

WOMEN OF COLOR IN THE ACADEMY

*Book of
Empowerment*

2021



“

Never underestimate the power of dreams and the influence of the human spirit. We are all the same in this notion: The potential for greatness lives within each of us.

”

Wilma Rudolph

The exercises within this journal serve as reminders and uplifters. They heighten awareness and introduce habits and actions that remind us and renew us so that we may rise into our power.

You are your biggest asset. Read that sentence again and repeat it as your daily mantra, because, too often, we forget or are told/shown otherwise. Our unique identities are reflections of our backgrounds and our strengths. These are the pillars on which our power stands.

“I Am From,” A Poetry Narrative Exercise

George Ella Lyon’s poem, “Where I’m From,” is a powerful exercise for you to explore your identity, through your connection to place, family, and identifying what is meaningful to you. It can serve as an empowering reminder of the root of your own strength.

EXAMPLE

Where am I from?

By Barbara Elliot,
Stanstead College

I am from piles of books
And fireplace stories to tell
From chewed clean mango stones
And blueberry stained lips

I am from The barren “Rock”
Sharing fishermen tales
Or innovative plans
That failed.
I am from Sarah Crosbie Manuel
And babies born dead
From Scottish Methodist Adrian blood
where
“no good every came of skylarking”
And playing cards on Sunday
was a sin.

I am from the Canadian Shield
And playing outside with gravel
scraped knees
Racing down sandbanks, catching
toads in small boxes,

From summer made rafts of log
boom logs floating free
And chickadee songs in spruce
smelling trees
Where rivers run cold and
evergreen forests
Give up places to hide.

I am from after school pick-up
baseball games
From preferring to be outside
hugging a tree
Than stuck in a classroom
I am from never-lived-anywhere-
very-long
And moving-from-town-to-town,
Country-to-country, school-to-school
Until I moved here.

Connecting to nature is the best
thing I do
Enjoying outside
Much better than in
Where the reason for living
Comes quickly to mind

Title: _____

I am from _____ (an everyday item in your home)
from _____ and _____ (products or everyday
items in your home)

I am from the _____ (description of your home)
_____ (a detail about your home –
a smell, taste, or feel)

I am from the _____ (plant, flower, natural item)

The _____ (plant or tree near your home)
whose long gone limbs I remember as if they were my own.

I’m from _____ and _____ (a family tradition
and family trait)

from _____ and _____ (family members)

I’m from _____ and _____ (family habits)

and from _____. (family habit)

I’m from _____ and _____ (things you were told
as a child)

and _____ (a song or saying you
learned as a child)

I’m from _____ (a family tradition)

I’m from _____ (place of birth) and _____ (family ancestry,
nationality or place)

_____ and _____ (family foods)

From _____ (a story about a family member)

_____ (detail about the story or person)

_____ (description of family mementos,
pictures or treasures.)

_____ (location of mementos – under my bed,
on the wall, in my heart)

_____ (more description
if needed)

Strength Exploration

When you know your strengths and use them frequently you tend to have success in several areas. You feel happier, have better self-esteem, and are more likely to accomplish your goals. To use your strengths effectively, it's important to have a clear idea of what they are, and how they can be used. Some of your greatest strengths might be easy to recognize, while others go unnoticed because they feel ordinary to you (even if they aren't). In the following exercise, you will identify your strengths and ways in which you are already using them. Additionally, you will explore new ways to use your strengths to your advantage.

Circle your strengths from the choices below or add your own at the bottom.

Wisdom	Artistic Ability	Curiosity	Leadership
Empathy	Honesty	Open Mindedness	Persistence
Enthusiasm	Kindness	Love	Social Awareness
Fairness	Bravery	Cooperation	Forgiveness
Modesty	Common Sense	Self-Control	Patience
Gratitude	Love of Learning	Humor	Spirituality
Ambition	Creativity	Confidence	Intelligence
Athleticism	Discipline	Assertiveness	Logic
Optimism	Independence	Flexibility	Adventurousness



Relationships

Romantic relationships, friendships, and family

List the strengths you possess that help you in your relationships.

Describe a specific time your strengths were able to help you in a relationship.

Describe two new ways you could use your strengths in relationships.

1.

2.



Profession

Past or present work, school, or other professional endeavors

List the strengths you possess that help you in your profession.

Describe a specific time your strengths were able to help you in your profession.

Describe two new ways you could use your strengths in professional life.

1.

2.



Personal Fulfillment

Hobbies, interests, and pleasurable activities

List the strengths you possess that help you achieve personal fulfillment.

Describe a specific time your strengths were able to help you with personal fulfillment.

Describe two new ways you could use your strengths for personal fulfillment.

1.

2.

11 Daily Rituals for Self-Empowerment

Daily life can drag us down and make us weary of our circumstances. The repetition of routine becomes mundane and mediocre, and we often wonder where to turn for a bit of liberating distraction. Falling victim to the “grind” means living blinded from our true purpose and power. But there is a way to balance our everyday duties while building strength from the inside out.

A dormant power lies within you which begs to be awakened. Historically speaking, we’ve built empires, invented life-changing technology, and displayed inhuman feats of resilience. And that’s being modest in regard to our potential. The individuals who have identified their internal stamina are the ones whose names we pronounce regularly as the great thinkers and doers of this world.

So, what would you do if you discovered your fountain of inner energy? Like reeling in a rare gem from the bottom of the sea, how do you rear your inherent strength to the surface so that it’s within your reach? You can unlock your own unique force through daily exercises aimed at establishing your tenacity and capacity. Practice these empowering acts to help you tap into surprising self-powers:



Movement

Any type of movement encourages strength. Not only does exercise empower your body; it raises the level of feel-good hormones which stabilize your mental and emotional states. The easiest way to become empowered today is to move. Walk, swim, hike, kickbox — whatever your sport of choice, engage in it every single day.



Affirmations

Speaking the right words expands the spectrum of your strength. Stand in front of a mirror and tell yourself, “Today, I am prepared. Today I am powerful. Today I am a winner.” Practice whatever affirmations relate best to you; the most important thing is to speak your words with conviction.



Individuality

Never compare yourself to anyone else because that devalues your own individuality. Realize that your intrinsic strengths are yours alone; no one else possesses the exact same qualities, talents, or marvelous traits as you. Understand and highlight your best features. Utilize your originality as an expression of your unshakable strength.



Inspiration

Allow yourself to become excited by even the tiniest details of life. Inspiration endows you with an elevated sense of awareness and sensitized connection to your surroundings. Watch the world around you with vigilance; at every corner you turn there are a million reasons to feel inspired to take on new ideas, projects, and beliefs.



Nourishment

The nourishment you provide for your body has a direct link to your overall well-being. Food of no nutritional value leaves you lethargic, depressed, and powerless. Lack of energy is your body’s way of asking for better food. While building up your inner strength, you must fortify your body, too. This way you are ready to manifest your newfound power. Establish a two-way communication with your body: listen to what it’s trying to tell you and give it what it needs.



Visualization

When you feel less-than-dynamic, take five minutes out of your day for a quick meditation. Find a quiet space, close your eyes, and breathe deeply. Allow yourself to daydream freely, picturing the ideal outcome to every problem, desire, and goal you may have. Mentally projecting your future revitalizes you with strength and gives you hope for the possibility of positive events to come.



Past Reflection

Equally important as projecting your future is past reflection which allows you to measure your progress. Create journal entries in which you translate your intentions into words, concluding with the things you've accomplished so far and those which you plan to accomplish next. Remember to thank yourself for what you've done right thus far, and understand what you might have done wrong in prior failings.



A Cause

There is strength in numbers. Joining a cause heightens your power because you share and receive potent energy in group efforts. What one person lacks another person has, and this makes a group energetically complete. Work with others towards a goal you all believe in and become involved in bringing about change you want to see.



Favorite Activity

When was the last time you indulged in your favorite hobby? Doing things you love instantly uplifts you and re-energizes your spirits. Whether it's cooking, creating, or a special craft, set time aside for activities which add variety and color to your day.



The Divine Source

Have you ever wondered, after a particularly long day or difficult challenge, how in the world did I do all of that? Even you are sometimes baffled by your own power to persevere. The universe appoints us with superhuman strength of the emotional, mental, and physical kind in times of greatest need. Recognize that you are an open channel of energy and call on your Divine source to refuel you with its unlimited supply of strength.



Action

There is no quicker road to empowerment than through action. Too often we postpone pursuing our bold intentions. Today I want you to do, not think about doing. When you see that your efforts yield positive results, you will become driven to act more often towards your aims.

“

Your difference is indeed your superpower. Your point of view is your superpower. You need to use that to bring innovation and new ideas and to help the majority ... see something that they do not know otherwise to see.

”

Michele C. Meyer-Shipp, Esq. SHRM-SCP, Chief People & Culture Officer, Major League Baseball, at the 9th Annual A Maven's World Conference

5 Actions to Empower Yourself and Others

To complete the following actions, you will need to establish a small (four to six) group of like-minded women of color. These can be women you know or have recently met or even women you want to meet. They can be peers or mentors or mentees or a combination of different career stages. As a whole, this community will support and empower one another. This is a supportive space where you discuss challenges, share common goals, and support one another to achieve. Below are activities that your group can engage in. You may consider seeking funding for your group from Faculty Development or Diversity Equity, and Inclusion Offices on your campus. Make it fun. Play the [2021 WOCIA Conference playlist](#) at your gatherings. Develop a group mantra.

01. Lean into Your Inner Heroines.

Nowadays, so many women of color are rising into their power. Find a quiet place and bring to mind one of these powerful women that you admire.

- What are her strengths? List a few and reflect upon how you already embody or could practice embodying these characteristics.
- With the group, share your thoughts with examples (and shero photos). Group members affirm and expand upon each other's ideas.

Not sure which shero to choose? Take inspiration from Forbes' article [The World's 100 Most Powerful Women](#). Check-in periodically to share the results of intentional use of these strengths in practice.

✦ **Bonus:** At the end of the activity, stand up for a group [Power Pose](#)

02. Read and Discuss Women Empowerment Books

One of the most powerful ways to connect with community is through conversations. Book clubs provide substantive material for such conversations. In her article, [A Feminist Book Club Guide](#), Erica Velandar provides tips on how to start a successful book club. While the discussions can be organic, you can find discussion questions online for many books. You may also create a list of questions as a group that you use across books like "what resonated with you?" or "what are you going to try?". Some book suggestions include:

- Lead from the Outside by Stacey Abrams
- Women in STEM: The 5 Keys to Unlocking Your Full Potential by Angelique Adams
- Be Unapologetically You: A Self-Love Guide for Women of Color by Adeline Bird
- The Memo: What Women of Color Need to Know to Secure a Seat at the Table by Minda Harts
- The Self Care Prescription: Powerful Solutions to Manage Stress, Reduce Anxiety and Increase Well-Being by Robyn L. Gobin, Ph.D.
- The 4-Hour Workweek by Timothy Ferriss
- I Am Diosa: A Journey to Healing Deep, Loving Yourself, and Coming Back Home to Soul by Christine Gutierrez
- Act Like a Leader, Think Like a Leader by Herminia Ibarra
- You Don't Have to Like Me: Essays on Growing Up, Speaking Out, and Finding Feminism" by Alida Nugent
- We Should All Be Feminists by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- The Source of Self-Regard: Selected Essays, Speeches, and Meditations by Toni Morrison
- Year of Yes: How to Dance It Out, Stand In the Sun and Be Your Own Person by Shonda Rhimes
- The Moment of Lift: How Empowering Women Changes the World by Melinda Gates

✦ **Bonus:** In these days of increased access via Zoom meeting, invite the author to join the conversation.

03. Engage in Strategy Sessions

Collectively we all have experiences and pockets of information that can help one another. Hosting periodic strategy sessions creates an opportunity to discuss issues and collaborate on innovative projects. The group can also serve as thoughtful and supportive partners as you tackle your biggest challenges and navigate roadblocks together.

✦ **Bonus:** Hire an executive coach with expertise in areas of interest for the group and ask them to conduct 360 interviews on your behalf to identify and hone your strengths. Contact Northeastern ADVANCE Office of Faculty Development for coach recommendations: northeasternadvance@northeastern.edu.

04. Take the 30-Day Self-Care Challenge

Over one year of a global pandemic has illuminated for many that carving out time for self-care is a vital necessity. However, many of us do not do it enough, if at all. Lean on your women empowerment group for support and motivation to make space for nourishing self. The Women's Resource Center has created the [Women Empowerment Toolbox](#). One of their tools is the [30-Day Self-Care Challenge](#). As an empowerment group, take the challenge together and share your progress/troubleshoot your hardships.

✦ **Bonus:** Find a way to keep it going after the month by joining [GirlTrek](#) or following the [NapMinistry](#) and try out their ideas.

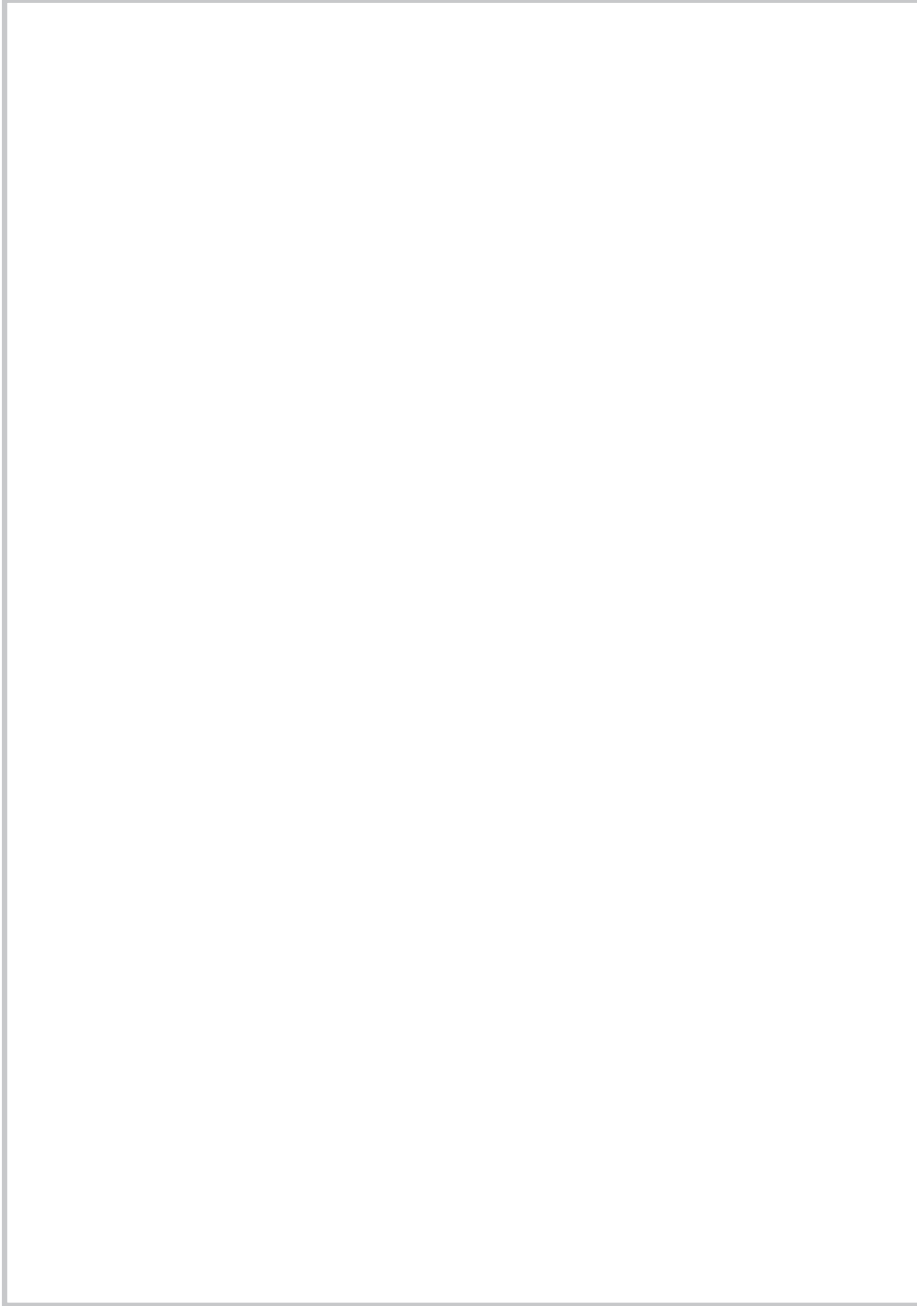
05. Write Together

The [National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity](#) recommends cultivating a regular writing habit and hosts 14-day writing challenges once per semester to foster this habit. Evidence shows that those who write regularly for short periods are significantly more productive than those who write less frequently but for long stretches. If writing productivity is important to the members of your group, create a writing group. Choose a regular (preferably weekly) block of time that you protect and use for writing. Each member can share what they

are working on and then writes for a specified amount of time. At the end, members share their progress and troubleshoot roadblocks. In his book "How to Write A Lot," Paul J. Silvia recommends strategies for making this time productive, such as prioritizing projects that are closest to submission and loosely defining "writing" by including everything from brainstorming and outlining to literature searches and copy editing, in addition to words on the page.

✦ **Bonus:** Kick off your writing group with a writing retreat. A writing retreat can ground the group in a shared lexicon and common practices. [InkWell Academic Writing Retreats](#) offers several options, from half-day to week-long retreats. And/or, participate in an [OpEd Project](#) workshop and motivate each other to write and submit an OpEd.

Thoughts, notes, and reflections



“

We call upon our sisters around the world to be brave — to embrace the strength within themselves and realize their full potential.

”

Malala Yousafzai

