

# What are Systems of Power?



# Systems of Power

Systems of power are the beliefs, practices, and cultural norms that reinforce white supremacy , patriarchy, and heteronormativity as the defining power structures in the United States

- Intersectionality
- Rooted in Race
- Rooted in Gender

# Our Ground, Our Voices Report

“Systems of power are the beliefs, practices, and cultural norms on which individual lives and institutions are built. They are rooted in social constructions of race and gender and embedded in history (colonization, slavery, migration, immigration, genocide) as well as present-day policies and practice. These systems of power reinforce white supremacy, patriarchy, and heteronormativity as defining power structures in the United States. Systems of power are oppressive and define relationships between marginalized communities and the dominant culture; they also shape social norms and experiences within marginalized communities. Systems of power feed the structural barriers that are the root causes of inequity experienced by young women of color.”

**Link to Full Report:** <https://www.clasp.org/our-ground-our-voices-young-women-color>

# Equity in Policy: Health Analogy

## HEALTH OUTCOMES

Health outcomes can range from well-being to sickness to death. They include things like asthma, heart disease, and cancer. Differences in root causes lead to differences in health outcomes and can even influence life expectancy. You will see 21 health outcomes in our full report.

## ROOT CAUSES

Root causes can range from food systems to neighborhood development. Differences in root causes include whether or not we have grocery stores in our neighborhoods or the ability to get a housing loan. Root causes lead to health outcomes and have to be addressed to make a difference in individual health. You will see 11 examples of root causes in our full report.

## SYSTEMS OF POWER

Deep in the soil, you will find systems of power—like racism and sexism — which shape how people experience root causes of health equity like housing or employment. These systems of power are embedded in history and our present day policies and practices.

- Are we all standing on the same soil?
- What are the leaves and roots in policy?
- How do our policy decisions affect the whole tree?