

**Decolonizing The Mind (DTM)
a theoretical framework
Part 7 – intersectionality versus solidarity**



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**Kimberle Crenshaw: Intersectionality,
the background**

"Unable to grasp the importance of Black women's intersectional experiences, not only courts, but feminist and civil rights thinkers as well have treated Black women in ways that deny both the unique compoundedness of their situation and the centrality of their experiences to the larger classes of women and Blacks. Black women are regarded either as too much like women or Blacks and the compounded nature of their experience is absorbed into the collective experiences of either group or as too different, in which case Black women's Blackness or femaleness sometimes has placed their needs and perspectives at the margin of the feminist and Black liberationist agendas... I argue that Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender. These problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure. Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated. Thus, for feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse to embrace the experiences and concerns of Black women, the entire framework that has been used as a basis for translating 'women's experience' or 'the Black experience' into concrete policy demands must be rethought and recast."

**Kimberle Crenshaw: Intersectionality,
the concept**

"Intersectionality is what occurs when a woman from a minority group . . . tries to navigate the main crossing in the city. . . . The main highway is "racism road." One cross street can be Colonialism, then Patriarchy Street. . . . She has to deal not only with one form of oppression but with all forms, those named as road signs, which link together to make a double, a triple, multiple, a many layered blanket of oppression."

**Kimberle Crenshaw: Intersectionality,
the arrogance of white feminist**

"The value of feminist theory to Black women is diminished because it evolves from a white racial context that is seldom acknowledged. Not only are women of color in fact overlooked, but their exclusion is reinforced when white women speak for and as women. The authoritative universal voice - usually white male subjectivity masquerading as non-racial, non-gendered objectivity - is merely transferred to those who, but for gender, share many of the same cultural, economic and social characteristics. When feminist theory attempts to describe women's experiences through analyzing patriarchy, sexuality, or separate spheres ideology, it often overlooks the role of race. Feminists thus ignore how their own race functions to mitigate some aspects of sexism and, moreover, how it often privileges them over and contributes to the domination of other women. Consequently, feminist theory remains white, and its potential to broaden and deepen its analysis by addressing non-privileged women remains unrealized."

**Kimberle Crenshaw: Intersectionality,
the arrogance of black leaders**

"Anna Julia Cooper, a 19th-century Black feminist, coined a phrase that has been useful in evaluating the need to incorporate an explicit analysis of patriarchy in any effort to address racial domination. Cooper often criticized Black leaders and spokespersons for claiming to speak for the race, but failing to speak for Black women. Referring to one of Martin Delaney's public claims that where he was allowed to enter, the race entered with him, Cooper countered: "Only the Black Woman can say, when and where I enter... then and there the whole Negro race enters with me."

**Kimberle Crenshaw: Intersectionality,
the solution**

"If any real efforts are to be made to free Black people of the constraints and conditions that characterize racial subordination, then theories and strategies purporting to reflect the Black community's needs must include an analysis of sexism and patriarchy. Similarly, feminism must include an analysis of race if it hopes to express the aspirations of non-white women. Neither Black liberationist politics nor feminist theory can ignore the intersectional experiences of those whom the movements claim as their respective constituents. In order to include Black women, both movements must distance themselves from earlier approaches in which experiences are relevant only when they are related to certain clearly identifiable causes (for example, the oppression of Blacks is significant when based on race, of women when based on gender). The praxis of both should be centered on the life chances and life situations of people who should be cared about without regard to the source of their difficulties."

N. Lykke: the extended version

"Intersectionality is a theoretical and methodological tool to analyze how historically specific kinds of power differentials and/or constraining normativities, based on discursively, institutionally and/or structurally constructed sociocultural categorizations such as gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, age/generation, dis/ability, nationality, mother tongue and so on, interact, and in so doing produce different kinds of societal inequalities and unjust social relations. As this is an umbrella definition, it is important to notice that the societal mechanisms at stake here are defined in different ways by different branches of feminist theorists. Depending on the theoretical framework, they can be theorized as dominance/subordination, in/exclusion, recognition/ misrecognition, power/disempowerment, possession/dispossession, privilege/lack of privilege, majoritizing/minoritizing and so on."

Berger en Guidroz

"Race, class, and gender were once seen as separate issues for members of both dominant and subordinate groups. Now, scholars generally agree that these issues (as well as ethnicity, nation, age, and sexuality) — and how they intersect — are integral to individuals' positions in the social world."

Crenshaw and the critique of identity politics

"The problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, as some critics charge, but rather the opposite- that it frequently conflates or ignores intra group differences. In the context of violence against women, this elision of difference is problematic, fundamentally because the violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class. Moreover, ignoring differences within groups frequently contributes to tension among groups, another problem of identity politics: that frustrates efforts to politicize violence against women. Feminist efforts to politicize experiences of women and antiracist efforts to politicize experiences of people of color have frequently proceeded as though the issues and experiences they each detail occur on mutually exclusive terrains. Although racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of real people, they seldom do in feminist and antiracist practices. And so, when the practices expound identity as "woman" or "person of color" as an either/or proposition, they relegate the identity of women of color to a location that resists telling."

Kimberle Crenshaw: Intersectionality, the prospects

"It seems that placing those who currently are marginalized in the center is the most effective way to resist efforts to compartmentalize experiences and undermine potential collective action.... The goal of this activity should be to facilitate the inclusion of marginalized groups for whom it can be said: "When they enter, we all enter."

A DTM critique of the concept of intersectionality

- The concept of intersection of oppressed: no valid empirical basis: white women and slavery/apartheid
- There is a hierarchy of oppression: LGTB used as an instrument in islamophobia, subsidized by the state, justifying the war in Afganistan
- Intersectionality as a divisive instrument in the organisation for liberation: mixing strategy with principles

A DTM critique of the concept of patriarchy

- Patriarchy: a social system in which males hold primary power, predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property.
- Dehumanizes the relationship between men and women, mothers and sons, fathers and daughters, sisters and brothers by objectifying them

Men and women in struggle

I am a woman. Not just any woman. And I don't owe solidarity to just any men. I am an indigenous person and I offer my solidarity to men who share that condition. Those from my community. And if I didn't offer it, it would catch up with me and force itself on me whether I wanted it or not... We belong to this community and we are showing our loyalty to it... To reproach us for not being feminists is like blaming a poor person for not eating caviar."

<http://www.ihr.org.uk/news/comment/10159-pierre-djemila-dominiqueand-mohamed>



Houria Bouteldja

Decolonial love

- *As a father I don't want my daughter to be treated like trash by any man: black, white, Muslim, Hindu etc. I want my daughter to be treated with the love and respect that I and my wife have raised her with.*
- *As a husband I want to live a life full of love for my wife. I want to share her dreams and hopes and do whatever I can to help her realize them, not because of an ideology (feminism), but because I love her.*
- *As a son I know what sacrifices my mother had to make to enable me to go to school and to grow as a man. How can I forget these sacrifices given out of love for her son? As gratitude, not in compliance with an ideology, I would like to say to my deceased mother: I wish I could have done more for you to make your dreams and hopes come to life.*

Questions and discussion

