

**“Pariah” (2007/2011):
Race, Gender, and Sexual Identity**

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PARIAH

- Pariah (Puy-rah-yuh): 1. a person without status. 2. a rejected member of society. 3. an outcast



Writer Director, Dee Rees

Autobiographical
coming of age
narrative ...



Captures coming
out as a Lesbian,
African American,
Middles Class,
Urban youth

Identity

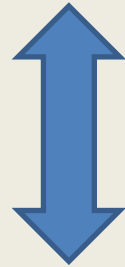
SEX: Phenotypic sex characteristics—biophysical characteristics ... male, female, intersexual, transsexual

GENDER: Cultural construction of the perceived biophysical facts or behaviors—socio-cultural labels of bio-behavioral and psychosocial qualities of the sexes – i.e. feminine, masculine, trans,

SEXUALITY: Sexual behaviors, feelings, thoughts, attractions, practices -- homosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, asexual, pansexual

PLACE

Place: position - spot -
situation – locality-
privilege.....



social class, origins,
identity, culture

A Lens



- **Hegemony:** The processes by which dominant culture maintains its dominant position.
- **Racism:** “The belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance.” (Lorde, 1984)
- **Heteronormativity:** Denoting or relating to a world view that promotes heterosexuality as the normal or preferred sexual orientation
- **Same/Homo/Fluid Sexuality:** Falls out of binary, two party sexual system ..threatens established social hierarchy of patriarchal control
- **Homophobia:** Irrational fear of GLBTQ people/behavior

LARGER THEMES

Heteronormativity

Race

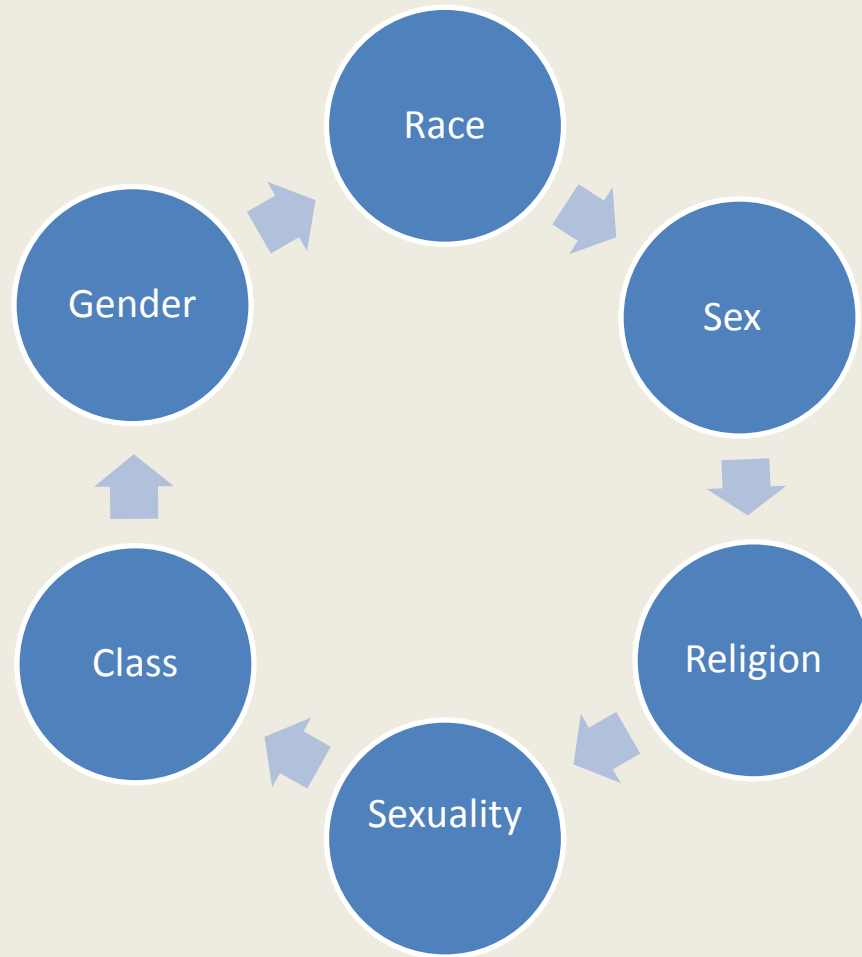
Sex

Gender

Class

Religion

INTERSECTIONALITY



SELF among Cultural Hegemony

- “I find I am constantly being encouraged to pluck out ...one aspect of myself and present this as the meaningful whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of self” (Lorde, 1984).
- Sexual identity hidden to maintain family and community relationships.
- Strict religious interpretations add to homophobia/lead to internalized racism/sexism in African American community and family and institutionalized racism externally constructed imposed on race/sex/culture.

RELIGION and SEXUALITY

- The church symbolic of empowerment and strength in African American culture and community A pillar of strength before slavery ... a voice for humanity in community.
- Some religious doctrines stress need to convert LGBTQ individuals from sinful lifestyles to avoid damnation.
- Introduces a space a conflict/inhibits religious freedom among LGBTQ individuals.

Themes of African American/Sexual Identity within Heteropatriarchy

- Importance of Religion
- Gender Role Socialization
- Significance/Influence of Family
- Intersections of Race, Sex, Gender, Sexual Orientation
- Integration within Dominant Culture/Dominant Lesbian Culture
- Desire for Validation for all Aspects of Identity within Place/Communities

FREEDOM

- *As Black women we have the right and responsibility to define ourselves and seek our allies...we have the right to recognize each other without fear and to love where we choose. Both lesbian and heterosexual Black women today share a history of bonding and strength to which our sexual identities and our other differences must not blind us (Lorde, 1984).*

CLIPS

- <http://focusfeatures.com/pariah>
- [http://focusfeatures.com/pariah/videos?film=pariah&folder=what pariah means to me](http://focusfeatures.com/pariah/videos?film=pariah&folder=what_pariah_means_to_me)
- [http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/13/world/asia/taiwan-buddhist-same-sex-wedding/index.html?hpt=hp t2](http://www.cnn.com/2012/08/13/world/asia/taiwan-buddhist-same-sex-wedding/index.html?hpt=hp_t2)

Discussion Questions

- How do aspects of race, sex, gender, sexuality, religion, and place intersect and operate in the film, *Pariah*?
- How do examples of “hegemonic heteronormativity” affect Li and Laura’s path to being themselves?
- Consider the last scene of the film when Li’s father comes to see Li. Why do you think the director ends the film at this moment, and what would you imagine happens?
- Lorde states: “And of course I am afraid, because the transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation, and that always seems fraught with danger.” What are the dangers that Li and Laura face in being who they are? What silence do they transform?
- What kind of action does the film itself provoke with the final scene of Li facing her father?
- How do place and class operate in Li’s family?