

INTERSECTIONALITY

DEI: 9/3/2020

Stanna Dorn

TED talk:

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

It all started with a woman named Emma DeGraffenreid...

- Court case: DeGraffenreid v. General Motors
- DeGraffenreid believed she was denied employment because she was a Black woman
- Court dismissed her case because the company was able to show that they hired both women and African-Americans
- However, the only African-Americans hired were men, and the only women hired were white. How to describe the core issue Emma was facing in trying to get a job?

Enter Kimberlé Crenshaw

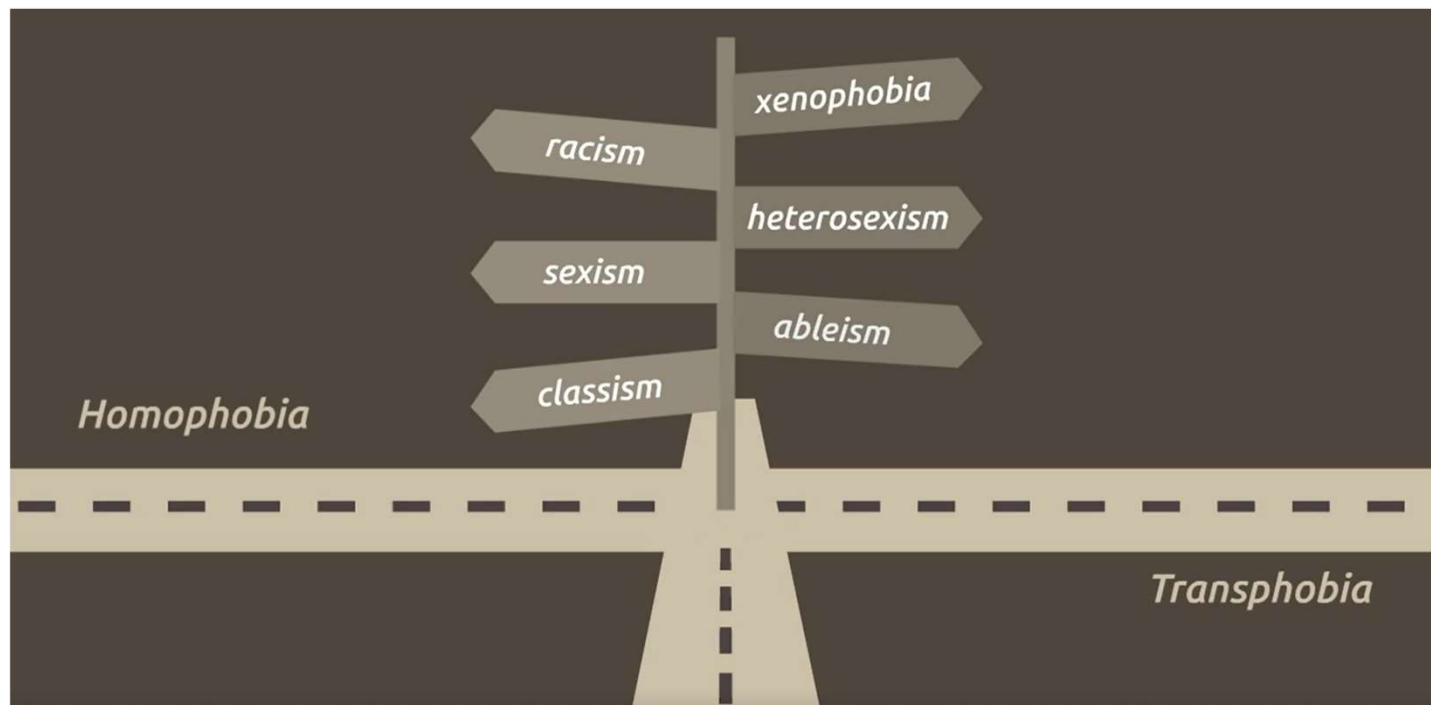
- Professor of Law at UCLA and Columbia Law School
- Foundational work in Critical Race Theory
- Co-founder of the African American Policy Forum (AAPF)
- With regards to the DeGraffenreid case, asked the question: how can we frame Emma's case such that courts could see how Emma's identity as a black woman caused her to experience 'injustice squared'?



The result: intersectionality

- “the theory that the **overlap of various social identities**, as race, gender, sexuality, and class, **contributes to the specific type of systemic oppression and discrimination experienced by an individual**” (<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/intersectionality>)
- “...the idea that when it comes to thinking about **how inequalities persist**, categories like **gender, race, and class are best understood as overlapping and mutually constitutive rather than isolated and distinct**”
 - (Wingfeld, <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/10/79-cents/504386/>)

The result: intersectionality



Why does intersectionality matter?

- Being cognizant of intersectionality allows one to **acknowledge how multiple facets of inequality can compound on one another**
- Recognizing intersectionality and its impacts allows you **to be more empathetic towards people from more marginalized backgrounds**
- **It applies to many people**, from the students you teach to people you might work with in a future job

Current tension/ambiguity: exact definition of intersectionality

- The frame of intersectionality has broadened since it was first introduced in the context of Black women
- Some claim that it is too broad now and that anyone can write their own definition of intersectionality
- Some believe that it should only be used in its original context

What can I do in response to this?

- Have increasing awareness towards the multiple intersecting identities that perpetuate inequity
- Realize that intersectionality means that not everyone's experience with discrimination and inequality is the same
- Take action: if you are not actively working towards dismantling systemic racism and inequity, *you are complicit*
 - Educate yourself—learn about its history
 - Get comfortable being uncomfortable
 - Call it what it is when you see it

#SayHerName: Breonna Taylor



- 26-year-old EMT killed by police on March 13th
- Many issues with how her case was handled
- One of the officers was fired, the others were placed on administrative reassignment—none of the officers have faced criminal charges
- This contrasts George Floyd's case, in which all officers were criminally charged quickly after its occurrence

Thoughts/Questions?

