

BOOK REVIEW

Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, Kehinde Andrews, and Annabel Wilson, eds. *Blackness at the Intersection*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024. 451 pp. Photographs. Bibliography. Index. \$26.95. Paper. ISBN: 9781786998651.

If Blackness is the intersection, then situationally specific Black identities are the various pathways leading to it. Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, Kehinde Andrews, and Annabel Wilson's recent edited collection, *Blackness at the Intersection*, considers the applicability of Crenshaw's foundational concept of intersectionality to the Black British context. The editors aim to "reassert the theoretical basis of the concept, to reattach it to a critical understanding of racism in society" as it "can and has been applied across a vast array of different locations" (23). The collection includes emerging scholars sharing space with established academics whose work shapes Black studies.

The book is divided into three sections of thematically linked essays. The first section, "Institutional Oppressions," comprises three essays on women's experiences in navigating British institutions to receive mental health care, legal services, welfare provisions, and media representations of Black and mixed-race women. The second section, "Marginalising Black Voices" contains five essays which continue the theme of institutional neglect but also inflect it with archival and ethnographic research to uncover assumptions behind racialized femininities, disability, and educational access and achievement. The third section, "Counter-narratives," focuses on responses to some of these assumptions via queer art, social media sites, and narratives about single mothers and their sons. Cumulatively, the book contains twelve essays, an introduction, and a powerful conclusion.

Among these excellent contributions, two broad areas reframing intersectionality stand out: racialized disability and educational disparities. From the first section, "Institutional Oppressions," Annabel and Paulette Wilson's life narrative "Reframing Intersectionality: A 'Herstory' of My Mother," narrates a Black mother's and her mixed-race caregiver daughter's interactions with the British mental health system. The life narrative describes "class, race, disability and gender in action" (59) through the Jamaican born mother's negotiation with the National Health System (NHS) once she was diagnosed with mental illnesses. The essay foregrounds the mother's resistance and the limits of such resistance by describing invasive treatments and imperious dictation of her medical condition by health personnel who do not hear Black women's voices narrating their own illness. Viju Kuppan's essay from the second section, "Marginalising Black Voices," also explores disability. In "Black Crip Killjoys: Dissident Voices


and Neglected Stories from the Margins,” Kuppam reinscribes feminist philosopher Sara Ahmed’s figure of the feminist killjoy to talk about the Black crip killjoy as a “body/mind that is not made to feel at home in the world” (186). Relating “intersectional failures” in representations of disability in various situations—academic, popular culture, sports, urban disasters causing disability and displacement—where race often does not enter the discussion, the author points to the relative privilege enjoyed by white male bodies as opposed to debilitated and disabled people of color. Kuppam positions himself as a “Brown brother, who stands and fights (writes) in solidarity with and for Black lives” (187).

Kuppam’s self-positioning connects to the revaluation of “political blackness” as a term that historically included African, Caribbean, South Asian, Arab, and other racialized minorities in Britain. For the editors, the concept has outlived its value as a term of political solidarity. With Black folk often at the lowest strata of educational access, income, and social mobility among ethnic groups, the editors call for deploying Black as describing only British Africans and British Caribbeans. Crenshaw et al. reject political blackness to ground the collection “firmly in Blackness defined as the African diaspora” (39). Thus, including South Asian Viji Kuppam’s essay is, as indicated in the introduction, a gesture whereby they “reject the notion of political blackness without casting out those who embrace it” (39).

The second macro concern raised in the volume is the applicability of intersectional analysis to understand disparities in UK higher education. Constantino Dumangane’s “Freshwater Fish in Saltwater: Black Men’s Accounts Navigating Discriminatory Waters in UK Higher Education” describes how despite Black British men attending university at a higher rate as a percentage of their ethnic group than white men, their representation in UK’s elite institutions remains low. Observing bodily hexis, responses to a video as a Critical Race Theory (CRT) tool, and participant interviews, Dumangane uncovers Black men’s strategies of coping with racism. Dionne Taylor adopts a similar approach in “‘It’s not even an attitude ... but a way of being!’: Negotiating Black British Women’s Lived Experiences” where she draws on her research on Black university students’ understandings of their academic experiences. Taylor concludes that despite being more likely to acquire a university education and attain qualifications, Black women are more likely to live in poverty and head single-parent households. The anthology closes with a powerful essay in the third section, “Counter-narratives,” titled “Blackness is the Intersection” which gestures towards a future-oriented politics.

If there is one omission in this excellent volume it is neglect of the Black British cultural studies legacy. Three contributors briefly mention Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, but there is no reference to Black feminist interventions by scholars such as Hazel Carby, Valerie Amos, and Pratibha Parmar, which were intersectional before intersectionality was a buzzword. Despite this oversight, this collection is of value across disciplines, especially for those researching and

teaching Black feminist studies who encounter students and sometimes scholars using intersectionality without a clear understanding of its history, current applicability, or future potential.

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