

**Parlament de Tània Verge,
consellera d'Igualtat
i Feminismes de la Generalitat
de Catalunya i catedràtica
del Departament de Ciències
Polítiques i Socials de la UPF,
a l'acte d'investidura de
Raewyn Connell com
a doctora honoris causa**

Barcelona, 17 d'abril del 2023



**Universitat
Pompeu Fabra
*Barcelona***

Rectora, membres de l'equip de govern de la universitat, companyes i companys. As Professor of Politics and Gender at the Department of Political and Social Sciences, the department that submitted Professor Connell's nomination, as member of the university's executive board between 2014 and 2021, and as Minister of Equality and Feminisms of the Government of Catalonia, this ceremony is a triple joy for me.

Given that the personal is political and progressive change is always a collective endeavour, my speech also has a political and collective dimension. This is why I want to share the honorific role of godmother of the new UPF doctor with several colleagues:

- Prof. Maria José González, with whom we drafted the proposal to nominate Prof. Connell, along with some male feminist allies, especially Prof. Abel Escribà-Folch.
- Prof. Mònica Figueras, former Vicerector of Equality and Social Commitment, and the team of the Equality Unit, Lluïsa Rojas and Carme Abelló, with whom we built up the equality structures of the university, under Jaume Casals' term as rector of the UPF.
- I am also sure that I share the pride for this ceremony with feminist and LGBTI+ organisations, with the team of the Ministry of Equality and Feminisms, and with the scholars from other universities who are present in this auditorium.

Honoris causa doctorates are the most prestigious recognition a university can accord. Such decisions speak about the university's self-representation and convey messages to both the academic community and the society it serves. In my view, today's ceremony conveys at least two messages.

Firstly, awarding an honorary doctorate to Professor Connell is a powerful statement in a context in which gender studies and critical race theory are being attacked by anti-rights groups and have already been banned or defunded in countries such as Hungary, Poland and various states of the USA. Thus, the message this ceremony elicits is one of explicit support to gender studies and institutional recognition of their academic value.

In addition, it is an open invitation to read and engage with the vast contributions made by gender scholars to all fields of research, not only to enrich our academic knowledge but also to identify the potential gaps and biases that may have gone unnoticed in our own research and teaching.

It is also a call to walk away from the temptations of the ivory tower and to debunk those ideas that consider that good research should not be principled on values or that academia and activism should be two separate spheres, since striving for a better world is the foundation of knowledge transfer.

Gender studies, and very prominently Prof. Connell's contributions, are highly relevant to policy practice, including university policies, because they offer critical insights into the ways in which social structures and power dynamics shape forms of knowledge, limit the scope of possible policy solutions, and affect the lives of marginalised communities.

Secondly, today the UPF demonstrates that commitment to academic excellence goes hand in hand with commitment to equality, which must include furthering gender balance in awards. Prof. Connell is the sixth woman recipient of an honorary doctorate at UPF. Six women out of the twenty doctorates of this sort accorded by the university since it was founded in 1990. This amounts to just 30 per cent women, with five of them having received the award between 2017 and 2023.

While there is still progress to be made to reach full parity, and we can do much better to diversify profiles in terms of race, geographical origin or gender identity, today's ceremony is a step in this direction.

Indeed, distinguishing a transgender scholar for her academic and social contributions is empowering for the transgender community and it is a transformative act for university students and staff and for the broader society. It challenges the negative stereotypes about transgender persons and is a very much-needed counter-narrative to the transphobia of the extreme right and other trans-exclusionary discourses. Let me be clear: stigmatisation and exclusion have never been radical nor feminist; it is plain status quo.

To finalise, I hope that my last words convey a collective message too from many people present in this auditorium: Thank you, Raewyn. Thank you for being a trailblazing scholar and activist who has inspired generations of gender scholars and provided extremely valuable guidance to policy practitioners seeking to promote social justice and equity.

Moltes gràcies.



