FOREWORD

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What Remains

To study gender-based violence is to study humanity. It is impossible to explore or research any social or cultural topic and not encounter gender-based violence. Precisely because of its enveloping nature, gender-based violence is a well-studied topic across the social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, and fine arts. However, despite its ubiquity as a topic of study and a field of intervention, we sometimes no longer see it, the way it clings to us, the way we are shaped by it as we in turn reproduce it in miniature and across scale.

We are facing a crucible moment in academic research, in our studies of violence, and our very existence on this planet. The previous frameworks for how we have analyzed harm and human rights, prevention and power, and care and concern seem inadequate when faced with an epochal transformation of our political economy and social institutions. The authors herein capture this timeliness by synthesizing the corporal and the conceptual, to provide a new way of thinking from, with, and through our embodied entanglements and engagements. This book is one where you did not realize there was something new to say until you felt changed by the encounter.

April D. J. Petillo and Heather R. Hlavka have curated a noteworthy intervention that warmly embraces previous works and challenges us to take up new directions in gender-based violence studies, a field that feels at times like a worn and tired area of work. Yet this book is unique because it offers more than an intervention. It is a disruption, an eruption of anger, pain, pride, and hope. It compels us as readers to consider
how wholly inadequate our fumblings have been heretofore and offers the unsettling we need to see the terrain with fresh eyes.

Humanizing Methodologies

This book situates the authors’ experiences as researchers in a world that Dorothy Counts, Judith Brown, and Jacqueline Campbell did not live in when *To Have and to Hit* was first published. It is even a different world from the time *INCITE!* was written. Petillo and Hlavka draw from the elders while recognizing that the new generation of scholars see differently, think differently, and do differently. They put identity front and center. They embody the argument that the topic and the study is impossible to separate from the people who are doing it. Sarah Deer (Muscogee) in her 2015 book *The Beginning and End of Rape* writes, “There are different categories of knowledge. There is the kind of knowledge we gain from years of careful study, consulting as many experts as possible and analyzing the empirical data. Then there is the kind of knowledge we can from experiencing something; a visceral knowledge that can invoke the physical senses and the genius of memory. I find Athabascan scholar Dian Million’s description of this as ‘felt theory’ particularly worthwhile because it honors and values the real, lived experiences of Native women as legitimate sources of knowledge. Both categories of knowledge are critical for addressing rape” (14). In Deer’s use of “felt” knowledge, we see connections to the embodied and entangled methodologies that Petillo and Hlavka curate. The contributors go beyond a visceral reactive position that has often been divided into “firsthand experiences” with violence or “secondary trauma” and instead points to the layered and scaled ways that violence leaves a heavy touch for many, a lighter brush for a few. Petillo and Hlavka disrupt the ecological model to present instead a methodology that uses the warp and weft of our encounters with others, and with ourselves, that leaves one changed from listening to and learning from another’s violence.

This book is born of an era that places the importance of identity at the forefront, by virtue of both the participants in our research and the people who are doing it. It is the latter set of voices that emerge radi-
cally, emotionally, and critically. The contributors challenge readers to interrogate the very nature of feminist methodology when it is embodied, entangled, and engaged with victims and survivors of gender-based violence. We are called to begin with Sherry Ortner’s feminist assertion that we fundamentally use our own bodies as a “way of knowing” and then iteratively go further to acknowledge that the knowing is already influenced by the violence we study.

The book evokes a productive marriage between standpoint theory and interpretive labor. The recognition of the complexity of identity in conjunction with the work, the actual labor that is required to witness, see, hear, learn from, learn with. Thus, we are left with deeper questions: What becomes of feminist methods in this framing of our experiences as interconnected? How deeply does participation need to be felt? If we are embodied and entangled, what is observation—if not of ourselves as well as others?

Call to Action: What Next?

The call to action that this book demands is a humbling one: it is not only acceptable but is in fact necessary to change our minds, to critique our past confidence. If we are unwilling or unable to see the limits to what we believed to be true if only five years ago, five months ago, we are not engaging in felt, embodied, and entangled methodologies.

Today, we can hold sacred the potential that the world can one day be free of gender-based violence. Petillo and Hlavka’s book represents a watershed moment in the political economy of academe: the legitimization of the theory and practice of gender-based violence research that not only recognizes but embraces the primacy of identity, lived experience as knowledge, and validates the expertise that comes from the aging process and the life cycle. It also represents how collaboration, collectivism, and, yes, engagement with coconspirators are the social bonds required for true cultural transformation. Capitalism’s false promise of individual success and achievement has built a world of hate and harm. This is not a world we have to continue to accept. Rethinking our methodologies allows us to remake our realities.
REFERENCES