The Role of the Scholar Activist in a Shifting Political Landscape

Kimala Price, PhD
San Diego State University
SPSSI Conference, June 2019
The Making of a Scholar Activist

Center for the Education of Women, University of Michigan, Scholars Reception, Winter 1998
The Era of Post-Truth Politics
The Public Intellectual

Elizabeth Mitchell, “What Happened to America’s Public Intellectuals?”

What is Scholar Activism?

Theory  Action
I am a scholar-activist, but not an advocate.... An advocate begins with a core and guiding goal—not a theory—and pushes for changes to achieve that goal. In contrast, a scholar-activist begins with a set of testable assumptions, subjects these to rigorous research, and once in possession of research findings seeks to translate those findings into action.... I much prefer the latter role since I often have more unanswered questions than clear goals, prefer to turn to data rather than personal beliefs when thinking through policy options, and find that actions are more effective when guided by research.

Sociologist Sara Goldrick-Rab
“On Scholarly Activism”

My Scholar Activism

- Research
- Community Work
- Teaching
- Policy and Politics
A Tale of Two Pills

- Narrative Analysis
- Mifepristone (medication abortion)
- Emergency Contraception
- Teen Girls
The Reproductive Justice Movement

Source: SisterSong Archives, Sophia Smith Collection on Women’s History, Smith College
Sexual Justice:
The right to individual autonomy in all matters related to adult consensual sexuality; family and relationship formation; and gender identity and expression.
Visual Rhetoric: Anti-Abortion Billboard Advertisements, 2010-2011

Sources: Radiance Foundation, Life Always
Community Work and Teaching

The Bread and Roses Center for Feminist Research and Activism, San Diego State University