

Guest Editors' Note

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There must exist a paradigm, a practical model for social change that includes an understanding of ways to transform consciousness that are linked to efforts to transform structures.

—bell hooks, *Killing Rage, Ending Racism* (1995, p. 193)

Only people with hope will struggle. The people who are hopeless are grist for the fascist mill. Because they have no hope, they have nothing to build on. If people are in trouble, if people are suffering and exploited and want to get out from under the heel of oppression, if they have hope that it can be done, if they can see a path that leads to a solution, a path that makes sense to them and is consistent with their beliefs and their experience, then they'll move. But it must be a path that they've started clearing. They've got to know the direction in which they are going and have a general idea of the kind of society they'd like to have. If they don't have hope, they don't even look for a path. They look for somebody else to do it for them.

—Miles Horton, *The Long Haul* (1998, p. 44)

You can blow out a candle

But you can't blow out a fire

—Peter Gabriel, "Biko" (1980)

Guest editing these special issues of *Prompt* over the last two years during the global pandemic of Covid-19 and the continuing pandemic of systemic racism has—paradoxically—given us hope. The writers, reviewers, and other editors at *Prompt* have made us feel like King's (1991, p. 8) idea of "beloved community," a new and more just and more equitable world, is possible. While the recent death of feminist and racial justice scholar bell hooks has dampened our hope (may she rest in power), we are heartened by the work contained in these pages that acknowledges students—and our—intersectional identities and work for justice.

This new issue has been crafted during a period of concern over "critical race theory" (CRT). CRT, an academic theoretical framework useful for understanding systemic racism, became a buzzword on conservative news outlets and, to our amazement, has led to legislation trying to combat (or prevent) the teaching of CRT in elementary and high schools. While the outrage about CRT is manufactured (critical race theory is taught in universities and graduate programs, not elementary schools), the manufactured outrage is evidence of how much more conversation we need about teaching social justice and unpacking systemic inequalities. However, the fuss over CRT also emphasizes the far right's concern with what bell hooks articulates above: there

prompt
a journal of academic
writing assignments

Volume 6, Issue 1 (2022),
pages 2–4.

DOI: 10.31719/pjaw.v6i1.134
Submitted November 14, 2021;
accepted November 14, 2021;
published January 31, 2022.

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is a connection between the transformation of an individual consciousness to systemic change. The assumption underlying the kerfuffle over CRT is that education can be transformative, and this assumption underlies the writing in this issue.

Given the value of self-reflection in social justice work, during our editorial process, we engaged in a series of conversations about the role of antiracism in publishing. We questioned gaps stemming from our privilege as white academics, and we engaged in dialogue with the editors of *Prompt* as we continued to diversify our pool of authors and reviewers. We recognize that critical self-reflection and dialogue must be ongoing processes, as we work to end systemic oppression of any kind, particularly the systemic racism that has permeated publishing.

In the spirit of this much needed work, the assignments in this issue focus on reflection—on encouraging students to reflect on their own identities in relation to issues of systemic injustice. In addition, we continued to ask authors to reflect on their own social identities and the role those play in crafting assignments and teaching for justice.

Haleema Welji’s “Interrogating the ‘Good’ Muslim: Challenging Representations of Muslims through Linguistic Analysis” begins this issue with a fascinating assignment on stereotypes of Muslim and Islamic identity. A Muslim herself, Welji offers a nuanced approach that provides first-year writing students with a thoughtful framework for examining both ideas of the “bad Muslim” (Muslim as terrorist) and the “good Muslim” (Muslim as a “good American”).

Following Welji’s piece, Soyeon Lee’s “Building Students’ Literate Agency through Makerspace Activities in a Two-Year College” describes a multimodal assignment that engages students with creating objects in a “maker space.” After students create objects, they analyze how their creations reflect their identities. Written in the context of a racially diverse student body, Lee’s piece highlights how multimodal instruction can be effective in the first-year writing classroom. She also proposes ways that those of us without “maker spaces” can adapt such projects in our own contexts.

Two pieces, Beth Buyserie’s “Languages of Power and Resistance: Future Teachers Writing for Social Justice” and Deanna Chappell’s “Reading and Fighting Patriarchy: Book Groups and Young Adult Feminist Fiction,” investigate how social justice assignments can be used in courses for pre-service teachers. Buyserie’s “Languages of Power and Resistance” explores how a historically a conservative course, a course on grammar for pre-service teachers, can interrogate “normative language.” Chappell argues that by encouraging pre-service teachers to read feminist young adult fiction and write about it, she is modelling feminist, anti-racist pedagogy for her students, pedagogy that they can take into their own classrooms.

In another multimodal assignment, Oscar Jerome Stewart, Geoff Desa, and Ian Dunham bring the arts into the business classroom as a means of moving students beyond a “for profit” world view and in order to promote environmental sustainability. “Widening the Lens of Business Education: Exploring Systemic (In)Justice Through Public Exhibitions of Student Art and Creative Writing,” encourages students enrolled in a senior seminar course to reflect on sustainability and social justice.

Keisha Goode’s “Socialization and Social Justice: A Reflection on Teaching and Designing a Sociological Theory Course,” uses her experiences of refining a core course in sociological theory to diversify both the readings and the assignments. Illustrating how the course has evolved because of feedback from students, Goode models the reflective teacher-scholar that many of us aspire to be.

Jill Swiencicki and Barbara Lowe’s “Teaching the Civic Deliberations over Monument Removals: Writing as Memory Work,” uses an assignment from a team-taught philosophy and rhetoric class to argue for engaging students in understanding theoretical frameworks behind monument removal. Swiencicki and Lowe ask students to do complex critical thinking to unpack

their assumptions and then write about them. This timely piece will be helpful for any of us who wish to incorporate controversial, contemporary issues about race into our classrooms.

Finally, in “Integrating Metacognitive Practice as a Strategy for More Equitable Storytelling in Community-Based Learning,” Marisa Charley explores how community-engaged learning from the Shepherd Program for The Interdisciplinary Study of Poverty and Human Capability at Washington and Lee University incorporates reflections on social class into their pedagogy.

Taken together, these articles give us hope. Miles Horton is correct in that without hope, we become “grist for the fascist mill.” These teacher-scholars believe in their students and inspire hope in them, and we have been honored to learn more about how social justice writing assignments can inspire hope in different contexts. We hope you will be inspired by the hope in these pages as we work to stoke the fire of revolution in our classrooms and in our universities.

Peace,
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Wiley
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Supplementary Material

For supplementary material accompanying this paper, including a PDF facsimile of the assignment description formatted as the author(s) presented it to students, please visit <https://doi.org/10.31719/pjaw.v6i1.134>.

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