BOOK REVIEW
Testimoniando in the Trenches: A Review of *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia*

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Situating the collection along the same feminist trajectory as *This Bridge Called My Back*, Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs and Yolanda Flores Niemann, the editors of *Presumed Incompetent* sought to create a work that validated the struggles of women in the academy, with the aim of "healing wounds, affirming sanity, and launching renewed determination" (xi). The end result is a collection of nearly forty contributors representing a wide range of experiences across the disciplines, from contingent faculty to full professors. The contributors share the common experiences of systemic and systematic marginalization, exclusion, silencing, sexualization, and exploitation.

This collection makes important interventions in the narratives of faculty hiring practices, retention, evaluation, and promotion, as well as gives its readers access to the instructor-student struggles and relationships that often reflect and reify the oppressive power structures of academic departments and universities. As John F. Dovidio explains in one of the section introductions, though the book's focus is women of color, it is *for* everyone. The narratives provide insights into the hierarchical nature of the administration and

academic gate keeping from a gendered, raced, and classed epistemic vantage point. The sheer weight of *Presumed Incompetent* indicates a prodigious undertaking to document the historical struggles of women in the academy, but the stories fix their readers firmly in the present.

The collection is organized into five sections: "General Campus Climate," "Faculty/Student Relationships," "Networks of Allies," "Social Class in Academia," and "Tenure and Promotion." Within each, common experiences emerge. For example, African American and Latina women report similar experiences of being expected to "mother" students and perform service for the department at the expense of their research. Latinas and Asian American women share backgrounds of economic disadvantage and expectations to support aging family members that affect how and to what extent they engage in the academic practice of self-promotion. Several scholars also describe being considered "noncollegial" because their desire to keep their personal lives private prevented their colleagues from engaging in the voyeurism of black women's lives to which they felt entitled. Stories of strained family relationships, disproportionate teaching and service loads, exclusion from opportunities to improve tenure eligibility, hostile students, and lack of academic validation from colleagues support the notion that the prestige and socioeconomic privilege that may accompany a tenure-track job do not make women of color immune from the "isms" that, historically, have been associated with only the experiences of working class women of color.

While for many women of color these authors represent meritocratic success stories, the race and gender politics of academic departments can undermine this success. In her essay, "The Making of a Token: A Case Study of Stereotype Threat, Stigma, Racism, and Tokenism in the Academy," Yolanda Flores Niemann illustrates the ways in which diversification efforts can be

misconstrued as "affirmative action" hires, and new colleagues may be apt to perceive the new hire as the department "token"; these perceptions may also have ramifications on the tenure and promotion process. Asking herself, "Was I a charity case?" (339), Niemann poses a question that seems to be the subtext of many of these narratives. Her case reveals how the impostor syndrome that pervades the psyches of women of color in academia can be exacerbated (or created) by the conditions of their recruitment, whether or not they are located as diversity hires.

Similarly, Jessica Lavariega Monforti's unprecedented study of Latinas in political science, "La Lucha: Latinas Surviving Political Science," exposes the extent to which the intellectual and professional expertise of Latina faculty are consistently questioned by students and colleagues, whether their areas of teaching and research are in general U.S. politics or grounded in critical race and gender studies. What this study and other essays reveal are an irony and a paradox of Latina academics: while Latinas are often recruited as part of diversity efforts, their research and/or teaching may not be considered "credible" if they are race- and gender-specific; on the other hand, similarly, those whose areas of teaching and research are *not* race- or gender-specific are largely questioned on their ability to remain objective researchers. The most troubling irony is that while Latinas are celebrated for their work mentoring students of color, the feminized and racialized identities and experiences that enable those successful mentoring relationships are what invalidate them as researchers to their department colleagues.

Presumed Incompetent is not the first collection to document the voices of women in the academy, but it is the first to bring together such a diversity of women who not only tell their stories, but also theorize from the intersections of their identities. While this volume documents histories of oppression within

academia, as Niemann's final essay explains, there is much women of color can learn in order to not only survive the academy but to transform it.

Presumed Incompetent should be required reading for all women, but especially for Latinas in all levels of academia, from graduate students aspiring to an academic career to full professors and administrators who are in decision-making positions. Currently, Latinas constitute just four percent of tenured and tenure-track women faculty in the United States and are overrepresented among contingent faculty—at a moment when for the first time ever Latinas/os are the largest minority group of incoming freshman classes. Although Latina PhDs have made significant strides in paving pathways toward the doctorate and professoriate, these stories demonstrate the harsh reality that for women of color, the struggle to be recognized for academic merit remains just that—a struggle.