

# Community Literacy Journal

---

Volume 14  
Issue 2 *Spring*

Article 18

---

Spring 2020

## Editors' Introduction

Paul Feigenbaum

*Florida International University*, [pfeigenb@fiu.edu](mailto:pfeigenb@fiu.edu)

Veronica House

*University of Colorado, Boulder*, [veronica.house@colorado.edu](mailto:veronica.house@colorado.edu)

Cayce Wicks

*Florida International University*, [abc@abcd.com](mailto:abc@abcd.com)

Vincent Portillo

*Syracuse University*, [abc@syracuse.edu](mailto:abc@syracuse.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/communityliteracy>

---

### Recommended Citation

Feigenbaum, Paul, et al. "Editors' Introduction." *Community Literacy Journal*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2020. pp. 1-4.  
doi:10.25148//clj.14.2.009031.

This work is brought to you for free and open access by FIU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Community Literacy Journal* by an authorized administrator of FIU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [dcc@fiu.edu](mailto:dcc@fiu.edu).

---



---

## Editors' Introduction

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

Atatiana Jefferson's face shows on the large screen. Carmen Kynard looks straight at the audience packed into the Irvine Auditorium at University of Pennsylvania and asks us to consider how our teaching, our research, and our activism respond to the life and murder of Jefferson, a 28-year old Black woman fatally shot by police in her own home a week earlier. Kynard posed this question during her keynote address at the third biennial Conference on Community Writing as part of her overall challenge to community writing and literacy scholars, teachers, and activists not to confuse the job with "the work." In her essay "All I Need Is One Mic': A Black Feminist Community Meditation on the Work, the Job, and the Hustle (& Why So Many of Y'all Confuse This Stuff)," which expands on her keynote address, Kynard argues that a Black feminist imaginative is essential for dismantling white supremacy in our classrooms. Since Kynard's keynote in October 2019, many, many more Black people have been murdered by police, in the streets and in their homes. The antiracism protests happening daily in cities across the country as we write this Introduction in Summer 2020 only heighten the urgency of Kynard's question. How, in everything we do, are we addressing white supremacy and the unrelenting violence against Black and Brown lives? Through a series of meditations and counterstories, Kynard navigates her own and imagined classrooms to investigate why she has "been sent" to do the work she does. Her advisor, Suzanne Carothers, urged Kynard, "*do not confuse the WORK with the JOB.*" Ultimately, Kynard finds a violence in universities that we must counter through radical and disruptive antiracist work, which we must do often *in spite of* job requirements or the professionalization obligations that Kynard calls "the hustle." In fact, "the work," the real work of justice, "the healing and regenerative practices" we're called to, may in fact run counter to our jobs insofar as these jobs are tied to the violence of institutional, linguistic, and pedagogical racism. How do we center Atatiana Jefferson in our work?

Celebrated, award-winning artist Michelle Angela Ortiz has spent the last twenty years as a public artist, community arts educator, activist, and filmmaker, using art as a tool for social change and cultural expression. In "Amplifying Community Voices through Public Art," her CCW keynote address originally delivered at the Free Library of Philadelphia, Ortiz shows us and explains several of her large-scale mural projects from around the world. In places as varied as Philadelphia, PA and Buenos Aires, Argentina, Ortiz has worked alongside populations such as patients living with mental illness and farmer's market vendors. Ortiz explains how through word and image, her murals highlight the culture and memories of indigenous peoples in the United States and immigrant families separated from one another. In this essay, Ortiz

brings us on a tour of her artwork to teach us about the important political and cultural work that public art can do.

In our third keynote address from the 2019 CCW, “The Contemplative Concerns of Community Engagement: What I Wish I Knew about the Work of Community Writing Twenty Years Ago,” Paula Mathieu urges community writing scholars and activists to explore the motivations for our work through contemplative practices. In her painfully honest journey into why she feels called to particular subjects, she ventures deep into her past as a nine-year old girl experiencing homelessness after her family’s home burned down. As she reflects on the support system available to her white, middle-class family, she explores the antiracist lens required of her given her privilege. Drawing from Amy Robillard’s belief in the vital and therapeutic function of stories for ourselves and others, and from Byron Katie’s meditation on “The Work,” Mathieu challenges us to explore the personal stories that lead us to our work as well as the connected structures of racism, privilege, and power in which we all find ourselves. She argues that to ignore these structures “poses risks to other people and places” and that to listen to and share our stories offers a kind of clarity necessary for ethical work.

Together, Kynard, Ortiz, and Mathieu provide a map toward the vital work we are called to do.

In the Articles section of this issue, we offer four essays that push the work of community literacy forward in important ways. In “Maria Varela’s Flickering Light: Literacy, Filmstrips, and the Work of Adult Literacy Education in the Civil Rights Movement,” Michael Dimmick foregrounds the multimodal literacy activism of Maria Varela, a Latinx Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee staff member whose key contributions to community literacy have been largely overlooked in the field until now. As Dimmick’s article demonstrates, the filmstrips that Varela developed in collaboration with various African American communities helped establish a new “ethos of place: an imagined and embodied relationship between local and national communities that offers a new identity, sense of participatory agency, and place from which to speak.” Complementing previous research on literacy programs like the Citizenship Schools and Freedom Schools, Dimmick’s groundbreaking scholarship helps solidify the role of multimodal literacy education in promoting community empowerment during the civil rights campaigns of the 1960s, and it serves as a powerful call for further research on Varela’s work.

Rachael Shah’s essay “What Is It That’s Going on Here?: Community Partner Frames for Engagement” makes important connections to other fields, in particular cognitive and social psychology, in ways we hope will become increasingly common among community literacy practitioners in coming years. Among the many contributions Shah’s piece offers are her insights about “experiential commensurability,” or the idea that people’s past experiences influence how they respond to different frames, which can help community engagement practitioners think proactively about how they frame their work to different stakeholders. This idea is a key reminder that the frames people adopt will be more effective to the extent they are crafted together with community partners. Shah argues further that in situations where exclusionary

and disempowering frames are in frequent use, articulating and circulating counter-frames can be an important part of rebalancing unequal power dynamics. This subverting of traditional hierarchies is vividly demonstrated in Maria Elena Wakamatsu's counter-framing work, as featured in Shah's article.

Responding to Rachel Jackson's call to decolonize community literacy through community listening, Joe Concannon's essay "Listening with šəqəčib: Writing Support and Community Listening" explores a situated practice of community listening between šəqəčib, an identity-safe Native scholarly community located in Seattle, and a literacy nonprofit comprised of mostly White settler volunteers. Written with the guidance of šəqəčib teacher Boo Balkan Foster, Concannon's piece examines the origins and evolution of the partnership and its efforts to center the voices and lived experiences of Native youth. As Concannon explains, "The šəqəčib scholarly community has developed pathways to affirm difference within the classroom while cultivating positive self-image as Native people with bright futures." Concannon especially urges White community-literacy practitioners entering Native spaces to "refigure listening away from a one-way transfer of information, and toward the building and affirming of connections across difference."

In "Allies in Progress: The Public-School Institutions We've Ignored," Lance Langdon speaks to the possibilities of progressive educational coalitions between universities and K-12 institutions, focusing specifically on the Humanities Out There (HOT) literacy outreach program at the University of California Irvine. Building his argument from a wide array of stakeholder interviews and textual artifacts, Langdon examines various components of HOT programming and phases of its ideological evolution over time. And while attesting to the radical possibilities afforded by progressive literacy sponsorship, especially through the participation of ethnic studies programs, his analysis is also refreshingly candid about instances where HOT has evinced an Anglo-oriented, monolingual, conservative ideology. Langdon's essay complements community literacy scholarship that has shown how, even when operating amid otherwise reactionary spaces, progressive coalitions can compose and circulate powerfully counterhegemonic narratives and values.

Our Issues in Community Literacy section features responses to the theme "Community Literacy: Where We Stand Now," a call for graduate student contributors to present their unique perspectives on the state of community literacy. Precarity emerged as a key concern in the three essays included here. In our first piece, "Pedagogy of and for the Public: Imagining the Intersection of Public Humanities and Community Literacy," Jacob Burg "imagine[s] a new pedagogy of and for the public" that "is constructed at the intersection of university and community." Arguing that both the anxiety and precarity that graduate students face today could be opportunities for hope and progress, Burg presents an alternative vision of the graduate student conference as an example that embodies this new pedagogy.

In "When Tactical Hope Doesn't Feel Like Enough: A Graduate Student's Reflection on Precarity and Community-Engaged Research," Megan McCool also examines the challenges of graduate students in community literacy. She argues that "enacting a kind of critical, tactical responsivity can hopefully help both graduate students and

community partners navigate” the complicated intersections of graduate school and community engagement. Drawing on her experiences at a local non-profit organization that provides legal services, McCool ultimately reimagines what a “success story” for community engagement might look like.

In our final piece from this section, “‘We Move Together:’ Reckoning with Disability Justice in Community Literacy Studies,” Adam Hubrig pushes back against the rhetoric of the call “Where We Stand,” illustrating that such language demonstrates the opportunity to put community literacy studies in more meaningful conversation with disability justice. Focusing on the work of BIPOC disabled disability justice activists, Hubrig explores the “unfolding conversations about epistemology, access, and reciprocity” between community literacy and disability justice.

Through highlighting new voices, these three essays work together to explore both the challenges and opportunities that exist in the field of community literacy today.

Our Project and Program Profiles section includes “The 1967 Project,” co-authored by Thomas Trimble, Patricia Baldwin, Christine Lawson, and Mansoor Mubeen, which articulates the pedagogical implications of a collaboration between a Wayne State University intermediate composition course and the Hannan Center of Lifelong Learning. Drawing on community knowledge and experiences from the 1967 Detroit Rebellion and its after-effects, the piece centralizes the expertise of community participants while emphasizing collaboration and rapport between students and community members within the practice of inquiry into a significant historical event in Detroit.

In our second Profile, “Food For Thought: Constructing Multimodal Identities through Recipe-Creation with Homeless Youth,” Amanda Hill describes the “Recipe of Me” residency, a multimodal community literacy project co-hosted through the Orlando Repertory Theatre and the Orlando Union Rescue Mission. The article focuses on digital storytelling, which encourages homeless youth to construct, as architects of identity, multimodal representations of themselves as a way toward greater literacy awareness and confidence in their writing and multimodal authorship practices.

We are also delighted to have three new book reviews and a keyword essay. We are grateful to Rosanne Carlo, Anita Voorhees, Charisse S. Iglesias, Sherita V. Roundtree, and Michael Shirzadian, who contributed work to this section.