

**DECOLONIAL  
STRATEGIES,  
A.Y. 2021-2022**

Prof. MAURO FARNESI CAMELLONE

2



# **INTERSECTIONALITY**

## **RACE - GENDER - CLASS**





# INTERSECTIONALITY

## RACE - GENDER - CLASS

### LESSON PLAN

1) **25.11.2021, 08:30-10:30**

Maria Lugones - Race, gender, and class

2) **29.11.2021, 12:30-14:30**

Kimberlé Crenshaw - Gender, race, and class

3) **30.11.2021, 12:30-14:30**

Sandro Mezzadra - Class, gender, and race

### MATERIALS

- Bibliography
- Crenshaw, K., "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" (1989)
- Crenshaw, K., "Mapping the Margins - Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women" (1991)
- Lugones, M., "The Coloniality of Gender", in W. d. Mignolo, A. Escobar (eds. by) *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, 2010.
- Lugones, M., Price, J., "The Inseparability of Race, Class, and Gender in Latino Studies" (2003)
- Mezzadra, S., "Intersectionality, Identity, Class" (2021)



CLARA MOGNO

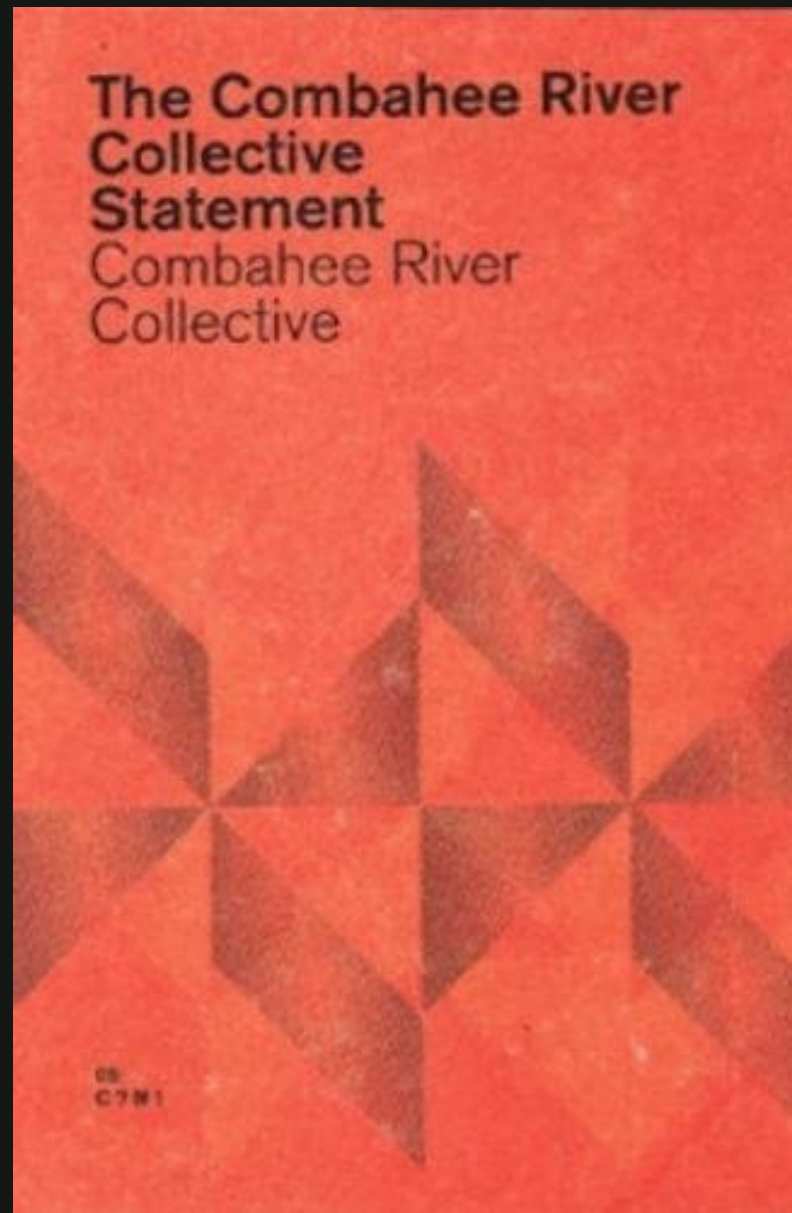
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(she/her/hers)

# **GENDER, RACE, AND CLASS**

**KIMBERLÉ CRENSHAW**

29.11.2021



The Combahee River Collective Statement (1977)  
by Combahee River Collective



Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of  
Race and Sex" (1989)



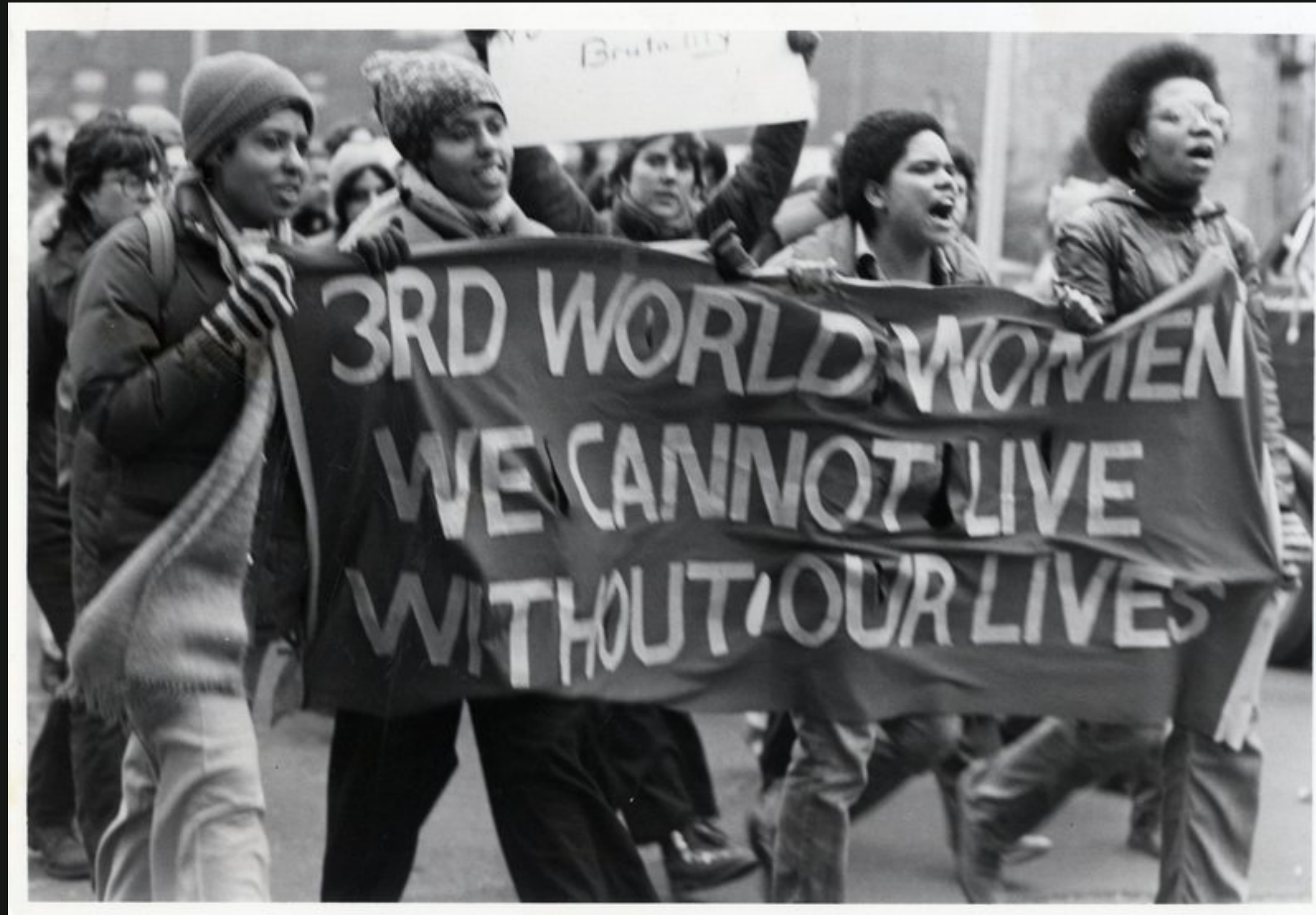
“**Intersectionality** is a **lens** through which you can see **where power comes and collides**, where it **interlocks and intersects**. It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things.”

Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw

"Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality, More than Two Decades Later"

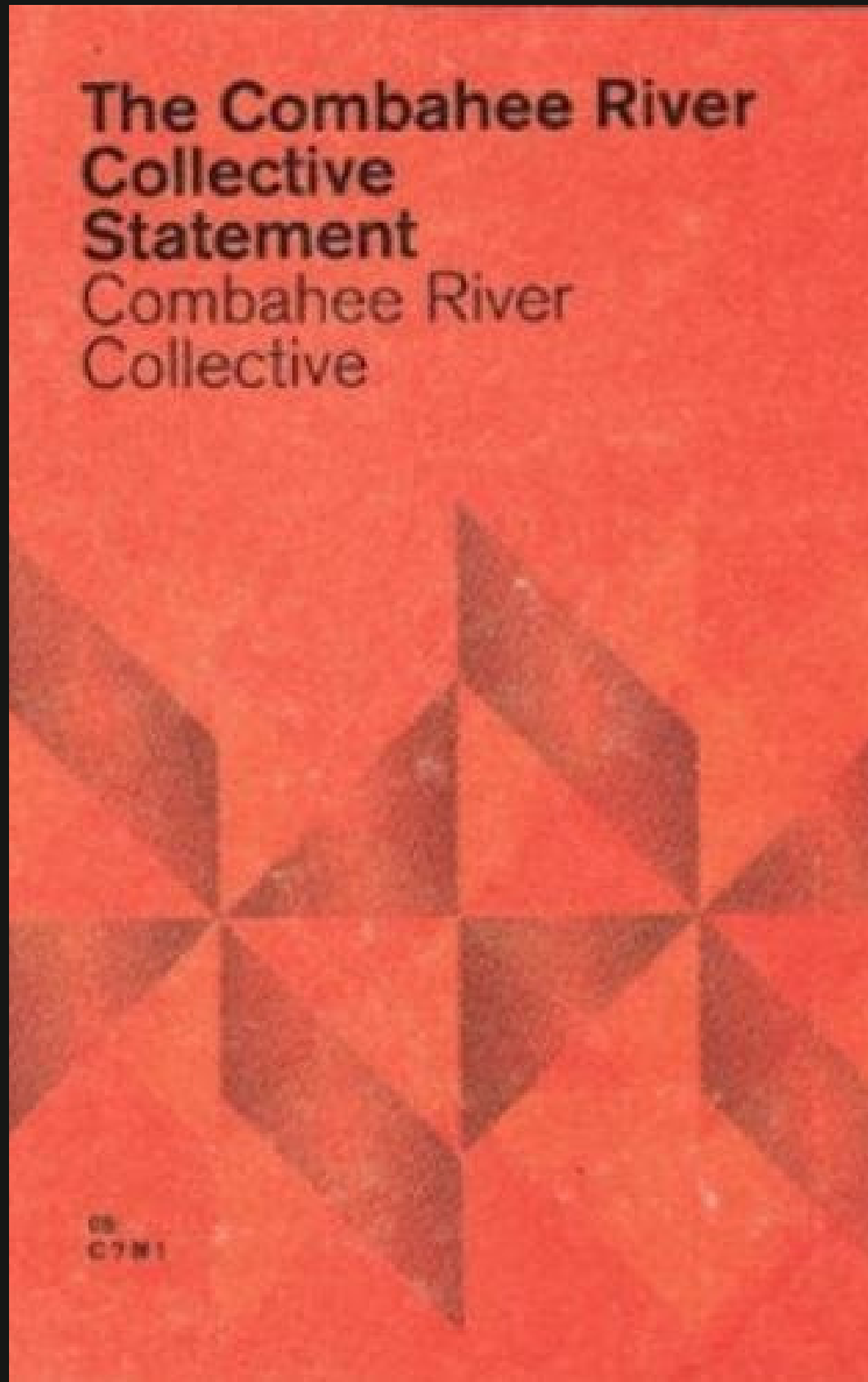
<https://www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality-more-two-decades-later>

# THE COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE



Members of Combahee River Collective at the March and Rally for Bellana Borde against Police Brutality (Boston, January 15, 1980)





## "THE COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE STATEMENT" (1977) - COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE

The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against **racial**, **sexual**, **heterosexual**, and **class oppression**, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that **the major systems of oppression are interlocking**. The **synthesis** of these oppressions creates the **conditions of our lives**. As Black women we see **Black feminism** as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all **women** of **color** face.

### 1. The genesis of Contemporary Black Feminism

Before looking at the recent development of Black feminism we would like to affirm that **we find our origins in the historical reality of Afro-American women's continuous life-and-death struggle for survival and liberation**. Black women's extremely negative relationship to the American political system (a system of **white male** rule) has always been determined by our membership in two oppressed **racial** and **sexual** castes.



## "THE COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE STATEMENT" (1977)



As **Angela Davis** points out in “Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves,” **Black women** have always embodied, if only in their physical manifestation, an adversary stance to **white male** rule and have actively resisted its inroads upon them and their communities in both dramatic and subtle ways. There have always been Black women activists — some known, like Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Frances E. W. Harper, Ida B. Wells Barnett, and Mary Church Terrell, and thousands upon thousands unknown — who have had a shared awareness of how their **sexual identity** combined with their **racial identity** to make **their whole life situation** and **the focus of their political struggles unique**.

A Black feminist presence has evolved most obviously in connection with the second wave of the American women’s movement beginning in the late 1960s. Black, other Third World, and working women have been involved in the feminist movement from its start, **but both outside reactionary forces** and **racism and elitism within the movement itself** have served to **obscure our participation**. In 1973, Black feminists, primarily located in New York, felt the necessity of forming a **separate Black feminist group**. This became the **National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO)**.

## "THE COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE STATEMENT" (1977)



Black feminist politics also have an obvious connection to **movements for Black liberation**, particularly those of the 1960s and 1970s. Many of us were active in those movements (Civil Rights, Black nationalism, the Black Panthers), and all of our lives were greatly affected and changed by their ideologies, their goals, and the tactics used to achieve their goals. It was our experience and **disillusionment** within these liberation movements, as well as experience on the periphery of the white male left, that led to the need to develop a politics that was **anti-racist**, unlike those of **white women**, and **anti-sexist**, unlike those of **Black** and **white men**.

There is also undeniably a **personal genesis** for Black Feminism, that is, the political realization that comes from the seemingly **personal experiences** of individual Black women's lives. **Black feminists and many more Black women who do not define themselves as feminists have all experienced sexual oppression as a constant factor in our day-to-day existence.** As children we realized that we were different from boys and that we were treated differently. For example, we were told in the same breath to be quiet both for the sake of being "ladylike" **and to make us less objectionable** in the eyes of **white people**.



## "THE COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE STATEMENT" (1977)



Our development must also be tied to the contemporary economic and political position of Black people. The post World War II generation of Black youth was the first to be able to minimally partake of certain educational and employment options, previously closed completely to Black people. **Although our economic position is still at the very bottom of the American capitalistic economy**, a handful of us have been able to gain certain tools as a result of tokenism in education and employment which potentially enable us to more effectively fight our oppression. A combined **anti-racist** and **anti-sexist** position drew us together initially, and as we developed politically we addressed ourselves to **heterosexism** and **economic oppression** under capitalism.

This focusing upon our own oppression is embodied in the concept of **identity politics**. We believe that the most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression. In the case of Black women this is a particularly repugnant, dangerous, threatening, and therefore revolutionary concept because it is obvious from looking at all the political movements that have preceded us that **anyone is more worthy of liberation than ourselves**. We reject pedestals, queenhood, and walking ten paces behind. **To be recognized as human, levelly human, is enough.**

## "THE COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE STATEMENT" (1977)



We believe that sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women's lives as are the politics of **class** and **race**. We also often find it difficult to separate **race** from **class** from **sex oppression** because in our lives they are **most often experienced simultaneously**. We know that there is such a thing as racial-sexual oppression which is neither solely racial nor solely sexual, e.g., the history of rape of Black women by white men as a weapon of political repression.

**SEPARATIVISM**

**ALLIANCE**

**SOLIDARITY**



Although we are feminists and **Lesbians**, we feel **solidarity** with **progressive Black men** and **do not advocate the fractionalization that white women who are separatists demand**. Our situation as **Black people** necessitates that we have solidarity **around the fact of race**, which white women of course do not need to have with white men, unless it is their negative solidarity as racial oppressors. We struggle together **with Black men against racism**, while we also struggle **with Black men about sexism**.



## "THE COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE STATEMENT" (1977)



We realize that the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of **capitalism** and imperialism as well as **patriarchy**. We are socialists because we believe that work must be organized for the collective benefit of those who do the work and create the products, and not for the profit of the bosses. Material resources must be equally distributed among those who create these resources. We are not convinced, however, that a socialist revolution that is not also a feminist and anti-racist revolution will guarantee our liberation. We have arrived at the necessity for developing an understanding of class relationships that takes into account the specific class position of Black women who are generally marginal in the labor force, while at this particular time some of us are temporarily viewed as doubly desirable tokens at white-collar and professional levels. We need to articulate the real class situation of persons who are not merely raceless, sexless workers, but for whom racial and sexual oppression are significant determinants in their working/economic lives. Although we are in essential agreement with Marx's theory as it applied to the very specific economic relationships he analyzed, we know that his analysis must be extended further in order for us to understand our specific economic situation as Black women.



## "THE COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE STATEMENT" (1977)

As we have already stated, we reject the stance of **Lesbian separatism** because it is not a viable political analysis or strategy for us. It leaves out far too much and far too many people, particularly Black men, women, and children. We have a great deal of criticism and loathing for what men have been **socialized** to be in this society: what they support, how they act, and how they oppress. But we do not have the misguided notion that it is their maleness, per se — i.e., their biological maleness — that makes them what they are. **As Black women we find any type of biological determinism a particularly dangerous and reactionary basis upon which to build a politic.** We must also question whether Lesbian separatism is an adequate and progressive political analysis and strategy, even for those who practice it, since it so completely denies any but the **sexual sources of women's** oppression, negating the facts of **class** and **race**.

### 3. Problems in Organizing Black Feminists

The major source of difficulty in our political work is that we are not just trying to fight oppression on one front or even two, but instead to address a **whole range of oppressions.** We do not have **racial, sexual, heterosexual, or class privilege** to rely upon, nor do we have even the minimal access to resources and power that groups who possess anyone of these types of **privilege** have.





## "THE COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE STATEMENT" (1977)



### 4. Black Feminist Issues and Projects

During our time together we have identified and worked on many issues of particular relevance to Black women. The inclusiveness of our politics makes us concerned with any situation that impinges upon the lives of **women, Third World and working people**. We are of course particularly committed to working on those struggles in which **race, sex, and class** are **simultaneous factors in oppression**.

One issue that is of major concern to us and that we have begun to publicly address is **racism** in the **white women's** movement. As Black feminists we are made constantly and painfully aware of how little effort white women have made to understand and combat their racism, which requires among other things that they have a more than superficial comprehension of race, color, and Black history and culture. **Eliminating racism in the white women's movement is by definition work for white women to do, but we will continue to speak to and demand accountability on this issue.**

## KIMBERLÉ WILLIAMS CRENSHAW (1959)



(Canton, Ohio 1959) Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw is an American lawyer, civil rights advocate, philosopher, and a leading scholar of critical race theory. She is a full-time professor at the UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) School of Law and Columbia Law School.

Crenshaw, K., "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" (1989)

Crenshaw, K., "Mapping the Margins - Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women" (1991)

# "DEMARGINALIZING THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND SEX" (1989)



**SUBTITLE:** A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics

pp. 139-140: In this talk, I want to examine how this tendency is perpetuated by a single-axis framework that is dominant in antidiscrimination law and that is also reflected in feminist theory and antiracist politics. I will center **Black women** in this analysis in order to contrast the multidimensionality of Black women's experience with **the single-axis analysis that distorts these experiences**. Not only will this juxtaposition reveal **how Black women are theoretically erased**, it will also illustrate **how this framework imports its own theoretical limitations that undermine efforts to broaden feminist and antiracist analyses**. With Black women as the starting point, it becomes more apparent how dominant conceptions of discrimination condition us to think about subordination as disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis. I want to suggest further that this single-axis framework erases Black women in the conceptualization, identification and remediation of **race** and **sex** discrimination by **limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group**. In other words, **in race discrimination cases**, discrimination tends to be viewed in terms of **sex-** or **class-privileged Blacks**; in **sex discrimination cases**, the focus is on **race-** and **class-privileged women**.

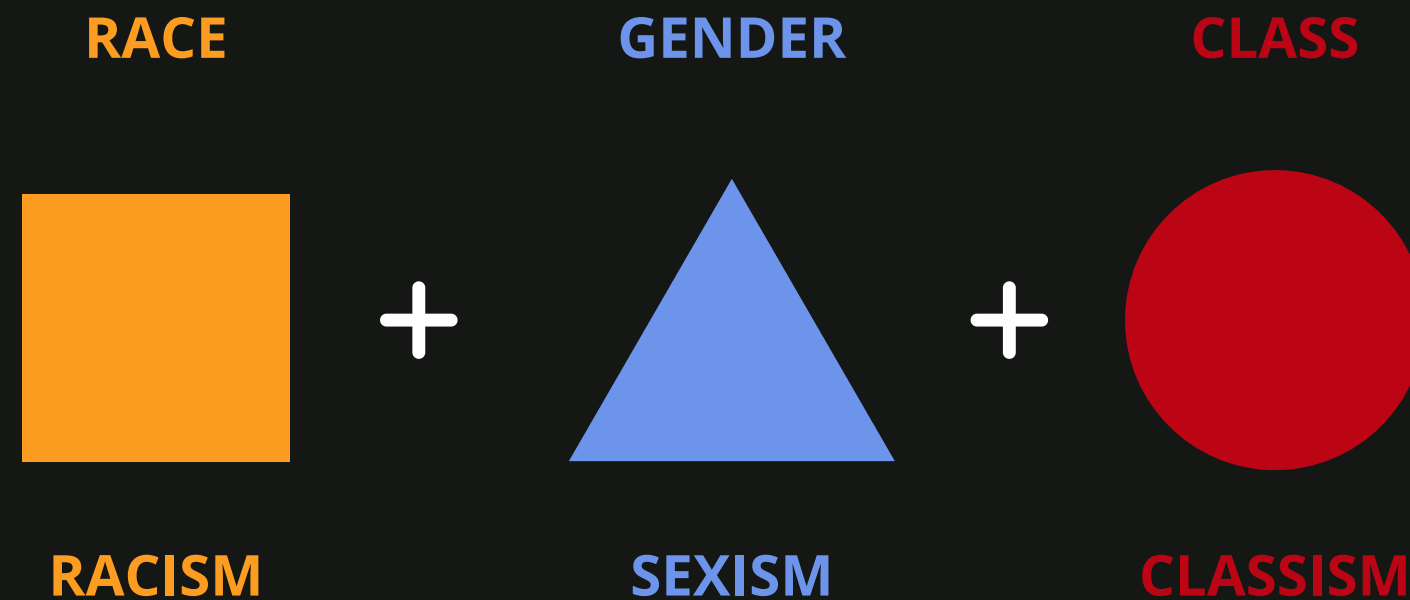


# "DEMARGINALIZING THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND SEX" (1989)



p. 140: 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.

## INTERSECTIONALITY



## "DEMARGINALIZING THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND SEX" (1989)



DeGraffenreid v General Motors

p. 141: In DeGraffenreid, five Black women brought suit against General Motors, alleging that **the employer's seniority system perpetuated the effects of past discrimination against Black women**. Evidence adduced at trial revealed that **General Motors simply did not hire Black women prior to 1964 and that all of the Black women hired after 1970 lost their jobs in a seniority-based layoff during a subsequent recession**. The district court granted summary judgment for the defendant, **rejecting the plaintiffs' attempt to bring a suit not on behalf of Blacks or women, but specifically on behalf of Black women**.

p. 141: The court stated: [P]laintiffs have failed' to cite any decisions which have stated that Black women are a special class to be protected from discrimination. The Court's own research has failed to disclose such a decision. The plaintiffs are clearly entitled to a remedy if they have been discriminated against. However, they should not be allowed to combine statutory remedies to create a new 'super-remedy' which would give them relief beyond what the drafters of the relevant statutes intended. Thus, this lawsuit must be examined to see if it states a cause of action for **race discrimination, sex discrimination, or alternatively either, but not a combination of both**.

## "DEMARGINALIZING THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND SEX" (1989)

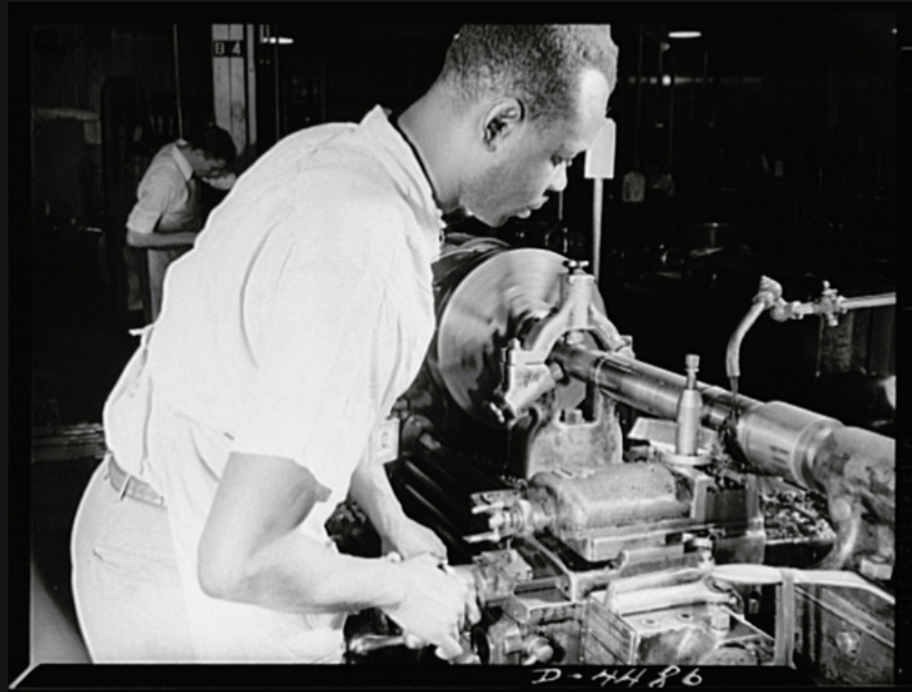


p. 142: After refusing to consider the plaintiffs' sex discrimination claim, the court dismissed the race discrimination complaint and recommended its consolidation with another case alleging race discrimination against the same employer. The plaintiffs responded that such consolidation would defeat the purpose of their suit since theirs was not purely a race claim, but an action brought specifically on behalf of Black women alleging race and sex discrimination. The court, however, reasoned:

"The legislative history surrounding Title VII does not indicate that the goal of the statute was to create a new classification of 'black women' who would have greater standing than, for example, a black male. The prospect of the **creation of new classes of protected minorities**, governed only by the **mathematical principles of permutation and combination**, clearly raises the prospect of opening the hackneyed **Pandora's box**."

pp. 142-143: The court's refusal in *DeGraffenreid* to acknowledge that Black women encounter combined race and sex discrimination implies that the boundaries of sex and race discrimination doctrine are defined respectively by **white women's** and **Black men's** experiences. Under this view, **Black women** are protected **only to the extent that their experiences coincide with those of either of the two groups.**'

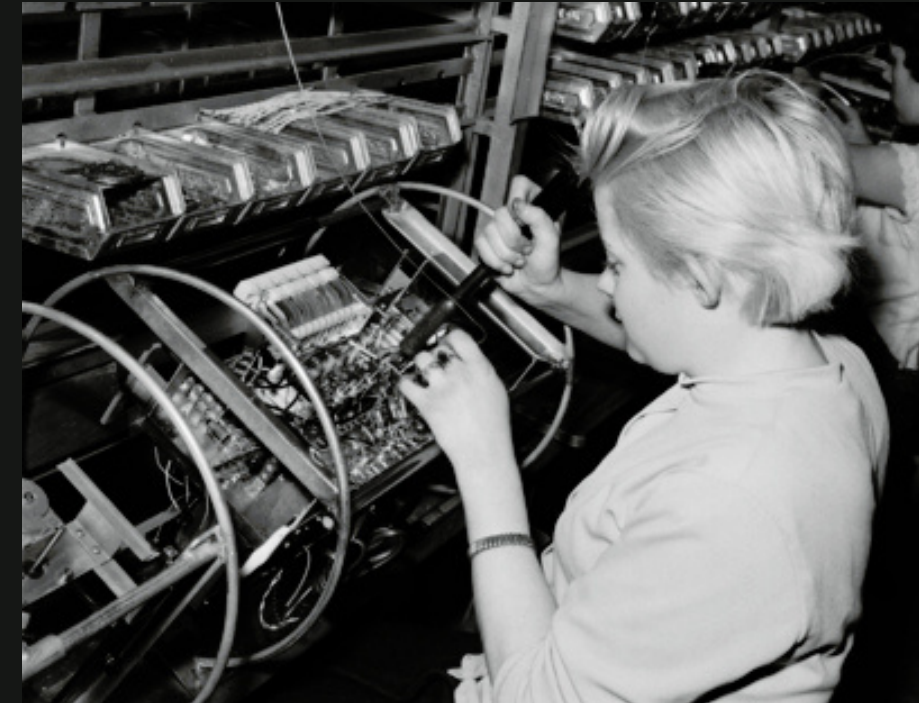




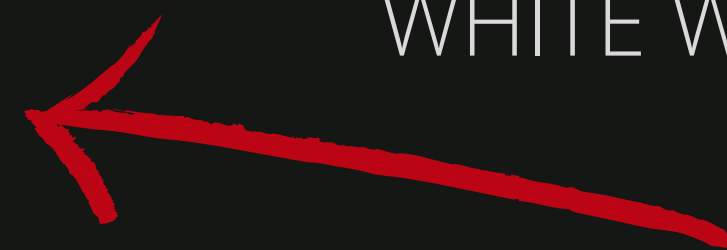
**RACISM**  
BLACK MEN



**BLACK**  
**WOMEN**



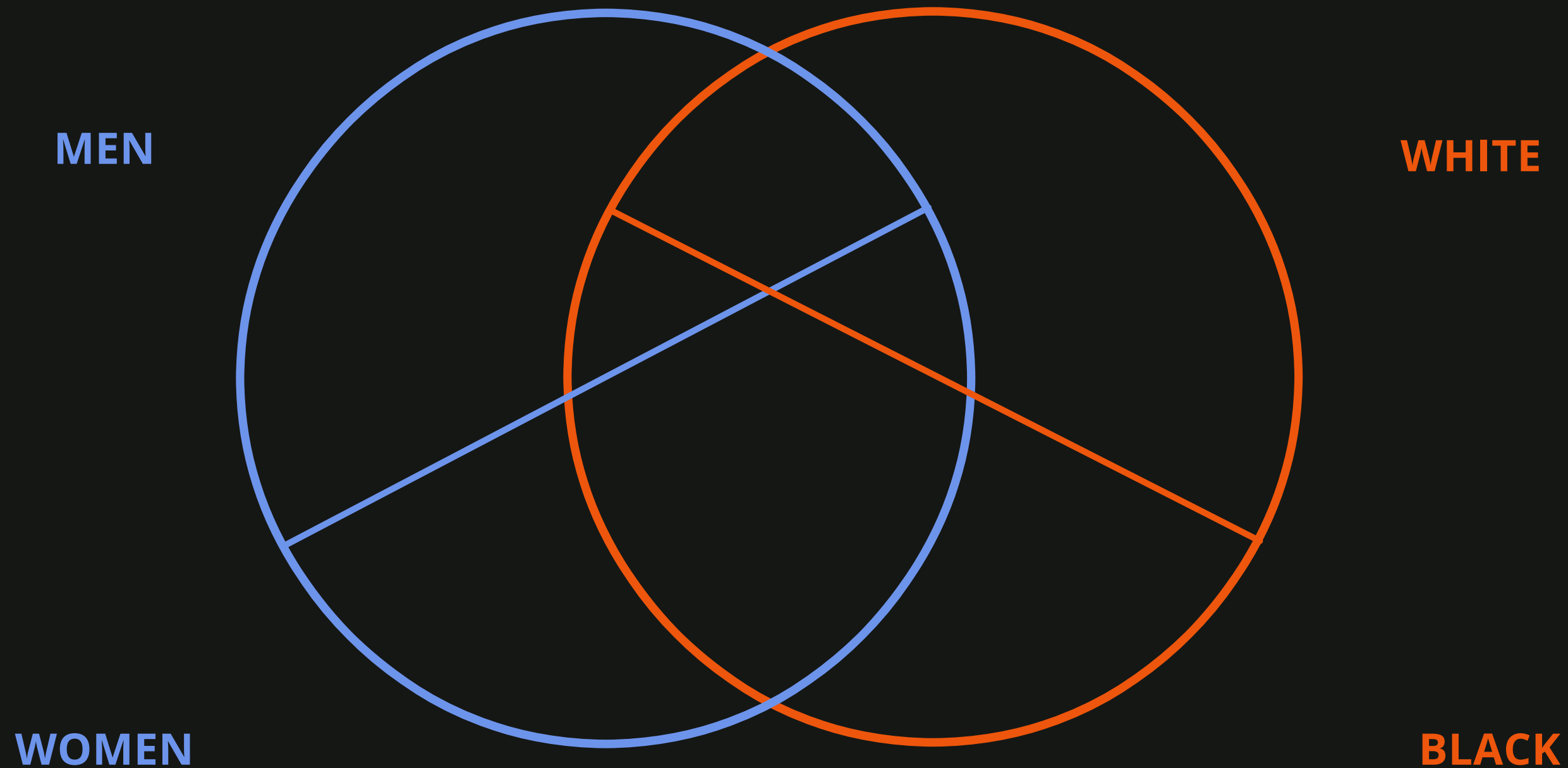
**SEXISM**  
WHITE WOMEN



# "DEMARGINALIZING THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND SEX" (1989)



XOR: EXCLUSIVE DISJUNCTION



$$p \leftrightarrow q = (p \vee q) \wedge \neg(p \wedge q)$$

## "DEMARGINALIZING THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND SEX" (1989)



p. 145: Discrimination against a **white female** is thus the standard **sex discrimination claim**; claims that diverge from this standard appear to present some sort of **hybrid claim**. More significantly, because Black females' claims are seen as hybrid, **they sometimes cannot represent those who may have "pure" claims of sex discrimination**. The effect of this approach is that even though a challenged policy or practice may clearly discriminate against all females, the fact that it has particularly harsh consequences for **Black females** places Black female plaintiffs at odds with **white females**.

p. 153: In 1851, **Sojourner Truth** declared "Ain't I a Woman?" and **challenged the sexist imagery used by male critics, to justify the disenfranchisement of women**." The scene was a Women's Rights Conference in Akron, Ohio; white male hecklers, invoking stereotypical images of "womanhood," argued that women were too frail and delicate to take on the responsibilities of political activity. When Sojourner Truth rose to speak, **many white women urged that she be silenced, fearing that she would divert attention from women's suffrage to emancipation**. Truth, once permitted to speak, recounted the **horrors of slavery**, and its particular impact on **Black women**:



## "DEMARGINALIZING THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND SEX" (1989)



"Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me - and ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have born thirteen children, and seen most of 'em sold into slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me - and ain't I a woman?"



**Sojourner Truth**

(Swartekill, 1797 – Battle Creek, 1883)



**bell hooks**

(Hopkinsville 1952)

## "DEMARGINALIZING THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND SEX" (1989)



p. 154: 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 objectivitys - is merely transferred to those who, but for gender, share many of the same cultural, economic and social characteristics.**

p. 157-158: Rape statutes generally do not reflect *male* control over *female* sexuality, but **white male** regulation of **white female sexuality**. Historically, there has been absolutely no institutional effort to regulate **Black female chastity**. Also, while it was true that the attempt to regulate the sexuality of white women **placed unchaste women outside the law's protection, racism restored a fallen white woman's chastity where the alleged assailant was a Black man**. No such restoration was available to Black women.

## "DEMARGINALIZING THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND SEX" (1989)



pp. 158-159: The singular focus on rape as a manifestation of male power over female sexuality tends to eclipse the **use of rape as a weapon of racial terror**. When **Black women were raped** by **white males**, they were **being raped not as women generally**, but as **Black women specifically**: Their femaleness made them sexually vulnerable to racist domination, while their Blackness effectively denied them any protection." This white male power was reinforced by a judicial system in which the successful conviction of a white man for raping a Black woman was virtually unthinkable.

p. 166: 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).

# "MAPPING THE MARGINS - INTERSECTIONALITY, IDENTITY POLITICS, AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN" (1991)



p. 1241-1242: This process of recognizing as social and systemic what was formerly perceived as isolated and individual has also characterized the **identity politics** of African Americans, other people of color, and gays and lesbians, among others. For all these groups, identity-based politics has been a **source of strength, community, and intellectual development.**

p. 1242: The embrace of **identity politics**, however, has been in tension with dominant conceptions of social justice. Race, gender, and other identity categories are most often treated in mainstream liberal discourse as vestiges of bias or domination - that is, as intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power works to exclude or marginalize those who are different. According to this understanding, our liberatory objective should be to empty such categories of any social significance. Yet implicit in certain strands of feminist and racial liberation movements, for example is the view that the social power in delineating difference need not be the power of domination; **it can instead be the source of social empowerment and reconstruction.**



## "MAPPING THE MARGINS - INTERSECTIONALITY, IDENTITY POLITICS, AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN" (1991)



p. 1242: 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 intragroup differences. In the context of violence against women, **this elision of difference in identity politics 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 difference within groups contributes to tension among groups, another problem of identity politics that bears on 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.

# "MAPPING THE MARGINS - INTERSECTIONALITY, IDENTITY POLITICS, AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN" (1991)



p. 1244: I should say at the outset that **intersectionality** is not being offered here **as some new, totalizing theory of identity**. Nor do I mean to suggest that violence against women of color can be explained only through the specific frameworks of race and gender considered here. Indeed, factors I address only in part or not at all, such as class or sexuality, are often as critical in shaping the experiences of women of color. My focus on the intersections of race and gender only highlights **the need to account for multiple grounds of identity** when considering **how the social world is constructed**.

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