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Meridians 1:1

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Foreword

The American academy undeniably has been shaped by the individual scholars and teachers whose knowledge, values, cultures, ideologies, and preferred approaches have determined not only what is studied in our colleges and universities but also what has been seen as having worth and significance over the generations. Scholarly research and artistic production have been supported in large measure on the basis of where they stand in the estimation of those who make decisions about access and funding. We believe that issues affecting the lives of women of color must be given greater attention and support and that such support, both public and private, will result in increased economic prosperity, exciting scholarly innovation, and much societal good.

In creating *Meridians*, we sought to establish a venue where women of color and those interested in their histories and cultures could participate in shaping the base of knowledge for future students and scholars desiring to be well-educated about the world they live in and the societies with which they interact. The need seemed manifest. Yet when we began to discuss this prospect with a larger audience, the reaction was often, “Why such a narrow mission?” Those who posed such a question often did so because of inadequate knowledge of the variety and depth of issues that are to be explored under such a rubric. They may also have believed that past shapers of the academy would forever be its primary shapers and principal beneficiaries.

This journal posits that women of color and their concerns need to be, and, in fact, will be at the center of the academy’s scholarly research agenda in coming years. If one considers today’s rapidly changing economic forces, entrenched political dilemmas, and the enormity and diversity of cultural production, it is apparent that the concerns and actions of women of color are helping to transform our future. Indeed, this journal’s existence suggests that the time has come for research topics of particular relevance to the lives of women of color be more widely known, better understood, and more consistently funded. *Meridians* provides a place for excellent, peer-reviewed scholarship and creative work, some of which may well contest the norms of traditional disciplines.

Paula Giddings, in *When and Where I Enter*, suggests that, in writing about their own histories, African American women are able to make “the women whose blood runs through [their] veins breathe amidst the statistics.” Women of color have many histories, and those histories can be brought into full and useful relief by providing opportunities for those women to speak for themselves. However, this journal is not simply for women of color and their voices and perspectives. It is for anyone who takes seriously the scholarly and artistic questions that relate to these women. It is for all who would make them and their concerns breathe among the statistics.

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