Diversity Statement
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To date, my academic career has taken me across four continents (Europe, Asia, Africa, and America). During this journey, I have had the opportunity to teach a very diverse range of students, acquire certain cross-cultural competencies, develop a research agenda that is focused on understanding imbalances in knowledge production, and become aware of my own shortcomings in creating a more inclusive environment for students.

To show that I meet several of the Building on Inclusive Excellence (BIE) criteria, In this statement, I will focus on how this process (from being an MA student in Berlin, then a PhD student in Hong Kong and South Africa, and eventually an Assistant Professor in the United States) has led me to proactively align my teaching, research, and service with efforts towards making academia more inclusive and equitable.

In the Spring of 2015, while I was a visiting graduate student at the University of Cape Town in South Africa, school life came to a standstill as students began protesting to demand the decolonialization of higher education. While, in my research on media representations of Sub-Saharan Africa, I frequently engaged with the history and epistemologies of colonialism, the witnessing of the #RhodesMustFall movement was a significant turning point in how I saw my role as an educator. It made me more aware of the importance to diversify the voices we amplify in the classroom, and, as soon as I began teaching seminars with extensive reading lists, I started to include a section on "Diversity in Research" in my syllabi, where I try to make students aware of the importance of looking beyond the "canon" of the discipline. Also, since in Fall 2020, my syllabi also offer students an approximate breakdown of how diverse the reading list is.

Building on that experience and having developed an interest on inclusivity and representation on campus, during the Summer of 2020, I served as a faculty member of an Anti-Racism Taskforce set up by my School. The group met over the course of several months to make twelve recommendations to the Director of School on how to create a more inclusive and equitable environment for students, staff, and faculty. Among those recommendations was the need to encourage all faculty to evaluate their syllabi and to make sure that they were providing a space for a diverse range of voices.

Because of the nature of my research, which is focused on global and transnational mediated communication, over the years, I have been able to develop collaborations with scholars from other countries, particularly those based in Sub-Saharan Africa. This has helped me become more aware of the profound imbalances in knowledge creation in academia, and the dominance of scholars from the Global North. While, as a junior scholar, my opportunities to significantly change these disparities are limited, I do try to contribute in as many ways as I can. I will illustrate this commitment with two examples.

In late 2019, I was awarded a small research grant by the University of Houston to study audiences' motivations to share misinformation in six Sub-Saharan African countries. From the onset of this project, I was determined to make this a collaborative study that would engage

scholars in Africa, as well as African graduate students, whose works and contributions are severely underrepresented in academic journals. The team, now comprising six African scholars and myself, has worked on three publications, and worked together in two additional grant applications. A few months later, I was asked to organize a two-day academic conference on digital media in Africa at the University of Houston, as part of the Valenti School of Communication's Annual Global Communication Summit. With the commitment to making the event as accessible as possible to scholars from African institutions, I designed a hybrid program (both virtual and face-to-face), reserved a number of spaces in the program for African graduate students, and instructed reviewers to be constructive and understanding in their feedback to younger scholars.

Having taught courses in four countries has helped me develop techniques to make sure everyone feels heard in the classroom. For instance, after teaching in Singapore and Hong Kong, both of which are countries where the predominant cultural upbringing calls for a quiet deference to authority, I have begun to use small discussion groups, technological tools, and prompts to make sure that students feel relaxed to speak up, and to challenge me and the contents when needed. More recently, teaching at the University of Houston (UH), one of the nation's most diverse urban research universities, has further equipped me to manage multiethnic classrooms. It has also made better understand the needs of groups of students that I had not taught before, such as those who work and study full time simultaneously.

I have been equally committed to making my classes and the School a safe space for LGBTQ students. Soon after joining UH, I underwent training to become an "LGBTQ Cougar Ally," a program that hopes to create spaces on campus where LGBTQ students feel comfortable and empowered. Building on what I learned during the training, for the last two years, at the beginning of every semester, I have been sending out a survey to all my students to understand their needs, motivations, and expectations. The survey includes a question about students' preferred gender pronouns. On the first day of class, I make sure that those students who aren't aware of the importance of addressing people by their preferred gender pronouns are given the resources they need to be informed, and that all students are addressed using the pronouns that reflect their gender identity.