

M A L C S

mujeres activas en letras y cambio social

January 17, 2020

Dear President Bacow and Provost Garber:

As an organization committed to issues of social justice and educational equality, Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social (MALCS) stands in solidarity with Dr. Lorgia García Peña and denounces Harvard University's refusal to grant her tenure. Dr. García Peña is an exemplary scholar and Harvard's decision to deny her tenure constitutes a flagrant disregard for the excellence of her scholarship, her contributions to the Harvard community, and her impact on the larger field of Latinx Studies. MALCS members were captivated by Dr. García Peña's words and work when she was invited to be a plenary speaker at the 2019 MALCS Summer Institute at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Her plenary title, "Archives of Justice: Mujeres Activas Cambiando la Historia," invited us all to imagine our own potential to change history through the contestation of dominant archives.

Dr. García Peña's status as an accomplished and highly regarded scholar is clearly evident in her overall research record. Her scholarship illustrates how critical research can both uncover what is often hidden as well as speak to pertinent issues in the academy and the discussions surrounding race and national borders. Dr. García Peña's main body of scholarship is rooted in the interrogation of transnational social dynamics and the processes of racialization. Her work is especially significant because her research demonstrates a rigorous analysis that points to the multiple layers in which blackness constitutes not only a tool, but also a practice that embodies notions of race, nation, politics, culture, and migration – all of which shape how communities view themselves and are identified by others. The fact that Dr. García Peña's scholarship engages with a variety of scholars and publics places her at the forefront of broader interdisciplinary conversations where her research is making a significant contribution— theoretically and empirically—as to how we understand the intersections of blackness, citizenship and Latinidades on a global scale.

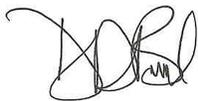
We note her prolific publication record with more than twenty-five different types of articles, essays, and books that not only reach multiple scholarly communities within and outside the U.S., but also speak to broader publics. Her award-winning sole-authored book *The Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation, and Archives of Contradiction* (Duke, 2016) is not only timely, but best represents her areas of expertise and the impact she is having in—and beyond—the field. *The Borders of Dominicanidad* brings together historical and contemporary cases to a conversation with one another. The book ranges from an analysis of U.S. occupation of the Dominican Republic in 1916-1924 to the politics of remapping national borders as a result of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Dr. García Peña successfully brings together seemingly different sites

of analysis, and creates an entirely new way of imagining power, race, nation, and diaspora. Simultaneously, she demonstrates how revisiting historical and contemporary archives and literature challenges and questions narratives we perceive as fixed when, they are in fact, complex and *rayano* – nuanced and unique because they are situated in the borderlands and in-between.

Dr. García Peña is a highly-lauded, first-rate researcher and her scholarly production demonstrates the strength of her ability to coalesce micro and macro analyses while intersecting historical, cultural, political and economic contexts. The strength of her scholarship has been widely recognized and we are outraged by Harvard University’s inability to recognize the strengths of Dr. García Peña’s tenure dossier and refusal to acknowledge her contributions to higher education. MALCS stands in solidarity with Dr. Lorgia García Peña and honors the transformative contributions she has made through her scholarship, mentoring, and service to various communities.

It is important to note the Dr. García Peña is not an isolated case. Harvard University’s inability to recognize her contributions to higher education is part of an ongoing trend in higher education where Latina professors are systematically disappeared from higher education. According to recent National Center for Education Statistics, Latinas represent 6% of assistant professors nationwide. At the full professor rank, we are only 3%. Meanwhile, white men at the assistant professor level consist of 34% of professors nationwide. At the full professor level, they comprise 54%. Over a similar timeframe, Latinas professors in higher education **decrease** by 50% while white male professor **increase** by 37%. In light of these statistics we question the commitment of Harvard and higher education in general, to recruit, retain and promote distinguished Latina scholars and educators.

With Deep Concern,



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Ex-Officio Chair
Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social



Aida Hurtado Ph.D.
Chair Elect on Behalf of the Executive Committee
Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). *The Condition of Education 2019* (NCES 2019-144), Characteristics of Postsecondary Faculty