



Theory to Practice Intersectionality

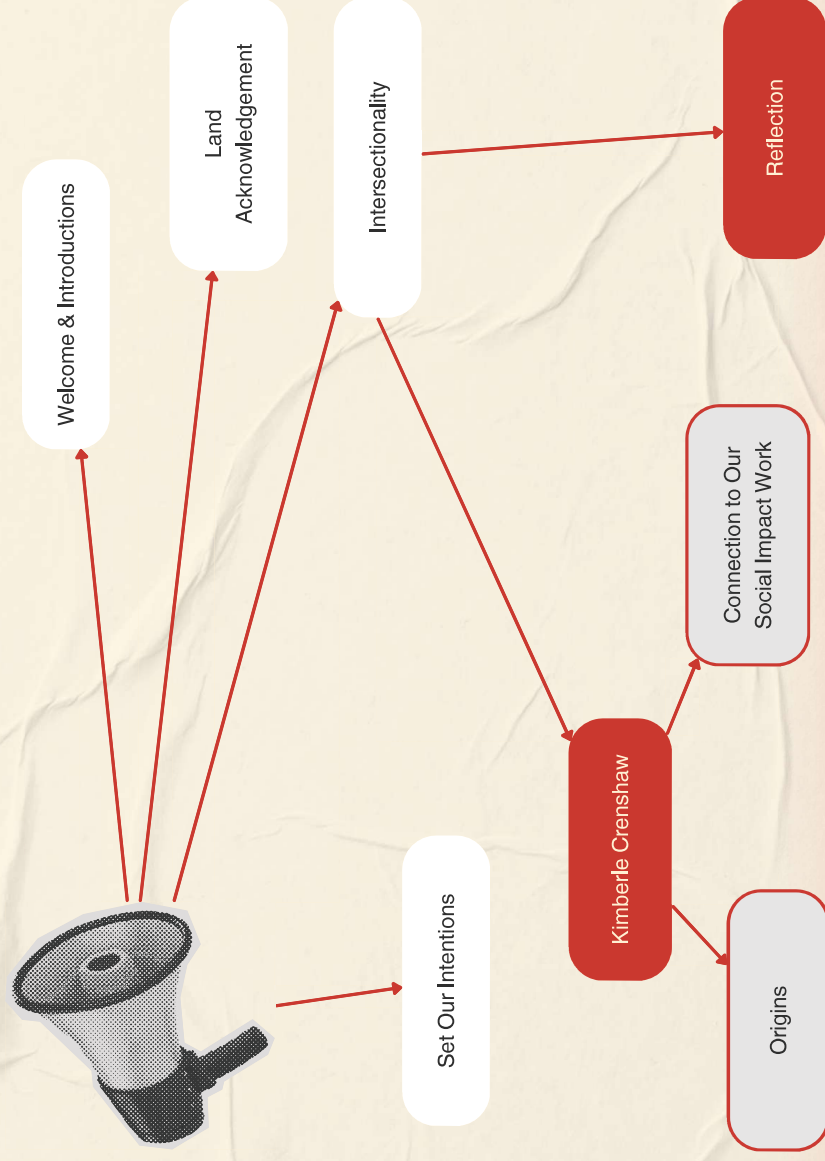
Applying Intersectionality to
Social Impact Work



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Welcome

- Land Acknowledgement
- Indigenous People's Heritage Month
- Review our community intentions and agreements
- Introduce Intersectionality and learn about Kimberle Crenshaw and her work
- Identify why this framework/theory is critical for us as practitioners of Social Impact Work
- Reflect and identify ways we are already doing this work, or to make a commitment today to implement small, measurable actions
- Introduce a Framework COUNTS
- Questions and Final thoughts.



Intentions & Community Commitments and Ice Breaker

Ubuntu

"I am because we are."

In Lak'ech

"Tú eres mi otro yo." / "You are my other self."

Mitákuye Oyás'in —

"We are all related. We are all interconnected"

Be Present

Show up as fully as you can for yourself and the group.

Practice Humble Curiosity

Before moving into the space of judgement, pause and wonder.

Honor Lived Experience

Our individual stories matter.

Speak From "I" & Listen to Understand

Share your own truth. Listen to understand, not to respond.

Hold Accountability With Care

Challenge ideas without shaming people.
Support with compassion.

Stay in the Garden of Grace

Give yourself and others room to be human and to grow.

Who is Kimberle Crenshaw?

Kimberle Crenshaw, JD
Civil rights scholar

- Law professor at UCLA & Columbia
- Graduated from Harvard Law School w/ a J.D.
- Coined the term “intersectionality” in 1989
- Writer rooted in Black feminist theory and Critical Race and Feminist Theory
- The origins of Intersectionality are connected to the courtrooms, grounded in CRT and Feminist Theory, as a means to identify the disparities Black women were navigating in legal cases



Intersectionality

Creator of Social Movements

Crenshaw is not just a legal scholar — she is:

- Co-founder of the African American Policy Forum (AAPF)
- Creator of “**SayHerName**” movement, highlighting police violence against Black women and girls
- A global voice and global advisory on civil rights, gender justice, and racial equity
- **One of the most cited legal scholars in U.S. history**



#Say Her Name

Invisible Structures

Why Crenshaw Created the Framework

- She noticed the disparities in the judicial system--there were evident inconsistencies
- Law treated race and gender separately
- Black women's experiences were erased
- Traditional discrimination law couldn't "see" the overlapping harm

Intersectionality became the tool (theory) to name **structural invisibility**



Intersectionality

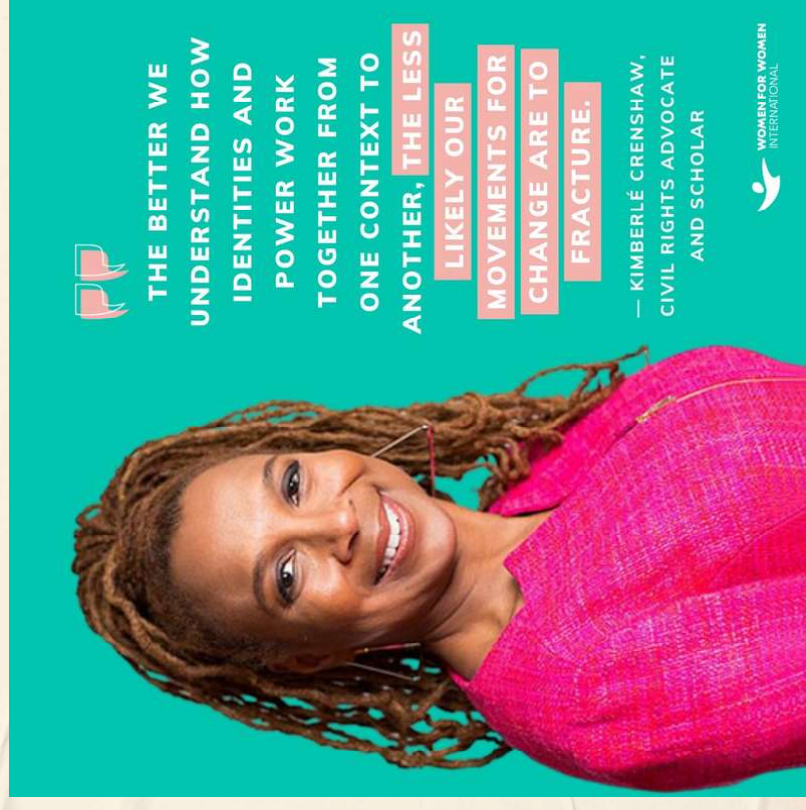
Defining Intersectionality

A “theory” or framework that helps identify the systems of oppression that overlap and create unique compounded harm, particularly to people of color.

Systems include racism, sexism, poverty, immigration enforcement, disability oppression, criminalization, language discrimination, homophobia, and transphobia.

Link: <https://youtu.be/JRci2V8PxW4>

Full Video: https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality?utm_campaign=tedsread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tcdcomshare



Key Cases Intersectionality

Crenshaw (2016) discusses three cases—*DeGraffenreid v. GM*, *Payne v. Travenol*, and *Moore v. Hughes Helicopters*—to illustrate how Black women's discrimination claims fell between race-only and gender-only frameworks.

DeGraffenreid v. General Motors (1976)

- Black women challenged a seniority policy that left them “last hired, first fired.”

Payne v. Travenol Laboratories (1976)

- Black women sued for workplace discrimination that affected all Black employees.

Moore v. Hughes Helicopters (1983)

- A Black woman sued for gender discrimination in promotion practices.

Why These Cases Matter:

- Black women's experiences did not fit into single-category legal frameworks.
- These cases revealed the gaps that were invisibilizing Black women's overlapping systems of oppression



Key Paper for Social Impact Work

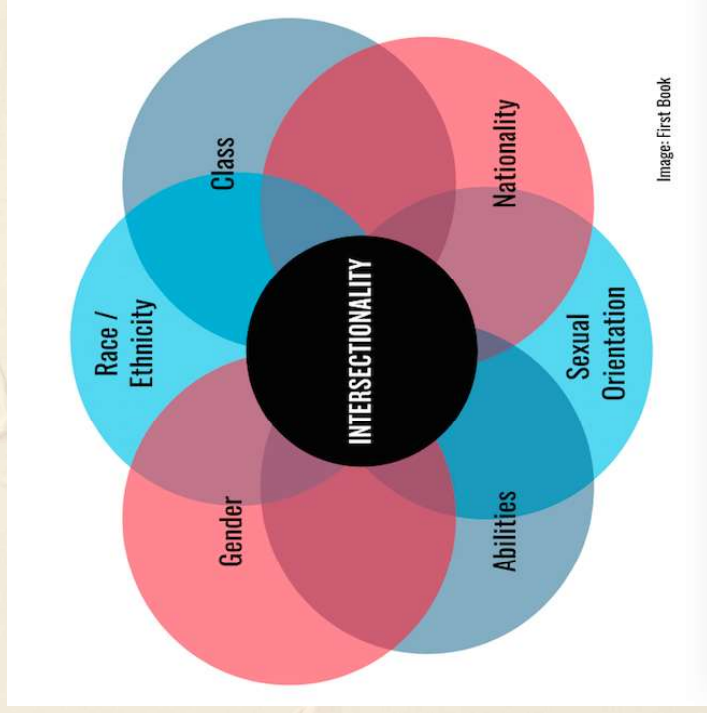
Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” (1991)

- Crenshaw expanded intersectionality into **real-world systems**, including:
- Domestic violence
- Traumas associated by Immigration
- Language access barriers
- Shelter and service system gaps
- Structural violence against women of color

Intersectionality

She showed how systems designed for “**all women**” often exclude **women of color** — a direct parallel to many of the structural gaps case managers see today, even when we aren’t aware of it.

Visual of *Intersections*



Identity

The many parts of who we are: Black, Indigenous, Latina. I am a woman, a wife, daughter, mother, immigrant, invisible disabilities, oldest daughter, first-gen college graduate...

Systems of Oppression

Think of the big structures around us that shape our lives. Racism, Sexism, Immigration enforcement, Homophobia or transphobia, classism/poverty, Ableism, criminalization, language discrimination, etc.

Venn Diagram Analogy

Each circle is a system, that overlap. The concentrated overlap of circles is where our clients exist with all the barriers/trauma. That is the intersectionality of their reality.

Pause 2 Check In

One Client or One Moment

1. Think of one client or one moment where you saw more than one barrier at play.

You don't have to write or share details — just hold the example in your mind.

Overalpping systems

Now think about what systems overlapped.

Only think of the systems not the story.

Housing- Immigration-Trauma-Disability-Unemployed-Language-
Probation-Health-Disease/Acute Illness-etc.

If you feel comfortable, please share only the systems, do not the client's name.



Application **C.O.U.N.T.S.** when moving

Intersectionality Theory to Practice

The **Complete Story**—See the whole person, their history, and the systems around them.

Observe System Barriers (Avoid “Client Fault”)

- Avoid labeling the client as the problem.
- Identify structural barriers affecting follow-through.

Understand Policy Limitations—Notice when standard rules, practices, and policies do not fit everyone’s lived reality.

Navigate Expectations Fairly—Hold clients accountable in ways that reflect their actual circumstances.

Tell the Truth in Documentation

- Document barriers clearly and respectfully.
- Describe context instead of writing “noncompliant.”

Support Through Harm Reduction

- Apply policy with flexibility and dignity.
- Build plans with clients.
- Advocate for equitable policies and procedures.



Commit 2 Applying What you learn

If you change nothing,

Nothing will
ever change!

Make a commitment to a small
change.

“A revolution is not a one-time
event.” – Audre Lorde

Reflection and Breakout Prompt (Two-Part)

Part 1 — Practice

- What is one small, measurable way you can begin weaving **intersectionality** into your daily practice with clients/staff?

Part 2 — Policy & Accountability

- What is one way your team or organization could embed **intersectionality** into a policy or procedure to create greater accountability and reduce harm?

Breakout Instructions:

- Each person shares for 1 minute
- Choose 1 person to report back to the full group
- Identify one collective commitment to bring forward

Take-Home Worksheet: Applying Intersectionality in Your Practice

Use this worksheet to reflect on:

- Your intention for equitable practice
- What intersectionality means and does not mean
- How to apply the C.O.U.N.T.S. framework
- One immediate action you can take
- One policy/practice you want to re-examine
- Who will support your accountability
- Your final reflection prompt



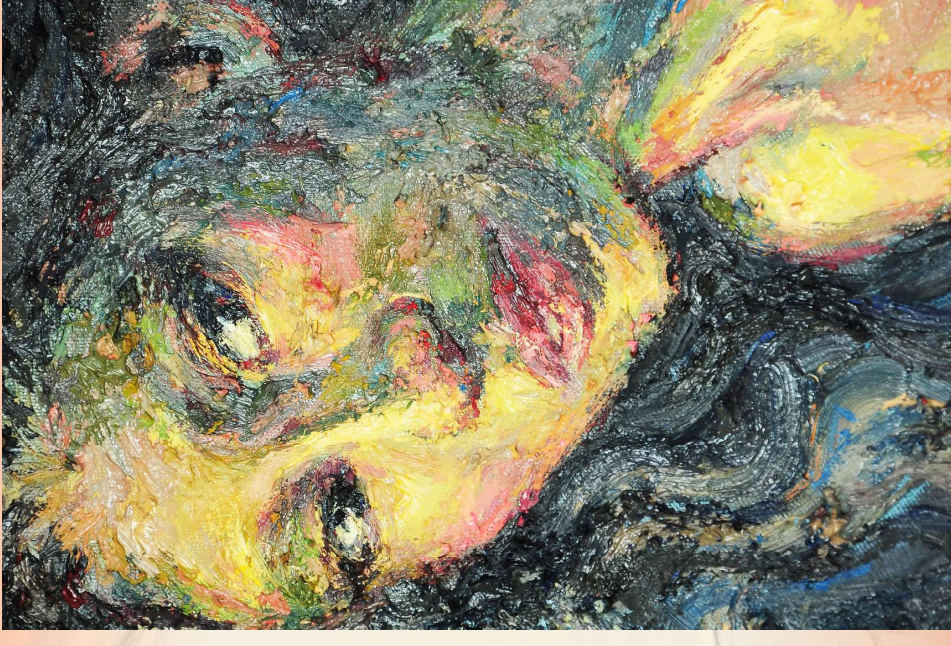
This worksheet is yours to take, use, and revisit as you continue the work.

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- Payne v. Travel Laboratories, 416 F. Supp. 248 (N.D. Miss. 1976).



*Thank you for
for being present today!*



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