

Fall 3-21-2024

Editors' Introduction

Kefaya Diab

Chad Seader

Alison Turner

Stephanie Wade

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

Recommended Citation

Diab, Kefaya; Seader, Chad; Turner, Alison; and Wade, Stephanie (2024) "Editors' Introduction," *Community Literacy Journal*: Vol. 18: Iss. 1, Article 10.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/communityliteracy/vol18/iss1/10>

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.

Coda

Editors' Introduction

As our own act of radical imagination, we, as an editorial collective, rethink our role in disrupting silence given the violent realities in Gaza. As we discussed and studied the pieces in this issue, we heard, saw, and felt more clearly how they disrupt the status quo and illustrate the possibilities of Coda as a space for rhetorical disruption and creative practice. The phrase silence = death was coined during the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s. Today, silence = death among marginalized queer communities, in racist societies, and in systems of pervasive rhetorical violence. Today, silence = death in Gaza.

One cause of silence around the violence in Gaza is the either/or framing that identifies only two positions: pro-Israel or anti-Jewish. This either/or framing is a form of intellectual bullying that conceals the possibility of finding common ground and perpetuates colonial ideologies that remove Palestine and the Palestinian people from the conversation, obscuring their suffering and needs. Today, silence = death in Gaza.

As a team of editors from various layered identities and backgrounds, which include Jewish, Palestinian, and white American, we want to make a space to move beyond these harmful dichotomies; to look instead at lived realities; and to call upon our friends and colleagues to do the same. Coda aims to continue a historical tradition that makes space for critical and creative voices and visions that are often silenced in conventional academic conversations. As such, we aim to continuously consider the ethical complexity of this work. By publishing pieces in a range of modalities and genres (in this issue alone, we feature poetry, experimental theater, non-fiction, quilting, list-making, and a graphic essay), we hope to challenge dichotomies that narrow what counts as knowledge.

Because narrow genre conventions in academic spaces often perpetuate silence, we found ourselves thinking about the other ways that the systems mediating our lives silence us. We thought about the idea of radical imagination and whether it's even possible when our lives are enmeshed in systems rooted in racist, colonial histories that function to benefit people already in power. Reckoning with the violence in Gaza reminded us of the ambient precarity that ensues from these systems. We considered the subtle and overt forms of control that keep us from building a more just world, and we asked how we might better come in solidarity from different standpoints in the face of individual and collective fears.

As we worked with the authors featured in this issue, we learned that radical imagination is possible when we find the collective support needed to disrupt the passive silence and fear that maintains rigid societal structures. The pieces in this special issue of Coda exemplify radical imagination as they break passive silence to make noise meaningful. As with every issue of Coda, we seek to make space for Audre Lorde's call to "transform silence into language and action."

We open with poetry that locates and lives in the excitement and caution of community building, respectively. The poem “First Pride Parade in My City” by Saurabh Anand preserves the first pride parade in the speaker’s city as a significant moment of rhetorical action. Through sonic and visual elements, the poem conveys the enduring, expanding effects of the community coming together for this occasion. The poem documents the significance of the speaker’s participation in this community event outside, yet as an extension of his academic work. Then, Mara Lee Grayson highlights the problematic limitations of academic spaces. In three poems, she locates the discomfort of working in and with a “not-exactly-chosen community.” Grayson reflects on the hypocrisies of institutions of higher education where faculty and administrators speak about progress while the institution perpetuates the status quo.

Other authors in this section reimagine genres from status quo formats to make space for more creative and critical work. Working from field notes, Sarah Puett builds a narrative essay, “Institutional Departure,” from her time with a racial justice organization in the Twin Cities. She compiles and reflects on her experiences as a sometimes-participant and sometimes-observer during these gatherings, and conveys the complexities of belonging and contributing in activist spaces.

In Tracey Bullington’s “Gratitude,” illustrated characters swap moments of gratitude over email, thankful for a favorite flavor of ice cream and a fixed flat tire. This daily exchange is imagined literally and textually through the form of a graphic essay. Using other familiar forms, Evan Harris illustrates an imagined—but also real—invitation to Pros & Cons list-makers to share their lists of decision-making. Playing with the rigidity and norms of a call for presentations, Harris helps us ask questions about what a virtual community can be and how that community might start from a QR code. Perhaps the call is an invitation for us to consider how any text on a page always exceeds that page, the journal that holds it, and the time of its publication.

We end this section with two experimental works: a play excerpt and the documentation of a community quilting project. In “A Meta-staging of the Initial Investigative Operatics Working Group, With [x number of] Original Cast Members Playing All the Parts,” Bethany Ides, Fan Wu, Ora Ferdman, and Zoe Tuck use multiple and shifting speakers, modes, and forms to position the reader as an active participant in complex inquiries that flirt with the absurd as much as the serious. Then, “Against Forgetting: Quilt Pieces and Reflection,” Susan Naomi Bernstein’s project, offers a material, poetic, and rhetorical testimony to the power of community writing to sustain contestatory positions and kinesthetic knowledge “stitch by neverending stitch.” Through photography and writing, this piece stitches together quilt-making, poetry, and Zoom community gatherings, creating a multimedia argument for work that echoes beyond the page.

We call upon ourselves and you, our readers and writers, to join us in committing to the liberatory potentials of our work, to use our positions to push back against violent silence and violence, to seek out accurate information about the crisis in Gaza, and to bring these commitments to our community work. As much as we aspire for Coda to be a space for the preservation of projects such as those in this issue that move us beyond the dualities that contribute to violence, such as the violence in Gaza

today, we have realized that we need to slow down and learn more so that we can fulfill these aspirations without doing harm. For this reason, we are taking a pause from soliciting new work to study antiracist, decolonial, and anti-ableist editing practices, to reflect on our own positionalities, and to build better systems and practices. We expect to share a CFP for the spring 2025 issue early next fall. In the meantime, we invite you to stay in touch with us, especially if you have feedback for us or suggestions for texts we might study or people we might listen to.

Thank you,
The Coda Editorial Collective.