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From the Book & New Media Review Editor's Desk

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Book and New Media Reviews

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Jim Bowman

In our capacities as civically engaged community members, critical language scholars, and reflective professional educators, daily work in a pluralistic society regularly and inevitably implicates us in discourses of complex cultural difference. Whether our context involves literacy work with refugee communities or the teaching of writing in higher education, similar challenges over access, power, and language can vex our professional practices. Recent scholarship in literacy studies reviewed in this issue covers an ambitious host of questions. For example, what does it mean to teach language and literacy for all members of our society? How do we do this, and, for that matter, how do we measure the meaning of our efforts? What sort of rhetorical flexibility is requisite for a scholar-educator who wishes to realize a vision of social justice in historically inequitable institutions? Difficult questions deserve sustained, reflective, scholarly treatment. Fortunately, a wealth of resources avails itself to those determined to better understand and respond to the social and cultural differences that produce distinct literacies in a society like our own.

This issue's keyword essay sets the tone for a collection of review essays that extend our capacity to respond critically to the many challenges of teaching language and literacy in a world of cultural difference and asymmetrical relations of power. Michael McDonald's keyword essay on *refugee literacy* describes experiences that he concludes "do not easily mesh with dominant models of literacy, citizenship, and community, but [...] nonetheless provide a compelling and important inroad to better understanding literacy in global and local contexts." Abigail Montgomery's look at John Duffy's *Writing from These Roots: Literacy in a Hmong-American Community* represents a powerful illustration of the ways one historically distinct cultural group has responded to local literacies through acts of critical appropriation. The final three reviews turn their attention to some of the challenges of realizing social justice in institutions of higher education. Leah Durán's take on *Affirming Students' Right to Their Own Language* demonstrates how critical practitioners of today's college writing classrooms can deploy a host of nuanced strategies designed to realize the promise of NCTE's 1973 egalitarian vision. For those of us looking to strengthen community connections between high schools and universities, Lance Langdon's critique of two texts, Maisha Fisher's *Writing in Rhythm: Spoken Word Poets in Urban Classrooms* and Korina Jocson's *Youth Poets: Empowering Literacies In and Out of Schools*, reminds us of the power of poetry as a source of inspiration and motivation. The final review, Lance Hendrickson's engaging summation of the *The Inaugural Summit of the National Consortium of Writing Across Communities*, held in New Mexico in July 2012, testifies to "the hard work of imagining" and its potential rewards for communities across our country.

