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Introduction

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Universities have reputations for being "liberal." We think of collegial environments where people with PhDs engage in intellectually stimulating conversation, sharing ideas and respectfully supporting one another. In large part, that idea is often true. When the reality departs from the myth, however, the context can be ugly enough to derail careers and injure physical and mental health. Such hostile climates are grounded in racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism. The related behaviors include shaming, disregard of cultural values, bullying, harassment, trolling, gaslighting, betrayal, lying, tokenization, coercion, stealing intellectual property, stealing grants, silencing, and blatant disregard for university policies and processes.

In contrast to the myth, when it comes to inclusiveness, universities may be the last bastion of elitism and sanctioned racism in the United States. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2018), in 2016, 76 percent of all US full-time faculty were White (non-Hispanic), 6 percent African American, 5 percent Latinx, and 10 percent Asian American/Pacific Islander. American Indian/Alaska Natives and persons of two or more races each made up 1 percent or fewer of US full-time faculty. Among those in the tenure-track ranks, the most coveted positions within academia, 82 percent of all full professors were White in 2016 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). The fact is Faculty of Color remain underrepresented in comparison to the 2017 US population, which is 76.6 percent White (non-Hispanic), 13.4 percent Black/African American, 5.8 percent Asian, and 18.1 percent Hispanic/Latino (US Census, 2017). University presidents extol the virtues of diversity, and most universities now have diversity or equal opportunity offices, ostensibly to facilitate inclusion of historically underrepresented groups in academia. Yet the numbers of Faculty of Color are disconnected from the various hierarchies of degrees conferred yearly across demographic groups (US Department of Education, 2016). The rhetoric around

the importance of diversity seems to be just that—rhetoric without accountability that ends up being meaningless. As Faculty of Color enter tokenized environments, where fewer than 15 percent of their numbers are present, their faculty roles are impacted, even changed, their career opportunities are hindered or halted, and their identities are disrupted by the service they are called upon to engage in by virtue of their uniqueness in the context.

Service in academia comes in many forms. The most common are committee work—at the department, college, university, professional (e.g., advisory boards, journal editorial boards), and community levels (e.g., chambers of commerce, school districts, fund-raising for scholarships, miscellaneous speaking engagements); student mentoring; informal, appointed department roles; and public relations (e.g., speaking on behalf of the university). Formal administrative positions are service that falls in a separate category, as persons in those positions are typically paid a salary for filling those roles. The other service roles, however, are examples of universities asking *some* faculty to engage in a great deal of time-consuming and unpaid service while still actively conducting their scholarship, something that is almost impossible to do at the same time. That is, universities sanction inequitable service from some faculty members, typically women. Then these faculty members are punished for their service through inequitable faculty evaluations.

In other words, faculty who engage in considerable quantity and quality of service, often assigned, and often because they are good citizens, cannot be expected to compete with faculty who engage in comparatively little or virtually no service when it comes to scholarly productivity. Yet the latter faculty receive no retribution or forfeiture of rewards for their lack of service, while the good citizens do, for their comparative lack of productivity. *There is a penalty for service*, which universities claim to value, including student mentoring, *but there is no penalty for lack of service*. Multiple narratives in this volume provide examples of this structural racial tax and emotional labor imposed upon women across race/ethnicity in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields and upon Women of Color in all disciplines.

ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

Women of Color in upper-level leadership positions, such as deans, chancellors, provosts, and presidents, are relatively rare, especially in comparison to White men. Although White women have made some progress entering these roles in the last decades, their numbers are still small, though not as small as the ranks of Women of Color in these high-level positions. Part of the reason for their scarcity is the lack of women across race/ethnicity in full-professor ranks. When there are few or only one in a given context, they enter tokenized situations. The manner and ramification of this token status is elaborated upon in this volume. As noted in narratives here, serving in these roles takes *ganas,* thick skin, and commitment.

Yet we need women in positions of formal power and authority who see and understand what others fail to notice. We need leaders with vision to make

changes toward increasing equity. We need such leaders to advocate for the less powerful. Their critical race and feminist lenses will move them to support people, rather than university brands. Such persons can effect institutional, system, and cultural change from within.

DEATH AND DYING IN ACADEMIA

One of the authors of this introduction had two Professors of Color who killed themselves while she was a student—one when she was an undergraduate and the other when she was a graduate student. The author was angry with them— how could they, elite intellectuals at a first-rate university, kill themselves? How could they not choose to fight but instead end their lives? However, they are not the only persons to die while striving to fit into the academic world and achieve success as defined in that elite environment. While we may feel helpless when we hear about scholars who end their lives, we also feel their anguish, desperation, and painful acceptance of their circumstances. And we realize that by not supporting and fully embracing outliers in the academy, especially Women of Color, we are acting irresponsibly. We realize that the best antidote for this disease of death by academia is to be communal and transparent about the hostile contexts experienced by too many of our colleagues.

Yet in the first volume of *Presumed Incompetent* we did not address the fact that people die because of both the dehumanizing tenure process and the sometimes careless and biased judgments and decisions of department chairs, deans, colleagues, and other high-level administrators. We did not address how physical and psychological death and dying might be avoided with appropriate pretenure mentoring by our institutions, departments, colleagues, and the academy at large. This volume directly addresses death and violence. It includes Susie E. Nam's chapter, "Making Visible the Dead Bodies in the Room: Women of Color/ QPOC in Academia," about the death of her colleague in a major state university. This volume contains Julia Chang's essay, "Spectacular Bodies: Racism, Pregnancy, and the Code of Silence in Academe," about childbirth and her loss of health due to the inhumanity of her academic workplace. Jamiella Brooks's work also speaks of a certain violence in academia that produces disease and death in "Academia Is Violence: Generatives from a First-Generation, Low-Income PhD Mother of Color." Adrien Wing's chapter, "And Still We Rise," talks about suicide and names African American scholars who died prematurely from a variety of illnesses that may have been caused or exacerbated by their experiences in academia. These narratives provide a somber reminder that sometimes success means surviving, psychologically and physically, and that death comes in multiple forms.

Multiple narratives in this volume also address the issue of damaged mental health. While death is the extreme consequence of severe psychological distress, many Women of Color may be so busy surviving that they lack the time and energy to seek emotional support. Such support can come from a variety of sources: family, friends, mentors and allies, religion and spirituality, meditation,

and professional healers and therapists. Meera Deo's chapter, "Securing Support in an Unequal Profession," discusses diverse sources of support as well the policies and practices that universities can adopt to ease the psychological toll on Women of Color.

FIGHTING BACK

The women in this volume of *Presumed Incompetent* provide many examples of how women are increasingly fighting back. They are battling in toxic environments that include bullying, sexual harassment, microaggressions, trolling, gaslighting, shaming, stalking, abuse of power, and misuse of and/or disregard for policies and processes. Women are engaging in battles against hostile climates in different ways, understanding that even small wins can be inspiring and empowering and lead to larger changes. For example, we agree to be the first African American tenure-track faculty member, or the first Asian American department chair or dean. We are preparing students with strong anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-homophobic foundations. We are addressing policies and processes that subject students to alienation and trauma. After achieving tenure, we are using our power to fight the system from within, questioning expectations of subservience and kowtowing, and distinguishing accurate from biased evaluative information. We are creating future faculty role models.

We are using university policies and procedures to fight back. We are operating with consciousness about politics—for example, about who may or may not be an ally when we are subject to hostile environments. We are using various survival strategies, such as journaling, to remain sane. We are finding online supportive communities that are lacking in our immediate work contexts. We are embracing our emotions, including anger. We are keeping detailed records that counter the narratives of those who seek to harm us. We are writing about race: calling out hazing, microaggressions, name-calling, stereotyping, passive-aggressive hostility, and White fragility. We are holding diversity offices accountable to effect change, and not just "make paper" and shape empty rhetoric. We are insisting on meaningful inclusiveness, rather than the disingenuousness of "tolerance" and color blindness. We are collecting and publicizing data and using it to effect change. We are calling out patriarchy, "bro-propriating" (a man taking credit for a woman's idea), "mansplaining" (a man patronizingly explaining something, often beginning by interrupting a woman), "manterrupting" (a man interrupting a woman) and "bro-opting" (a man adopting a woman's idea as his own). We are including men in our own identity groups. We are honoring emotions, including anger. We are insisting that the choice to become pregnant must not be punished. We are recognizing and resisting patriarchal females, gossip, whispering cowards, the weaponization of information, expectations of silence, and hegemonic politeness. We are asserting the value of intersectionality—in data, research, hiring, and cultural narratives. We are creating allies and recognizing the collective as social capital for power, strength, success, and healing.

The essays in this volume are organized as follows.

1. TENURE AND PROMOTION

Section 1 sets the stage for the remainder of the book by naming many of the systemic biases that pervade the academic workplace and offering pragmatic, solution-oriented recommendations. These chapters examine the formidable obstacles that Women of Color encounter on the road to tenure and promotion, including inequitable teaching loads, crushing service obligations, race and gender bias in the evaluation of teaching and scholarship, pregnancy discrimination, lack of mentoring, sexual harassment, stalking, bullying, and the painful reminder that skinfolk are not always kinfolk—that those who share our social identities are not necessarily allies. The authors describe in gripping detail the lengths to which colleagues will go to sabotage the careers of Women of Color, and offer a variety of tools that can be deployed to resist, fight back, and prevail.

2. ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

This section provides a rare window into the working lives of Women of Color who have entered the ranks of senior academic leadership—as well as roadmaps for those who aspire to follow in their footsteps. Creating an equitable and inclusive campus climate requires a diverse leadership team. However, Women of Color who occupy leadership positions quickly discover that there is an inherent conflict between their personal values and the expectations of senior administrators who want to protect the university's brand. Academic leaders who are deemed too ethnic, too queer, too feminist, too angry, too honest, or too radical may find themselves dismissed from their positions. Women of Color who navigate these conflicting imperatives often question whether they are transforming their institutions or facilitating the institution's diversity marketing. They may be viewed with suspicion by faculty colleagues while being excluded from meaningful decision-making by university provosts and presidents.

Women of Color who rise to the highest echelons of the profession also continue to battle the presumption of incompetence along with gender sidelining. They experience challenges to their authority, inconsistent institutional support, ageism, and the perception that they have become "sellouts" or careerists.

The contributors to this section demonstrate that these hurdles are daunting but not insurmountable. These challenges include the hegemonic "politeness" of academic culture that serves to protect White fragility and perpetuate existing power relations. The pioneering leaders whose stories animate this section provide a wealth of strategies to combat the presumption of incompetence and increase the representation of Women of Color in senior leadership positions.

3. SOCIAL CLASS

This section examines class bias in academia and its intersection with race, gender, pregnancy, physical and mental (dis)ability, and other markers of identity. Academia generates voluminous research on poverty but rarely addresses the

impact of low academic salaries on faculty, especially adjuncts, who must take on multiple jobs to make ends meet and to support parents and siblings whose sacrifices made their academic careers possible. The professor is expected to be "a poster figure unburdened by anything associated with life, free from poverty and debt, no visible pregnancy or family to support, in full physical and mental health" (see chapter by Jamiella Brooks in this volume). Women of Color who struggle with family financial or care-giving responsibilities, who face debilitating physical or mental illness, or who navigate the tenure and promotion process while pregnant are frequently presumed incapable of diligently and competently fulfilling their professional responsibilities.

Academics from the working class face extraordinary pressure to conform to White middle- and upper-class norms not only in speech, dress, mannerisms, and vocabulary but also in the choices they make about teaching, scholarship, and service. Those who pursue qualitative or community-based research, teach or write from critical class, race, and gender perspectives, attempt to diversify the curriculum, or work with underserved or at-risk communities frequently find their competence questioned and their accomplishments devalued. They may also be shunned and accused of incivility if their working-class candor clashes with middle class passive aggressive communication styles.

The contributors to this volume challenge the deficit model that assigns negative attributes to working-class identity. They identify the unique skills and insights that working-class scholars bring to the academic workplace, including community-building skills honed through years of intersectional class-conscious alliances. The essays in this section demonstrate how working-class coping strategies and values (including solidarity, transparency, sharing, and openly expressing emotion) can create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all marginalized groups.

4. BULLYING, WHITE FRAGILITY, AND MICROAGGRESSIONS

Women of Color who challenge White, patriarchal norms and defy race and gender stereotypes are often depicted as angry, ungrateful, and threatening. They are frequently ostracized, disciplined, denied tenure and promotion, and silenced, not only by White faculty and administrators but also by fellow Scholars of Color who have internalized racist and sexist beliefs. This section directly and unabashedly discusses the myriad forms of abuse, exploitation, and disrespect endured by Women of Color in academia and their impacts on the bodies and psyches of those who are targeted as well as those who witness the torment of others. The daily microaggressions as well as the premeditated attacks can cause or exacerbate physical and mental illness, and can lead to miscarriages, suicide, or premature death from cancer, heart disease, and other serious ailments. The essays in this section are harrowing, but they provide valuable advice to Women of Color and those who serve as allies on ways to challenge and disrupt oppressive practices and processes.

5. ACTIVISM, RESISTANCE, AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The final section of this volume is devoted to activism and resistance in a variety of venues and through a variety of means. The contributors to this section share inspiring and courageous narratives about their struggles against marginalization and abuse, including: filing a complaint regarding a hostile work environment while enduring two miscarriages; using social media to create a supportive online community; challenging faculty to incorporate a racial justice lens into the curriculum; healing from racial battle fatigue by talking openly in safe spaces; appealing tenure denial; combating tokenism; confronting racist internet trolls; and filing (and winning) sex discrimination and retaliation lawsuits.

SUMMARY

One of the key lessons of this volume of *Presumed Incompetent* is the importance of building community, mentoring the next generation, and developing intersectional alliances in order to challenge the oppressive practices that have inflicted so much harm on our communities. And of course, we must continue telling our stories. For a glimpse of the impact of the narratives in the first volume of *Presumed Incompetent,* please see the website of the University Press of Colorado & Utah State University. In the space of some of the narratives in this volume, these stories are told, in part, from the vernacular and speech of the authors' cultural context. As such, we are legitimatizing the power of these ways of interpersonal communication.

We received almost 150 narratives for this volume of *Presumed Incompetent*, courageously contributed by women across rank and race/ethnicity. Regrettably, space constraints kept us from bringing to light all of their resolutely presented experiences. Sharing our stories validates the realities of others who face similar experiences, and affords all persons, including academic leaders from a range of power and position standpoints, the opportunity to learn about and intercede in the severe and life-altering forms of violence occurring under their noses.

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