NWSA Stands in Solidarity with our Colleagues at the New College of Florida

Dear Colleagues,

We are once again witnessing yet another round of backlash and policies that are aimed at our colleagues and designed to frighten them, stop them, and silence them. The Stop W.O.K.E legislation passed in Florida serves as a reminder of the continuous attempts on restrictions in our education systems. As the Zinn Education Project has documented, similar legislation has been proposed in over 42 states. This is not just a Florida issue but a national call to action. We must speak out in support of our colleagues at the New College of Florida, the honors college of the Florida State University System, as they stand against Governor DeSantis and openly reject his plan to remake their small liberal arts innovative school into “the Hillsdale of the South.”

Angela Davis once said, “If they come for me in the morning, they will come for you in the night.” It is clear that they are coming for us with their draconian laws about what we can do with our bodies; with their Stop W.O.K.E campaigns to control what we teach in our classrooms; and, with their plans to remake this country into a bastion and haven for white supremacists and toxic and dangerous masculinity. There is a story of an enslaved woman who when she was told that she was going to be sold away from her children, grabbed an ax and chopped off two of her fingers. One would like to believe that when she was faced with choosing one dark path over another, she chose the one that she could live with and that would allow her to live where she wanted. There are always paths to choose and each one comes with sacrifice and must be met with steely resolve and unwavering fortitude. We are at war and like Harriet Tubman, we must face the path that we have decided to tread without resolve, without second thoughts, and without looking back.

We stand in solidarity with our colleagues and share here excerpts of the statement that was released by the New College chapter of the United Faculty of Florida (NCUFF), the union that represents the New College faculty.

In this moment, we stand united, as in the past and for the future, in support of New College’s values and mission. We, as faculty at a public liberal arts honors college, are dedicated to free and open critical inquiry in our classes, on campus, and in our community. We want to reassure our partners in education—our students and their families, our New College colleagues and alumni, the larger Sarasota/Manatee community, and all Floridians—that we will continue to pursue our work as educators and citizens. We will continue teaching and learning with our
students, providing the high-quality, personalized education, mentorship, and opportunities for career exploration that are the hallmark of New College.

We respect our students as leaders and learners. We support their fearless pursuit of knowledge including research on race and gender. We assert our unflagging commitment to free speech, academic integrity, and the respectful exchange of different viewpoints. We maintain our commitment to coming together and making changes to support the achievements, dignity, and personhood of all members of our community. We ask our fellow Floridians, advocates for public education, and all who believe in the values of civic engagement, mutual respect, inclusion, and thoughtful dialog embodied in a liberal arts education to voice their support for New College, our mission, and our students.

Please contact NCUFF with any questions: ncuffpresident@gmail.com

NWSA is choosing the path of direct and intentional resistance, the path that leads us closer to who we want to be, and the path that will help change the direction in which this country is moving. We fully intend to continue institutionalizing our leadership approach to responding to challenges and addressing threats to our field and colleagues.

If you are experiencing similar difficulties, do not hesitate to contact NWSA directly at nwsa@nwsa.org or by phone at 773-524-1807, so we can amplify your efforts and provide support.

Sincerely,
Karsonya Wise Whitehead, NWSA President
Ariella Rotramel, NWSA Vice President
Heidi R. Lewis, NWSA Secretary
Karma Chavez, NWSA Treasurer
Qiana Cutts, NWSA Member-at-Large
Lisa Covington, NWSA Women of Color Co-Chair
Beverly Guy-Sheftall, NWSA Past President
Yi-Chun Tricia Lin 林怡君, NWSA Past President
Amy Reid, Professor of French and Gender Studies, Director of the Gender Studies Program at NCF
Gina Velasco, NWSA Member-at-Large
Erica Williams, NWSA Member-at-Large

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