

INTERSECTIONALITY CASE STUDY HANDOUT

Intersectionality Case Study 1 – Militia Groups

Y is a black WHRD who lives in a favela in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, a region of territorial disputes between militias and drug dealers, with high rates of violence. Both groups are involved in illegal activities such as drug trafficking and gambling and also control politics and public services in the territory.

Y is a community leader who works in a local organization that supports marginalized people through activities such as the distribution of food baskets, popular education, and medical assistance for children. In this organization there are also women who have relatives in militia groups.

Since the municipal elections she has faced threats because she refused to support the militia candidate. Since then, her social network has been monitored.

On international women's day, she posted on social media a campaign about domestic violence. The post referred to a government campaign encouraging the reporting of cases of violence against women.

An hour later, a man appeared in front of her house and threatened to kill her "Don't you know you live in a slum, Auntie? It goes through this" (pointing to the gun and her wall). Her brother arrived at her house 15 minutes later saying that he received a message that she was targeted to die. She deleted the post and left her house.

In the neighbourhood where she lived, only police officers use security and surveillance equipment in front of their houses, such as cameras and custom-made fences.

Y uses social media to promote her human rights work.

She is the legal sponsor of the local organization. And she is well recognized for her work as WHRD in the networks of black feminist organisations.

Questions:

1. what are the key aspects of the WHRD's intersectionality here?
2. what vulnerabilities and capacities does X have as a result of her identity?
3. what protection measures do you think she should consider?

Intersectionality case study 2 – Refugee Camp

X is a WHRD who was born in Egypt and married a man from Iraq. Due to worsening conditions including detention of opposition activists such as X in Egypt, she and her husband left for Europe to claim asylum.

In the refugee camp they arrived at in Europe, X's education and professional experience and fluency in English added to the practical help she gave to women in the camp helped her to get a job assisting in the Safe House for women living in the camp.

On arrival at the Safe House, the women survivors are asked to agree never to reveal its whereabouts.

While the Safe House is physically well protected, there have been general threats by conservative male relatives against anyone helping women to gain protection there. X has been followed, and received anonymous calls on her phone.

X's phone has contacts and information from other refugees seeking asylum in the country and in other countries, and also contacts with the Safe House and women experiencing violence in the camp.

The decision on the asylum application of X and her husband is still pending. X has young children, and balances childcare with her job. Sometimes her situation feels overwhelming. She recently heard a rumour in the camp that an influential male asylum seeker had been overheard saying that she could be abducted if she carried on doing what she was doing.

Questions:

1. what are the key aspects of the WHRD's intersectionality here?
2. what vulnerabilities and capacities does X have as a result of her identity?
3. what protection measures do you think she should consider?

Intersectionality Case Study 3: Discrimination within the human rights community

B is a trans woman of colour working for the rights of indigenous communities in Colombia. Her work involves the promotion and protection of indigenous and campesino rights including through rural demilitarisation and peace negotiation between communities and paramilitary groups.

B visited Ireland on Front Line Defender's Rest and Respite programme, during which time she was introduced to human rights movements in Ireland. Two weeks after arriving she attended a seminar being given by a prominent white Irish LGBTIQ+ rights defender and defender of the rights of those with HIV/AIDS, named R.

During the seminar, R spoke about rapid the advances that Ireland had made in the field of LGBTIQ+ rights, from its legalisation in 1992 to marriage equality in 2015. He spoke highly of the work of gay rights defenders who made this rapid transition possible and highlighted how LGBTIQ+ persons now enjoy pretty much full rights when compared to others in society.

B asked the R about the remaining tasks for Irish society in the field of LGBTIQ+ rights, particularly how to address trans rights and the rights of people of colour. In response he claimed that most of the work was done, Ireland was a multicultural country and virtually no one had a problem with LGBTIQ+ persons, so there was very little further that could be addressed. Though he mentioned Ireland's high rate of HIV infection.

After the seminar, R gave queer walking tour of Dublin, he pointed to the various places of historical importance predominantly with regards to Irish gay men. B, who was troubled by the lack of visibility for queer women, trans people and queer people of colour in the city, spoke about her observations and personal experiences and asked R why these issues seemed absent from both past and present narratives. R became defensive. He claimed those issues were historically less relevant and didn't need separate examination.

B was dissatisfied with the attitude of R and left the walking tour. She did not feel comfortable engaging with any more LGBTIQ+ umbrella organisations.

Questions:

1. What are the aspects of B's intersectionality here?
2. What are the aspects of R's intersectionality here?
3. Do either B or R face risk in this story? How?
4. Do B or R display any capabilities? Can you think of ways they can improve their capabilities?
5. What does this story tell us about the importance of intersectionality within the human rights community?