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FOREWORD

*I'm evoking for women a role that we have yet to make, in the name of a voice that, unsilenced, might say something that has never been heard.*¹

All of us who founded the *UCLA Women's Law Journal* did so because we believe in the power of language. We believe in reclaiming the language that has been used against us for so long. For our authors, it is empowering to write words that challenge the assumptions that plague our culture, words that affirm and validate the perspective of women, and words that question everything: "What has been women's concrete experience? What has been left out?"² As readers, we share the vision and the power of those words. Author and reader create together a voice that is at last heard.

The *UCLA Women's Law Journal* is committed to diversity within feminist legal scholarship. We believe that feminist scholarship must endeavor to encompass the experiences of *all* women. Although we recognize the challenges ahead, we hope to place at the center of our journal the perspectives of women of color, lesbians, impoverished women, physically challenged women, and other underrepresented voices. The touchstone of a more encompassing feminist jurisprudence is acknowledging difference with accuracy and without exclusion.

But although focusing on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, age, and religion may help us to identify our own essentialist assumptions about "women,"³ ultimately we reject the practice of separating human beings into categories because our culture attaches stigma to difference. The danger of identifying a "different" experience lies in the very word "different": even that word choice reaffirms the centrality of the "essen-

1. C. MACKINNON, FEMINISM UNMODIFIED 77 (1987).

2. See Wishik, *To Question Everything: The Inquiries of Feminist Jurisprudence*, 1 BERKELEY WOMEN'S L.J. 64, 72-73 (1985).

3. See E. SPELMAN, *INESSENTIAL WOMAN: PROBLEMS OF EXCLUSION IN FEMINIST THOUGHT* (1988).

tial" white middle class heterosexual woman. We must continue to take steps toward encompassing all women with a keen awareness of our own self-centricity. In the words of Audre Lorde, "if I fail to recognize [others] as other faces of myself, then I am contributing not only to each of their oppressions but also to my own I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own."⁴

—Stephanie H. Villafuerte and Laura E. Reece,
Editors in Chief
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4. A. LORDE, *SISTER OUTSIDER* 132-33 (1984).