

Reading questions for Excluded, by Julia Serano

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Block 4

Our final block of the book includes Chapters 16 through 21. These last chapters give us a framework and tools for inclusively challenging sexism.

Questions for before you read Block 4

- We learned about marked traits, double standards, and double binds in Block 3. What are some ways to challenge these?
- Describe a time you've changed your mind about a deeply held belief related to sexism.
- How important are the words we use in our discourse?
- Describe homogeneity, heterogeneity, and what real inclusion looks like.
- How does cancel culture intersect with this?

Questions for during and after you read Block 4

16, Fixed Versus Holistic Perspectives

- Describe how intersectional identity combines with single-issue activism to produce exclusion.
- Apply the following statement to your lived experience, your leadership, your activism: "Human beings are way too heterogeneous for us to treat other people's experiences with gender and sexuality, and sexism and marginalization, as though they are proverbial "nails" that can be dealt with in a one-size-fits-all manner. Therefore, we must constantly be seeking to expand our toolkit – in this case, by trying to uncover and understand the heterogeneity in people's experiences and in the myriad double standards they face."
- Refute inherent/fixed meaning of traits.
- What is feminism?
- Elaborate on the strategies Serano gives, page 227:
 - Understand marked traits
 - Be familiar with double binds, recognize double standards
 - Dismantle rather than reverse hierarchies

17, Expecting Heterogeneity

- What does it mean to *expect heterogeneity*?
- Relate diversity at your institution to heterogeneity, tokenism, and exploitation. See also, On Being Included, by Sara Ahmed.
- Who should we hear?
- How have you been subtyped? How have you subtyped others?
- Elaborate on the following statement (page 237), and apply it to your life and institutional work.
"As activists, it is important for us to talk about our experiences and perspectives as women, queers, trans people, and so on. But we must refrain from viewing our groups homogeneously."

18, Challenging Gender Entitlement

- Why do you dress the way you do?
- Serano describes a realization on page 240, about a "hardline, self-righteous, cut-and-dried view of the world." Describe such a view you've had or currently have, and how you are working to change it.
- What does it mean to be "ethically gendered"?
- Serano raises the concept of "gender erasure" on page 247. What other forms of erasure exist? How does erasure lead to invalidation and marginalization?
- Apply the BDSM concept of "safe, sane, and consensual" to institutional life, politics, and other areas of your experience. Relate to autonomy.

19, Self-examining Desire and Embracing Ambivalence

- Discuss the statement (page 259) "[I]f we feel a strong sense of repulsion toward particular bodies, identities, or sexualities, that is usually a red flag – a sign that we may need to further examine what double standards may be unconsciously driving that."
- What empowers you? How can it be disempowering for others?

20, Recognizing Invalidations

- How does language interplay with marginalization?
- Do you identify as cis or trans? Something else? Why? Why not?
- "How do we apply what we already know about marginalization to help recognize and analyze unfamiliar and unarticulated forms of marginalization?" (page 270)
- Describe tactics to resist invalidation:
 - mental incompetence
 - sexualization
 - immorality
 - anomalous
 - inauthenticity
 - what others can you think of?
- Consider the "pertinent questions" Serano gives on page 277, and how they can help overcome invalidations.

21, Balancing Acts

- Describe the balance between abstraction and concreteness, in the context of holistic feminism and activism.
- React: (page 284)
"Sexism and marginalization permeate almost every corner of our lives, and thus there are a seemingly infinite number of different problems that we might wish to address, and different approaches we might take to counter them."
- On page 287, Serano describes her spaces and organizations "for their own kind". What spaces serve that purpose in your lived experience?
- Discuss call-out culture and cancel culture, in relation to heterogeneity and marginalization. Compare and contrast different approaches to calling.
- What's up with my vagina?
- What does Serano mean by "Stop using privilege as a device to undermine others"? (Page 296-297)
- Is there any such thing as an evil oppressor? A righteous activist? Infallible or ignorant?

Concluding questions

- Summarize holistic feminism.
- What does it mean to be marginalized?
- What are double standards, double binds, and marked traits?
- Describe a mechanism for transcending single-topic activism.
- What book will you read next?
- What's your next action at your institution? At your home? In your personal life?