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## Reclaiming Our Time: We Do it for the Culture

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## **Reclaiming Our Time: We Do it for the Culture**

Angela E. Fillingim & Nini V. Hayes

Using narrative methodology with a lens of critical race feminism, in self-reflexive ways we draw on our experiences as a Latina and Black-Pinay tenure-track faculty who have dealt with spirit murdering and labored in community to resist. We used feminist theories to understand the roots of our friendship and commitment to resistance. Our persistent encounters with spirit murdering were tied to, what we call, “time-theft.” Time-theft describes an embodied consequence of spirit murdering which deeply affects our emotional, mental, and physical well-being. We offer insights into how we resisted “time-theft conquistadors” and other means the institution tried to steal from us. We conclude with resources and recommendations that move us, and hopefully you and yours, closer to reclaiming invaluable time towards whatever moves, sustains and inspires you.

*Keywords:* scholars of color, women of color, joy, spirit murdering, time-theft

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### **Reclaiming Our Time: We Do it for the Culture**

The institution of higher education can grind you down. That was a lesson we both learned leaving graduate school and we might even say the easiest lesson learnt. What is harder, and requires commitment, is community, consistency, and compassion. These values guide us in honoring our boundaries and building solidarity while we center our freedom and joy. In our work together, a constant struggle is how to work in higher education but not be *of* the institution. In the face of white supremacy, neoliberalism, hyper productivity and individualism, hallmarks of the settler colonial institutions we labor in, reclaiming our time has been central to our psychological, physical, emotional and spiritual wellness. Toni Morrison (1975) reminds us, “the very serious function of racism is distraction. It keeps you from doing your work. It keeps you explaining, over and over again, your reason for being.” Thus, as womxn of color in the academy, when we reclaim our time, we resist the distraction of the ivory tower because we have been and always will be worthy. We are powerful and we build power. We do it for the culture, meaning when we are true to ourselves, choose each other, and have healthy boundaries, those seeds bear fruit.

We draw on our experiences as Latina and Black-Pinay faculty who have dealt with spirit murdering and white supremacy culture. For five years we worked together at a traditionally white teaching institution. Over the course of our professional and personal relationship, we have endured the phenomenon “spirit murdering” coined by Black feminist scholar Patricia Williams (1987), defined as a “product of racism which not only inflicts pain, but it is a form of racial violence that steals and kills the humanity and spirits of people of color” (c.f. Garcia & Dávila, 2020). Additionally, education and abolitionist scholar, Bettina Love (2016, p.2), elaborates, “What I am talking about is a slow death, a death of the spirit, a death that is built on racism intended to reduce, humiliate and destroy people of color.” This is a form of violence that is sanctioned and perpetuated by institutional practices as part of an ongoing project that demands the social and physical death of BIPoC folx (Love, 2016; Williams, 1987; Wright-Mair & Pulido, 2021).

Using narrative methodology (Givens & Jeffries, 2003; Nash, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) with a lens of critical race feminism (Wing, 2003; Gonzales, 2018), in self-reflexive ways we draw on our experiences as a Latina and Black-Pinay tenure-track faculty who have dealt with spirit murdering and labored in community to resist. A common denominator of our reflections highlights with specificity what we call “time-theft” and how we arrived at our choices for addressing the embodied and psychological ways we were marginalized, tokenized and oppressed. Our theorization draws on Black and Latina feminist theorizations of slow-scholarship and the neoliberal university (Mountz et al., 2017). We also draw inspiration from The Combahee River Collective, Black liberation, Indigenous resurgence, youth movements, and environmental justice work, as they too, prioritize

nurturing strong relationships while composting<sup>1</sup> toxic ones. Therefore, we assert our responsibility as womxn of color in the academy to expound the ways in which spirit murdering is practiced, experienced, and responded to, but above all, that there is love and joy in the struggle.

This article is divided into two thematic sections. The first centers the underrated necessity of friendship. The second examines time-theft and resistance. Finally, we conclude with resources and recommendations that move us, and hopefully you and yours, closer to reclaiming invaluable time towards whatever moves, sustains and inspires you.

### **Coraje (Courage) & Friendship**

In Fall 2017, we met as first year faculty at a traditionally white institution (TWI). We got to know each other in a three-day teaching and learning workshop for new faculty. It was during this professional development “opportunity” that also paid us to work before our contract started. This was money we both needed. The workshop was put on by mostly senior colleagues in the sciences, who were known around campus for their “diversity” work. During this workshop, we endured and witnessed problematic understanding and pedagogy about race, racism, gender, sexuality, and equity-centered teaching. Subsequently, we bonded over this trauma and have continued to nurture our professional and personal relationship because sadly, but unsurprisingly, that was the first of countless incidents of spirit murdering we endured and resisted at our institution.

During the workshop, senior faculty organizers had a unit on diversity, equity, and inclusion. To summarize, we read an article that analogized racism to riding a bike on roads meant for cars, and were asked to fill out an identity wheel that denied the real experiences of immigrants, gender, sexuality, and racism. For instance, nationality was something listed as a changeable identity. Yet, our experiences and those of our communities have taught us that nationality is not evenly distributed. Decades of research on immigration, race, and gender show nationality is not evenly distributed: Black, Indigenous and People of Color do not enjoy the same privileges of nationality as white, able bodied, cis-gendered, heterosexual presenting peoples (see: Glenn, 2002; Hamad, 2020; Ngai, 2005; Tuan, 1996).

This was spirit murdering, it was the denial of “interlocking systems of oppression” (Taylor, 2017) that define shape our lived experiences. We, along with some colleagues, were angry, sad, and pained by this. This reinforced the notion that “unmarked humanity is white” (Trouillot, 1995, p.81). This act was also designed to make us complicit in the spirit murdering of a junior faculty of color that was asked by white senior colleagues—people with the ability to evaluate the junior faculty—to present the unit. We witnessed the junior faculty of color being prevented from altering the presentation. This

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<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank Dr. Kristen French for giving us the language of composting.

was a moment we were all familiar with, using a person of color as a go between for the colonial administration and to be the instrument of violence (e.g., Fanon, 1963).

This was the start of a defining feature of our resistance to spirit murdering, “coraje” (Lebrón, 2021). Marisol LeBrón (2021) talks about coraje’s (courage) dual meaning, anger and courage central to transformative struggles. As new faculty attending workshops with senior faculty on campus, there was a clear risk in allowing our anger to turn into courage. We, along with other new faculty that were spirit murdered through this exercise, understood that the senior faculty on this campus were venerated by their colleagues and administration for their “innovative” diversity, equity, and inclusion work. Further, we were being paid money we needed after moving, money that would help us get by until our first paycheck. As importantly, we also understood the precarity of our positions, as fems of color landing a tenure track job was no easy task. Our programs had disciplined us to be grateful for tenure track jobs and to accept and respect hierarchies. Yet our coraje was part of a long journey to undiscipline ourselves.

We used coraje and community to reclaim our humanity. We were part of a community of transgressed people, the community spoke back to the workshop organizers. This was a place where we co-authored strategies that we used throughout our 5 years together. The first, was inquiry. The communal response asked why and how they decided on the lesson. The second, was to be in solidarity with others. Community made sure to echo each other, and while workshop organizers tried to deflect back to the presenter, the community response ensured that questions and critique were directed at those with power, not their go-between. This is part of a third strategy, direct action against those that hold institutional power. Finally, we center emotion. While the academy often demands that we reject emotion in favor of objectivity, to be bodies without spirits, we did not allow ourselves to fall into that trap. This event also created trauma bonds between us, and with other first year faculty members. It eventually became something that we could laugh about as we saw one of the workshop organizers around campus. In that laughter was both a product of trauma and a refusal to allow them to steal our time and joy.

In my (Nini) campus office, taped on the back of the door, is a print out of a 1965 photo of Nina Simone and James Baldwin. They are sitting next to each other, heads touching at the crown. Their smiles are broad, full and infectious. Their eyes are lit with joy, heavy with experience and looking into a future they dreamed of. I/We know they went through a ridiculous amount of shit, so for me, seeing their radiating faces reminds me of the power of friendship. The kind of friendship that supports you, defends you and helps you become and be free. Right of the door, is a collage of polaroid pictures of me and friends from graduate school. We survived that hellscape because of and for each other. There is a tiny bouquet of felt flowers Jane sent me after my dad passed. There is a green heart from Johnny. There is artwork from Burlile that looks like me and Amy hugging. Fayise painted a small

portrait of me. These are reminders of being “a friend among loved ones” (bergman & Montgomery, 2017, p. 38).

A notebook on my desk has stickers on it, one is of a multicolored fist and red heart that says, ‘Education & Social Justice Minor’. When we were pre tenure, Angela and I co-directed the minor for a couple years. Another sticker says ‘Ethnic Studies in Every School!’. Angela bought this sticker in bulk for an Ethnic Studies conference we helped organize. Angela knows I love stickers and recently gave me one with a cornucopia of pumpkins with a fall season aesthetic that reads, ‘My favorite season is the fall of Colonialism’. This is why we are friends. In many ways, who we are and our life experiences are different, but we have similar values, boundaries and hope for justice and transformation.

In *Joyful Militancy* by bergman and Montgomery (2017) is a chapter titled *Friendship, Freedom, Ethics, Affinity*. There they share an excerpt from The Invisible Committee’s book, *To Our Friends*:

“Friend” and “free” in English ... come from the same Indo-European root, which conveys the idea of a shared power that grows. Being free and having ties was one and the same thing. I am free because I have ties, because I am linked to a reality greater than me. (The Invisible Committee, 2015, as cited in bergman & Montgomery, 2017, p. 127)

This passage spoke to me! If coraje is the inception and center of our friendship, then freedom and the shared power that grows forms the surround. Working in higher education can be lonely; lonely in the sense that it can feel like no one sees you, understands you or you are made hypervisible by tokenism. Data of full-time faculty (faculty include professors, associate professors, assistant professors, instructors, lecturers, assisting professors, adjunct professors, and interim professors) at degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the United States highlights the historical and continued problematic reality of higher education. National Center for Education Statistics (2022) reported Fall 2020 data that Black womxn constitute 4% of the total professoriate and Latinas represent 3%. Similarly, our male counterparts are dismally represented in the academy. Meanwhile, white men and women are disproportionately overrepresented with white men taking up 39% of the total professoriate and white women 35%. In context, U.S. Census data for 2021 reports the following racial populations; Latina/o/x (Hispanic) 19%, Black 12% and White 59% (USAFacts.org, 2022). This data coupled with the fact the academic industrial complex dispossesses and exploits the labor and intellect of womxn of color because it is founded on racist and patriarchal values (Stanley, 2006; Muhs et al., 2012, Bonilla-Silva, 2018) is why our friendship and friendships are imperative. So, when I find my people, I hold them close and in return, “If you need someone to channel your rage, hype you up for setting boundaries, wanna burn a bridge? We Ride!” (@twomorayeels, 2021).

### **World-travel as Resistance and Reclamation**

As we wrote this piece, we reflected on how we were able to endure spirit murdering to reclaim our time beyond strategies for navigating the institution. Through our ongoing dialogue we realized we reclaimed our time throughout, amid unrelenting spirit murdering. Yes, our larger acts of successfully getting problematic people removed from the review process and moving to another college were major steps in reclaiming our time and humanity. Key to this process was getting to know each other as people first, we traveled into each other's "worlds" to offer love, laughter, tears and support. As importantly, we went places together, we made asks of administration together, and committed to supporting each other's well-being.

We bonded as people first, meaning we rarely talked about research. We embraced Lugones' (1987) feminist ethic of love, we traveled into each other's worlds and centered play. Lugones (1987, p. 17) describes playfulness as "an openness to being a fool, which is a combination of not worrying about competence, not being self-important, not taking norms as sacred and finding ambiguity and double edges as sources of wisdom and delight." According to Lugones (1987, p. 17), world travel is so powerful "because by traveling to their 'world' we can understand what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes...Knowing another women's 'worlds' is a part of knowing them and is part of loving them." This commitment to loving each other beyond the confines of the institution is key to reclaiming time.

We had coffee in the central cafe in our building and laughed about life, pop culture, or the drama of our families. We planned meet ups with ourselves and others in the hallways to show our spirit murdering colleagues that we were still filled with laughter and that we have community. We were loud, we were visible, we were unapologetically human and petty with a purpose. We sent each other memes, talked about shows that brought us joy. We found we both love British procedural shows and would share new series the other might like. We spent time getting to know each other's partners and families. We organized movie trips to see films that centered Black lives, imaginaries and futures. We were present and loving through births and deaths in our families. We traveled to explore familiar cities and saw them through the other person's eyes. In knowing each other's worlds—here we did not center research—we were able to center an ethic of love that Lugones argues is key to solidarity.

Another key aspect of reclaiming our time was exerting agency in who we work with. We could not do this without also having built community. Nini already had connections with senior women of color faculty and invited Angela and her family to join. Senior faculty hosted potlucks at their home, allowing us to break bread and just be. As importantly, these networks introduced us to key advocates on campus. They shared valuable wisdom like the white union representatives that already had a racial vocabulary and institutional knowledge we would need in order to embrace *coraje* as an ongoing practice. As importantly, these were sites where we could be human together.

Another key aspect of reclaiming our time was medical leaves. Each of us has taken significant medical leaves at full pay because we were fortunate to labor at an institution with a strong union. This required us, in the words of Dr. Farima Pour-Korhsid to be “vulnerageous,” vulnerable and courageous. To admit that unrelenting spirit murdering was harming our physical and psychological health in the context of our tenure clocks, was uneasy. Time is both a resource and freedom. Yet, our bodies and minds could not persist with the cumulative weight of spirit murdering. The mental and physical consequences of spirit murdering manifested in panic-attacks, insomnia, anxiety, and other physical manifestations. Taking medical leave was also the freedom to rest, seek treatment that would help us start a healing journey while on the tenure clock. To be clear, this time gave perspective on how we can invest our time in the future. We reclaimed our time by saying yes to working with people—faculty, staff, and students—that would be fulfilling. The time away also allowed us to bow out of places that were not going to be part of our future journey. These choices require coraje, it is from this space we can do things differently.

We also reclaim our time by centering, what we affectionately call the 3 P’s: policy, precedent and procedure. While policy needs little explanation, precedent requires some detailing. Precedent operates at both the departmental level and within the larger institution. At the departmental level, learning about precedent requires having a senior faculty willing to mentor and share information.

At the institutional level, our communities across campus set precedents in other spaces. This was not a formal sharing of precedent, but rather came from conversation as people. For instance, as we became Co-Directors of ESJ we used the precedent set by others on campus to work with our board to advocate for two faculty directors to transition the program as the inaugural director stepped down. As the Co-Directors we realized that having two faculty fill this role was not tenable given the structure and needs of the program. Further, our staff member was laboring outside of her assigned role to support and grow the program. In our view, she functioned as a Co-Director. Through our check-ins with our friends across campus we learned of an alternative structure: a staff and faculty Co-Directors. We worked to restructure the program so that our staff was being properly compensated and recognized for her work, and to have a sustainable structure for a program with a small number of faculty. Once we learned about precedent we could make a proposal and cite specific procedural steps.

### **Time Theft**

You are not required to set yourself on fire to keep other people warm.

(Joan Crawford, 1942)

We approach the academy as a reflection of U.S. society. In both realms, time is a valuable resource and more importantly, time is freedom (Gonzalez Van Cleve, 2016; Kwate, 2017). In the academy, there are constant negotiations of how one spends their time and also different demands



placed on one's time. As faculty, our responsibilities include teaching, research, and service. Meanwhile, tenure/promotion/review clocks are constantly ticking, deadlines are always looming, and a neoliberal university demands and rewards unending "productivity." In the academy, time and the abundance of time equates to currency, privilege, security and autonomy. Time is also the ability to have lives and identities outside of our institution. But because academia is racist, sexist, homophobic, ableist and classist, it remains a place of dispossession and slow death for faculty of color.

We know that faculty of color, especially female faculty, encounter tremendous demands on our time. For example, faculty of color experience disproportionate service expectations (Baez, 2000; González & Harris, 2012; Grollman, 2015), invisible emotional and cultural taxation (Padilla, 1994; Joseph & Hirshfield, 2011; June, 2015), racial taxation (Bonilla-Silva, 2018), double consciousness (Du Bois, 2009), tokenism and essentialism (Fasching-Varner, Albert, Mitchell & Allen, 2014, Young & Hines, 2018). The two extensive volumes of *Presumed Incompetent* elaborate the interlocking ways that time is both a resource and source of anguish (Harris, 2020; y Muhs et al., 2012). We also know the embodied consequences of spirit murdering shorten our lifespan (Clark, Anderson, Clark & Williams, 1999; Vest, 2013; Kwate, 2017; Hartlep & Ball, 2020). To the latter point, the second volume of *Presumed Incompetent: Race, Class, Power and Resistance of Women in Academia* acknowledges the sad reality that people die from the dehumanizing pressures of this job, death by academia (Brooks, 2020 & Wing, 2020).

We found that our persistent encounters with spirit murdering were tied to, what we call, "time-theft." Time-theft describes an embodied consequence of spirit murdering which deeply affects our emotional, mental, and physical well-being. Time-theft is instigated by institutional actors and manifests as, but is not limited to, unproductive meetings with administrators and colleagues, mental and emotional anguish of job security and retaliation, defense and over justification of our presence and work, and the necessity of processing acts of spirit murdering with each other and community. In our first years on the tenure clock, time theft led us to question if we were asking "too much." We spent countless hours on the phone or texting to ask if something was "normal" or if a response was proportional to the transgression. This is what spirit murdering was doing to our minds, gaslighting us, making us question if our feelings and experiences were in fact valid. Having a person that we could process with, a person that understood how the institution functioned, like a lifesaver in the sea of spirit murdering.

As we were writing this piece, we had to confront two warring sides of time-theft: being cast as a racial maid and dealing with time-theft conquistadors, both of which we explain below. We use "racial maid" to highlight the ways that race and gender shapes labor. Much like maids are supposed to work out of sight, our institution tried to use us to clean up the racial messes created by colleagues and the institution and offer comfort to students and colleagues in private. However, we had no institutional power to address structural causes of spirit murdering.

In the following section, we outline examples of time theft under They Tired it. By “they” we refer to colleagues, chairs, and administrators. All of these actors can be time-theft conquistadors. We use this term to laugh in the face of unrelenting shenanigans. The term “conquistadors” recognizes that our ancestors were both colonized by the Spanish. Spanish colonization relied on a hierarchy of humanity of those that could be human and those that would never be human in the eyes of colonizers (Mignolo, 2005). Conquistadors’ mission was to force people into the hierarchy and eliminate those that they viewed as non-human. We do not use this term lightly. For us, this term captures our experiences with people that choose to engage in spirit murdering. Time-theft conquistadors are akin to what Fanon (1963) discusses as the go-betweens of the colonial administration and the colonized. Time-theft conquistadors wanted our bodies to act as racial maids while maintaining the culture of the institution.

We then share some of our co-authored strategies of solidarity to resist and reclaim our time. Being in solidarity with each other is where we choose to spend the majority of our time and energy as it represents our commitment to never go it alone and not let the bastards grind us down. Our co-authored strategies of solidarity is our love language for each other, for Womxn of Color in the academy and for anyone else on the margins. As the research of our dear colleague and Angela’s co-author in life, Michael Schulze-Oechtering, shows there can be “no separate peace.” It is how we remind each other there is more to life than this job, we are born worthy, we suffer no fools, and we are not supposed to be here and still, we rise.

In more explicit and strategic ways, our co-authored strategies of solidarity was a responsive and iterative response that included hundreds of hours processing, plotting plans for next steps, growing our community, organizing collective support and gatherings, co-authoring and editing much of each other’s written record as it pertains to institutional life (emails, dossiers, course materials, etc.) and of course chisme. This is not an exhaustive list, rather, these are the lessons we hold close as we move through different spaces and new academic settings. These strategies were chosen to disrupt the culture of the institution that normalized spirit murdering but more importantly, they were strategies that always came back to what would help us get more free, cultivate joy, and grow as people. Our co-authored strategies of solidarity also remind us we stand in the light of our ancestors, on the shoulders of those who blazed a trail in the academy, and that we take seriously making things better for those who come after.

<b>They Tried It</b>	<b>Our Co-Authored Strategies of Solidarity</b>
Racist evaluations from colleagues	Use your networks and support others to reach out to networks for advice and support. While it

	<p>is uncomfortable to share reviews with others, being “vulneragous” to condemn the culture with allies is key. This compels a shift in how things are done, and lets colleagues know that people across campus are supporting you.</p> <p>We learned that no matter how much you prepare to address potential critique, time-theft conquistadors will thieve.</p> <p>Reclaim your time by investing in what you can control, in laughter, and building a loving community you can commiserate with and show up to meetings with.</p>
<p>Using faculty meetings and voting processes to make a spectacle out of you or social justice work.</p>	<p>Play the long game, in the end they will show they have no basis for this treatment in policy. Have a friend remind you of this. Build intergenerational networks inside and outside of your department and college. Use these as resources to learn about policy, precedent, and standard operating procedure.</p> <p>Reclaim your humanity by being a thorn. Ask questions about process, and make sure the responses go on the record. Learn about policy regarding faculty meeting attendance, and if you don’t have to go, reclaim that time!</p> <p>Reclaim your time by doing good work, supporting yourself, and if you need to, leave the space.</p>
<p>Unsupportive and problematic chairs</p>	<p>If you have union representation, use your networks to identify a union representative that</p>

	<p>is dogged in their representation of WOC faculty. Make a plan with your union representative that you feel comfortable with. Stick to your plan. Sometimes dealing with a chair requires playing a long game and being a thorn in the side of administration. This is a frustrating process and requires resilience. These processes often allow spirit murders to expose themselves. As you wait for this process to unfold, learn about precedent. Who has moved a line? Why? Angela has shared her materials for her line move with junior colleagues who need to make the same request. This is about changing the culture of the institution.</p>
<p>Positioning you and your body as the source of discord in a previously “harmonious” department.</p>	<p>First of all, if there is no disagreement in a department, this is a red flag. A marinara sea of flags. You are not the problem, time-theft conquistadors that expect you to be a racial maids are. When we built intergenerational networks and got the chisme, we learned that harmony meant the spirit murdering of our colleagues.</p> <p>Reclaim your time by reveling in the power they are giving you.</p>

### Concluding Thoughts

On the other side of tenure (Nini) and with the perspective of leaving the institution (Angela), we are now able to grapple with the moments and strategies we used to reclaim our time and humanity. A key element of this was building community. Throughout everything we were able to build relationships with colleagues and students, rooted in reciprocity that affirmed a collective humanity that the university would never recognize or deserve. While spirit murdering continues, we have worked to build and maintain collectives on campus, and most importantly, in the midst of the violence, we make time for each other. Making this time can be taking walks, answering the phone

during our workday, sending video messages, sending texts to make each other laugh. We do not diminish the embodied effects of spirit murdering, our need for medical leaves show how deeply it is felt. Rather, we make choices that are aimed at reclaiming our time and labor. This, in turn, reclaims our humanity. We also know that to survive as we have, requires what Lugnoes' (1987) discusses as world-travel and playfulness that built loving relationships. This meant saying yes to things that would also support our healing processes and walking away when the project was becoming harmful or not fulfilling to our entire humanity.

We also realized that a key part of reclaiming our time was investing in people that we can be in community with, and that from that will come fulfilling and meaningful work. We would like to acknowledge the people that shaped our journey and created a space for resistance. Finally, and most importantly, reclaiming your time also requires an openness to walking away from institutions or divesting from them. We hope that the insights from this short reflection will provide a loving guide that unmask some of the unspoken realities of navigating higher education. Make community, harness your coraje, be a thorn, and remember, this is just a job.

(Matias, 2015; Young & Hines, 2018; Wright-Mair & Pulido, 2021).

Recommendations we offer here are not new, but tried and true. What is harder is to be consistent and that is why co-authored strategies of solidarity have been the biggest factor in our resilience, survival, joy and sanity.

### **Recommendations**

- Find your person or people and be in solidarity. Solidarity is the antithesis of the neoliberal, ego focused university.
- Avail yourself of your institution's resources, such as taking leave. Sometimes you must look further to see if there are also state and federal resources to heal and protect your well-being.
- Be a thorn. This is different from having a thick skin. Being a thorn means speaking up, truth telling, finding allies and accomplices and understanding your institution's policies, precedents and procedures to navigate healthy boundaries.
- Know that no matter what you say or do, your body, mind, and spirit will never be what they want. You can pour hours into your performance reviews and tenure and promotion files to try and mitigate the spirit murdering, but if your colleagues are determined enough, this will not matter. Ensure that you have allies in the review process and be the ally in the review process to ensure that conversations pertain to the merits of the case, that folks understand racism in review. Support efforts to rewrite review standards.
- If you have a union, join it. Workers support workers. If you do not have union, find your comrades and create one.

- When asking about policy, precedent or procedure, be wary of explanations that rely on “this is how we have always done this.” Ask for the written policy. If there isn’t one, then ask for what you need in writing.
- Stories are powerful. Authoring and controlling your own narrative is important and affirming so take every opportunity to use your voice.
- Academia always wants its pound of flesh. Figure out how to make that a two-way street. Time-theft conquistadors will thrive so playing the long game is key.
- It is healthy and radical to get eight or more hours of sleep each night. If you live in line with your values, it makes it a lot easier to sleep at night.
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### **Reading Suggestions**

- The Combahee River Collective Statement
- Presumed Incompetent I & II
- Emergent Strategy by adrienne maree brown
- Rest is Resistance by Tricia Hersey
- Student Disorientation Guides  
<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/disorientation-guides-college-what-are>
- All About Love by bell hooks
- Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower by Brittney Cooper

Finally, we wish to dedicate this essay to the womxn in our lives who love us, show us grace when we transgress, make us laugh, cry with us, and bear witness. We make time for these women in our lives and are grateful for every moment spent with them, in service to them, and thinking. Blessed be our badass comrades.



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