
***The Intersectional Environmentalist: How to Dismantle Systems of Oppression to Protect People + Planet.* Leah Thomas. Voracious, 2022. 192 pp.**

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Most modern feminists, other allies, and members of gender and sexual minorities are undoubtedly familiar with intersectionality. I had been using the term to refer “to the interaction of multiple identities and experiences of exclusion and subordination” (Davis, 2008). However, in *The Intersectional Environmentalist: How to Dismantle Systems of Oppression to Protect People + Planet*, Thomas cites the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition to describe “the complex ways in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as of racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups” (p. 26). Though the concept has existed since the 19th century (Collins & Bilge, 2020), the term was first coined and subsequently popularized by Crenshaw (1989) to draw attention to the fact that even though American politicians had already passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, employers continued to discriminate against Black women. Because intersectionality is such a versatile theory, many other aspects of identity in addition to what Monture (2007), as reflected in the Merriam-Webster definition, has labelled the so-called trinity of race, class, and gender can also be considered. As the title of her book implies, Thomas helps the reader to contemplate environmentalism from an intersectional perspective.

The book has five short and accessible chapters. Chapter 1 provides background information on intersectional theory and feminism and illustrates how we can apply an intersectional approach to environmentalism. Similarly, in Chapter 2, Thomas extrapolates from social justice to environmental justice. She states, “Social injustice and environmental injustice are fueled by the same flame: the undervaluing, commodification, and exploitation of all forms of life and natural resources, from the smallest blade of grass to those living in poverty and oppressed people worldwide” (Thomas, 2022, p. 5). In Chapter 3, Thomas addresses that uncomfortable elephant in the room: privilege. In Chapter 4, she shows how Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) are disproportionately adversely affected by environmental problems than Whites. For example, one statistic that Thomas cites is the fact that 71% of African Americans live in counties that do not have clean enough air, by federal government standards. Over half of Latinx people in the United States live in similarly poor circumstances. Similarly, Latinx workers, who are overrepresented in the agriculture industry, are three times more likely than Whites to die from heat exhaustion on the job. Lastly, in Chapter 5, Thomas covers three relevant contemporary issues and how they relate to intersectional environmentalism: fashion, green energy, and veganism.

Thomas draws attention to the disparity between the wealthy Global North and the less affluent Global South with numerous examples. First, the fashion industry has an enormous negative impact on the environment, and fast fashion, in particular, has exacerbated the problem. Compared to 1995, in 2015 consumers purchased 400% more clothing. Furthermore, the fashion industry is one of the largest polluters in the world, exploiting not only the earth's natural resources, but also labour. As trends keep changing, consumers will keep buying, causing this vicious cycle to continue. A related issue that is close to my heart is that government agencies have uncovered evidence of forced child labour and slavery in the industry. Exacerbating this disparity is the fact that most fashion manufacturing occurs in the Global South, and increasing consumption in the Global North is driving demand. Corporations exploiting child labor and disregarding safety standards further widen the gap. For the sake of a sustainable environment, these problems must be addressed. One more glaring difference between the Global North and the Global South that Thomas highlights is the fact that 70% of the world's lithium is found within indigenous lands in South America. In 2015, China alone drove 50% of the global demand (Hao et al., 2017).

The book was also easy to read because of highlighted definitions as well as the helpful Q&As interspersed in the book. Definitions of terms such as misogynoir and, of course, intersectionality, increased accessibility. The Q&As in each chapter would benefit not only individuals reading the book independently but also book club members because they serve as discussion questions. Still, even when reading independently, readers can consider what they have learned and apply it to what they already know and experience. For example, in Chapter 2, Thomas invites the reader to consider racial segregation and environmental injustices in their own community. In Chapter 4, she invites the reader to consider why climate justice activists need to focus not only on the Global North, but also the Global South.

I enjoyed the book for several reasons. As I mentioned above, I liked the fact that it was accessible. One does not even need to be conversant in intersectional theory to see how to apply it to various contexts. Thomas illustrated numerous problems, such as the wage gap, education, and criminal justice, as they apply to BIPOC. Thomas is not promoting competition in the 'Oppression Olympics,' but she reminds us that Black workers earn less than Whites, Black women earn less than Black men, and Black LGBTQ+ workers earn even less.

I also enjoyed the book because Thomas showed me a way to consider the issues in a new light. Thomas discusses and suggests pledges of support for various aspects of the environmental justice movement for her readers to take. I felt motivated to make some of them, including the pledge in Chapter 2 to work to dismantle systems of oppression in the environmental justice movement and

the one in Chapter 3, to use my privilege to advocate for and amplify the messages of BIPOC activists. Other additional gems were Thomas's recommended reading, viewing, and listening lists in the tool kit, which included reports, videos, and podcasts, as well as the list of additional resources towards the end of the book.

Though *The Intersectional Environmentalist* is easy to read, informative, and inspirational, I do have some minor complaints about the book. First, though the tool kit and resources sections are helpful, an index would have made it easier for the reader to navigate through the book. Including such an index would make searching for concepts by topic, and perhaps even authors, easier. Furthermore, though the author has criticized the environmental movement for focusing excessively on the northern hemisphere, a disproportionate number of her own examples of environmental problems and policy are drawn from the United States context. Despite these minor reservations, I still encourage readers to draw inspiration from this book to get straight to work not only on smashing the patriarchal systems which perpetuate social inequalities, but also on smashing predatory capitalistic systems which exacerbate environmental inequalities and wreak ecological destruction.

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