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# Queer of Color Space-Making in and beyond the Academic Industrial Complex

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We are a group of eight organic and professional queer and trans people of color (QTPOC) intellectuals, who had the opportunity to spend a quarter together at the University of California, Irvine in early 2017, thanks to a successful grant from the University of California Humanities Research Institute (UCHRI). Our residential research group (RRG) came together to discuss queer of color space-making in Europe and transnationally.<sup>1</sup> Over the course of ten weeks, we engaged with a broad range of topics related to queer of color spaces, including spatial segregation; gentrification; queer of color performance; trans of color politics; travels and translations; theorizing activism; social movements; anti-Blackness; Islamophobia; racisms and racialization; decoloniality; violence; carceral and border regimes; historiography and archives; queer family making and the state; and creative practices including film, visual art, dance, and creative writing.

But beyond *studying* oppressed peoples' spatial, political, and historic interventions, we were deeply committed to finding better ways of *making* and sharing space with each other. Our experiences and how we make and share space together are indexes of power and viable categories of theoretical analysis. For example, over the course of the residency, we built space with each other in many ways, which we discuss in this article. We also built space with other queer, trans, nonqueer, and nontrans people of color by attending events organized by them on campus and by organizing our own public event including participants from Southern California and Europe and with people of all colors resisting the newly elected regime at anti-Trump and pro-immigration marches in LA and Orange County, where the residency was based. This was especially important to those of us who had traveled

Southern California and other parts of Europe and North America as part of the fellowship.

One of the ways we created our own space was through collective writing. This took considerable trust. Some of us had known each other for years; others first met in week one of our RRG. Our group included professors, tenured at different ranks or untenured, PhD students, and folks currently debating whether or not to return to the academic industrial complex (AIC) as graduate students. We had spent varying amounts of time in the AIC, on both sides of the Atlantic, including the United States, Canada, Germany, France, Britain, Italy, and South Africa. Several of us had escaped from the unself-consciously white academies of Northwest Europe and moved to North America. This displacement felt both inevitable for us as activist queer and/or trans of color scholars, and deeply problematic. In the United States and Canada, we found that we were invited into complicity with a settler colonialism that continually erases its own foundational and contemporary violence by celebrating its territory as a haven for oppressed peoples from everywhere, and thereby further strengthening its U.S.-centrism, which is based on settler colonial empire. Simultaneously, the place accorded to us in North America continually confronted us with the assumption of Europe as white, and QTPOCs in Europe as nonexistent.

While we all situationally identify as queer and/or trans of color, we have different relationships to power and oppression along many axes, including anti-Blackness, Islamophobia, border imperialism, transphobia, class oppression, chronic illness and disability, sexism, racial-mixphobia, and work with the next generation including queer parenting and other forms of intentional kin building. We were determined to give these differences, and the crucial knowledges that they give rise to, space, and to acknowledge how they impacted our weekly interactions and daily lives in Irvine: from not being able to use any of the (gender-segregated) bathrooms in the building where we were meeting, to being mistaken for the group's only other Black trans person by UCI faculty, to being mistaken for another lesbian of color fellow, to eruptions of irresolvable conflicts about how we handled and mis-handled blackness and Indigeneity. We understood early on that while the institutional space that we had applied for and gained was, like all institutional spaces in the AIC, deeply flawed, we did have the power to inhabit and share this space intentionally and expansively, prefiguring the world we want to live in. The UCHRI RRG provided a space-time to do precisely that.

We began by crafting a community agreement together in week one. Its many detailed guidelines included recognizing the specificity of anti-Black

racism and the labor of Black women, Black queers, and Black trans people; respecting self-determination; gendering each other consensually; and creating access for folks with chemical sensitivities, food differences, and other requirements. We shared food and met each other's kids, cats, and partners. We experimented with ways to share resources between waged and unwaged members of the RRG. We engaged in material solidarity. One person had a car and drove everyone to dinner. Another had to leave for a few days, and several others took care of her cat in her absence. One found a way to provide free bikes to visiting fellows stuck in Irvine without cars. Some of us bore unequal burdens resulting from the ubiquitous precarity of trying to finance graduate education, which included driving hundreds of hours on one of the world's most dangerous freeways. We created ritual: each session began with a reading of the community agreement and a pronoun round and check-in that validated the importance of emotions and of what was happening in the world in this time of rising fascism, as personal, political, and part of QTPOC knowledge production.

Our period of residency at the UCHRI corresponded to the beginning of the Trump presidency, thus a moment when coloniality, white supremacy, hate, and war were spectacularly legitimized across the United States. Given the real-world consequences of peoples waking up to the statuary of the Lost Cause Campaign littering and marking every official building, school, and park in U.S. society, this moment lent itself to a more critical understanding of the ways that anti-blackness and suppressing the reality of settler society operates to produce spaces of legitimacy, learning and socialization, and recreation and leisure. We found ourselves in Irvine, a small planned city incorporated in 1971 and built on the land of the Tongva people (aka Gabrieleño and Fernandeño people, according to names adopted and resignified by the Spanish colonial missions that built on their land). "Tongva" means "people of the earth." We are grateful to them for the use of the land. While our RRG was about QTPOC in Europe and space, and most of our discussions were about people of color born in white-dominated Europe, as long-time or more recent citizens, migrants, or refugees, this all took place on settler colonized land. The members of our RRG have different kinds of relations to Indigeneity and to U.S. Indigeneity. Some are mixed with Indigeneity in the Americas. Others come from sites where the term "Indigenous" is used as a racial slur to signify (post)colonial populations who arrived in the center of empire from the colonies. All are faced in Europe with our construction as other, as perpetual and permanent foreigners, in relation to white nationalists' claims to their own (European) Indigeneity. And yet, on Tongva

land, our university affiliations signify forms of class privilege and association with a settler colonial institution, even if as people of color—some U.S. citizens and some not—we are also perpetual outsiders to the white settler nation and its institutions. Such are the complexities with which we live.

Within the culture of trust and vulnerability that we created together, we could begin to share, first with each other and now in print, that the AIC, often hailed as the nicest arm of neoliberal governance, is an irretrievably harmful presence in our lives and our communities. We wrestled with how the AIC's investments in meritocracy and professionalism produce friction, competition, and forms of tokenistic racial violence, some of which are still far too difficult to acknowledge and talk about openly. Some of us only had our silence or our absence or our compliance to register what the AIC has done to us and in our name. We were able to talk about the personal impacts of the spaces in which we produce knowledge, and our assigned locations in these spaces, and the ways in which these are each deeply implicated in the racial, colonial, gendered, capitalist, carceral regimes we are up against. We were able to explore, also, how queers of color can present a disruptive force to the AIC, whose strategies bring us closer to an abolitionist horizon on learning and education. The following pages were birthed as part of this transformative encounter.

We hope that in these pages the reader will hear our collective voice in both its plural and combined singular dimensions. Our positions and narratives are ones that the university—as a hegemonic site of cultural analysis and knowledge production—actively tries to avoid engaging, derides as bromides, and belittles as *mere* personal experiences. This politics of minimizing our analyses has taken many faces over the years, most often cohering around the idea that we as queer and trans people of color lack the capacity to historicize or theorize how power operates on these lives. As Saidiya Hartman has explained: *We were “sold [as] strangers; those outside the web of kin and clan relationships, nonmembers of the polity, foreigners and barbarians at the outskirts of their country, and lawbreakers expelled from society.”*<sup>22</sup> As strangers within and without, our freedom dreams do not usually conjure sympathy or compassion because the world that we fight for looks so vastly different from the one in which we currently reside. In the current world there is room for us only if our ways of being are disciplined and caricatured using abstractions that are wholly unrecognizable to us. The value of experience as marshaled here clearly reflects a deep investment in critique and struggle against social structures, practices, policies, statutes, and institutions that produce systematic and institutionalized quotidian violence and

ever-new forms of brutality—symbolic, embodied, and material.<sup>3</sup> We critique the unity implied in the universalized “we” that paradigmatically and paradoxically presents itself as a sovereign individual “I” in Western philosophy and offer a situated narrative that links the “we” and the “I.”<sup>4</sup> Of course, we are not into some unmediated notion of experience or, farther back, the idea of an unmediated subject of experience. Instead we are deploying situated narratives. Norma Alarcon’s “The Theoretical Subjects of *This Bridge Called My Back*” explains “the displacement of . . . subjectivity across multiple discourses . . . the peculiarity of [such] displacement implie[s] a multiplicity of positions from which she was driven to grasp or understand [the self] and [the] relations with the real” reflect how universalization is critical to power.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the collective voice here is the result of deliberate crafting and a highly mediated decision to link ourselves and to “adjust . . . behavior to maintain membership in a group” of queer and trans people of color in order to interrogate the social structures, practices, and embodied understandings that constitute how we are produced, read, and denoted in the world.<sup>6</sup> This “we” is a chosen political association, not a careless set of revelations. The classic approach of coming together to write erases the individual voices to write systematically at the highest level of abstraction possible, because individual voices are deemed divisive and untrustworthy and symptomatic instead of paradigmatic. However, part of the evidence of the trust that we extended to each other is to be found in our method of creative collective writing. We decided that the individual voice should not be erased in the collective. The movement between the “we” and the “I” in this essay is a political choice that reflects a commitment to not erase the multiplicities of subalternities and instead to allow the components of the collectivity their full existence. Our goal was not to pursue universalization; instead we tried to pay attention to what each other was saying. This gesture against universalization allowed each person in the collectivity their full existence and compelled us to practice inhabiting each other’s space as we created a new one, collectively.

The differences and similarities in our group were also reflected in our academic trajectories. Some of us had always dreamed of becoming an academic. Maybe a teacher or elder deemed us bright. Maybe the smartest queer we’d ever met, whom we had a mad crush on, was doing a PhD. Maybe we thought that we could change the world, one classroom at a time. Maybe we wanted to make our parents and community proud by obtaining status and a stable financial situation, even through the lens of meritocracy that constantly stigmatizes the poor and people of color, and yet, due to colonial and

racialized extraction and appropriation, the university is also simultaneously often the legal owner of the most important repositories of histories of resistance and rebellion that have been hidden from us. Other members of our group had never dreamed of becoming academics. Most of us had no idea what that even meant. For some of us school was an escape from other brutal realities. Many of us hated educational institutions from the minute we set foot in high school and later college. We hated the white, elitist, cis-heteropatriarchal version of “knowledge” they were forcibly imposing upon us, and the ways our white middle-class heteronormative and cisgender peers were being fostered as future reproducers of civilization, while we were trained to become wardens for the assimilation and control of other black and brown folks. We were silenced, disciplined, and reminded daily that we arrived uninvited, yet we persisted (sometimes barely), reclaiming resources and knowledge for our communities.

Many of us were already well aware that the neoliberal humanist heteronormative, cisgender, and misogynist project of the university is and has always been deeply tied to the genocidal, colonial, and enslavement episteme. We were cognizant of the fact that Man’s overrepresentation, as Sylvia Wynter puts it, continuously reproduces epistemic regimes of otherness as inferior, criminal, and to be eliminated.<sup>7</sup> We knew not to trust the “murderous invitations” of the neoliberal university, which needs “diverse” bodies in order to beautify its racial/colonial capitalist and carceral agenda.<sup>8</sup>

We did not belong in the institution. We belonged in the movement, in the streets. But we loved reading, and in those moments when we were able to forget where we were, we loved learning. We read stories about Black feminist liberation and emancipatory struggles, accounts of movements that were often subsumed by official histories and progress narratives.<sup>9</sup> We read the book about the Black woman who went to Harvard via the Rosenwald Fund.<sup>10</sup> We read books that opened up worlds where it was possible to be queer and trans and belong in antiracist and anticolonial struggles. We read theory, and we realized we had long started writing it, too, as a form of poetry, or in other creative genres, that made interventions into dominant categories, ways of thinking, and logics. This kind of theory engaged everything about our queer racialized bodies.

Books were our home. Many of us had grown up odd, nerdy, queer, and, socially awkward—far more involved with books than with people. Some were lucky enough to come of age in times and places where we could join radical movements that affirmed our lives. For others, books were the first place where we could find any kind of community. In a world that treats

trans people of color in particular as excessive to even the most radical community, reading and writing can save lives.

Many of us were under no illusion that working in the AIC would occur under favorable conditions. However, the jobs that we saw tended to be better than working in the supermarkets, factories, restaurants, libraries, museums, and sexual health and nonprofit organizations in which we had previously worked.<sup>11</sup> We were tired of seeing so many upper-class white professors making money and careers from teaching Eurocentric analyses of the oppression and exploitation that we and our ancestors had gone through. If we were going to be exploited for our community connections, at least there was a small chance we might eventually land a full-time job.

Being paid to think was, of course, an extremely attractive idea. We chose employment in the AIC both for economic survival and for the transformative possibilities that some of its sites—the classroom in particular—promised. We stayed in grad school despite financial difficulties and in the face of a lot of hunger—spiritual, physical, material, emotional. One of us made it through graduate school as a single mother. Another stayed despite being the only Black student in the philosophy department for six years. Another was undocumented and in political exile during most of her university education. Most of us lived far away from family and friends. Much of the time, we felt marginalized, invisible, and alone. We stayed in spite of the anti-Black gendered violence that pervaded our grad schools, and despite horrifying experiences of racism, Islamophobia, queerphobia, and transphobia from teachers, administrators, staff, and fellow students. The strength we found often came from simultaneous continued involvement in multiple activist movements.

Our devaluation, tokenization, and erasure as queer and trans of color intellectuals did not end with the PhD. Many of us experienced recurring racial, gendered, and sexual macro assaults and macro aggressions in the areas of employment, labor, housing, health, hiring, and admissions, that if named and leveraged could maybe actually change how we understand what on earth we are doing here.<sup>12</sup> We stayed even though our colleagues did not greet us in the corridor, or told us we were in the wrong corridor. Some of us took close to a decade to land our first tenure-track job. Some made it through the tenure process, and some to full professor, in the face of racist, cis-supremacist, and misogynist presumptions, often in the guise of “mentorship,” that we are “incompetent.”<sup>13</sup> Many of us have stayed for the students: for our POC students who feel they have no place in the university or in the world; for our QTPOC students who need to be in the company of somebody

who will let them come out and come into themselves on their own terms and in their own language and who won't mind them hiding beyond middle-class aspirations like "getting into graduate school." At the same time, we are well aware of the neoliberal traps of "staying for the students." Thus, students, too—especially, but not only, those white, cis, and/or male students for whom our classroom is often the only place where they have to confront the facts of racial/colonial capitalism and cis-heteropatriarchy—have a hard time respecting us and regularly reinscribe us as affectable subjects.<sup>14</sup> When we help these students understand how their history was mutually created with and deeply imbricated with structures of oppression that entrapped and strangled people from other communities, our teaching is deemed too "political," even as the neoliberal university decorates itself with us. We regularly receive worse evaluations, and more complaints, than our white colleagues. We perform an enormous amount of free labor to compensate for the university's own inability to deal with race, coloniality, class, gender, and sexuality. Yet our service record, just like our skin, is always "too thin."

We have remained academics in spite of quickly learning that we can't always expect solidarity from all of our POC/WOC/QTPOC colleagues, many of whom play into the colonial divide and rule and manipulation tactics of white colleagues and the administration in power. For one RRG member, occupying academic space as a cis-femme Latina from a working-class background has meant being routinely subject to belittling "micro" aggressions from senior scholars and sexual harassment from white men administrators. Some members have received rape threats from students. Others have supported student survivors in the face of criminally neglectful university structures. For trans and gender nonconforming people of color, almost no spaces currently exist where our academic contributions are invited or welcomed. Trans people of color generally remain disposable even in spaces that gather under such rubrics as "queer of color" and "anti-racist feminist." Every time we step into a room we are forced to engage in a new humiliating fight for basic access, pronoun awareness, and washroom use. Allies are few and far between: even in the most radical associations, gender solidarity often stops at cis women's loyalty with fragile cis men, whose comfort and "defense" is prioritized over the possibility to organize with trans people, whose unique positionalities have so much to teach about liberating gender from racist respectability scripts and the colonial gender binary. Trans people of color also get divided and ruled between entrenched interests that have little genuine care for them—like in France and the United States, where white cis male colleagues mobilize toxic inclusion to recruit trans

people to burnish their own legitimacy while failing to mentor them and secure them funding, leaving them to be trained and mentored by the same old antiracist cis feminists they abuse and disdain.

We stay in the face of skyrocketing tuition fees that make the university inaccessible and the notion of liberationist education a sham. We stay even though the university is built on stolen land, run on Native, Black, Latinx, racially mixed, and Asian women's labor and part of the global privatized war machine complex, all of which we actively work against. We stay even though our workplaces are sites of racial profiling and actively gentrify working-class neighborhoods. We stay even though our very presence here signals "progress," when really we are fighting tooth and nail just to hang on to spaces and resources long and hard won by the isolated generations of QPOC and POC that precede us. This is why the ethics of how we make space together are so important as principles to us.

From our impossible locations in the AIC, we invent various strategies to keep us and other gendered and racialized subjects here. The strategies we invent divest from the competitive values of the colonial neoliberal university, and from its racially skewed logics of merit, respectability, and gender and racial exceptionalism, and instead invest in polyglot, heterotopic community. Our strategies affirm the lives of queer and trans people of color, and of all others treated as raw material for theory production, rather than fostered as present and future knowledge reproducers. We are cognizant of the harmful effects of the AIC on our community members—both those who never jump the gates, and those who do, and who, too, deserve solidarity in surviving the toxic impact of the institution. We repurpose the resources of the neoliberal university to redistribute the land, wealth, and cultures extracted from our peoples back to our peoples and to build community in our classrooms and our hallways, even as we acknowledge the profound inequalities inherent in the process of labor under conditions of coloniality, racism, capitalism, cis-heteropatriarchy, and misogyny. We create cultures of appreciation that strive toward an honest and constructive division of labor, risks, and benefits and that value the shifts we do for each other as comrades.

We have been forced to fight. But our strategies include engaging in these struggles for our very existence and for the departments and research centers we have built (see the film *On Strike* by Irum Sheikh).<sup>15</sup> These struggles also take place beyond individual universities—translocally and transnationally. As Black and other people of color academics, queer, trans and otherwise, we, especially those of us who are based in the United States, are sometimes called into an academic space to talk about racism and intersectional postcolonial

power “over there,” and as such we are often interpellated to become complicit in the erasure of the colonial, racist, and intersectional power at work “here.”<sup>16</sup> We resist becoming fly-in academics who dismiss antiracist and anticolonial struggles locally and exclusively orient ourselves to the white institution that invites us and pays for our flight. We enter into crunchy transnational conversations in order to hold each other accountable to travel ethically and in ways that uplift and orient themselves toward local struggles both in and beyond the institution. We strive to become community-accountable scholars who seek to counter the uneven power relations between the Global North and South, the United States and the rest, and the English-speaking and non-English-speaking world.<sup>17</sup>

We fight for the future and also to maintain what our earlier generations have already established, which is constantly under threat. We remember and call the names of those who have created these spaces for us.<sup>18</sup> Sometimes they were queer and trans people of color, and sometimes they were not. Those spaces and our solidarity have kept us here.

While ultimately seeking to liberate education from the AIC, we invent practical strategies that help us and our students survive the space of toxic institutions here and now. We ask each other to act as coexaminers and committee members and letter writers in order to protect our students from racist, sexist, queer and transphobic, classist, ableist violence whether enacted by the state, vigilantes, or interpersonally. We swap concrete teaching methods for dealing with white/male/cis/hetero/sexist students and ideologies in our classrooms. We use our academic positions to funnel university funds into community spaces where QTPOC needs are centered and we all can learn from each other. These are just some examples of the many crucial survival strategies we invent so our peoples may survive and thrive inside the academy and beyond.

We collaboratively produce scholarship to ease the isolation we experience as academics and to enrich the work with each other’s multiple positionalities and perspectives. The process further deepens these critically necessary relationships. We introduce people who might share similar questions. We host events where strangers share hotel rooms and become friends—even if just for forty-eight or seventy-two hours. We send text messages asking things like “Have you eaten today?”; “Can my child sleep at your house?”; and my “Bio-Family came through with the wrecking ball again and so can you sage my house?”

We critically revisit the academic tools we were given. We reclaim the spiritual and the sacred in our relationships, scholarship, politics, and pedagogy.<sup>19</sup>

We take creative turns in our work and embrace artistry as a way of saving our lives.<sup>20</sup> We generate images and languages that the university can never fully discipline or incorporate.<sup>21</sup>

We remain here because of you and us. In the process, the “here” changes alongside the you and us.

The university space we want to build with you is a decolonial and abolitionist space. It works toward a world without the university. Because in that world, there will be no capitalist mode of production—no classes, no separate education, no avowed or unavowed colonial, racist epistemologies, no meritocracy, no need to select the more “talented,” no need to assign human beings to a ruling, working, or middle class. This is our horizon. Through building collectively, we create a decolonial abolitionist university space from the margins to the center. There, we share our freedom imaginings, practices, and ways of being and knowing, in their difference, with their complexities. We build safety outside the system: safety that is not organized around violence, but around relations that need neither the state nor an inferiorized other. Our political, intellectual solidarities work to keep the lives of all QTPOC, especially the most subaltern (simultaneously often the most resistant), at the center, regardless of whether they are in the room.

In this decolonial and abolitionist space, we work to have each other’s back as WOC, QPOC, TPOC, POC. We see each other’s potential and take collective risks to foster it. We see the beauty in our vulnerabilities and vow not to exploit them. We nourish each other and our students. We remain connected with our communities and have the work we do there valued. We do not owe each other. We build this space and do these things because they affirm our integrity, how we want to be in this world and the next, and what we want to create now and for future generations.

We envision this university as a place where people meet, exchange, engage, share knowledge, creativity, and stories, write and think—where we make beginnings without borders. In this space, everyone fully acknowledges the Native land on which we stand and the peoples whose land it is and who have been displaced, not in the sense of the colonial logics of recognition but of self-determination. In this place, Native peoples and cultures are fully present. And all marginalized peoples are fully present. In this space, we feed each other’s cats and hold each other’s hands and babies.

Our vision of a constructive academic space leaves the Ivory Tower, with its logics of austerity, debt, and rising tuition. It’s a university where Native scholars and Native studies are prioritized and are a central part of every person’s training. It is a university where three-quarters of the faculty of color

are not contingent labor. It's a university where colonial, raced, and gendered employment discrimination is not masked by neoliberal diversity goodwill initiatives, and administrators of color do not pit students of color and faculty of color against each other. In this university, the resources currently centered on "diversity" are applied toward advancing justice, and the enormous sacrifices demanded of our labor and mentoring are recognized and fairly compensated.

It's a university where classes are taken in public libraries, jails/prisons and immigration detention centers (as we also work to abolish them), K-12 school buildings, storefront churches and business parks, neighborhood recreation centers, sex work places, bus stops, book shops, cafés, nightclubs, and the streets—public buildings and openings in, between, around, and beyond buildings—that are not just the sequestered areas designated as college campuses.<sup>22</sup> One of the many forms it could possibly take is an autonomous Third World college that critiques all relations of power (coloniality, capitalism, racism, disability, gender, sexuality, speciesism).<sup>23</sup> A place where people's fears of poverty are not able to drive them into studying scientific methods and problems that they don't really actually care about. In this university, everybody gets to learn to read and write and consider what deep-thick-nested-entangled-seemingly-impossible freedom dreams and decolonial and abolition promises might be available to them and us—if they were just permitted to sit in them for a little while or preferably for a long while.

In this new academic spatiality as *place*, we abolish grades and use written evaluations. Abolish tuition and create funding for smaller classes. Open up the very definition of education to include many different kinds of experiences, curiosities, skills, and ways of knowing and being, and open enrollment to everyone. To do this, we need also to create a totally different economy. To do this, the abolitionist university meets the grassroots struggles in order to overthrow this economic system of accumulation of knowledge-based status for some through the dispossession of others.

Perhaps we will never be able to create such a university space—too lazy, too silly, too self-indulgent, too weepy, too hungry to heal what got wounded in us. But as the collective space we created in Irvine (of all places) has taught us, we have the power, more often than not, to go much further in resisting the neoliberal university—its hierarchies, its competition, its murderous pace, its scarcity. In the two and a half months that we shared, we were able to take back a space in which we were able to treat each other better and dream up futures. Manifesting our community agreement, we spoke candidly about anti-Blackness and Islamophobia, paid attention to gender pronouns,

and asked hard questions about white nationalism, white republicanism, white leftism, white conservatism, white secularism, white religious conservatism, white queer and trans politics, homonationalism, and Black and brown heteropatriarchy and misogyny, historically and at present. We talked scrupulously about Blackness, shared honestly what we had learned about creating autonomous spaces, rode bikes, took walks together to the outdoor market, rode busses and trains together to anti-Trump rallies in Los Angeles, huddled under umbrellas together and bought and shared inexpensive dry socks as it rained on rallies, went to dinner together regularly, cooked for each other, soaked happily in the hot tub and swam in the pool at housing provided by UCHRI, listened to what is happening in each other's lives, and held space for ourselves and each other to feel and mourn and name what it means to be liminal and constantly displaced. We strove to make the UCHRI room where our weekly formal meetings took place accessible by watching our scents and caring for each other's dietary restrictions and differences. We shared what road we had taken to get into that space and what our bodies were revealing to us simply by sitting still in it. All this before/alongside/under/over/when/after we started talking about the film, essay, article, book, chapter, or social problem we meant to examine that day.

Ultimately, the spaces that we created together, and that we dreamed together and as yet are unable to create, (have) touched us, moved us, opened us, healed us, strengthened us, enraged us, in many ways. The experience we shared during the two and a half months of our work together has an after-life in multiple directions, registers, and the ongoing coproduction of yet more critical and politically constructive space. We ended our time together with a creative writing session on the need to claim (physical) QTBIPOC spaces that took on the shape of a manifesto. In its publication, we collaborated with *contemp+orary*, a brilliant online project devoted to (and founded by) radical queer and women of color artists.<sup>24</sup> One residential research group member shared from an earlier draft of this article at the Racial (In) Justice in the Canadian University conference at the University of British Columbia that happened shortly after the research group ended.<sup>25</sup> Emboldened by the queer-affirming space in which they had participated, and by their and other trans members' attempts to openly discuss transphobia in it, they were able to raise awareness in this important multiracial space as the only person at the event who was trans-identified, and the only speaker who explicitly addressed queer issues.

Another member shared the RRG reading materials with her QTPOC students; they read the articles along with the UCHRI sessions. Additionally,

in a seminar she taught on Fanon and Feminism, the majority of the students read the articles from the UCHRI sessions. They engaged in discussion about how QTPOC epistemological frameworks enable us to reconsider Fanon's analyses of the world. Not only has this work and the kinds of questions that the RRG shared been drawn into classrooms, but activists also made use of the materials and discussions to shape their activism in real time.

Two other RRG members were involved in cocreating and speaking at a decolonial antiracism LTQ POC day-long Town Hall in Paris, entitled "R-assemblage lesbien, trans, queer décolonial et anticapitaliste" (Lesbian, Trans, Queer Re-Assemblage) on March 18, 2017, just days after the UCHRI RRG ended. It took place as the finale of the (otherwise generally very white dominated) annual Queer Week in Paris. Held at a new POC open space in Paris, *La Colonie* (the word "Colonie" is barred), the town hall consisted of a film about QTPOC in the French context (*Diasporas/Situations* by Tarek Lakrissi), a panel on Black trans subjects and issues (organized by a RRG member), a panel on Decolonizing Sexualities based on a recent book publication with that title and in which three RRG members are contributors, and a keynote (by an RRG member) on how not to do alliances so we can begin to think about how to actually create alliances.<sup>26</sup> It was the first time ever in France that there was a panel on Black trans, and that there was such a broad dialogue across LTQ POC positionalities and issues. Following the town hall a broad coalitional group was formed among LTQ POC, called LTQ POColibris in French and Rainbow Birds in English. Also a few months later, in mid-July, a mixed group, called Claq: Collectif queer, trans, pédé, bi, gouines (Claq: queer, trans, faggot, bi, dykes collective. "Claq" means "slap" in French), was formed and spectacularly staged a solidarity protest with refugees and migrants, directly condemning the French government's anti-refugee and anti-migrant position and policies.

Another member was deeply encouraged by the space we created to center the experiences and theories of QTPOC scholars and activists at the final and main panel of the conference "Securitization of Society: Queer-Feminist and Race Critical Perspectives" organized by the Women's and Gender Studies Section of the German Sociological Association (a deeply white institution), which she co-organized with other QPOCs and critical white members of the section.<sup>27</sup> This panel was not about presenting "lived experiences" as an add-on but about taking over the space and about teaching who can *really* speak about abolitionist justice, which is never based on systemic violence (like policing and carceral regimes) and about who needs to listen, including cisgender POCs.

It is our hope that this text, as a coauthored, cocreated QTPOC spatiality itself, will have its own afterlife, invoking ever more freedom promises and desires, ever more critical and creative analytics and practices, and provoking further effects with, in, and through everyone who is engaged, as readers, and as coauthors. We offer these pages up for the wider collectivity, even if as trace, inscription, moving assemblage, or fantasy.

Between Elon Musk and the seven “earth-like” planets NASA recently discovered, we ended the creative writing session that gave rise to this article by fantasizing that rich white people will get out and start fucking up the next planet, leaving us behind. That would be a good start.

PAOLA BACCHETTA is professor of gender and women’s studies and vice chair of pedagogy at University of California, Berkeley. Her books include *Co-Motion: Situated Planetarities, Co-Formations and Co-Productions in Feminist and Queer Alliances* (forthcoming); *Femminismi Queer Postcoloniali: Critiche transnazionali all’omofobia, all’islamofobia e all’omonazionalismo* (with Laura Fantone, 2015); *Gender in the Hindu Nation: RSS Women as Ideologues* (2004); *Right-Wing Women: From Conservatives to Extremists around the World* (with Margaret Power, 2002). She has published over fifty journal articles and book chapters on critical analytics of power; postcolonial, decolonial, anti-capitalist feminist and queer theories and practices; political conflict; and queer of color, decolonial feminist, antiracism, and right-wing social movements. Her areas of specialization are France, India, and the United States. See [academia.edu/PaolaBacchetta](http://academia.edu/PaolaBacchetta).

FATIMA EL-TAYEB is professor of literature and ethnic studies at the University of California, San Diego. Her work deconstructs structural racism in “colorblind” Europe and centers strategies of resistance among racialized communities, especially those that politicize culture through an intersectional, queer practice. She is the author of three books and numerous articles on the interactions of race, gender, sexuality, religion, and nation. She is active in black feminist, migrant, and queer of color organizations in Europe and the United States.

JIN HARITAWORN is associate professor of gender, race, and environment at York University. Their publications include two books, numerous articles (in journals such as *GLQ* and *Society&Space*), and several coedited collections (including *Queer Necropolitics* and *Queering Urban Justice*). Their book *Queer Lovers and Hateful Others: Regenerating Violent Times and*

*Places* (2015), on queer Berlin, addresses both academic and non-academic readerships interested in queer of color spaces and communities. Jin has keynoted in several fields on both sides of the Atlantic, including gender, sexuality, and transgender studies, critical race and ethnic studies, and urban studies, and has made foundational contributions to various debates, including on gay imperialism, homonationalism, queer gentrification and criminalization, and trans and queer of color space. Together with a team of awesome Torontonians, they organized the third Critical Ethnic Studies conference in Toronto in 2015.

JILLIAN HERNANDEZ is a transdisciplinary scholar interested in the stakes of embodiment, aesthetics, and performance for Black and Latinx women and girls, gender-nonconformers, and queers. She is completing her first book, *Aesthetics of Excess: The Art and Politics of Black and Latina Embodiment*, and expanding her theorizing on raunch aesthetics into a second book project. Hernandez teaches courses on racialized sexualities and girlhood at the University of California, San Diego in the ethnic studies department and critical gender studies program. Her scholarship is based on over a decade of community arts work with Black and Latinx girls in Miami, Florida, through the Women on the Rise! program she established at the Museum of Contemporary Art in North Miami. She is continuing this work in San Diego in collaboration with Yessica Garcia and Hilda Gracie Uriarte through the Rebel Quinceañera Collective. Hernandez is also an artist and curator of contemporary art.

SA SMYTHE is a Black genderqueer writer living between London and LA, constantly scheming up new ways for us to get free. They earned a doctorate in history of consciousness from UC Santa Cruz and are currently UC President's Postdoctoral Fellow in gender and sexuality studies at UC Irvine. Their academic scholarship concerns dispossession and Black poetics in the Mediterranean. SA is publishing editor for *THEM—Trans Literary Journal* and an editor at *ScarfMagazine*. They have poetry published (and/or work forthcoming) in *phren-Z*, *the nines*, *Johannesburg Salon*, *Strike!*, and *Black Trans Love Is Trans Wealth: An Anthology*. Their writing has been featured in *Critical Contemporary Journal*, *okayafrika*, and elsewhere. SA also does translation work in several languages and organizes globally in Black queer and trans abolitionist writing collectives. Their next poetry collection is tentatively titled *but do you have reparations money?*, and their writing is archived at [www.essaysmythe.com](http://www.essaysmythe.com) and on Twitter @essaysmythe.

VANESSA E. THOMPSON is a research associate and finishing doctoral candidate in the department of social sciences at Goethe University, Frankfurt, Germany. Her research and teaching are concerned with Black political theory, with a focus on Black formations and resistances in Europe, social movements, decolonial and postcolonial queer-feminist theories, theories of spatialities, and abolitionist theories and activism. Vanessa has written articles on black social movements and racism in France, the relation between postcolonial power and recognition politics, and racial profiling and policing in Europe. She is a cofounder of the initiative of Christy Schwundek and the abolitionist grassroots initiative copwatch-ffm.

TIFFANY WILLOUGHBY-HERARD uses the resources available at the University of California, Irvine to participate in Black liberation. She has been concerned with how Black women and Black women's political consciousness has manifested itself in critical approaches to knowledge, culture, and associational life. Moving between political theory, history of knowledge, and Black movement politics, she has been active in countless social forums on race, class, gender, sexuality, political education, and political economy. She is concerned with theorizing how survival politics matter and what is to be learned by the way we actually treat the people we are in closest proximity to. She is a formally trained academic researcher, a formally trained choral singer, an untrained poet and dancer and creative writer—who has sought out these modes as a means for flourishing and communicating with others and with the natural world. She was raised in Detroit and is ever grateful to the Wildcat Generation who used print culture to overthrow American apartheid by naming its psychic burdens and costs but also through organizing against it and taking over and founding newspapers to share their political ideas and principles.

## NOTES

1. The RRG was called *Queer of Color Formations and Transnational Spaces in Europe*. A description can be found at <https://uchri.org/awardees/queer-color-formations-translocal-spaces-europe/>. More on the themes and provocations that gave rise to the group can be found in a coauthored article by the group's convenors: Paola Bacchetta, Fatima El-Tayeb, and Jin Haritaworn, "Queer of Color Formations and Translocal Spaces in Europe," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 33, no. 5 (2015): 769–78.

2. Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 5.

3. Linda Martín Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

4. Viola F. Cordova, "Ethics: The We and the I," in *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*, ed. Anne Waters (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley-Blackwell Press, 2003), 173–81.

5. Norma Alarcón, "The Theoretical Subjects of *This Bridge Called My Back* and Anglo-American Feminism," in *Criticism in the Borderlands: Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture and Ideology*, ed. Hector Calderón and José David Saldiva (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991), 140–52.

6. Cordova, "Ethics," 174.

7. Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentation—an Argument," *New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337.

8. Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman, and Silvia Posocco, "Murderous Inclusions," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 15, no. 4 (2013): 445–52. See also Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2012); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012); Roderick Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Grace Kyungwon Hong, "'The Future of Our Worlds': Black Feminism and the Politics of Knowledge in the University under Globalization," *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 8, no. 2 (2008): 95–115.

9. Toni Cade Bambara's novels and short stories reflect on Black women who refuse to participate in doing the labor for charlatans passing as leaders in *The Salt Eaters* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 25–41; see Toni Cade Bambara, "The Organizer's Wife," in *The Sea Birds Are Still Alive* (New York: Vintage, 1982), 12. See also Alice Walker, *Meridian* (New York: Pocket Books, 1986); Gloria Naylor, *The Women of Brewster Place* (New York: Penguin, 1986); Paule Marshall, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (New York: Vintage, 1982). If it is anything, *Meridian* and *The Women of Brewster Place* are fictional accounts of the lives of a generation of young Black women advocating voting rights and housing rights and anticolonial activists, too raucous and unruly in the early framing of the post–Civil Rights Movement generation to be included in schoolchildren's national history of the rebellion against the ubiquitous violence of Jim Crow. These were not saintly women; they lacked respectability, rank, children with all the proper paternal stamps of approval, and addresses on Strivers Row. Instead they had made political and social mistakes as well as fighting epic and incredibly long local battles within the constraints of black heteropatriarchy, white feminine solidarity politics, and racially planned environmental disasters. Their rebellion, though not fundamentally delinked from that of Dorothy Height and the formal political work of national Black women's organizations, was targeted in broad sweeps and became the center of hysterical masculinist national discourses from Daniel Moynihan's discourse about their economic autonomy being a sign of a "tangle of [family] pathology" to President Clinton's Crime Bill and Welfare Reform Bill, both signaling these women's refusal to cooperate with the normative expected

gendered political channels and protocols. In the North and South their organized dissent was deemed scandalous and antithetical to the kind of knowledge formation that is critical to state making. Marshall's protagonist orchestrates history plays and carnivals and is beloved by the children in her Caribbean community while she stymies and refuses to be accepted by the adults who afford no room to her queer sensibilities.

10. Rose Browne and James W. English, *Love My Children: An Autobiography (The Education of a Teacher)* (Des Moines: Meredith Press, 1969).

11. See also Michelle Dizon, "Institutions, When Will You Open Your Doors?," *Brooklyn Rail*, March 9, 2017, <http://brooklynrail.org/2016/02/criticspage/institutions-when-will-you-open-your-doors>.

12. We purposefully are troubling the language of micro aggressions. Though the interactions that the term includes are nuanced and interpersonal, they constitute forms of legalized discrimination, injustice, oppression, repression, dispossession, and other violence.

13. Gabriella Gutierrez y Muhs, Yolanda Flores Niemann, Carmen G. Gonzalez, and Angela P. Harris, eds., *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2012).

14. Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

15. *On Strike! Ethnic Studies, 1969–1999*, dir. Irum Shiekh (San Francisco: Center for Asian American Media, 1999), DVD, 30 min.

16. Vanessa E. Thompson and Veronika Zablotsky, "Rethinking Diversity in Academic Institutions," *Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women's and Gender Studies* 16 (2016): 77–95.

17. Organizations and Members of the Black Communities in Germany and Austria, "Community Statement: 'Black' Studies at the University of Bremen," 2015, <https://blackstudiesgermany.wordpress.com/statementbremen/>.

18. Ruth Nicole Brown, *Black Girlhood Celebration: Toward a Hip Hop Feminist Pedagogy* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009); Zora Neale Hurston, *I Love Myself When I Am Laughing and Then Again When I Am Looking Mean and Impressive*, ed. Alice Walker (New York: Feminist Press at CUNY, 1989).

19. Jacqui M. Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, and the Sacred* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006).

20. Ruth Nicole Brown, *Hear Our Truths: The Creative Potential of Black Girlhood* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013).

21. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2015).

22. Toni Cade Bambara figures several sites of this kind of intergenerational learning in her works of fiction. From the Academy of the 7 Arts and the Southwest Community Infirmary to the salt marshes in *The Salt Eaters* (New York: Vintage, 1992; 106–7, 26–41, 42–54, 63) to "Broken Field Running" in *The Sea Birds Are Still Alive* (New York: Vintage, 1982), Bambara documents how the university is not the sole or the primary location where communities archive and share their alternative knowledges, principles, modes of contestation, and interpretation.

23. “Decolonizing the University” (workshop at University of California, Berkeley, February 26–27, 2010).

24. GENS QTPOC Collective: Fatima El-Tayeb, Paola Bacchetta, Jin Haritaworn, Jillian Hernandez, SA Smythe, Vanessa Thompson, Tiffany Willoughby-Herard, “On the Need to Claim (Physical) QTBIPOC Spaces,” *Contemporary*, October 24, 2017, [http://contemporary.org/qtbiopoc\\_spaces/](http://contemporary.org/qtbiopoc_spaces/); Jin Haritaworn, “Adventures of a Trans of Colour Professor,” *Contemporary* (forthcoming).

25. Jin Haritaworn, panelist, “The State of the Academy: Issues, Policy & Effects on People,” conference, “Racial (In)Justice in the Canadian University: The Politics of Race, Diversity, and Settler Colonialism,” Vancouver, University of British Columbia, Traditional, ancestral, unceded Musqueam Territory, March 16, 2017, [http://www.facultyassociation.ubc.ca/assets/media/Equity-Conference-Program\\_FINAL\\_web.pdf](http://www.facultyassociation.ubc.ca/assets/media/Equity-Conference-Program_FINAL_web.pdf).

26. Sandeep Bakshi, Suhraiya Jivraj, and Silvia Posocco, *Decolonizing Sexuality* (London: Counterpress, 2016).

27. Jin Haritaworn and Alexander Weheliye, “Ethnic Studies in Deutschland? Über die Grenzen und Potenziale der universitären Institutionalisierung von minorisierten Wissensformen,” in *Geschlossene Gesellschaft? Exklusion und rassistische Diskriminierung an deutschen Universitäten* [Closed society? Exclusion and racist discrimination at German universities], ed. Kien Nghi Ha, Noa Ha, and Mekonnen Mesghena (Berlin: Heinrich Boell Stiftung, forthcoming).