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Introduction to Feminism and the Academy Today: A Graduate Forum

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SPECIAL FORUM

Introduction to Feminism and the Academy Today: A Graduate Forum

Kara Watts, JFS Editorial Board

Heather M. Turcotte, JFS Executive Editor

The Journal of Feminist Studies (JFS) began in the fall of 2011 with the mission to explore the state of feminist scholarship at the turn of the new century, and situate this history within a larger question of where feminism itself is heading. JFS's first issue (2001) contained a forum focused on "Feminism and Feminist Scholarship Today" and until now, it is the only forum JFS has published. In a current context of transnational political, economic, and social shifts alongside JFS's recent editorial transitions—that includes new editors, advisory board members, and web platform—we feel another forum focused on feminism and scholarship today is necessary.

The idea for this forum developed through conversations concerned with how the academic industrial complex continues to regulate feminist relationships, labor, health, knowledge production, and access to liberatory histories and futures. Of particular concern is the continued academic investment in hierarchies and management that create explicit and not-so-easily-named violences that significantly affect feminist experiences in, and with, education. The academy is a contentious site containing histories of repression, and in naming academic violence there is potential for collective resistance and transformative exchanges in justice (Chatterjee and Maira 2014; Agathangelou et al. 2015; Powell and Turcotte 2015). We feel it particularly necessary to center graduate student insights and experiences at this juncture because graduate students are located in precarious positions that can expose the intersections of contradiction and possibility within feminism and the academy. This special forum is an effort to continue the questioning of our engagements within feminism and the academy so we can reassess and (re)envision our accountabilities: what we are willing to do (and create) for more just feminist futures?

This special forum is a compilation of feminist hardships in the academy and their subsequent survivals and successes. We would like to wholeheartedly thank all of the contributors for sharing their theories, experiences, and visions for more just feminist futures. Their contributions continue the feminist work of rethinking our relationships to, and within, academia and beyond. The different threads of this special forum focus on the limitations of white middle class feminism and the lack of intersectionality in academic feminist practice; they draw attention to systems of health and illness and how academic engagement too often itself exhibits unhealthy norms and practices. The pieces ask questions and encourage shifts in the equity of access to knowledge and education. In doing so, the pieces contribute to anticolonial and decolonial archives and citational practices that center accountable feminist politics that can echo the concerns of feminist work itself. Importantly, these pieces reinvigorate the "personal as political" to illustrate how identity politics are at work in graduate students' lives and how these

politics are intimately intertwined with institutional culpability, methods of critique, and the (im)possibilities of feminist transformations.

Each piece in this special forum contributes to the deconstruction of institutional power on interpersonal and systemic scales. They highlight the tensions and possibilities embedded within graduate education and the academy. Importantly, they offer generous, insightful, and liberatory visions for how to build more supportive frameworks (and policies) that can create the conditions for not only surviving the academy but also thriving within and beyond it. Eight years since JFS's first forum, this special forum is a continued call for feminist activism through the praxis of writing. We hope these pieces encourage you, as they did us, to further question and transform your academic and feminist relationships and daily practice.

Questions to consider as you read through this special forum:

1. What are the feminist contradictions raised in these pieces, and how can they lead us toward larger inquiries?
2. How does each piece inform histories of academic violence? How is violence institutionalized as an academic norm? How does each piece contribute to more just and sustainable frameworks for graduate school, feminism, and the academy?
3. Where can you locate yourself in these interventions and visions? In what ways does feminism need to move and transform from here?

We encourage you to continue to build on this forum and share your insights about feminism and the academy and feminism today. We welcome your submissions to JFS and look forward to exploring the multiple theoretical paradigms and political agendas of contemporary and historical feminist scholarship together. JFS thrives on the productive controversies, divergences, and solidarities between transnational and historical contexts of feminism.

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