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Introduction to the Special Issue

Breaking the Silence: Telling Our Stories as an Act of Resistance

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Guided by autoethnography, which is rooted in ethnographic research, this special issue of *Taboo* is a space for women of color who are immersed in the academy to share critical stories. Autoethnography is “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experiences (auto) in order to understand cultural experiences (ethno)” (Ellis, 2004; Jones, 2005). In fact, “stemming from the field of anthropology, autoethnography shares the storytelling feature with other genres of self-narrative but transcends mere narration of self to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation” (Chang, 2008, p. 43). In this approach the “self” is the I, the informant is your surroundings, and the crux of the work is your response to how you fit into all of it. Very similar to an autoethnography, a critical autobiography is a thoughtful analysis of one’s life experiences to construct meaning of self in relation to others in society. Autobiographical writing can focus on an entire life or specific actions or events to deconstruct a particular outcome. This self-reflexive process examines issues that inform us about who we are individually and collectively. However, introspection is not only critical to the person who is self-reflecting but also to the readers who may otherwise create their own narrative about the persons they are reading about.

Thus, the act of using one’s voice to tell her truth is a radical, symbiotic part-

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nership. It embodies the struggle for liberation in the communal act of telling and listening. It is the collective spirit of our communities that fosters the space for our stories to be heard. With a focus on autoethnography and critical autobiography, the WomenScholars of Color in this special issue take off their masks, stepping out from under the gaze and into vulnerable spaces, in an effort to resist oppressive metanarratives. The women featured in this issue embody a range of experience. We are Black and Brown scholars and educators; we are independent scholars, post-doc fellows, junior faculty, and seasoned, tenured professors. Furthermore, the pieces shared in this special issue highlight critical stories of resistance through deep reflection, passionate introspection, and a shared desire to transform our lived experiences by breaking the silence.

Your journey into our stories will be moving, inspirational, painful, exciting, frustrating, and empowering. This special issue includes “all the things” and will give you “all the feels” because the masks have been removed, and “the tea” is being spilled. Not only have the masks been removed, but the truth is revealed. And, at times, the truth is ugly. Why? Because sometimes, we feel like imposters in the world of academia when our intersectional realities have not been validated. Sometimes, we allow others to treat us badly, for the sake of the struggle (or so we tell ourselves), in hope that a brand new day is on the horizon. Sometimes, we get so caught up in the quagmire of introspective truth-telling that we forget (or refuse) to tell our own truths to our own selves. Other times, we feel like the resistance is too much but so necessary, so we keep pushing because we know—deep down inside, underneath all the hurt and frustration—that our Black Feminist, Womanist, Afro-Boriqua consciousness impacts how we move (and how others see or don’t see us) within educative spaces as scientists, doctoral students, faculty, and administrators at HBCUs and PWIs, alike. In this special issue, we resist the metanarrative told to society-at-large, to our children, and to our faces; and we dare to tell our stories, not for mere entertainment and not because we are self-indulgent. We break the silence because we care enough about ourselves to love ourselves when no one else will, and THAT is “an act of political warfare” (Lorde, 1988).

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