Coda

Editors' Introduction

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Welcome to the second edition of Coda: a new section of the *Community Literacy Journal* devoted to the creative work that ensues from community writing! While our name evokes aural imagery and calls into question the idea of endings, in our second issue we turn our attention to visibility, the power of its presence and the pain of its absence. The diversity of the writing we are privileged to publish in this issue is a testament to writing's unique affordances to make metaphorically visible our lived realities, in all their desires and complexities, as well as our intimately imagined worlds, in all their carefully constructed plot twists and details. *We exist*, our stories, essays, and poems say. *And we have something, with love, to share.*

The writers in this issue ask us to reckon with the ways being seen differs from being heard. At a moment of state-sponsored censorship that regulates language, stories, and bodies, these writers raise questions about what it means to be seen in a world where power structures seek to erase difference. They draw attention to the vexed, dangerous, and sometimes deadly paradoxes of hypervisibility and invisibility. As poet Vivian Lorena Carmona writes elsewhere: *Para algunos soy invisible / para otros completamente visible. For some I am invisible / for others completely visible.*

Some of the pieces grew out of partnerships with community writing organizations whose missions connect visibility to action and who create spaces for writers to respond to institutional failures, particularly those of the state. For example, the poet quoted above participates in Poetry for Peace workshops run by EncantaPalabras, a Colombian educational NGO devoted to, in the words of co-founder Juana María Echeverri, writing a new page of Colombia's history after decades of armed conflict. We also have work from several participants in Exchange for Change, an organization in Florida that sponsors writing for incarcerated people so that, in their words, "students can become agents of social change across different communities in ways they may otherwise have never encountered." According to the National Institute of Corrections, the United States has the second largest incarceration rate in the world; and globally, over ten million people are incarcerated. Those of us who engage in literacy work have a special responsibility to examine our complicity in the school-to-prison pipeline and to do better. Because the writers in this issue are finding new ways of being seen, they document these imperatives.

As these writers explore visibility, they offer readers new ways to think about community–what it means to be isolated from community, what it means to act in concert with others, and indeed to write together. Gustavo Guerra cultivates empathy to counter the erasure that results from stigma. In "Bad Habits," he mourns the

possibility of being in love and in a relationship. With that he resists invisibility. As an incarcerated person, he is denied that possibility, yet he continues to have hope. In "Frozen Margaritas," Guerra's memories of a past love are crushed under the reality of incarceration. Yet, the taste of the margaritas' salt and lime remain with him as if to say that memories of love would always remain visible, free, and would never be incarcerated like him. "In a community, you don't need everyone to love you, but you need people to see you," writes Don Unger in his narrative about the disintegration of a queer, xennial community. For Unger, community is a place where people can be seen, which sometimes provides protection and other times makes him the target of violence. Meanwhile, Ryan Moser recasts images of incarceration: Moser's sangha becomes a visible agent of peace amidst violent surroundings. The excerpt we've printed of Devin O'Keefe and Justin Slavinski's collaboratively written story, "The Missing Briefcase," shows the two Exchange For Change participants' long-running writing partnership. The story conveys the authors' love for the hard-boiled noir genre, from the dialogue to the wardrobe details, and it is a testament to the potential of writing collaboratively.

Some writers explore visibility and understanding on a more individual basis. In "I Remember," Frank Morse shows how it is possible to see new life and possibility in the rubble of trauma and tragedy. He writes that "My second chance began in a burning car, in a ditch, upside down, smashed, broken, and dying." While sharing the story of how a need for OxyContin resulted in a deadly car accident, Morse invites us to think about what we might be able to find buried in our own tragedies. "What second chance have you received?" he asks. "Who paid the price for it?" Vivian Lorena Carmona and Fresban Alexis Bueno both write poems from their perspective as members of the embera chamí community, an indigenous community that for decades was caught in the crossfires of warring factions in Colombia's armed conflict. In both writers' poems, set in what Carmona tells us are the mountains of Colombia, writing becomes a vehicle for both inner peace and political peace, resembling the music of the many varieties of birds that they call attention to as populating their land. "Drought" by H.L. Smith recognizes the space a community writing project created for her to reckon with the toll the pandemic had on her as a teacher. Continuing this theme, in the poem "Notes," Parisa Mosavi (Pavie) describes the chronic fatigue that so many activists encounter in oppressive and violent environments. As a description of the author's own forms of resilience against this fatigue, "Notes" challenges us to do more than see what is around us: now is the time, the speaker beckons, "To observe and react/To hear and answer back."

As you observe and react to the work on the following pages, we urge you to answer back in your own ways and to share your answers with us.