

November 28, 2016

The National Women's Studies Association Statement on Combatting the Climate of Fear, Division and Xenophobia in the Wake of the U.S. Presidential Election

The National Women's Studies Association met in Montréal, Canada in the immediate wake of the November 8, 2016 U.S. presidential election, and many of us were shaken by the results. As transnational, indigenous, intersectional and anti-racist feminist scholars, and practitioners, and scholars of conscience, we feel compelled to speak out about the implications of this political moment for the work we do and the communities of which we are a part. Throughout this election season, and in the weeks since November 8th, women and girls, LGBTQIA people, poor and working people, Muslims and Arab-Americans, Jews, Black people, indigenous people, Mexicans, Latinx, immigrant communities, and people with disabilities have been threatened and maligned. Racist, xenophobic, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, homophobic, ableist, transphobic and misogynist views have been rampant in the public sphere, sparking instances of harassment, intimidation, and assault. Women have been insulted and mocked, sexual assault has been trivialized, and Black communities have been disparaged and maligned. Millions of undocumented residents fear unjust deportations. And climate change denial places the future of the entire planet at risk.

We recognize that none of us are entirely safe. Intellectuals and teachers have been, and continue to be, the victims of authoritarian regimes around the world and over time. Although critical thinking and transgressive pedagogy are often perceived as dangerous to certain political agendas, NWSA embraces these features of our work and calls on members to use our collective energies to push back against the climate of fear, xenophobia and anti-intellectualism that have become so prevalent. We must do what we do best which is to provide alternative ways of thinking, expose myths and lies through our research and writing, engage

a broader public, and insist upon critical and dissident inquiry that interrogate unsubstantiated claims, and build bridges of unity and understanding. In our ongoing efforts to democratize and decolonize colleges, universities and academic scholarship, we must teach to the urgency of the moment, and in doing so reach out beyond our campuses and beyond national borders.

We encourage our NWSA members to stand with, defend and provide sanctuary for our students and colleagues who are most vulnerable. In these challenging times we must embrace and reclaim the activist roots that carved out a place for women's and gender studies and other interdisciplinary, critical areas of study within the Academy over forty years ago. In addition to recognizing the continued importance of the rigorous and clarifying scholarship that has been the hallmark of NWSA members, we also encourage members to organize teach-ins and vigils, and to explore ever more creative forms of learning, sharing, and mobilizing. Speak out loudly and consistently through letters, petitions and collective statements. We cannot accept the skewed argument that it is not our place, or it is somehow unprofessional, to speak out. On the contrary, speak out we must. It is our ethical obligation to do so. And in doing so we are inspired and empowered by our collective effort.

NWSA has more than 2,000 individual and 350 institutional members working in varied specialties across the United States and around the world. Through scholarship, pedagogy and praxis our members actively pursue knowledge to promote a just world in which all persons can develop to their fullest potential—one free from ideologies, systems of privilege or structures that oppress or exploit some for the advantage of others. It is with this mission in mind that we call upon our NWSA membership to be vocal, to be courageous, to be bold, to be visible and to be engaged with each other and with a larger public in this critical time. Despite our trepidations about the future, we are bolstered by the creative, generative, humane and principled stances and actions many have already taken. We stand with and remain supportive of our members in the work that lies ahead.