

HOW TO CITE LIKE A BADASS FEMINIST TECH SCHOLAR OF COLOR

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 want 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 believe that white people invented technology.

So, why cite at all given these problems?

DATA & SOCIETY



Words by
Sareeta Amrute &
Rigoberto Lara Guzmán
Illustration by
Alexandra Mateescu

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 through mutual aid.

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 to 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.

When you review another's work and find your knowledge absent, make sure it is included. If you feel uncomfortable doing this for yourself, ask someone else to do it — an editor, a trusted colleague, an ally.

But, don't only go about citing yourself. Practice SHINE by building a network of mutual aid.

If you are invited to a conference, asked to speak, asked to write an op-ed, see who else you can ask them to invite. If you can't make it, suggest the names of other tech feminist scholars of color who might. Cite your students, cite your colleagues, cite those whom others would call your ‘research subjects’.

Make a list, keep the names handy, knowing that we can all fall back into reproducing old power relations, keep adding to that growing list.

Jessie Daniels offers this simple piece of advice: agree to author order before agreeing to do a publication. Old power relations will always want to erase and demote the less famous, the less male, and the less white. Try to remember that and act accordingly.

03. UNSETTLE EXPERTISE

Are you a tech feminist scholar of color? You are not alone. Sareeta Amrute has collected stories

of preeminent experts in their fields whose work has been ignored, of graduate students

whose work has been stolen by their advisors, of ‘research subjects’ who are never asked what

they think or even if they think this research is worth doing, of mentors who give hours to

students and colleagues only to find their expertise is never referred to in that student's or

colleague's research, of non-US based scholars whose entire existence appears unknown to the

so-called center.

So, what to do about it?

There are ways to SHINE without reproducing the systems that exclude us. Center yourself and those you know. Feel your own expertise. CITE YOURSELF.

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 Rùben 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 can I suggest who would be a better person than me to be the expert here? Who do I want to be in community with?