When I left the Southeast in 1996, there were two races of dominant concern – Black and White. There were the typical confluences of race and gender. Outside of the Black community, the challenge was how to bring some parity to the Black and White experiences in education, employment, housing, and economic achievement. Within the Black community, the struggle was as old as time: how do we bring some parity to men and women, specifically within the Black community? As generations of Black women before me, I struggled with the question of how to fight the good fight for Black communities without sacrificing the issues and concerns specific to being female. Returning to the Southeast some fifteen years later, things have changed substantially. We once saw questions and challenges in Black and White: we now have an influx of African, Asian, Caribbean, and Latin American immigrants. And the challenge is this, can a Black woman advocate for the fair treatment of oppressed people without doing damage to the Black community? Pulled between being a Black advocate and a social justice advocate, what is the appropriate response of a third wave Black feminist?

I propose addressing the question “How does feminist legal theory relate to other social justice movements and how is that relation reflected in practice?” In addressing this question, I propose writing a paper evaluating the divergent interests between being an advocate for oppressed people in the southeast and being an advocate for the Black community. Has the changing face of the Southeast compromised or improved Black women’s voices? As an advocate for the fair treatment of oppressed people, are Black women compromising the interests of the Black community? In advocating for the best interests of Black men, women, children, and families, must Black women necessarily sacrifice some interests of other racial and ethnic minorities? My starting premise is that there is a divergence, the nature of which is devastating to consider.