

Intersectionality

The Georgetown University National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) conducted a Community of Practice on Cultural and Linguistic Competence in Developmental Disabilities. In the final year of the project, the NCCC responded to interests and needs of the CoP state teams that asked for a focus on racial equity in intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) by creating a Racial Equity Learning Community. The NCCC team identified two terms — disability justice and intersectionality — and in partnership with persons with IDD, created a set of materials to define these terms and share what they mean within the context of their lived experience.

Kimberlé Crenshaw, a lawyer and civil rights advocate, introduced us to the term intersectionality in 1991. She wrote about how a person who because of their membership in multiple social groups may experience discrimination, oppression, and marginalization. Her work focused on Black women.

Since 1991, the term intersectionality is used in multiple ways by many in health, mental health, and human services. Sometimes those who use the term intersectionality confuse it with multiple cultural identities and omit the important defining factors of discrimination, marginalization, and oppression.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. Stanford Law Review, Vol. 43, No. 6 (Jul., 1991), pp. 1241-1299.



ANDY ARIAS is an actor, advocate and diversity and inclusion subject matter expert. Andy shared his thoughts on intersectionality with the NCCC.

“Crenshaw is correct. From childhood through adult life, I experience stereotyping, marginalization, and discrimination because of my Queer-ness, my LatinX-ness, and my disability. Intersectional identities are all the parts of a human. All humans need to feel included and that they belong for who they are. When we take the humanistic level away discrimination can quickly become a factor. As Crenshaw alludes to, it is critical that we understand how intersectionality affects people, including those who experience disability. Tapping into our emotional intelligence to understand the impact of socially imposed beliefs about the worth of humans, based on race, ethnicity, disability, queerness and other identities is the work we all need to do.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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