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WritingMKE for Racial Justice

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WritingMKE for Racial Justice

8/12/2020

By Rachel Bloom-Pojar, Danielle Koepke, Chloe Smith, and Madison Williams



Milwaukee activist mural on the corner of N. 14th St. and W. Vliet St. in Milwaukee, WI. From left to right: Vaun Mayes, Markasa Tucker, Tommy Franecki, Elle Halo, Jeremiah Thomas, Khalil Coleman, Sam Alford, & Frank Nitty. Photo by Madison Williams.

August 2020 has just begun and educators around the country are wrapping up an unprecedented summer as they prepare for an uncertain academic year ahead. Here at Writing & Rhetoric MKE, we have been spending the summer engaging in weekly conversations about renewed attention across the country to structural racism, #BlackLivesMatter, and community-police relations. Starting in June, we began to shift our weekly team meetings to figure out how we wanted this website and blog to be more responsive to our current moment, to the historical injustices Black communities have faced, and to the ways we might more critically engage with challenging white supremacy in our daily lives. We began with some difficult conversations about the pervasiveness of whiteness on our editorial board, at our institution, and within our field of study. These topics have been part of our conversations for the past few years but we recognized that too often we were using language that was more palatable for white audiences by emphasizing the celebration and amplification of community writing and rhetoric across Milwaukee but not explicitly naming the types of writing and rhetoric we really wanted to engage with and support.

We continued our conversations week to week as institutions, businesses, and public figures released statement after statement (finally) affirming that Black Lives Matter. We discussed critiques of these statements as not going far enough and reflected on how we might [take action](#) in ways that did more than [perform allyship](#). We didn't want to just release another statement that did little more than check a box for public relations in our current moment. And

we had to acknowledge what our desires were for engaging with the fight for justice and the limitations of what our small team and locally-focused blog could do in that fight.

We're writing today to share a new set of pages on the site dedicated to our commitments to racial justice. These are meant to be live, evolving pages that will be updated in the coming months and years to continuously improve our reflection of antiracist work in Milwaukee. First, we invite you to check out our [commitment to antiracist action](#), which includes details about what we hope to do over the next year and how we will try to remain accountable by reflecting on actions each month. By August 2021, we will review how this all went and what needs to be done for the following year to improve our engagement with and support of antiracist organizing, writing, and rhetoric with our local communities. We have created a [page](#) that features a list of relevant texts for learning more about racism in the U.S. and the fight for racial justice. This page also reflects that while reading is an important first step for many people, [it is not enough](#)—it must be accompanied with action. We have also included a page to emphasize how you can [take action](#) with local and national organizations to support activism, social justice, and community change.

Beyond creating these pages, we commit to the following actions:

- Solicit and publish blog posts that highlight community events, organizations, and spaces that are focused on antiracist work
- Diversify our contributors in order to represent a more inclusive range of perspectives and experiences
- Continue to educate ourselves on how to pursue liberation for all and avoid performative allyship
- Use the privileges we have to fight racial injustice and reduce the labor asked of people of color
- Foster connections between students of writing and rhetoric and local antiracist organizations

In order to hold ourselves accountable to these commitments, we will publish Antiracist Action Updates every month for the next year while also inviting our readers to engage in conversations across social media about how we all are taking action for social justice in our communities. We invite you, our readers, to hold us accountable and actively participate in the evolution of this blog's commitment to antiracist action. You can connect with us through email at writingandrheticmke@gmail.com or on Twitter [@writingmke](https://twitter.com/writingmke).