



# STUDY GUIDE

## WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?

---

**KEY TERMS:** Leftist orthodoxy      identity      intersectionality  
victim      paradigm      oppressor

<b>NOTE-TAKING COLUMN:</b> Complete this section <u>during</u> the video. Include definitions and key terms.	<b>CUE COLUMN:</b> Complete this section <u>after</u> the video.
<p>When does your opinion matter, according to Leftist orthodoxy?</p> <p>What is intersectionality, and who is at the bottom of it?</p> <p>What trumps all other considerations when it comes to identity politics?</p>	<p>How does the Left view identity?</p> <p>How does intersectionality work?</p>

## DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

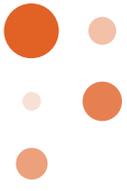
- Towards the beginning of the video, Mr. Shapiro points out that, “... according to current Leftist orthodoxy... your opinion only matters relative to your identity and where that identity ranks on the hierarchy of intersectionality.” Why do you think that the Left advocates such a myopic viewpoint? What factors do you think have contributed to the development of such a viewpoint?
- Mr. Shapiro goes on to define Intersectionality as, “...a form of identity politics in which the value of your opinion depends on how many victim groups you belong to. At the bottom of the totem pole is the person everybody loves to hate – the straight, white male.” Do you think that constructing a hierarchy of victimhood as the basis of a political platform, and thereby becoming the benchmark for valuing the worth of someone’s opinion, is an equitable and good approach to examining and developing political issues, activism, and policy development? Why or why not? Considering that straight, white males are often victims too, why do you think that they are despised by the Left? Explain.
- Later in the video, Mr. Shapiro explains that, “Intersectionality takes your victim status and uses it as the basis for creating alliances with other victim groups. Thirty or forty years ago, activists encouraged racial solidarity among blacks to combat oppression. But today that is not enough. Today’s activists demand blacks make common cause with other allegedly ‘oppressed’ people – gays, lesbians, transgendered, Palestinians, Native Americans, whomever... By focusing on the places where various victim identities intersect, intersectionality creates a united ‘us’ versus ‘them’ paradigm: righteous victims rising up together to fight the oppressor, those dreaded straight, white men.” Do you think that joining with other victim groups strengthens and helps the black community that is advocating for black issues, or does joining with disparate, other groups weaken the position of blacks advocating for black issues? Explain. Do you think that all supposed ‘victim’ groups are, or feel that they are, equally oppressed and equally strengthened by uniting together, as is the premise of identity politics? Why or why not? Do you think that the ‘us v. them’ paradigm and mentality is a legitimate basis for actual change- i.e. do you think that blaming and protesting against white men is going to produce the outcomes that the ‘victim’ groups want? Why or why not? Do you think that ‘victim’ groups are necessarily righteous simply because they claim to be oppressed? Explain.
- Mr. Shapiro concludes the video by pointing out that, “...most important, intersectionality promotes the biggest hoax of all: that we aren’t individuals who are to be judged on the basis of how we act but are merely members of groups to be judged on the basis of our group identity. In other words, you and I as individuals with our unique experiences, thoughts and ambitions count for nothing; our racial and sexual identity count for everything. It’s hard to imagine an idea less likely to produce a free and equal America than that.” What do you think Mr. Shapiro means by this last statement? Why do you think that the Left views the world so heavily through the lens of superficial categories and judges people based on that, rather than judge people based on individual merit, character, achievement, and aspects that an individual can actually control and make decisions about?

## EXTEND THE LEARNING:

### CASE STUDY: Queer Palestinians/ Palestinian Queers

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Queers for Palestine?” and “Aswat – Palestinian Feminist Queer Movement for Sexual and Gender Freedoms,” then answer the questions that follow.

- What is QUIT, what is their rationale for existing, and what do they do? Why does the author characterize QUIT as oxymoronic? What do Palestinians do to gay people? Why is the Gaza Strip a dangerous place for gay people? Who does the GLF associate itself with? Why? What does the GLF believe? Why do so many queer Palestinians go to Israel? What is ASWAT, what is its mission, and what does it do? What does ASWAT highlight?
- Where do you think queer Palestinian women would be placed on the ‘intersectionality ladder of victimhood?’ Do you think that black American males would be higher or lower than queer Palestinian women on the ‘intersectionality ladder of victimhood?’ Explain. Do you honestly think that Palestinian women care about issues facing black men in America? Do you think that queer Palestinian women can relate to black American males and could feel united with black American males? Why or why not? Do you think that most ‘victim’ groups, especially queer Palestinians, are actually victims because of white males? Why or why not? Considering that progressives tend to value equality above all else, do you think that a Leftist can somehow rationalize and reconcile the hierarchal victim ladder of intersectionality with the progressive agenda? If so, how? If not, why not?
- What are some fundamental problems with intersectionality? Why do you think that the Left only approaches politics in terms of identity, rather than on the objective merits of issues? In what ways might identity politics be considered ‘Un-American?’ After watching the video and reading the articles, have you learned anything new and have your views related to this content changed at all? Explain.



# QUIZ

## WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?

---

1. According to current leftist orthodoxy, your opinion \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. matters
  - b. is irrelevant
  - c. only matters relative to your wealth
  - d. only matters relative to your identity
  
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is a form of identity politics in which the value of your opinion depends on how many victim groups you belong to.
  - a. Intersectionality
  - b. Leftism
  - c. Socialism
  - d. Democracy
  
3. Which of the following are considered “oppressed” by today’s activists?
  - a. Heterosexuals
  - b. Males
  - c. Wealthy
  - d. Palestinians
  
4. Intersectionality creates a united “us” versus “them” paradigm.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
5. \_\_\_\_\_ is the most open, least racist nation on the planet.
  - a. France
  - b. England
  - c. Canada
  - d. America



# QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

## WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?

---

1. According to current leftist orthodoxy, your opinion \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. matters
  - b. is irrelevant
  - c. only matters relative to your wealth
  - d. only matters relative to your identity
  
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is a form of identity politics in which the value of your opinion depends on how many victim groups you belong to.
  - a. Intersectionality
  - b. Leftism
  - c. Socialism
  - d. Democracy
  
3. Which of the following are considered “oppressed” by today’s activists?
  - a. Heterosexuals
  - b. Males
  - c. Wealthy
  - d. Palestinians
  
4. Intersectionality creates a united “us” versus “them” paradigm.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
5. \_\_\_\_\_ is the most open, least racist nation on the planet.
  - a. France
  - b. England
  - c. Canada
  - d. America

## Queers for Palestine?



Of all the slogans chanted and displayed at anti-Israel rallies over the past month, surely "Queers for Palestine" ranks as the most oxymoronic.

By James Kirchick  
January 28 2009 12:00 AM EST

Of all the slogans chanted and displayed at anti-Israel rallies over the past month, surely "Queers for Palestine" ranks as the most oxymoronic. It is the motto of the San Francisco-based Queers Undermining Israeli Terrorism (QUIT), a group advocating financial divestment from the Jewish State. QUIT contends that Zionism is racism, regularly demonstrates at gay pride marches, organizes with far-right Muslim organizations, and successfully lobbied the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission to boycott the 2006 World Pride Conference due to its location that year in Jerusalem.

What makes QUIT oxymoronic is that their affinity for Palestine isn't reciprocated. There may be queers for Palestine, but Palestine certainly isn't for queers, either in the livable or empathetic sense. Like all Islamic polities, the Palestinian Authority systematically harasses gay people. Under the cloak of rooting out Israeli "collaborators," P.A. officials extort, imprison, and torture gays. But Palestinian oppression of homosexuality isn't merely a matter of state policy, it's one firmly rooted in Palestinian society, where hatred of gays surpasses even that of Jews. Last October, a gay Palestinian man with an Israeli lover petitioned Israel's high court of justice for asylum, claiming that his family threatened to kill him if he did not "reform." He's one of the few lucky Palestinians to be able to challenge his plight.

And that's only in the relatively benign West Bank. The Gaza Strip, which has stagnated under the heel of Hamas's Islamofascist rule since 2007, is an even more dangerous place for gays, "a minority of perverts and the mentally and morally sick," in the words of a senior Hamas leader. As in Iran, Hamas's patron and the chief sponsor of international terrorism, even the mere suspicion of homosexuality will get one killed in Gaza, being hurled from the roof of a tall building the method of choice.

It's these facts that make the notion of "Queers for Palestine" so bizarre. Contrary to what some gay activists might have you believe, there really are not that many political subjects where one's sexuality ought influence an opinion. Aside from the obvious issues related to civic equality (recognition of partnerships, open service in the military, etc.), how does homosexuality imply a particular viewpoint on complicated matters like Social Security Reform, health care policy, or the war in Iraq?

The answer, at least for some of those on the left side of the spectrum, is one found in the early rhetoric of the Gay Liberation Front, the leading gay rights organization to emerge after the Stonewall riots. The GLF was, in the words of historian Paul Berman, the "gay wing of the revolutionary alliance" that in the 1970s challenged the liberal consensus and came to be known as the "New Left."

GLF leaders, for instance, played an instrumental role in the creation of the Venceremos Brigade, which dispatched starry-eyed American radicals to pick sugar cane in Cuba as a show of solidarity with the regime of Fidel Castro. (Like the Palestinian Authority, Communist Cuba didn't exactly return the kindness of its gay sympathizers; for decades it interned gays and HIV-positive individuals in prison labor camps). The GLF allied itself with a whole host of radical organizations (like the murderous Black Panthers) whose role in the struggle for gay equality was tenuous at best. And the very name of the GLF was adopted from the National Liberation Front, the moniker of the Vietnamese Communists.

Why does this history matter now? Although you will find few out-and-out Marxists in the leadership of gay organizations today, most gay activists still view the world with the same sort of "oppression" complex epitomized by the early radicals who led the GLF. They believe gay people to be "oppressed," and hold that any other group claiming the same victim status should earn the support of gays.

It's for this reason that every major gay organization was so hesitant to talk about the overwhelming support among African-Americans to ban gay marriage in California, and why the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force went so far as to commission a bogus study ostensibly refuting that disturbing statistic itself. In the estimation of the gay rights establishment, African-Americans, like gays, are "oppressed," and there is no room for enemies on the left.

But gays will never get anywhere as long as they view the world in this constrictive and counterproductive way. Indeed, if one wanted to construe a "gay" position on the Arab-Israeli conflict -- that is, examine the issue purely through the prism of the welfare of gay people -- the inescapable stance is nothing less than partiality for Israel. Israel, after all, is the only state in the Middle East that legally enshrines the rights of gay people. Gays serve openly in the military and occupy high-profile positions in business and public life, and Tel Aviv is an international gay mecca. As clichéd as it may sound, Israel is an oasis of liberal tolerance in a reactionary religious backwater, and if gay people want to stand with the "oppressed" of the region, it is the Palestinians seeking a peaceful, two-state solution, not the murderers of Hamas or their backers in Tehran, who merit support.

None of this is to say that gay people are wrong for sympathizing with the downtrodden and genuinely oppressed; on the contrary, it's an admirable quality. But all too often, ideologues with ulterior motives and radical agendas pervert this worthy instinct.

It's one thing to express concern about the humanitarian conditions in the Palestinian territories. But to stand alongside the enthusiasts of religious fascism isn't "progressive." It's obscene.

<https://www.astraeaoundation.org/stories/aswat-palestinian-gay-women/>

## **Aswat – Palestinian Feminist Queer Movement for Sexual and Gender Freedoms**

Aswat is a feminist queer movement for sexual and gender freedom for Palestinian women.



Aswat is a feminist queer movement for sexual and gender freedom for Palestinian women, who are part of an indigenous minority living and discriminated against in the state of Israel. Our mission is to empower queer Palestinian and Arab women, and stimulate an alternative discourse that promotes the struggle for sexual rights and freedoms with a community-based and grassroots focus. We envision a Palestinian society that respects the sexual and gender diversity of all its members and understands its struggle as intersectional against all forms of oppression and discrimination. By building a vibrant, mature, strong, and proactive cadre of young feminist queer and trans leaders, Aswat hopes to challenge the existing mainstream views and attitudes about sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender identity in the Palestinian society and regionally.

Aswat remains the only group in Palestine that is entirely composed of queer and trans women that directly works on issues related to Palestinian women's sexualities from an intersectional and queer perspective. As a grassroots organization, we are part of the community of beneficiaries for whom we work. We involve the community of queer Palestinian women in all of our activities, and we design our projects based on their needs and well-being, as well as the gaps that exist in the knowledge and sovereignty of the wider Palestinian societies.

Legal and political discrimination hinders Palestinian women from developing their own discourse on sexual rights and freedoms. Aswat has to bypass a rigid system of Israeli laws to implement effective programs for sexuality education. At the same time, we deal with conservative stakeholders, and social and religious taboos that interfere with our work in the field. In the reality of Occupation, Colonization,

Apartheid, and the geographical separation of Palestinians, Aswat contributes to offering an alternative to Israel's Pinkwashing practices and Palestinian taboos regarding sexual freedoms and rights. By showcasing contextualized perspectives and positionalities from within Palestine and the region, or stemming from movements of queer resistance, it reaffirms the role of queer Palestinian resistance in the struggle for sexual freedoms and national liberation. At the same time, it highlights the importance of regional solidarity and collaboration by shedding the light on the intersectionality of regional struggles with the aim of advancing issues of sexual and bodily rights, and standing against occupation.

Aswat's work is needed to help queer Palestinian women and trans be more at ease with their identity as both Palestinians and queers, and rally them around the centrality of queer liberation for a free and just society. In addition to raising awareness within Palestinian societies, our work ensures that community leaders, activists, artists, academics and service providers are engaged in and mobilized around a critical dialogue about sexuality and the discourse of sexual orientation and gender identity.