



Introduction:

This activity asks you to write an essay defining, applying, and critiquing the term intersectionality. The term was first coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a law professor and social theorist, in her paper, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: The Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics."

To prepare for writing this essay, you will read several documents. In the first part of your essay, you will juxtapose these readings and do a bit of research to discuss the history of the term "intersectionality" and to demonstrate how the concept is applied in a current social justice movement. You will then read critiques so that, in the second part, you can discuss your own position on the possibilities and limits of intersectionality for advancing the goals of a social movement you care about.

Participant Instructions:

1. Read the following before beginning your essay (all PDFs in [Downloads](#) for this tool):
 - "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: The Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" by Kimberlé Crenshaw
 - *The Combahee River Collective Statement*
 - "About the Black Lives Matter Network"
2. This essay has 2 parts. In the first part, you will answer the following questions:
 - What is intersectionality, according to Crenshaw? How does she use it in her essay?
 - What are the beliefs/principles of the Combahee River Collective, and how might Crenshaw be building off their work?
 - What are the beliefs/principles of the Black Lives Matter movement? How is intersectionality embedded in its principles?
 - What is another contemporary social movement that applies a framework of intersectionality? How is intersectionality embedded in its principles? *Note:* This will require you to do research beyond the three readings. Feel free to bring in your own relevant experience to the essay as well.
3. Locate and read at least one critique of intersectionality. (There are suggestions in [Links](#), but you are welcome to find others.) In this second part of their essay, they should answer the following questions:
 - Why do you think intersectionality has become such an integral component of social movements – specifically, social justice movements?
 - What are some critiques of the concept and/or how it is used?
 - Do those critiques apply to the contemporary social movement you discussed in the first part of your essay? Why or why not?
 - What do you find useful about the concept of intersectionality, and where do you see its limits? Would you use it to further a social movement you care about? (This does



not have to be a social justice movement.) If so, why and how? If not, why? You are invited to speak to your lived experience and commitments in this section.