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From the Editor

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From the Editor

It has been a difficult academic year. (I say this not as an explanation—or excuse—for why this Spring issue of *Intersections* may be arriving to your faculty mailbox after Spring term has ended.) This year has been uniquely difficult for many of us, and difficult for unique reasons. Some of those reasons are meant to be captured by the title of this issue: “Education in the Age of Trump.”

It was about a month before Tuesday, November 8, 2016, when I fully realized that my work with students and colleagues was different this year. Augustana had had what we refer to as the “chalking” incident. College Republican students had written a number of comments on campus sidewalks one night, including: “Build that Wall,” “Make Augustana Great Again,” “The West is the Best,” and Milo Yiannopoulos’s tagline, “Feminism is Cancer.” A debate between the right to free speech and the devastation of hate speech (as many international students, students of color, and others interpreted the chalkings) quickly ensued.

A week later, I joined a student rally and protest that was organized by Latinx Unidos, including by a senior student leader who attends the same local Lutheran church as me. It was moving to hear students of color speak about their place (and sometimes their perceived *lack* of place) on our campus, and a bit surreal to join them in chanting “Who’s home is it?” while passing alumni during homecoming weekend. Later, I volunteered to host one of the open conversations for students returning to campus for Winter trimester just days after Trump had been elected to office. The other faculty and administrators

and I prepared ourselves to listen closely to the fears of many marginalized students, including international, minority, and DACA students. We ended up also listening closely to students who claimed that they could not be publicly “out” as Trump-supporters for fear of being demonized as racists, sexist, or xenophobic.

The academic year continued apace, with many of us trying desperately to figure out whether and how to talk about divisive issues in the classroom, whether and how to support marginalized students without marginalizing others, and whether and how to engage in grassroots political action while carrying on with our teaching and research. These challenges have not gone away—at least not for me. They were with us before November 8, and yet feel far more acute today.

The essays to follow carefully (re)imagine the vocation of Lutheran higher education during our anxious political climate. Some were written before Trump’s presidency; others were written after and about it. Each of them offers invaluable information—and even guidance—for our collective calling to educate for vocation, to search for truth in an era of “alternative facts,” and to remain realistically hopeful and broad-minded among widespread cynicism and despair.



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