

To: NOMAS Council

From: NAMEN (North American MenEngage Network) Steering Committee

Date: 4/12/17

RE: Accountability - NOMAS/ Haven “Forging Justice” Conference

Thank you for sending the NOMAS statement on November 30, 2016 regarding our concerns related to the 2013 *Forging Justice Conference*, which was co-sponsored by NOMAS. We have shared it with the collection of folks who have been trying to engage with NOMAS on this for several years now. While we are very cognizant of the difficulties involved with accountability, and our responsibilities as allies for gender justice, we do not believe NOMAS’s strategy of silence reflects those responsibilities. This silence has served to isolate NOMAS and the intent, according to your most recent statement, was to “protect” you from further accusations of “defensiveness, deflection and mansplaining”. It is our view that this silence has in fact increased our concerns, rather than alleviated them.

While your assertion that it is critical for allies to listen to those with concerns, and seriously consider those concerns, your decision to subsequently remain silent, due to an assertion that you were treated unethically, only leaves others with deeper questions and a sense of dismissal of their concerns. That has been our collective experience to date.

Silence can be a critical aspect of respect and learning, and it can also be a tool of the privileged, used to avoid challenges or dismiss the concerns of those they purpose to support.

It is our view, that in the context of sexist oppression, transparency from allies in this movement for gender justice is a critical component of social responsibility, and accountability to those who are most harmed.

On November 20, 2013, the North American MenEngage Network (NAMEN) sent you a request which included asking for this transparency...

*“In reviewing the [list of demands](#) as posted on the [shakesville](#) website, and the NOMAS response, we recognize that some demands seem to be met while others appear partially met and yet others not attended to at all. We ask NOMAS leadership to listen to the women making the demands, in your efforts at accountability, and to respond fully to the stated demands.*

*In the event NOMAS cannot address a demand to the extent requested, we recommend you clearly articulate why you chose to refuse a demand or answered the demand to the degree in which you did.”*

This level of transparency will allow those who challenge us (pro-feminist men), or who have

been offended and/or harmed by our behavior, as well as others, to have the necessary information to determine their future alliances with us as an individual, or as a group. In addition, this will enable them to ascertain their subsequent safety, and/or comfort level, if we are sharing spaces at work, at conferences, or other personal/professional events.

NOMAS has failed to attend to these concerns. Your silence has not only been targeted toward those who were directly offended by your collective behaviors in 2013, but also toward multiple national feminist and pro-feminist men's organizations and individuals calling for accountability.

Based on your last communication, we understand that NOMAS is no longer interested in attending to any further concerns regarding your accountability on this issue and you are comfortable with the manner in which you have responded.

As we know, silence is also complacency. Therefore, NAMEN will not stay silent, and subsequently complacent, regarding a national pro-feminist men's organization's response to public calls for accountability.

NAMEN has worked since 2013 to engage NOMAS in conversation and an exchange of thoughts and concerns related to accountability. This resulted, after much effort on our part, in one email, one phone call, and again, months of delay before we received the council's reply to our requests. All of these requests have occurred as private exchanges. Due to our continued concerns related to NOMAS's limited engagement, we feel an ethical obligation to publicly express our efforts to engage NOMAS in accountability discussions, and requests for transparent action, and the lack of substantive results, from NOMAS, regarding those efforts.

While we respect and appreciate the years of work and effort that NOMAS has engaged in to counter sexist oppression, we are sorely disappointed in your history of accountability. Accountability is an "enormously important issue" that is the foundation of our work for justice, and fundamental to the integrity of that work.

Sincerely,

NAMEN Steering Committee

(Add list of names and affiliations)