

# Community Literacy Journal

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## Note from the Editors

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## NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

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We are happy to be putting this issue together at a time when the United States inaugurates a community organizer as president. Not that we confuse editing with community organizing—although there are overlaps—but as anyone who has done community literacy research or worked on community projects knows, organizing people, logistics, and building alliances between groups and institutions will take up a good deal of your time. A fall 2008 article in *The Nation* on community organizers who go into public office notes,

Each of these former organizers know—as do the thousands of people who currently work as organizers for groups trying to improve neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, public health and other issues—organizing is a serious job. Like many politicians, organizers are idealists, but they are also pragmatic. They deal with power, conflict and human lives, typically with people not well served by the regular political system. Their job is to help people channel their frustrations and their hopes in constructive and effective ways. (Dreier, “From Organizer to Elected Official”)

Sarah Palin’s speech at the 2008 Republican National Convention included this observation: “I guess a small-town mayor is sort of like a community organizer, except that you have actual responsibilities.” Another view, from Byron York in the *National Review Online*:

Perhaps the simplest way to describe community organizing is to say it is the practice of identifying a specific aggrieved population, say unemployed steelworkers, or itinerant fruit-pickers, or residents of a particularly bad neighborhood, and agitating them until they become so upset about their condition that they take collective action to put pressure on local, state, or federal officials to fix the problem, often by giving the affected group money. Organizers like to call that ‘direct action.’ (“What Did Obama Do As A Community Organizer?”)

At a time when community literacy practitioners, community organizations, and academic partners and researchers are confronting rapidly diminishing material resources, how our work is perceived and represented will certainly affect our ability to build meaningful alliances and to provide people who are underserved by their institutions with opportunities to participate in a democratic and literate society.

The *Community Literacy Journal* aspires to publish both the best peer-reviewed scholarship in community literacy research *and* to serve the needs of community literacy practitioners, workers, and organizations, whose needs are often more day-to-day practical than scholarly. One way that we can continue to bridge that gap is to focus on the collective needs that we have in common: methodologies and assessment instruments that withstand scrutiny from citizens, funders, and legislators; sustainable community efforts that connect people and promote participation; and continuing to document the ways in which scholars and practitioners can share and benefit from each other's work. In that spirit, we renew our call for co-authored pieces in collaboration with academics and community partners.

In other news:

- The *CLJ* received the Best New Journal Award from the Council of Editors of Learned Journals at MLA Conference in December in San Francisco.
- The journal's website now runs on Open Journal Systems (OJS), a journal management and publishing system developed by the Public Knowledge Project. Manuscripts, anonymous peer reviews, and subscriptions are now all handled through the OJS system; subscribers, authors, and reviewers can self-register at <http://www.communityliteracy.org>.
- We are happy to introduce two new Editorial Board members: Mike Rose (UCLA) and Shirley Brice Heath (*Emerita*, Stanford University).
- Sara Webb-Sunderhaus's "A Family Affair: Competing Sponsors of Literacy in Appalachian Students' Lives" (*CLJ* issue 2.1) is anthologized in the upcoming *Norton Book of Composition Studies*. Webb-Sunderhaus's article was part of a special issue on Appalachian Literacies, guest edited by Katherine Vande Brake and Kimberley Holloway.
- Our Design & Production Editor, Roxane Gay, who has been with us and making us look good since 1.1, will be leaving us after 3.2 to work on her dissertation. Roxane won't be easily replaceable, and we will follow her career with eager anticipation.

## WORKS CITED

- Dreier, Peter. "From Organizer to Elected Official." *The Nation*. 8 September 2008. 30 January 2009. <<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20080922/dreier>>.
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