01. WHY CITE?

Citation is a way of showing who you are and where you’re going. It sounds simple, but it goes wrong all the time. People, even feminist scholars of color, get caught up in lineage and originality. We want to be in good company but we tend to get stuck on thinkers who others have already designated as important: (mostly) famous white men.

We need people to know we’ve got something to say, so we conveniently forget all the others who co-created our ideas: (mostly) black and brown women and people who don’t have formal credentials (like the people we interview).

This problem of lineage (the wrong kind) and originality (acting AS IF we stand alone) is compounded in tech worlds. Sometimes, even we originality (acting AS IF we stand alone) is compounded in tech worlds. Sometimes, even we

So, why cite at all given these problems?

First, it’s important to cite to avoid the erasure of our existence and our knowledge as black and brown people. Second, citation does not have to be a means of reinforcing privilege. It can be a way to spread SHINE.

Rigoberto Lara Guzmán defines shine as a tactic to counter our erasure by acknowledging one another and unsettling who is considered an expert.

By spreading shine we build distributive networks and reinforce community.

As Mutale Nkonde always says, “We are not stars, we are the Sky.”

And the sky contains multitudes.

02. BE A BADASS FEMINIST

Derrida, Foucault, even Donna Haraway do not need any more citations. If you HAVE to cite them just get your foot in the door, put them in the footnotes. Or just put them in parentheses at the end of a sentence. Save those in-sentence mentions for the people you want to SHINE on. These can be writers. They can also be people you interviewed. It is powerful to recognize that the people we usually think of as ‘research subjects’ are theorists in their own right.

Jasmine McNealy points this out all the time. She uses the work of Mariolga Reyes Cruz as an example. Reyes Cruz asks in the title of one of her articles, “What if I just Cite Graciela?” Graciela is what some might call a “research subject” but Reyes Cruz knows Graciela is an expert.

Recognize that your work is co-created.

03. UNSETTLE EXPERTISE

Recognize that women of color, Dalit and Bahujan writers, Queer thinkers of color, disabled/crip scholars, non-U.S. based scholars, LGBTQIA+ thinkers hold expertise precisely because of the way they have been historically positioned at the intersection of many different kinds of power relations.

Recognize that we are all subjects of hegemony — just when we think we’ve reached peak woke, we are more than likely forgetting someone. Eve Tuck, K. Wayne Yang, and Rúben Gaztambide-Fernández have made a Citation Practice Challenge on tumblr to help us remember.

Make it a habit to do a ‘badass feminist tech scholar of color’ scan on everything you write, every speech you are about to give, and all those emails you are about to answer. Ask yourself, for each topic your present, each yes or no you give to a request, where are the women of color? Who do I want to be in good company with?