

Editor's Introduction

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I'm happy to introduce this special issue devoted to veterans and welcome our special editors and contributing authors. When Eileen Schell and Ivy Kleinbart first approached me about this special issue, I could not help but reflect on the personal familial connections I have with veterans. As someone whose husband died during military active duty, I am a surviving spouse and will carry this strong identity for the rest of my life. Also, two of my cousins and father-in-law served during the Vietnam War, and my father is a veteran. When I was a professor, I was open about sharing my stories as a military widow in an academic environment that sometimes did not understand military experiences. We had a number of veterans, active-duty, and military family members attending my university. The Naval Air Station was just across the bridge, but some administrators, faculty, and students had little knowledge of what occurred across that bridge. Fortunately, others did cross that bridge to make this institution military-friendly.

This special issue is another bridge in helping readers understand veteran communities and their important roles within and outside of academia. I have said in previous issues how much I enjoy the word “Reflections” in our journal title. What this special issue proves is that bridges are strengthened between veteran communities and academia when reflections are an important part of this work. Throughout this issue, readers will see the empowering elements of reflection in veteran stories, faculty stories, and scholarship. Reflections also happen with poems, and one is present here too. Without reflections in service-learning, community outreach, and similar endeavors, the bridge will inevitably crumble.

As readers will see when they read the special editors' introduction, Eileen and Ivy reflect on their journeys in working with veterans. I commend them for walking the walk and honoring veteran communities with this special issue. Enjoy!

Cristina Kirklighter

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