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Inequality is all around us, it is so deeply ingrained in our society's systems that it often slips under the radar, especially for those of us who experience privilege because of these systems. How one makes sense of the world is based on one's positionalities, how one sees the world, and how the world sees them. The root of almost all inequalities is the power imbalance that exists in our society. This power imbalance is most clearly seen through race, gender, and class dynamics. These are the three inequalities I will be focusing on.

As a white female-identifying person who grew up lower-middle class, I have a complex relationship with the inequalities mentioned above. I grew up in a small town in southern Maine with roughly a 98% white population. My race was never something I had to grow up thinking about, I always looked like everyone else in my classrooms and could relate to what I saw not only in real life but in media as well. I first noticed race being deeply ingrained into a system in ballet class when I was seven. It was getting close to recital time, and our dance teacher was going over what we needed for costumes, the shoes we had been using all year, our hair pieces, and lastly, “skin-colored tights.” As we were leaving class my mom and I stopped in the dance store to get me a new pair of tights for the recital, also in the store was a girl named Mia who was in my dance class. I excitedly ran over to her and started talking about my excitement for the recital and how I always loved getting a new pair of tights. Mia’s smile faded, and she turned away from me, confused. I asked what was wrong, and Mia responded by saying, “Buying new tights is always hard for me; they never have a pair that matches my legs.” That was the first time I truly thought about the fact that Mia was black; her race was never an essential factor in our friendship, so I rarely thought about it. Mia, however, was constantly reminded of her race every time we were in dance class and her tights were lighter than her skin tone. While this may

seem like a minuscule example in the grand scheme of things, for this little girl, it became a piece of her identity. The lack of range in the color of tights for young girls is a perfect example of how racism has been hidden in society. There is a lack of space for people of races other than white to feel 100% entirely included.

The social stigmas that people of color face are not the only ways that race plays a role in today's society. As a white person, I am automatically "ahead" in life than those of color simply because the systems are set up to make people who look like me succeed. This can be seen in different ways, especially how police interact with different communities and within different schools. There is a vocational school in Roxbury, MA that has a majority of students of color, this school is in the same building as a majority white school. These two schools share a gym, yet their students' experiences are wildly different. For the majority of white schools, there is one SRO assigned, and the students can walk into the building freely without any hassle and can carry their backpacks with them throughout the day. On the other side of the building, the students have a much different experience. Every morning, the students at this vocational high school must walk through metal detectors while their bags are being searched by one of the seven SROs assigned to their half of the building. This is an example of blatant racism that is excused by society.

Gender is a spectrum, whether you identify as male, female, nonbinary, genderfluid, or transgender, there is a human desire to see yourself reflected in positions of power. The idea of a glass ceiling usually refers to female-identifying people, but this issue also extends to many other groups. The lack of diversity seen in positions of power is a problem for more reasons than just representation. The people who are in power are the ones who get to make the rules for those who are not, this translates to a lack of fundamental rights being met for the "minority" groups.

The clearest example of this is the issue of reproductive rights in America. People who have a uterus are currently under attack by the US government, and a significant reason is that the majority of people who are voting on this issue do not have a uterus. This causes an issue because the people in power vote on issues they have no real personal ties to and therefore do not think about the potential consequences. If there were more women or people with uteruses in positions of power, the ability to pass laws that take away our rights would be significantly more challenging.

The lack of diversity in positions of power also causes a systemic issue. When asked at a young age to draw a politician, children will often draw a person that matches their gender; it is at approximately age 6 or 7 that young girls start to draw males for politicians automatically. This is an example of the systemic impact that the lack of diversity has on society. Young girls stop picturing themselves in positions of power because that is not what they see; they see older white men. Female-identifying people struggle to have a sense of belonging in positions of power because there really haven't been very many females in power. When Kamala Harris was sworn in as Vice President of the United States, I cried. I cried for my younger self, I cried for my older self, and I cried for all of the young girls who now will never know a world in which America has never had a female vice president. The fact that Kamala is also a woman of color means that now women of color who have historically been treated the worst in this country, now get to see themselves reflected in a way they never have before.

The inequalities of this country cannot be seen as individual issues; they are all overlapping issues that need to be addressed. There is an insurmountable need to look at the intersectionalities of these issues in this country, and how they affect all aspects of life, from schooling to social issues, to how children see themselves in the world.