

welcome

On behalf of the planning committee, we wish to welcome you to the 2024 Women of Color in the Academy Conference. As has been the case with past conferences, we have a wide array of workshops, panels, talks, and networking events planned. We believe everyone will come away from the conference with a renewed sense of purpose and energy. Echoing the Spanish language term coined by the national mentoring group, Las Comadres, to describe events that consist of comadres (cherished female friend) and abrazo (collective hug), we hope that the 2024 WOCIA Conference is truly a *Comadrazo* for all of our participants.

This year's theme, "Legacies of Solidarity: Bridging Generations in the New Normal," is the fruit of our careful consideration. As women of color in the academy, we harbor a strong awareness of our contemporary social and political realities, and we see the theme as an expression of this awareness, as well as our reflection on how we may respond to this moment in our roles as teachers, scholars, administrators, and leaders in our families and communities. We realize that the next few months may bring uncertainty about the future of our country, as well as the well-being of the multiple communities we inhabit. Nevertheless, we have the privilege of invoking the African-centered traditions of looking to our ancestors—spiritual, relational, or otherwise—for inspiration on how to confront these challenges and draw strength from their examples of resilience during the darkest of times. They have gifted us with much with which we can work!

We ask that you keep this invocation in mind as you enjoy the day at the conference.

Because our theme focuses on the intergenerational transfer of awareness, faith, harmony, and the strength that comes from all three, we have planned an exciting day that enables each of us to reflect on how these qualities guide our personal and professional lives. This year's keynote speaker, Crystal Williams, captures the peace and fortitude that come from the women who have come before us and who are right beside us, in her poem:

from *People Close to You* (2010)

She asks if she can sit on the bench & it is that kind of day in Santa Monica, slow & gentle so that when she sits, properly, like a teacher or the pudgy mother of a girl named Marilyn, in unison you raise your round faces. The wind hefts the voices of your deadlings. They are serious & sorrowful women, full of warnings, but today seem content to let you be, saying only, *Child, be thankful, open your chest, that great cavern, to our other sister.* & so you watch the sea.

Who knows what the woman beside you hears: there are so many languages in the world & your tongue is tied to this one. So you sip iced tea & lean a bit forward into them, your gone women, your sages, who seem to be stroking your head. You begin to imagine the ocean floor as a cup, the pouty lips of God, the soft foam, the salt as if food, tasting sweet & clear.

In Solidarity,

Patricia, Isabel, & Nicole

Patricia Davis, Isabel Martinez, and Nicole N. Aljoe

In Solidarity and Gratitude to Our Mentors

This conference is dedicated to the remarkable mentors who embody the true spirit of solidarity. We are fortunate when we encounter individuals in our paths who guide and uplift us, know when to push us forward, and advise us to be cautious along the way. Their encouragement and critical feedback are the cornerstones of our collective success. May their unwavering support continue to forge paths, break barriers, and create a legacy of empowered women.

