



ORIGINS OF INTERSECTIONALITY

It is a defining feature of social justice movements that we grow forward, expand our work, and constantly increase our efforts on behalf of those we serve. In any moment of development, growth, change, or expansion it is critical to understand and honor the work that we are building upon. With that objective in mind we want to provide a few of the exceptional leaders who contributed to the origin of Intersectionality.

“Intersectionality’s core ideas of social inequality, power, relationality, social context, complexity, and social justice formed within the context of social movements that faced the crises of their times, primarily, the challenges of colonialism, racism, sexism, militarism, and capitalist exploitation. In this context, because women of color were affected not just by one of these systems of power but by their convergence, they formed autonomous movements that put forth the core ideas of intersectionality, albeit using different vocabularies.”

~Intersectionality by Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge

Intersectionality, as a term, is the result of the work and scholarship of Kimberle Crenshaw and was first shared in her 1989 article “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics”. This is a defining moment in both Critical Race Theory and Feminist Theory, as well as, the culmination of over 150 years’ worth of work by a multitude of social justice leaders and researchers. We want also ensure that we, as a movement, are constantly increasing our ability to honor the roots of social justice work including attributing credit to those who have been silenced, excluded, or erased.

The timeline that follows is not exhaustive but provides a sampling of some key moments and pieces that led to the creation and naming of Intersectionality. We have tried to include works that may be new and have not included some pieces that many of us have read, however, please help us grow our list.

1988 Chandra Talpade Mohanty produces “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”.

1987 Trinh Minh-ha publishes “Difference: A Special Third World Women’s Issue”.

1986 bell hooks article “Sisterhood: political solidarity between women” is published in a special issue of the Feminist Review “Socialist-Feminism: Out of the Blue”.

1984 Audre Lorde authors “Sister Outsider”.

1984 Bell Hooks produces “Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center”.

1983 Beth Brant edits and produces “A Gathering of Spirit: A Collection of Writing and Art by North American Indian Women” with a feature article from Barbara May Cameron.

1983 Nawal El Saadawi publishes her memoir “Memoirs from the Woman’s Prison”.

1983 Bonnie Thornton Dill authors “Race, Class, and Gender: Prospects for an All-Inclusive Sisterhood.”

1982 Anna Julia Cooper publishes “A Voice from the South”.

1981 Nawal El Saadawi assists in the creation and publication of an Arabic feminist magazine “Confrontation”.

1980 Cherrìe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa begin interviewing Black Feminist’s about how “class and race issues intersect in the women’s movement”. This will be an essential element in their editing and design of “This Bridge Called My Back? Writings by Radical Women of Color” in 1983.

1979 Mitsuye Yamada authors “Invisibility is an Unnatural Disaster: Reflections of an Asian American Woman”.

1978 Awa Thiam is the first African woman to publicly denounce FGM and polygamy in a published treatise “La Parole aux négresses”.

1974 Anna Nieto Gomez authors “La Feminista”.

1974 Cheryl Clarke authors “Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance”.

1972 Mirta Vidal publishes “Chicanas Speak Out Women: New Voice of La Raza”.

1970 Black Women’s Liberation Group publishes “Sisterhood is Powerful”.

1970’s Feminist sociologists Patricia Hill Collins, Ruth Enid Zambrana, Maxine Baca Zinn, Bonnie Thornton Dill, and Lynn Weber form an intellectual community to discuss intersecting or interlocking structures of oppression as they investigated women’s engagement with low-income occupational sectors, as well as, their family lives.

1925 Elise Johnson McDougald’s “The Double Task: The Struggle of Negro Women for Sex and Race Emancipation” is included in “The New Negro” and the “Survey”.

1912 Elizabeth Eaton authors a collection of stories “Mrs. Spring Fragrance” under the pen name Sui Sin Far.

1902 Anna Julia Cooper publishes “The Ethics of the Negro Question”.

1860 Harriet Jacobs authors “Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl”.

1850’s Sojourner Truth speaks at a variety of abolitionist and women’s rights conventions including her famous “Ain’t I A Woman?” speech at the Ohio Women’s Rights Convention in 1851.

1831 Maria Stewart’s “The Sure Foundation on Which We Must Build” is published in The Liberator.

1830 Maria Stewart produces “Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality,” a collection of writings about unique challenges facing Black women.

Prepared and produced for MCEDSV 2018 Annual Conference by Lisa Winchell-Caldwell. For more information please email her at, lisa.winchell-caldwell@mcedsv.org.