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Editors' Introduction

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Editors' Introduction

*Veronica House and Paul Feigenbaum, with
Vincent Portillo and Cayce Wicks*

This issue of *Community Literacy Journal* offers multiple responses to the question of how we, as Washington D.C. activists Mary Brown and Phyllis Ryder ask, “keep going forward when the world is on fire.” In **“Journeying To Purpose,”** an adaptation of Brown’s 2021 Conference on Community Writing Plenary Address, they write “about holding onto the transformational power of expression and relationship. We see building connections and finding your unique point of agency as essential for creating systemic change.” They share the story and vision of the non-profit Life Pieces to Masterpieces, the first arts-based organization in the nation focused solely on meeting the needs of African American males from early childhood to adulthood through art. Through their stories and guidance, Brown and Ryder invite us to discover our gifts, get in touch with our pain, and “journey to purpose.”

Following a similar line of thought, 2021 Conference on Community Writing Keynote Presenter Brigitte Rouson reminds us that “Community is the site and shaper of liberation. Its sinews are substance—creating a muscular experience of being held on a collective journey. Community is source and it is system.” Drawing on ancestral and embodied knowledges, Rouson’s keynote address, **“Liberating Powers: Community Building in Word, in Deed,”** offers examples of, and invites us to join in, collective work toward liberation. Like Brown and Ryder, Rouson urges us to “say ‘yes’ to this awesome endeavor” of the long haul toward justice.

In our opening article, **“Innovaciones y Historias: A Home- and Community-Based Approach to Workplace Literacy,”** authors Guadalupe Remigio Ortega, Alfonso Guzman Gomez, and Calley Marotta engage with the literacy experiences of men employed as university custodial staff in order to propose a home- and community-based approach to workplace literacy. For individuals who are often denied the opportunity to showcase their literacy repertoires and desires within the context of their formal workplaces, this approach takes an assets-based approach to recognizing the participants’ professional and vocational literacies across contexts. As Remigio Ortega, Guzman Gomez, and Marotta explain in their article, “We also draw from Latinx and Chincanx theories in education, writing studies, and transnational literacy studies to assert the value of understanding workplace literacies in relation to people’s broader literate lives.”

In the next article, **“The Rules of the Road: Negotiating Literacies in a Community Driving Curriculum,”** Rebecca Lorimer Leonard and Danielle Pappo share an ethnographic case study, borne from their partnership with a community language school, whose immigrant students asked for literacy support in earning driver’s licenses. The article shows how cultural norms, unspoken rules, and embodied literacies infuse the experiences of immigrants with what the authors call “rules of the

road”—the unspoken social and literate rules that regulate literacies in the car and on the streets.”

Stephanie West-Puckett asks us to imagine a cross-disciplinary and multi-partner project involving scientists, poets, and faculty teaching youth about science and the “crash encounters” that occur when different conceptions of literacy and knowledge-making meet. “**Crash Encounters: Negotiating Science Literacy and Its Sponsorship in a Cross-Disciplinary, Cross-Generational MOOC**” describes the youths’ participation in a two-year Massive Open Online Collaboration (MOOC) funded by the National Science Foundation. Through this case study and associated theorizing, West-Puckett describes the “learners’ unconventional and interdisciplinary writing and the cultural and disciplinary conflicts that emerged around it.” In a reframing of science literacy as a series of crash encounters, West-Puckett prompts literacy practitioners to anticipate these “crashes” and offers suggestions for how to design and participate in interdisciplinary networks to create more dynamic and vibrant approaches to science literacy.

This issue’s Interview section offers a conversation, “**Democracy, Pedagogy, and Activism: 2022**,” between long-time community literacy practitioner Steve Parks and Srdja Popovic, Visiting Researcher at the University of Virginia and founding member of the Otpor! (“Resistance!”) movement, which helped instigate the fall of Slobodan Milošević’s dictatorship in Serbia. This discussion emerged from ongoing collaborations that have included co-teaching a writing course on democratic advocacy and establishing the Democratic Futures Working Group. Popovic and Parks’s wide-ranging conversation addresses the precarious state of democracy both nationally and globally, focusing particular attention on the advantages and limitations of contemporary narratives and practices of community organizing and activism as they compare to earlier models. The discussion then turns to the inadequacies of higher education to meet the moment of democratic advocacy in an era of increasingly illiberal authoritarianism both in the U.S. and abroad. In looking for productive ways forward, the discussants envision more inclusive frameworks for credentialing people to teach and produce knowledge about democracy and advocacy in and beyond university spaces.

This issue also includes three Project and Program Profiles. In “**Stories from the Flood: Promoting Healing and Fostering Policy Change Through Storytelling, Community Literacy, and Community-based Learning**,” authors Caroline Gottschalk Druschke, Tamara Dean, Margot Higgins, Marissa Beaty, Lisa Henner, Robin Hosemann, Julia Meyer, Ben Sellers, Sydney Widell, and Tenzin Woser share the work of co-creating a community literacy project, *Stories from the Flood*, as well as undergraduate community-based learning courses with the aim of working toward community healing, student learning, and structural change. As a partnership between university faculty members, former students, and the Driftless Writing Center, the goal of *Stories from the Flood* is to help community members in and around Wisconsin’s Kickapoo River Watershed record, preserve, and share their flood experiences, with the aim of supporting community healing and serving as a resource for future conversations about flood recovery and resilience. Given the complexity of the *Stories*

from the Flood, the authors argue that the success of such a project has everything to do with “dynamic reciprocity,” whereby project participants build community by slowing down, working repeatedly and flexibly over time. In these ways, “Stories from the Flood” adds to a body of scholarship that speaks to ethical university-community intervention during our era of climate change.

In **“Write Your Roots Disrupted: Community Writing in Performance in the Time of COVID,”** Sarah Moon describes the difficulties and disruptions that took place while developing and staging a food-themed public storytelling project during a pandemic. The article focuses on Write Your Roots (WYR), a community project that invites community members to write and stage a performance of a monologue about a personal food history. Moon builds upon the scholarship of Michel de Certeau, theorizing the importance of our private homes in relation to space, story, and activity. Finally, Moon’s profile adds to a growing body of scholarship that speaks to the need of community writing projects as both lifeline and near impossibility during such difficult times.

In **“Bilingual Comics on the Border as Graphic Medicine: Journaling and Doodling for Dementia Caregiving during the COVID-19 Pandemic,”** Elvira Carrizal-Dukes, Maria Isela Maier, Sarah Y. Jimenez, Jacob Martinez, Dave Hernandez, and Ronnie Dukes reflect on their collaborative project intended to use “graphic medicine” to provide culturally relevant educational materials for caregivers of Alzheimer’s patients. Through live-streamed Zoom sessions for members of the El Paso community, these collaborators sought to provide a space for caregivers to not only become more informed about care for Alzheimer’s patients through bilingual comics, but also to provide a space for participants to use the tools of journaling and doodling to improve stress management in the caregiving process.

Our Book and New Media Review section, edited by Jessica Shumake, includes several timely reviews from recent scholarship in community literacy. We thank Jessica and the various scholars who contributed reviews for this issue. We hope readers will also enjoy the second installment of “Coda: Community Writing and Creative Work,” as edited by Kefaya Diab, Leah Falk, Chad Seader, Alison Turner, Kate Vieira, and Stephanie Wade.