

## Diversity Statement

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My commitments to diversity and inclusivity stem from my own experiences as a woman who once doubted my value in the philosophy community. Like most people from the deep South, I grew up surrounded by conservative church communities where women's voices were undervalued. Religious and theological thinking can closely resemble philosophical thinking, so it is no surprise that I carried the negative messages I had received about my voice – especially about its role in public intellectual settings – from the pew into the philosophy classroom. Throughout my time as an undergraduate, I was quiet and under-confident, struggling to speak up in class even when I had something I wanted to say. To compound things, all of my undergraduate philosophy professors were men, which – along with philosophy syllabi dominated by men – further perpetuated the subconscious impression from my upbringing that deep, rigorous thinking is done best by men.

When I got to grad school, I was one of only four women among twenty-five grad students in the philosophy department, and often found myself as the only woman in the room. Especially because diversity and inclusivity were hot topics, I was constantly aware of my gender while interacting with other members of the department. Sometimes it felt that, as the only woman in the room, my contributions not only reflected on me, but also on women in philosophy more generally. This was an enormous amount of pressure to bear. In addition, worries arose when I was selected as a participant in a conference or workshop – was I selected because my work is good, or because I am the token woman?

My approach to cashing out my commitment to diversity and inclusivity is informed by these personal experiences. For one, I am especially sensitive to the struggles faced by students who, for whatever reason, are quiet and under-confident in the philosophy classroom. My own observation has been that these students disproportionately come from groups that are underrepresented in philosophy. I am eager to help instill confidence in these students: confidence that they belong, that their voice counts, that what they have to say is worth hearing. I hope to do this in whatever philosophy community I join, in part, by giving these students opportunities similar to those that helped develop my confidence. For me, this included plenty of one-on-one with professors, and doing philosophy in informal, smaller groups, especially groups involving other women.

Yet, although it is important for students to be confident in their voice and their value in the classroom, it is also important for them to realize that doing good philosophy does not require them to be as outspoken or tenacious as the stereotypical philosophy major. During my first few years in philosophy, I mistakenly thought that the frequency and boldness with which one contributed to philosophical discussions was directly proportional to one's philosophical talent. As someone with a quieter disposition, this was discouraging to me since I could not picture myself as ever doing philosophy like that. In light of this, I want to show students there are many styles of doing philosophy well with others. By giving students the space to find their voice and contribute in ways they find comfortable – which I discuss at length in my teaching statement – I aim to make the philosophy classroom a hospitable place for a diverse range of personalities, styles, and backgrounds while also instilling confidence in students who need a boost.

More broadly, I think it is vital for the purposes of diversity and inclusivity to simply have more people from unrepresented groups involved at all stages in the field. It is not enough to have a token woman or person of color, for example, as this can lead to social isolation and also invite unwarranted pressures and self-doubts. It is also vital for students from underrepresented groups to see other people who look and sound like them flourishing in the field. Because of this, I have served in various leadership roles in the [Summer Immersion Program in Philosophy at Brown](#) (SIPP@Brown), including as the graduate student director in 2019. SIPP@Brown is a program for undergraduates from underrepresented groups in philosophy that aims to increase diversity in the field. I am eager to continue serving in diversification initiatives in whichever philosophy community I am a part of.

With all that said, I also want to help foster a culture of listening among philosophers. When it comes to discussions about diversity and inclusivity, humility is too often underrated. Instead of voicing my own view on how to make the field more diverse and inclusive, sometimes I need to stop talking and listen to others whose lived experiences are different from my own: I need to keep in mind that, as a white woman, I do not know what it is like to be a person of color, for example, trying to succeed in the field. It is only by listening humbly that we can better understand the barriers faced by people with backgrounds different from our own and, thus, be in a position to work alongside them to tear those barriers down. I strive to always approach these topics with humility and an open ear by acknowledging my own limited perspective and inviting others to share their own.

In sum: I am committed to promoting diversity and inclusivity in philosophy by making the philosophy classroom a welcoming place for students from all backgrounds and by supporting those from underrepresented groups at all stages in the field. This includes not only getting involved in diversification initiatives like SIPP@Brown, but also instilling confidence in students who doubt their place in the field and accommodating quieter styles of philosophical engagement. In addition, it involves cultivating a culture of humble listening where philosophers can learn from each other – especially those from underrepresented groups willing to share – about how to make the philosophical community more diverse and inclusive.