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Fight the Tower: Women of Color in Academia Manifesto

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Fight the Tower: Women of Color in Academia Manifesto*

As women of color in academia, we are often presumed incompetent, not because of our teaching, scholarship, or service, but because of the biased presumptions associated with our gender, sex, sexual orientation, color, race, national origin, ethnic group identification, citizenship status, accent, age, disability, religion, marital status, motherhood, and personhood.

We are perceived as easy targets for discrimination and dismissal based on these assumptions, and because our numbers are still kept disproportionately low in academic institutions, many wrongly surmise we are not capable of collective action. We stand today to say we are united in our struggles to fight off the institutional violent attacks against our personhood, work, and well-being, and vow to connect with others to assist and unite in raising our voices and demanding equal rights and justice.

This is what we know.

We know meritocracy in academia is a myth that is promoted by the dominant group to perpetuate a status quo that protects their own inadequacies.

The reality is we are expected to produce beyond the standards set out by and for the institutional establishment. But, even when we exceed those standards and excel, that does not guarantee equitable pay, promotion, tenure, maintenance of tenure, or equality.

We call out the power holders for their lack of real commitment to rigorous scholarship and demand our earned place in the academy beyond token appointments.

* *About: Our Manifesto*, FIGHT THE TOWER, <http://fighttower.com/about.html> (last visited May 21, 2014).

We know the academic career pipeline does not exist for us.

Academic institutions create barriers for women of color to prevent our admission to graduate programs, access to tenure-track positions, tenure, administrative power, professional success, and advancement – especially in top tier universities. Those of us that make it through the system are constantly under scrutiny and this makes work progress difficult and every advancement effort a battle.

We speak truth to power to expose the unjust and discriminatory practices aimed at us and demand fair representation and access to all levels of the academy.

We know there is little civility in academia.

We are often abused, bullied, humiliated, subordinated, silenced, isolated, and made to feel inferior. The constant macro- and micro-aggressions serve to sabotage our work and deplete our much-needed time and energies. These types of violent assaults almost always result in mental, emotional, and physical harm. They sometimes even kill us.

We vow to stand strong in unity against the many faces of oppression and will never sit idle while our sisters face beat downs and deaths in the institution.

We know that even those that look like us can also hurt us.

People of color that subjugate their own are the co-opted tokens and opportunists that believe they will avoid victimization and be included in the establishment if they conform, go along with the oppressors, and sometimes act as oppressors themselves.

They do not realize they have no immunity and may find themselves the targets of discrimination in due time.

We will make known their actions and protect ourselves from their treachery.

We know that deceit and unlawful biases are protected under shrouds of “confidentiality” and “anonymity.”

Perpetrators are not accountable for defamatory statements made during discussions of our records.

We insist upon due process, including open, honest, and truthful deliberations of our records. We demand the opportunity to speak on our own performance and directly answer concerns during the process surrounding decisions about our future in the academy.

We know that our associations and collaborations threaten the establishment and thus concerted efforts are made to isolate and weaken our connections to those inside and outside of the academy.

We move forward with our mobilizing while rejecting the divide-and-conquer strategies that are self-defeating.

We know that due to gender, racial, ethnic, and cultural stereotypes we are expected, and at times explicitly asked, to remain silent and blindly adhere to the power hierarchy.

We defy the stereotypes and bravely use our voices for truth-telling, give our testimonios, scream of the injustices we endure, broadcast our achievements, and vow to never, ever remain silent.

We know a misperception exists that we lack the resources to defend ourselves against unjust attacks and to fight for our rights to remain and thrive in academia.

We work tirelessly to mobilize, and consolidate our power and resources to advance our individual and collective struggles to fight.

In solidarity and unity for justice, join us to **Fight the Tower.**