

Intersectional Environmentalism

Leah Thomas describes Intersectional Environmentalism as “an inclusive version of environmentalism that advocates for both the protection of people and the planet.”

Key People, Vocabulary, and Movements

Below are important people, vocabulary, and movements for understanding the scope of Intersectional Environmentalism. Please note that these are not all of the movements and people that have worked for environmental justice, these are the historical movements, all based in the United States, as outlined in *The Intersectional Environmentalist*.

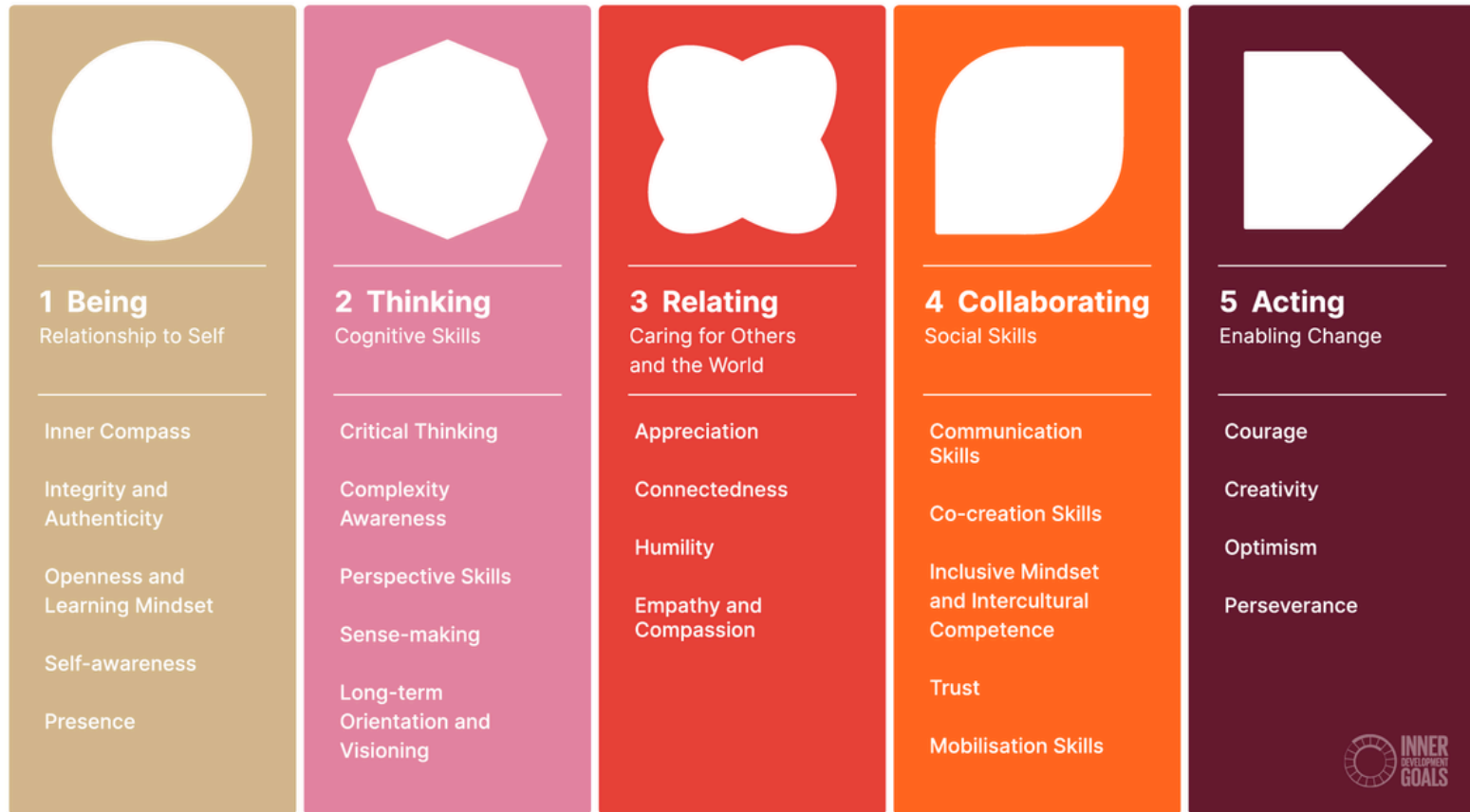
Kimberlé Crenshaw	The first person to describe the term “intersectionality”, which takes its roots in Black feminist activism and recognizes the vast diversity of people and that their identities cannot be separated but rather inform one another (race, economic status, religion, gender, sex).
Hazel M. Johnson	Hazel M. Johnson, known as the Mother of Environmental Justice, was a prominent advocate in Chicago's South Side. She founded People for Community Recovery to address environmental pollution in Altgeld Gardens. Johnson's activism influenced local and national policies, including President Clinton signing the Environmental Justice Executive Order. She connected with global environmental activists to protect marginalized communities from corporate and governmental neglect. <i>From the Chicago Public Library.</i>
Dr. Robert Bullard	Dr. Bullard, known as the Father of Environmental Justice, conducted a study revealing the correlation between race and toxic waste site placement. He organized the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit and advocates for environmental justice and policy awareness. <i>From The Intersectional Environmentalist by Leah Thomas.</i>

<p>Combahee River Collective</p>	<p>“The Combahee River Collective was a Black Feminist Lesbian organization that was active between 1974 and 1980. This intersectional group was created because there was a sense that both the feminist movement or civil rights movement didn't reflect the particular needs of Black women and lesbians.” <i>From the City of Boston - Black History Boston</i></p>
<p>Black Sanitation Workers</p>	<p>In 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee, Black sanitation workers initiated a strike to address unsafe working conditions and insufficient wages. This marked the first instance, as noted by the EPA, of Black Americans organizing on a national level against environmental injustices. Together with Martin Luther King Jr., these workers championed for workplace safety and equitable compensation. <i>From The Intersectional Environmentalist by Leah Thomas.</i></p>
<p>Chicano/a Movements</p>	<p>Arturo Sandoval founded the Center of Southwest Culture which was on the organizing team for the first Earth Day in 1970. Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta were fighting for farmworker safety, banning harmful pesticides, and increasing awareness for environmental justice in Latinx communities in the 1960s and 1970s. However, their activism was considered separate from the Earth Day movement due to racism, xenophobia, and classism. <i>From The Intersectional Environmentalist by Leah Thomas.</i></p>
<p>Indigenous Occupation of Alcatraz</p>	<p>In 1969, Indigenous rights activists held a 19-month occupation of Alcatraz Island in San Francisco, California. This occupation highlighted broken treaties and promises to the Indigenous community, called for Alcatraz to be returned to Indigenous peoples, and that the U.S. government implement restorative justice programs such as infrastructure improvements, fresh running water, and enriching the soil. <i>From The Intersectional Environmentalist by Leah Thomas.</i></p>
<p>Warren County Sit-In</p>	<p>In the 1980s, Warren County became a focal point for the environmental justice movement due to a landfill contaminated with PCBs. The predominantly Black community protested against the landfill, leading to a government investigation that exposed environmental racism, revealing that most toxic landfill sites were located in Black communities with high poverty rates. <i>From The Intersectional Environmentalist by Leah Thomas.</i></p>

Activities

Inner Development Goals

This framework aims to help people and communities develop inner qualities that will allow them to thrive in a changing world.

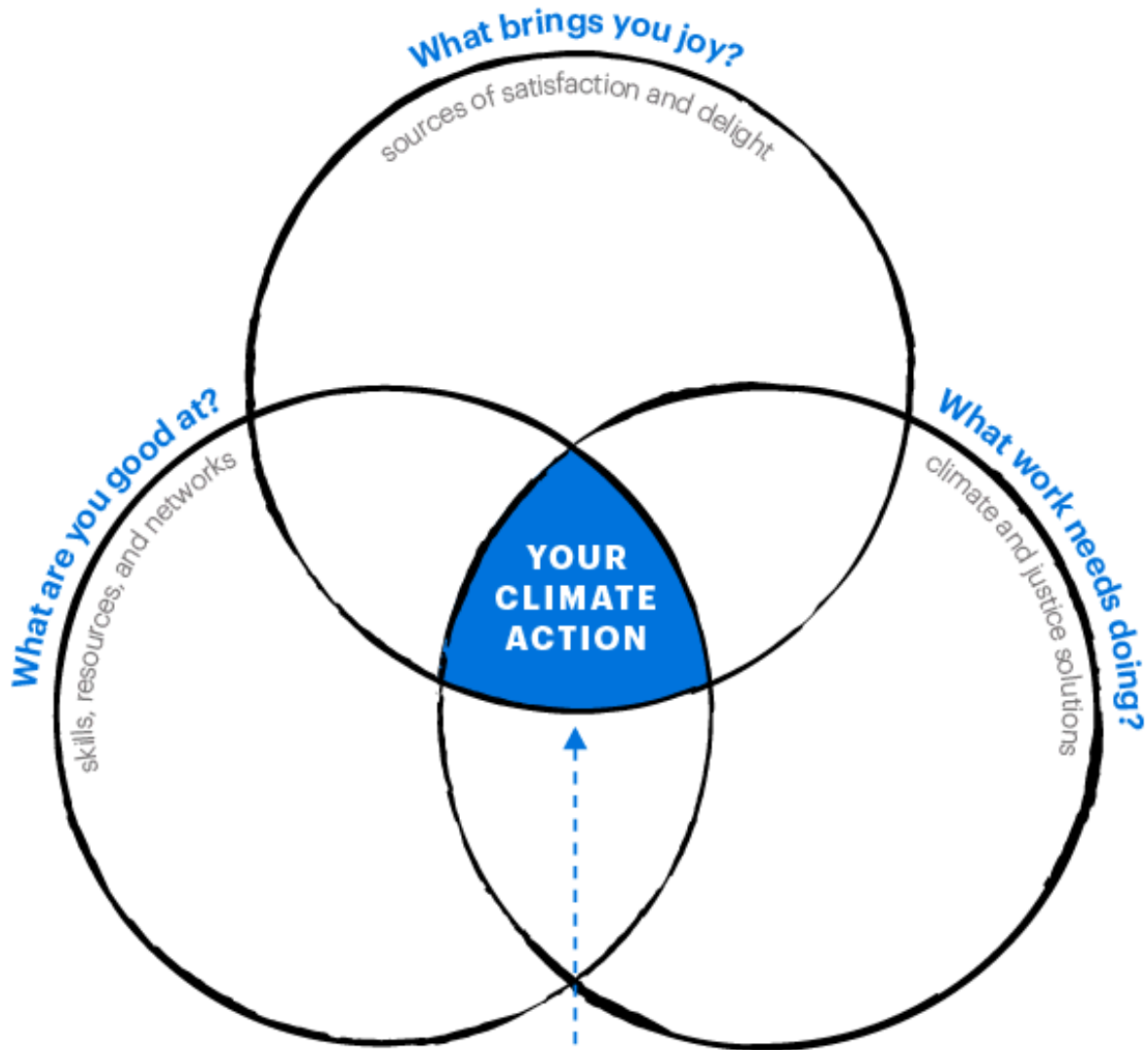


How do you contribute to each of these areas? What qualities do you bring for a just and sustainable transition?

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Climate Venn Diagram

Created by Anaya Elizabeth Johnson, the Climate Venn Diagram is an exercise to see how specifically *you* can find a meaningful way to help with climate solutions. Use the space below to fill out your own Climate Venn Diagram, keep in mind your diverse identities and your talents.



A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners and a dashed blue border, intended for users to fill out their own Climate Venn Diagram.

Discussion Topics

Using the structure that Leah Thomas sets in *The Intersectional Environmentalist*, these questions are adapted from her book and a study guide created by [Radical in Progress](#).

	Discussion Question
Intersectional Theory, Feminism + Intersectional Environmentalism	What current social issues and discussions need a more intersectional lens? I.E. What would an intersectional approach to education look like? What would an intersectional approach to policy look like?
Environmental Justice: A Wider Lens	When I visit the green spaces in my community, are they free and open to the public? Can I make a conscious effort to learn about topics from a perspective outside of my own? To you, is the climate crisis a future threat or one you face right now?
Unpacking Privilege	How can we use privilege to create change? Which aspects of my identity felt most impactful in my upbringing? How do my overlapping identities intersect?
Who's Affected: The Reality for BIPOC Communities	What are some global examples of environmental racism? How can I proactively research instances of environmental racism without burdening BIPOC to do the emotional labor for me?
People + Planet	Can you describe where you see the intersection of people and the planet in one word? How can we change our attitudes towards fashion, green energy, and veganism to be better intersectional environmentalists?

The IE Pledge

I will...

- stand in solidarity with BIPOC, LGBTQ2S+, and Disability communities and the planet.
- not ignore the intersections of environmentalism and social justice.
- use my privilege to advocate for Black and brown lives in spaces where their messages are often silenced.
- proactively do the work to learn about the environmental and social injustices these communities face without minimizing their voices.
- respect the boundaries of BIPOC, LGBTQ2S+, and Disability friends and activists and not demand they perform emotional labor or do the work for me.
- share my learnings with other environmentalists and my community.
- amplify the message of BIPOC, LGBTQ2S+, and Disability justice advocates and environmental leaders.
- not remain silent during pivotal political and cultural moments that impact targeted communities.

Intersectional Environmentalist Toolkits

The Intersectional Environmentalist has a plethora of free [Toolkits](#) that can help deepen and expand your environmental knowledge. Toolkits include:

- An Intersectional Approach To Earth Day
- Environmental Justice in Palestine
- Modern-Day Imperialism In The Global Waste Trend
- Ecofeminism and Environmental Liberation
- How Organic Can Save The Planet
- Reimagining Food Justice + Food Sovereignty
- Reproductive Justice
- Indigenous Environmentalism: The Rights of Manoomin
- Black Woman Savior Trope