

Patricia Hill Collins

By: Jan Rose-Davis



Sociologist and scholar Patricia Hill Collins began learning about the complex interactions between class, race, and gender from an early age. Collins is a first-generation college graduate who continued working hard to earn her master's and doctoral degrees. Born an only child to Eunice Randolph Hill and Albert Hill, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1948. She grew up with more educational opportunities than her parents; however, she had to work hard as part of the working-class youth cohort. As she navigated the well-funded but complicated school system, her diligence with education took her from the supportive Black working-class community to academic spaces needing desegregation (ASA). Her intellectual prowess led her to receive her Bachelor of Arts in sociology on a scholarship from Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, in 1969, which aimed to diversify its student body because of the “affirmative action” movement. From there, Collins went on to pursue her MA in sociology at Harvard University in 1970, and her PhD at Brandeis in 1984 (Gianoulis).

Along the way, she was a Harvard University, teacher and curriculum specialist for the teacher trainer program, 1970-73; St. Joseph's Community School, curriculum specialist, 1973-76. She taught seventh and eighth grades and also helped to organize parents and students in a broad-based community development program. At Tufts University she was the African American Center, director, from 1976-80, which was formed to promote black culture. Collins moved on to serve as a special assistant to the president in 1980. Later on, at the University of Cincinnati, from 1982-87, she became an assistant professor of the Department of African-American Studies, then an associate professor from 1987-94. Eventually, she became a professor from 1994-2005, a Charles Phelps Taft professor emeritus in 2005, acting chair from 1987-88, and chair from 1999-02. As part of her work to eliminate racism and promote tolerance, in 2002, Collins became the founder and president of PHC Educational Services. This service is a consulting company to help schools, businesses, and community groups improve their relations with minority groups. In 2005, she moved to the University of Maryland where she was awarded the Wilson Elkins professorship in the sociology department. Additionally, she became the first African-American woman president of the American Sociological Association, an academic group founded in 1905 (Gianoulis).

For Collins, studying sociology allowed her to explore her interests in different identities and their interactions within the social sphere. The vision she had of society as a network of intricate interactions was her most influential contribution to the sociological way of thinking. Her main argument is that biases must be eliminated to create a just and healthy society. She is known for her work on the intersection of factors such as race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and national origin (Cole). Moreover, her predominant focus is how these factors affect our perceptions of selves and others. In particular, Collins's work on the impact of these factors on Black people in America has revealed how black people are often trapped in poverty, and even in prison, by racism, which has been destructive to African-American unity. Additionally, through her work, she expands Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality as a critical tool and the role it plays in understanding social issues and inequity (Austin). A motto she coined from her research was "excellence through diversity," which expressed her belief that real progress will come only through a society that includes everyone (Gianoulis).

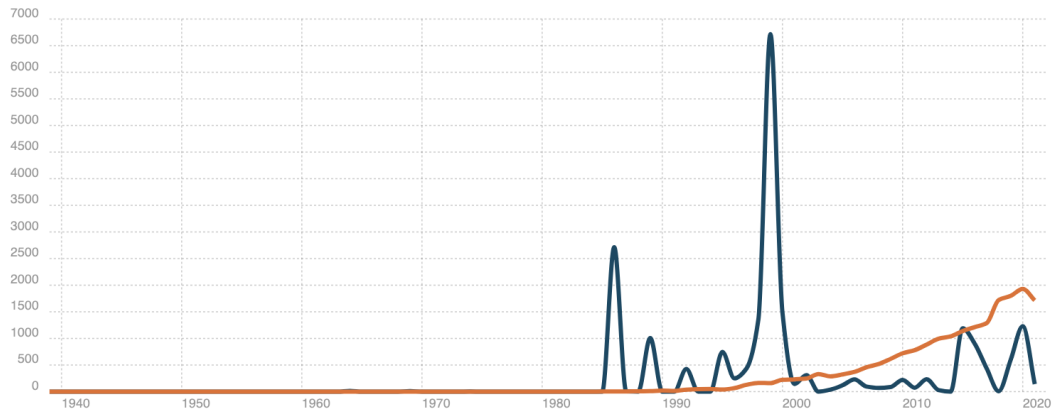


Today, Collins remains dedicated to her beliefs and vision as a Distinguished University Professor, active researcher, and author at the University of Maryland. Her work continues to reach new heights as she transcends United States borders and expands global Sociology and its place within the globalized social system. She aims to understand, in her own words, "how African American male and female youth's experiences with social issues of education, unemployment, popular culture, and political activism articulate with global phenomena, specifically, complex social inequalities, global capitalist development, transnationalism, and political activism" (Cole). These new goals and passions have allowed her to interact with multiple communities in different ways. She paves the way for her work to reach more and more people as a member of some groups and an outsider to others. As a woman driven by her beliefs, she aspires to create nurturing communities that support the development of scholarship framed by a commitment to social justice (ASA).

Popular works from Collins include *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (1990), *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (2004), *From Black Power to Hip Hop: Racism, Nationalism, and Feminism* (2006), *On Intellectual Activism* (2012), and more recently *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* (2019) (Austin).

Patricia Hill Collins's Published Works

- Number of citations in a given year to any of this author's works
- Total number of citations to an author for the works they published in a given year. This highlights publication of the most important work(s) by the author



(Austin)

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