be the explanation for any cases of discrimination I faced.

However, it is bizarre to think we can simply categorise ourselves in such a way considering the complexity of our identities. You cannot simply make one Women of Colour's experience and struggle the basis for every other Women of Colour. Rather we need to embrace the multitude of different stories, each shaped by a plethora of different factors.



Natalie Ziegler

she/her/hers

As a queer woman who spends a lot of time with straight women and in heteronormative environments and presents as femme/passing, I've found intersectionality to be personally validating since it's a framework that accounts for the difference in lived experiences amongst women. My sexuality and gender, in my eyes, are interlinked and I do experience them together and I think my experiences are quite different from those of my straight female friends. We experience the same but also different challenges and joys in womanhood, and I appreciate how intersectionality acknowledges instead of erases the differences.



Nupur Apte

she/her/hers

Being a woman ultimately means there must be a social hurdle to overcome. Furthermore, being a woman of colour means that this hurdle is exacerbated. I refuse to look at my life this way. My identity isn't an inconvenience for me and I will always be proud to be who I am.



Olive Ivanoff

she/her/hers

I have always been grateful to live in a country that encourages education amongst women. This opportunity has driven me to prove to society that I am capable of so much more than just cooking, cleaning and aiming to be visually appealing. I hope to be defined and valued not by my physical appearance, but by my intelligence, personality and desire to contribute academically to society.



Prisca Ochan

she/her/hers

In institutions like ANU (and just about every school I have attended), where there are about four people of African descent, I am very aware of the fact that I'm Black. I simultaneously feel invisible and hyper-visible. I've had to reflect on the realities of often being the only Black face in a room. I could spend all day on campus and not see another person who looks like me. As a Black woman, race is something that is constant, and sometimes people treat me differently because of it. People will question my intelligence and competence (overtly or otherwise), and men will exoticise and fetishise me, confessing that they have "never been with a black girl before." Black men will tell me that they don't like Black women.



Misogynoir is real, believe me. I can't go to Priceline and find makeup that matches my skin colour. I can't go to any salon to get my hair done. My natural features are deemed unattractive on me, and most of the time I'm not confident enough to wear my natural hair... And that's not necessarily because I dislike my natural hair (indeed, that's sometimes true, but hundreds of years of colonialism will do that to you). It's also because Black hair is very political, and life is easier when my hair is straight. Currently, I'm working on my confidence—being confident enough to wholeheartedly embrace my natural hair and my natural features...To paraphrase Black writer Ntozake Shange, being Black and a woman is a metaphysical dilemma I have yet to conquer. I'm still working on this dilemma of mine.

Being an intersectional feminist means acknowledging that the colour of the body in which you walk in this world creates a different world. When you are Black and a woman, you are served with the worst of both worlds. My blackness impacts the way in which I experience oppression and discrimination. Being an intersectional feminist means that you don't pretend that these problems don't exist. You realise that there is no one-size-fits-all type of feminism. You don't claim to not see colour. Because you do.





Priyanka Tomar

she/her/hers

I've been really lucky and have been raised in a family that strongly believes in women's empowerment. For this reason, I've always been very proud to identify as a woman of colour. However, sometimes I have felt like the unique challenges I face because of my intersecting identities can be overlooked, even within the feminist community. I believe it's so important that whenever we discuss any issue, we consider all the factors that may influence somebody's identity whether that be race, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other lived experience. That is why I feel that the spaces that are created for women should always be accessible and inclusive for those from all walks of life.



Sanjoli Banerjee

she/her/hers

I have so many identities attached to me. I am a female biologically, an Indian citizen, a Hindu by religion, a Punjabi-Bengali by ethnicity etc. but

'what's in a name?' I feel these identities should not bind you or characterise you as a certain 'type' of person. I am not reminded of my association with these characteristics in my daily routine. Moreover, I would rather prefer to be called an explorer or a global citizen or would love to introduce myself as one of the youngest social activists in my home country. Why not?



Siang Jin Law

she/her/hers

I think the most interesting experience of being an international female student is how easy it is to forget that gender exists. I am lucky enough to have a family who believes in equal opportunities, and so much of university life revolves around opportunities for everyone no matter their identity. But sometimes small things like a distant relative commenting on how much prettier I am after I've lost weight, or someone asking me how I got so good at English, remind me of how far wider society is from being the accepting and open-minded environment that ANU is lucky enough to have. But I'd like to think that things are changing, thanks to the many wonderful strong women all around the world who fight every day to improve our world. As someone once said, 'here's to strong women: may we know them, may we be them, may we raise them.'



Sumithri Venketasubramanian

she/her/hers

I identify more closely with being a woman of colour, than just being a woman. Because my experience of gender is so tied to my background and feels inextricable from my race and ethnicity, if I hadn't found that my experiences were shared with other women like me, I don't know if I would be able to say with as much confidence that I am a woman.

Speaking of race and ethnicity, a couple of pals and I are launching a show next semester on Woroni Radio called 'Oh, But Where Are You Really From?' where we're going to have some hectic discussions about race, religion and identity with some amazing guests. We've got a Facebook page, like us and find out more about what we're up to til we go on air in Semester 2!



Tanika Sibal

she/her/hers

The ANU Women of Colour Collective has honestly been one of my favourite things about being at ANU. I've always identified as a woman, but only since coming to uni have I realised that I am a 'Woman of Colour'. This term is now something that I identify strongly with, as my ethnicity is also such a large part of who I am. My high school was a very multicultural place, over 80% of the students spoke a language other than English at home. Being at ANU is a little bit of a different story (haha), I think this why suddenly the term 'Woman of Colour' has become so important to me - in saying that, I don't mean I'm suddenly this alienated character, I'm still the same woman as before, just with a different experience to my white counterparts.



Tracey Beattie

she/her/hers

Most people don't realise the difficulties that come with being a mixed woman. For the past twenty years I've always been asked questions that make me question my sense of belonging, like 'what are you?' or 'where are you 'actually' from?' However, I have now realised that the world isn't black and white, so why should I be? My identity should not be defined by how well I fit into a certain country or culture, but by who I am as a person. Am I Australian because of my dad? Am I Vietnamese because of my mum? Am I Thai because I've lived there nearly all my life? I can now say that I am all of them and so much more.



Vishakha Nogaja

she/her/hers

I don't think I ever felt "Indian" till I came to university. It was only after I stepped outside of my privileged bubble into an unfamiliar environment that I realised how much being a woman of colour was part of my identity. It shapes how I experience the world, how I make sense of it. It took me a move to another continent to get back in touch with my culture, and sometimes you need that. A different lens to look at things from, to appreciate and embrace your roots.

