

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.



LYDIA X.Z. BROWN is a community organizer, policy expert and lawyer. Lydia shared their thoughts on intersectionality with the NCCC.

“Disability Justice builds on Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw’s work on the concept of Intersectionality — a method of analyzing and understanding the effects of multiple forms of oppression. When a person or community experiences more than one form of oppression, there is a compounded effect — not an additive one. For instance, I have been in many situations where it wasn’t just my race, my gender, or my disability that led someone to discriminate against me, treat me terribly, or threaten me with violence — it was a combination of more than one of those factors. Intersectionality helps us understand how a disabled person of color is so much more likely to be assumed to be untrustworthy or criminal than a White disabled person or even a nondisabled person of color. Intersectionality also helps us understand how important it is for all of our communities to work together to end oppression.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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