Dealing with Racial and Gendered Micro-Agressions in STEM fields: A Mexicana’s testimonio of White Supremacy in Academia

Submitted by Alejandra Catalina Camacho
Graduate student of Neuroscience at Texas A&M University

In this paper I address my experiences as a Ph.D. student in the sciences, a white male dominated field, in which as a Mexican woman my default state in the academic and professional environment is presumed incompetent. Micro-aggressions such as “you speak very good English,” and “where are you from, you have an accent” are part of everyday life. Since I have entered the Ph.D. program, several women have left the program. I question whether the racial and gendered oppression in my field is common and if others are currently experiencing such hostility. I challenge the current racialized climate in STEM fields and how micro-aggressions, isolation and consistent discrimination create a hostile environment for Chicanas, but overall to women of color. I have reached out to other Latinas in other fields at my university and to mentors in my home institution at a Hispanic serving university. I aspire to empower other students of color and encourage them to continue in the sciences. My testimony is one laced with pain, suffering and rage as well as one full of dreams, hope, and expectations for more welcoming and inclusive spaces where women of color can contribute our cultural and intellectual capital as scientists in STEM fields.