

Artwork by Favianna Rodriguez

Interrogating
**INTERSECTIONALITY AND FEMINIST
KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION**

Dr Radhika Govinda
University of Edinburgh, UK



INTERROGATING INTERSECTIONALITY AND FEMINIST KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

- ❖ Intersectionality as analytic tool

origin, meaning and relevance

- ❖ Intersectionality and its critics

key debates, cautionary notes and other epistemic concerns

- ❖ Intersectionality as academic activism

decolonising University classrooms, democratising the curriculum and disrupting neoliberal diversity

'Who am I' riddles/ POLITICS OF LOCATION IN THE ACADEMY

Invisible in curricula, hypervisible in academia

Who am I?

From the majority world, a minority in this part of the world

Who am I?

Neither insider nor outsider, forever on the margins

Who am I?

Difficult to identify with, yet identified by many descriptors

I am

Woman *of colour*, Asian Indian, *political* sociologist, *postcolonial* feminist

I am

Where many lines of difference meet

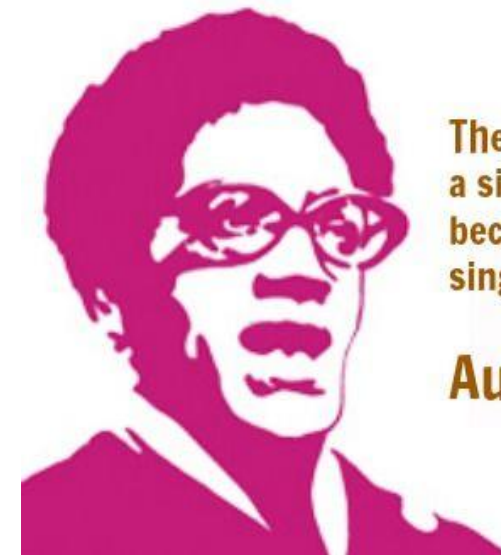
I am

Embodied intersectionality.

RG August 2017

WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?

Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the **complexity in the world**, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by **many factors** in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by **many axes** that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an **analytic tool** gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves (Collins and Bilge 2016).



There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.

Audre Lorde

'INTERSECTIONALITY-LIKE THINKING'

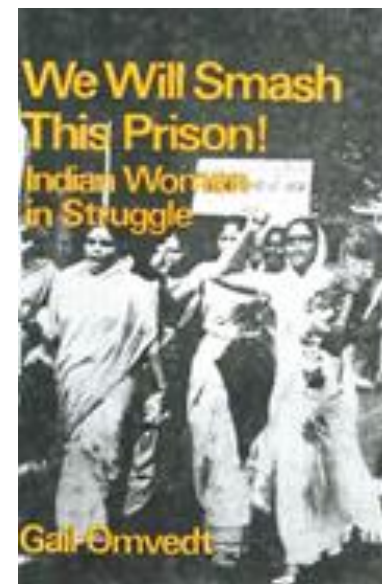
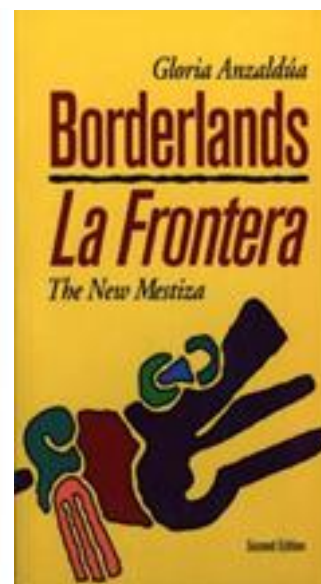
Sojourner Truth, 1851: 'Ain't I a woman?'

Combahee River Collective, 1977: 'interlocking systems of oppression'

Gloria Anzaldua, 1987: 'borderlands of identities and experiences'

Gail Omvedt, 1979: 'downtrodden among the downtrodden'/ 'triple oppression'

Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, 1983: 'gender, ethnic and class divisions as mutually constitutive'



UNDER WESTERN EYES: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses

Chantre Mohanty

It ought to be of some political significance at least that the term 'colonialism' has come to denote a variety of phenomena in social, economic and literary writings in practice. From its status as a category of exploitative economic exchange in both traditional and contemporary Marxistist or particularly neo-Marxist readings as Derrida, Anand and Gauri Olick to its use by feminist women of color in the US, to describe the appropriation of their experiences and struggles by hegemonic white women's movements, the term 'colonialism' has been used to characterize everything from the most virulent racism and political liberalism to the production of a particular cultural discourse about what is called the 'Third World'. However sophisticated or problematical its use as an explanatory concept, colonialism almost invariably implies a relation of structural domination, and is a discourse or political subjectivity of the heterogeneity of the subject in question. What I wish to explore here, specifically in the production of the 'Third World Women' as a singular identifiable subject in some recent colonialist feminist texts. The definition of colonialism in this book is a problematical discourse, because it is a certain mode of appropriation and outbursts of subordination and 'colonization' about women in the third world by particular analysis categories employed to evaluate the subject which take as their primary point of reference the subject as they have been articulated in the US and Europe.

My interest is not to challenge the term 'colonialism' or its own legislative and theoretical to colonialism, and the way it is used to describe the experience of women of color, race and national boundaries, but to explore the ways in which the political practice in the third world is not a mere reproduction of

INTERROGATING INTERSECTIONALITY

'the most important theoretical contribution of women's and gender studies to date' (McCall 2005)

'the most valid theoretical approach to study social stratification' (Yuval-Davis 2015)

'welcomed the margins to the table of theory making' (Lewis 2013)



INTERSECTIONALITY AND ITS CRITICS

- ❖ What is intersectionality – a metaphor, a heuristic device, a concept, or a theory? (Anthias 2009; Davis 2008; Lutz 2001; May 2014)
- ❖ Additive vs. Constitutive? (Collins 2000; Hancock 2013; Menon 2015; Rege 2000)
- ❖ Identity-Structure: 'either/or' or 'both/and'? How many levels of analysis? (Anthias 1998; Crenshaw 1989; Menon 2015; Yuval-Davis 2006)



INTERSECTIONALITY AND ITS CRITICS



- ❖ How many, and which lines of difference? Some more central? (Bilge 2013; Butler 1990; Lutz 2001; Menon 2015)
- ❖ Relevance outside the context of origin? Anything new to offer? (Cho, McCall and Crenshaw 2013; John 2015; Menon 2015; Nash 2008; Yuval-Davis 2015)



INTERSECTIONALITY AND ITS CRITICS

❖ Widespread espousal: sign of success/ danger of cooption, depoliticisation, erasure? (Bilge 2013; May 2014; Menon 2015)

THINKING INTERSECTIONALITY

a rare event

ERICKSON KIVA, MSU

Presented by the Department of Philosophy along with the following co-sponsors:
MSU College of Arts and Sciences, Office for Multicultural and Intercultural Education, Asian Pacific American Community Center, Latino Cultural Center, James Madison College, Center for Studies in Latin American, Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies, and the Center for Gender and Sexuality Studies

with

Presenters: [Three circular portraits of speakers]

Zona Abierta

Intersectionality: Feminism & Activism

Presented by the UIC Latino Cultural Center

Join us for an interactive dialogue with community organizer and activist Cynthia Brito who will share her personal journey as a teen mother and how she organizes against the inequalities of Latina women living in our communities. Through her story and community involvement she will focus on issues of domestic violence, reproductive justice, and immigration.

when: Wednesday, Oct. 23, 2013
time: 3:30pm to 5pm
where: Latino Cultural Center Lecture Center B2

Free refreshments and admission

For more info, please call 712-995-3095 or visit us at www.uic.edu

This event is co-sponsored by the UIC Latin American and Latino Studies Program and the National Latino Institute for Reproductive Health. It is a member of the Latino Health Action League, and is a part of the Don't Dream of Education annual conference for Latina teens.

UIC RAFAEL CONTRÓN ORTIZ LATINO CULTURAL CENTER

WHY IS MY CURRICULUM WHITE?

26 OCTOBER

5:30-7:30 PM
Conference Auditorium One

Asia Dalit Rights Forum

Intersectionality of Gender, Caste & Descent Based Discrimination in the implementation of SDGs- Moving towards a poverty free World

Side Event @ HLPE
12th July: 1.00-3.30 pm
UN Church centre, 2nd flr
777 UN Plaza, NY, USA

INTERSECTIONALITY: Children & Urban Engagement

16,000,000 children live below the poverty level in the U.S.

Black and Latino children are 4 times more likely to be obese than White children.

IN MOST URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS, PARENTS ARE LESS LIKELY TO ALLOW THEIR CHILDREN TO PLAY OUTSIDE DUE TO HIGH CRIME RATES.

WHEN OLDER CHILDREN ARE EXPOSED TO RACISM, THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO BECOME SELF-CONSCIOUS AND DEVELOP SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION.

INTERSECTIONAL LGBTIQ+ SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

BLACK RAINBOW

Black Rainbow is an online presence for the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL LGBTIQ+ GROUP WA

The WA Amnesty LGBTIQ+ Action Group campaigns to defend the rights of gender and sexuality diverse people in Australia around the world.

QUEER MUSLIMS IN AUSTRALIA

Queer Muslims in Australia (QMs) is a group for and by Muslim, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) Muslims who wish to engage in a safe space.

<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/qmslms/info>

(IN)VISIBLE 'OTHERS'

'Mirror mirror on the wall'/ PROMISE AND PERILS OF INTERSECTIONAL PEDAGOGY

What is Intersectional Pedagogy, Take I:
Calling out the God trick
Changing answers to old questions
Complicating identity
Confronting one another across differences
Cathartic, did you say?

What is Intersectional Pedagogy, Take II:
Admitting power and privilege, fear and rage
Accepting conflict as a catalyst for change
Acknowledging the wounds of struggle
And allowing solidarity a chance
Ah ha, it's like playing 'mirror mirror on the wall'!

TEACHING ABOUT MARGINS AT THE INTERSECTIONS

What is Intersectional Pedagogy, Take III:

Dismantling the canon

Decentering the knowledge field

Displacing the universal self

Dislocating white, First World subjectivities

Dizzying, did you say?

What is Intersectional Pedagogy, Take IV:

Transgressing boundaries

Troubling reflections

Transforming the gaze

Teaching about margins at the intersections

Terrifying, did you say?

My understanding and efforts to incorporate intersectional pedagogy in my teaching practice derive from my engagement with the writing and ideas of Freire (1968), Crenshaw (1989), hooks (1994), Spivak (2008) and Mohanty (1984; 2003) among others, as is reflected in this poem.

INTERSECTIONAL PRIVILEGE

The Privilege Walk is a social experiment designed to **visually represent privilege** and create **awareness and understanding** among participants and viewers.

Examples of identity cards

- '33 year old, married Indian female University lecturer on a highly skilled work visa'
- '53 year old white British male artist'

Examples of statements

- If you can show affection for your romantic partner in public without fear of ridicule or violence, take one step forward.
- If you have ever been the only person of your race/gender/sexual orientation in a classroom or workplace setting, please take one step back.

DECENTERING LEARNING

Given the politics of privilege and ethnocentrism,
IS TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST PRAXIS POSSIBLE?

- ❖ Read excerpts from hooks' *Feminism Is For Everybody* (2000) and Namala's 'Dalit Women' (2008)
- ❖ Imagine Black feminist activist, bell hooks and Dalit (ex-untouchable) feminist scholar activist, Annie Namala were to meet. What would they say to each other?
 - *about women of color/ Dalit women? Are there any similarities in their condition?*
 - *about women in Civil Rights/ Dalit movements in the United States and in India?*
 - *about feminist women's movements in both countries?*
 - *about the possibility of transnational feminist praxis?*
- ❖ Write up this conversation with yourself as the moderator.





EMBODIED INTERSECTIONALITY AND NEOLIBERAL DIVERSITY

- Only 85 of the UK's 18,500 professors are of colour
- Of the 85 professors of colour, only 17 are women of colour
- A cursory glance at the heads of higher education institutions in the country reveals that just three out of 159 are of colour

(Grove 2014; University and College Union 2013 and 2016)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- ❖ Intersectionality as analytic tool
- ❖ Key academic debates on intersectionality, with important implications for equality practitioners and policymakers
- ❖ Intersectionality as critical pedagogy for decolonising feminist classrooms in British HE
- ❖ Interrogating intersectionality less about what *is* intersectionality, more about what it can *do*!