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Coda Editorial Collection Introduction

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Coda

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The six texts that follow teach us how community writing can shape spaces and places. While Coda originated as a way to preserve the creative work that ensues from community writing projects, these texts do so much more. They embody and resist the material effects of institutional spaces that are often shaped by racist, white-supremacist ideologies; structured by ultra-competitive, punitive systems; and scarred by extractivist models of production. These pieces demonstrate community writing as a tool for survival by making legible the fuzzy boundaries between ideological spaces and physical places and by insisting that readers look. We are grateful to these authors for sharing their work with us and grateful to you for reading.

We open with Stephen Paur's multimedia piece, "Tucson House: Visual Echoes," a composite photograph of a large apartment building in southern Arizona that offers shelter to people many of us are trained to look away from. Just as Paur's image is one piece of a greater project—the image is composed out of a still from a video that uses voice-over storytelling—the "visual echoes" he creates of Tucson House makes visible multiple spaces and places within a single structure, an echo that, in Paur's words, invites us "to try not to blink." Adam Craig's poem, "Storms," similarly weaves together confinement and openness in prison and home while he feeds the birds. Though the narrator is physically stuck in one place, his practice creates a meaningful space that allows him to connect with the memories of relationships and the world around him in the present, past, and future.

Alexandra Melnick's short story, "The Man Who Lived on Rose Street," depicts a place inflected by a different passing of time as some people leave and others stay. While the reasons for this vary—urban planning, natural disasters, economic change, and gentrification—the story conveys both the difficulty and the value of maintaining community in the midst of and in spite of these larger changes.

In response to racist realities and during the isolation era of COVID-19, Ada Vilageliu Díaz's piece, "Becoming," illustrates the continued importance of creative decolonial spaces. She, her students, and the families with whom they work use books and writing workshops to create a space of resistance to racism. Discussing books by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and creating their own books allows them to perform identity and culture and to build space for others to do so. Performance as creative resistance emerges in Nic Nusbaumer's essay, "I Won American Idol," as well. Performing in a place seemingly dominated by consumer culture, Nusbaumer wins on his own terms, in the language of his choice, conveying the power of

love and enlarging the cultural space of a midwestern suburb to make room for his identity as Filipino and as American.

Colorado State University's Community Literacy Center (CLC) composed a poem written collaboratively by students trained as community writing facilitators, using a process that centers their workshop spaces. Inspired by the methods of Ocean Voung, the poems in the collection reflect many of the obstacles and challenges facing new writers in community writing, like rising above silence and feeling comfortable around strangers. By composing these poems in community, the CLC interns establish inclusive practices that deconstruct social barriers.

As we reflect on the work in this edition of Coda, we consider the affordances–and limitations–of community writing in allowing people to reshape spaces in ways that might beget a greater degree of freedom. As you read these pieces, we urge you to linger in these texts and in the spaces and places you inhabit, to write, and to let us know what happens.