

Open letter to Hypatia

We have now closed signatories for this letter in order to send it to the Editor and Associate Editors of Hypatia.

To Hypatia Editor, Sally Scholz, and the broader Hypatia community:

As scholars who have long viewed Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy as a valuable resource for our communities, we write to request the retraction of a recent article, entitled, "In Defense of Transracialism." Its continued availability causes further harm, as does an initial post by the journal admitting only that the article "sparks dialogue." Our concerns reach beyond mere scholarly disagreement; we can only conclude that there has been a failure in the review process, and one that painfully reflects a lack of engagement beyond white and cisgender privilege.

While it is not the aim of this letter to provide an exhaustive list of problems that this article exhibits or to provide a critical response, we would like to note a few points that are indicative of the larger issues. We believe that this article falls short of scholarly standards in various areas:

1. It uses vocabulary and frameworks not recognized, accepted, or adopted by the conventions of the relevant subfields; for example, the author uses the language of "transgenderism" and engages in deadnaming a trans woman;
2. It mischaracterizes various theories and practices relating to religious identity and conversion; for example, the author gives an off-hand example about conversion to Judaism;
3. It misrepresents leading accounts of belonging to a racial group; for example, the author incorrectly cites Charles Mills as a defender of voluntary racial identification;
4. It fails to seek out and sufficiently engage with scholarly work by those who are most vulnerable to the intersection of racial and gender oppressions (women of color) in its discussion of "transracialism". We endorse Hypatia's stated commitment to "actively reflect and engage the diversity within feminism, the diverse experiences and situations of women, and the diverse forms that gender takes around the globe," and we find that this submission was published without being held to that commitment.

Many published articles include some minor defects of scholarship; however, together the problems with this article are glaring. More importantly, these failures of scholarship do harm to the communities who might expect better from Hypatia. It is difficult to imagine that this article could have been endorsed by referees working in critical race theory and trans theory, which are the two areas of specialization that should have been most relevant to the review process. A message has been sent, to authors and readers alike, that white cis scholars may engage in speculative discussion of these

themes without broad and sustained engagement with those theorists whose lives are most directly affected by transphobia and racism.

We urge that Hypatia immediately acknowledge the severity of these concerns. In addition to retracting the article, we also believe it is imperative that Hypatia commit immediately to the following:

1. Issue a statement taking responsibility for the failures of judgment associated with publishing this article and apologize for the initial uncritical response posted on Hypatia's Facebook page;

2. Open its general editorial norms and procedures to scrutiny, revising forward:

2. Open its general editorial norms and procedures to scrutiny moving forward;
3. Release a statement about its review practices and a plan for improvement. This statement should identify the cause of the problem and pledge to sustain dialogue with both people targeted by transphobia and racism and scholars who specialize in the related relevant subfields of philosophy in future submissions;
4. Avoid the practice of deadnaming (that is, referring to trans people by former names) and commit to developing best practices for naming trans individuals as authors and subjects of scholarly discussions.

These steps are especially important, considering that areas such as trans and race theory have historically been underrepresented and excluded from the field of feminist philosophy. Given this history, it is especially dangerous for Hypatia to stand behind an article that exhibits poor scholarship in both fields and little concern for the voices of those most impacted by "theoretical" debates on the subject of racial and trans identity.

We write with a feeling of urgency to make the Hypatia Editor, Boards, and scholarly community aware of the reception of this article and to register the dismay that we have experienced after seeing that a journal of Hypatia's caliber--the most widely respected journal in feminist philosophy-- would see this article fit to publish. As scholars who view Hypatia as an important and valued resource, we deserve and demand better.

Note from statement writers (added 5/1, at approximately the 520th signatory): "We acknowledge that this statement should have named anti-Blackness directly. The statement is not an exhaustive summary of the many harms caused by this article. We hope it will at least serve as a way to register that harm and issue a demand for a retraction. This is one step in the direction of seeking accountability for the harms committed by its publishing-- and to begin a conversation about the larger problems with our discipline it represents. And we thank Chanda Prescod-Weinstein (and others) for pointing out the dangerous erasure of anti-Blackness and the erasure of the Black labor on which the rhetoric of our own letter is built"

NOTE: THERE IS NO NEED TO CLICK "SUBMIT"; THIS BUTTON IS ONLY AVAILABLE SO THAT THE LETTER CONTINUES TO BE VISIBLE. HOWEVER, BE ASSURED THAT CLICKING "SUBMIT" DOES NOT COLLECT YOUR SIGNATURE.

SUBMIT

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