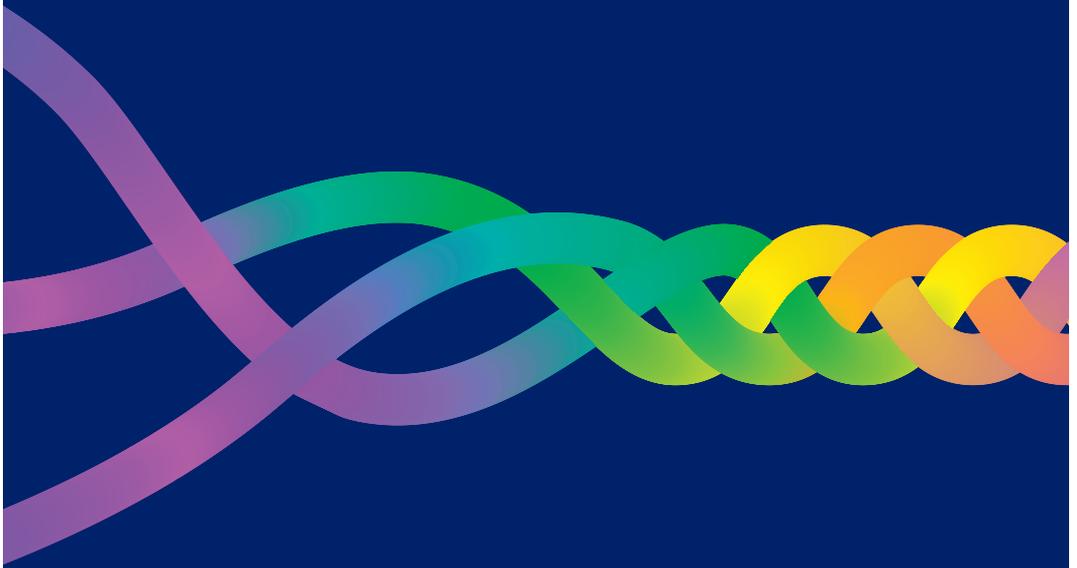


Section 1

# Feminist Roots/Routes



**As authors of this section**, we articulate something elemental about the various pathways that lead to feminism, something that sometimes necessitated breaking with social precedents. At the same time, threads of intellectual, moral, and social continuity with the past remain woven into our lives, confirming the legitimacy of autonomous choices in the face of societal circumscriptions of gendered and racialized behavior. Writing in the personal narrative form, as we have, has entailed wrestling with the inherent messiness of the human experience and taking seriously the inchoate affective responses, associative thought processes, and memories that emerge. Invariably, the observations resulting from this iterative process are informed as much by the methodological and social training we acquired in the academy as by the historical era in which our intellectual formations were forged. In the process, we touch upon wider social phenomena such as intersectionality and positionality, but also marriage and kinship as institutions, and the disparate technologies that mediate subjectivities, including higher education as enterprise, apparatus, and social formation.

Helga Thorson's contribution retraces her individual path towards feminist consciousness—one that emerged gradually in her youth—across layers of growing awareness about differentials of power, access, and mobility. In the form of a braided reflection that travels back and forth across time, she weaves together strands of her life while reflecting on the feminist spaces she has inhabited and traversed. The various strands of this piece, such as her expression of solidarity for the Black Lives Matter movement in the summer of 2020, the emerging awareness of her own willful ignorance, and the assumed universality of her own experiences come together in her braided narrative to strengthen her commitment to intersectional and anti-racist feminism.

Alison Guenther-Pal's essay is also an account of intellectual and political commitments as she explores the development of her views on marriage through the combined lenses of intersectional feminism and queer theory. The piece is written in a hybrid genre that alternates between personal narrative and scholarly analysis. This chapter offers a critique of the German movement for same-sex unions by revealing

how the *Homo-Ehe* debates at the last turn of the century abandoned the radical impulses of earlier gay, lesbian, and women's liberation movements to embrace a mainstream, reformist, homonormative, political rhetoric. Bookended instead of braided, she frames her analysis with an intersectional feminist-queer critique of *marriage equality* that on the surface seems at odds with her recent decision to marry.

There is an unruliness to Angelica Fenner's attachment to the past as preserved within the storage cartons she has stowed since graduate school and that inspire her essayistic contribution. Serving no practical purpose in a household where space is at a premium, their value has instead become anamnestic, their contents coveted for the time travel they now enable and the memories thereby conjured. Their unboxing following decades of interment becomes the narrative ground for reflecting on the disorderliness of material existence as both burden and inspiration to the imagination. While appearing an obscure object of autoethnographic exploration (and an obsolete one, in an era of proliferating plastic), they honor a rich legacy of women's writing that has drawn on the domestic sphere as a foil for both self-reflection and social critique. The digital turn of the 1990s and its implications for communication, data storage and retrieval, and preservation, and the concern over media-specific obsolescence extends to the author herself when the battered boxes prompt her to contemplate the limitations of her own memory and her mortality.

Although the chapters in this section differ in content, style, and the way past and present experiences become interwoven, they all illustrate the centrality of feminist roots and routes in the respective authors' lives. As the section's title suggests, our essays explore the varying ways in which the foundations of our feminist praxes have grown stronger but also portable, accompanying us on our individual pathways and serving as vital guideposts particularly when we encounter *ruts*—to continue the alliterations at hand—along the way. It was Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres, as Alison Guenther-Pal recalls in chapter two, who reminded her students that the etymology of the word *radical* stems from the Latin word *radic-* (*radix*) meaning root. In this way, the feminist roots we have developed and cultivated continue to extend their reach, becoming, paradoxically intertwined with those of others along the journeys—our own unique routes—we each have undertaken and continue to navigate.