Patricia Hill Collins looks at the phenomenon of intersectionality through the doors of two basic components of humanity, race and gender. She observes the black woman, or the black feminine, as the ultimate image of inequality that results from the intersection of the race and gender. This is evident since the masculine is theoretically the dominant gender in our societies, as well as the white is the dominant race in most of our societies. This leaves the black women with little or almost no form of authority. This intersectionality, on the other hand, could be used as a tool for unifying this group or category of people for their own beliefs, rights, and point of views.

Audre Lorde’s quote “the true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations we which seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us”, suggests that we should not only find the oppressors’ discrimination, prejudice, racism, and inequality, but we should fight these qualities first internally, in our own selves and from within, just as Rankine claims in “Let it begin in me”. One should clear one’s negative intersectionality embedded in one’s unconsciousness, and then go out and fight for
compensation and equality with the outside world. “To get at that “piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us” we need at least two things...”. This quote emphasizes the importance of unity to annihilate oppression; in addition to that, comparing and ranking oppressions will not solve the problem, but rather make it worse.

Domination and subordination function in intersectionality could be explained by the intersectionality of different races or genders. For instance, a white woman is dominant, and the black woman is subordinate in our society; we detect this phenomenon through racism throughout history and until now. The same concept applies to gender, as the man is the dominant party of the patriarchal society, while the woman is subordinate. But according to Collins, intersectionality has a building role in the society, as various races, classes, genders, ages, sexuality, ethnicity, and nation play a role in social construction, and social organization. Relating this to my sociology class, the structural functionalist theory is a theory that views the intersectionality, and the variety of social categories, as a part of social construction and build up, in which the chances of one category provide chances to another. We can reconceptualize by acquiring “both new theories of how race, class and gender have shaped the experiences not just of women of color, but of all groups”.

Dichotomous thinking can be explained by the two colors black and white. One clearly has a dominant status over the other. The same applies to men and women, for fact and opinion, for thought and feeling.
Dichotomy creates eternal classification of each group, tearing humanity apart and focusing on these social categories as the only expression of identity. Collins claims that there are two methods of considering dichotomy which are “either/or” or “both/and”. She focuses on how we should utilize the “positive” form of dichotomy presented by both/and, and not either/or. She explains this idea by relating to her roles in society “I am both a college professor and a mother—I don’t stop being a mother when I drop my child off at school, or forget anything I learned while scrubbing the toilet”.

Institutional oppression is the oppression found in schools, hospitals, businesses, and the workplace and government agencies in which there is a claim of equality, but in reality discrimination rules. “Even though the working of the institutional dimension of oppression are often obscured with ideologies claiming equality of opportunity, in actuality, race, class, and gender place” different categories “subordinate types” of people “in distinct institutional niches with varying degrees of penalty and privilege”.

Symbolic dimension of oppression, is simply looking at the term of classification (race, gender, class), and stereotyping, as claiming what they resemble based on previous acculturation and ideologies. “Central to this process is the use of stereotypical or controlling images of diverse race, class, and gender groups”. Collins gives us the example of men and women and how we symbolize man as the aggressive, strong,
leader gender while the woman as passive, follower and emotional.

Individual dimension of oppression is our beliefs and concepts that are based on both the institutional and the symbolic dimensions of oppression. “Our individual biographies vary tremendously. As a result of our institutional and symbolic statuses, all of our choices become political acts. After that, we use these concepts in forming our own biographies, the individual ones.