**1st Place: The Sisterhood of Intersectionality**

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Maybe it was in Malay class when someone had asked me if I was Chinese because my eyes were slender and long. Or perhaps it was in RE when all the boys in my class uproared in rebuttal after I had made the claim that one of my peers was sexist for implying that all women wanted to flash themselves and seek male validation. Or even when a man thrice my age had trapped me in the corner of a restaurant by sitting at the edge of my booth to chat about Harry Potter - he definitely didn't have any other ideas, did he? It was only in 2020 when I had truly grasped the fact that I was going to be targeted for the rest of my life because of my skin colour and gender.

Overwhelmed, I spent a couple of months keeping my thoughts to myself because I didn't want the boys to dislike me. It was until I realised that I was just proving my RE classmate's point: I was seeking approval from the boys in my class despite the fact that they were simply people who were never taught different in a social stratification imbued with patriarchal ideologies. Three months later, I had gone into the pandemic afraid that it would hinder my ability to develop my critical thinking and prevent me from scratching the itch of intrigue that I had, silently fostering in the back of my mind ever since I was a child - I was completely wrong.

I had discovered Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. She isn't a feminist but rather someone who explores the institutionalised white superiority within traditional feminism and endeavours to further develop it into a modern movement filled with justice for each individual woman. She strives to recruit girls from a young age to help build a world-wide understanding of intersectional feminism in hopes to shape Generation Z into bring young minds into people who stand up against expectations made by cis-het white, able-bodied males who lived centuries ago.

In a passionate speech regarding the explicit biases within medicine, Ocasio-Cortez referred to her religious faith, opposing the justification of negligence over people of a different race, gender or sexuality. Referencing to the abuse of power prevalent behind religious freedom in the United States, she states "The only time religious freedom is invoked is in the name of bigotry and discrimination." In one sentence, Ocasio-Cortez is able to highlight the history of discriminatorybased gaslighting within the American healthcare industry, although touching on a global spectrum. Janice A. Sabin, PhD, a professor at the University of Washington who researches the implicit bias in health care tells Today in an article - about the dismissiveness that floods medical care black women receive - that, "Pain is an area for implicit bias having an impact because it's an extremely subject area." Ocasio-Cortez acknowledges this and calls attention to its inequitable nature.

She remarks upon the fact that certain 'advocates' have done this before and used religious freedom to account for other horrid events in history. "It's very difficult to sit here and listen to arguments in the long history of this country of using scripture and weaponising and abusing scripture, to justify bigotry. White supremacists have done it, those who justified slavery did it, those who fought against integration did it, and we're seeing it today." I think that her method of speaking out is one of the best. She reflects upon her own personal beliefs to logically manipulate arguments, manifesting the vindication behind her reasoning, whilst also recognising that her counterparts may not agree, repeatedly starting her sentences with "In my faith…" She develops the idea that all people are sacred in their own right and should be treated with the same respect that she wants to be treated with herself. "There is nothing holy about rejecting medical care of people, no matter who they are, on the grounds of what their identity is. There is nothing holy about turning someone away from a hospital. There's nothing holy about rejecting a child from a family. There's nothing holy about writing discrimination into the law." Ocasio-Cortez carries herself with a certain elegance and speaks with such sincerity, convincing spectators that she is indeed correct. She takes things into her own hands and brings the beatitude (Matthew 5:6) "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled," to another level as she continuously brings women from around the world together to be a part of the sisterhood of intersectionality, leaving no one out. What elevates the power that Ocasio-Cortez exudes, in my view, is her ability to directly bring forth attention to people who have confronted her in problematic and immature ways. In a speech combating misogyny, Ocasio-Cortez calls out former president of the United States for approaching her with racially motivated remarks, "... the president of the United States last year told me to go home, to another country with the implication that I don't even belong in America."

By doing this, Ocasio-Cortez actively encourages others to rise. She encourages others to speak out against their injustices, in a special language that tells women that their stories are worth telling. She brings awareness to a multitude of socio-economic issues and proves that women do have something to say and that they can say it. She has heavily inspired me- and loads of others alike- and I would be grateful to have even a sliver of her bravery and confidence.

If Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez can overcome every woman's worst nightmare and survive, who says I can't too?