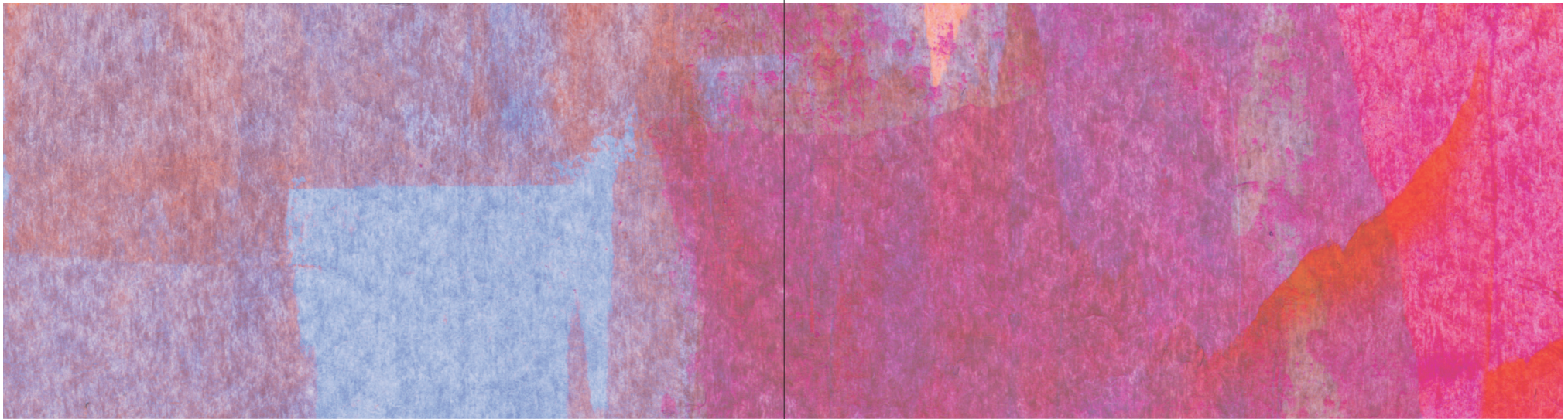


The Book of
Resilience



**WOMEN
OF COLOR
IN THE
ACADEMY**



In an era marked by shifting narratives and deliberate efforts to undermine diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), women of color in academia stand at a critical crossroads.

Policies once designed to foster fairness are being dismantled, and the invaluable contributions of diverse voices are increasingly challenged. Simultaneously, hard-fought rights for women are being threatened in ways that compromise our autonomy, our presence, and our influence in the academy and beyond.

Yet, despite these challenges, history reminds us that we have always been here, learning, leading, and reshaping institutions even in the face of resistance. We are the scholars, the mentors, the innovators, and the truth-tellers whose resilience has contributed meaningfully to knowledge as it exists today. Though

the current climate may seem daunting, our collective strength is greater than any opposition we face.

This professional development workbook is designed to affirm that truth. This is an opportunity to conceptualize, reflect, and build strategies that will fortify us for the road ahead.

The theme, **“Diversity & Truth in the Academy: Preserving Courage, Persistence, & Resilience,”** calls us to reaffirm our place in academia—not as guests, but as architects of its future. We honor those who came before us, those who walk beside us, and those who will follow in our footsteps. We know that progress is not linear, and setbacks are not the end of the story. Together, we persist!

As you engage with this workbook, we encourage you to find inspiration in your own journey and the journeys of those around you. Let this be a guide, a resource, and a reminder that your work is vital, your voice is necessary, and your presence is powerful.

EXERCISE 1

Two Truths of Resilience

This exercise engages us in critical reflection on our personal and communal relationships with resilience. Resilience is the capacity to survive, adapt, resist, and find meaning despite hardship and adversity.

Throughout history, the resilience of minority communities has been weaponized by those in power to evade accountability and perpetuate the systemic conditions that cause harm.¹ In 2022, Zandashé Brown, an award-winning New Orleans-based writer/director, wrote that she “dream(s) of never being called resilient again in my life. I am exhausted by strength. I want support, I want softness, I want ease, I want to be amongst kin, not patted on the back for how well I take a hit, or for how many.” At the same time, acts of resiliency can also contribute to personal empowerment and healing.

Reflect on the ways in which you have experienced or witnessed the weaponization of resilience.

Reflect on the ways you have found strength and solidarity through acts of resilience.

In what ways can your personal resiliency be supported by family, community, culture, society, systems, and institutions? What impact would this have on your personal capacity?

¹ C. Elue, L. Howard, & E. Jordan. (2022, March 31). Unpacking resilience and grief. Teaching in Higher Ed. teachinginhighered.com/podcast/unpacking-resilience-grief/#transcriptcontainer

EXERCISE 2

The Courage to “Do it Scared”

Courage is not the absence of fear but the willingness to act despite fear. This exercise encourages you to acknowledge your fears while making a plan to move toward action.

Part 1: You have been here before! Take a moment to reflect on courageous actions, big or small, you have taken in the past. List at least three instances below:

Part 2: Current fears. Today is marked by uncertainties that may loom large in your mind or block you from seeing a path forward. To clear some space, list the personal, professional, or existential fears that are currently occupying you.

Part 3: Cultivate courage. Explore strategies to take action to address one fear from your list. You can draft an achievable goal that challenges you to step out of your comfort zone, break down actions into smaller manageable steps, create a timeline or plan to make progress, identify an opportunity to build momentum, or find a network that can offer support. What actions will you take?

EXERCISE 3

Enlarging Our Alliances Across Communities

We engage in meaningful work in the academy and beyond to support the communities and values that matter to us most deeply; doing that work feels easiest with people we already connect with comfortably. These are people who we may admire, who inspire us, and who help us to find joy in those efforts. Our work is too often risky, too often taxing emotionally and otherwise—we need the confidence of working with those we know will support us. In the current political climate, these relationships will be more critical than ever.

This may also be a time that challenges us to enlarge our alliances for the work of resilience and to help us expand our strategies of persistence. This exercise may help us to find the courage to reach beyond the comfortable spaces of our existing alliances and communities.

Step 1: Begin by describing the relationships that do provide you with a reliable circle of trust, feelings of solidarity, and a sense of comfort to continue doing work that is risky, hard, and necessary. How did you first get to know these colleagues and friends? What phrases and words would you use to describe those relationships?

Step 2: If it has been a while since you have been able to seek out new opportunities for friendship and solidarity with others beyond that comfortable circle, consider some of the reasons why. What are the risks inherent in reaching out beyond your circles of trust? Have you had any negative experiences when you have tried to do that previously?

Step 3: Consider one or two new colleagues or people beyond our campus spaces you might be able to connect—or reconnect—with. What is a very simple gesture of outreach that comes to mind? What simple gestures have been meaningful for you in the past?



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*The most common way people
give up their power is by
thinking they don't have any.*

Alice Walker

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