

Editor's Introduction

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Changes and “Getting on the Bus”

The changes for the cover of our website at <http://reflectionsjournal.net/> celebrate the brave individuals who risked their lives by taking a bus down to Mississippi in 1964 as part of the Freedom Riders. Mickey Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andy Goodman were missing. According to Hardy Frye: “We were in this auditorium, and they tell us: ‘Three people are missing.’ And the next day we all got on the bus to Mississippi.” Today, we see students at universities who are taking bus tours to learn more about these Freedom Riders and Civil Rights, such as the recent bus tour at University of Texas San Antonio <https://www.utsa.edu/sombrilla/spring2012/story/feature-the-movement.html>. We see the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride Coalition defending the rights of immigrants and getting on buses to Washington D.C. Those individuals who do public rhetoric, civic engagement, and service learning have choices to make whether they “get on the bus” or let the bus

pass them by. We either walk the walk and take deliberate steps onto the bus or we just talk about “getting on the bus” as it drives away. *Reflections* has a history of publishing works by authors who “get on the bus” and want to share their bus ride and beyond with others.

As the editor of *Reflections*, I want to continue and, if possible, enhance this journey along with our Associate Editor, Wendy Strain, and Assistant Editor, Willma Harvey. Our Associate Editor, Wendy Strain, continues to do an outstanding job with our social media and recently redesigned our website. I would like to welcome Willma Harvey as our new Assistant Editor. Her work with helping me carefully edit the articles is truly appreciated. Willma grew up in Gulfport, Mississippi, so our cover redesign particularly resonated with some of her childhood experiences in Mississippi during this time. Tobi Jacobi as our Book Review Editor did an excellent job of locating book reviewers well in advance and offering her insights and editing skills for our reviewers.

Steve Parks and I would like to thank Diana George and Paula Mathieu for their past work as co-editors, as well as Diane Shoos for her work with the Public Rhetoric & Activist Documentary issue during this period of transition to help ensure the journal’s continued success. We appreciated their innovative ideas and commitment to the journal during this time. Thanks also to the Virginia Tech editorial team for their past work with the journal: Libby Anthony, Leonard Grant, Kathleen Kerr, Molly Scanlon, and Tana M. Schiewer. Thank you for all of your hard work.

So, let’s “get on the bus” and take a short ride in describing this issue. Stacy Nall and Kathryn Trauth Taylor start us out with an article entitled “Composing *With* Communities: Digital Collaboration in Community Engagements” that describes the increasing importance of digital media to help foster reciprocal and effective community-university partnerships. This article appeals to an expansive audience of readers interested in service-learning, professional writing, and research and community action. Getting on board with “collaborative digital writing” in service-learning courses meets with our changing technological world that speaks to our students and, at times, the communities they serve. As Nall and Taylor point out, the road

may be a bit bumpy with digital medium barriers, but through their experiences, they offer sound advice on what best practices work well in these partnerships. What I particularly like about this article is that the authors walk the walk, as one reviewer stated, by including “both student and community perspectives” in their work. Nall and Taylor will offer *Reflections*’ readers ways to view service-learning in our technology driven 21st century.

Veronica House in “The Reflective Course Model: Changing the Rules for Reflection in Service-Learning Composition Courses” helps us update the “Reflections” in our journal title by demonstrating the importance of, as she states, creating “effective reflection assignments that connect community-based learning with academic learning, site-based data collection with traditional research, and writing about community issues with composing documents for or with the community.” House argues that we need to move towards, as described by Ashton and Clayton, critical reflection in assignments grounded in learned skills that take students from deep analysis to action. Critical reflection for students should be a forward thinking journey rather than one fixated in previous learning. House proceeds to share with readers how she integrates critical reflection concepts and assignments into her first-year service-learning course. Yet, as she points out, these models not only apply to a first-year service-learning course but to a wide range of courses and community partnerships. As we see service-learning become increasingly ingrained in Composition Studies and first-year programs, we need to develop ways to help students assess their learning experiences which, in turn, encourages them to become more accountable for their learning process. In addition, we need to provide our increasingly data driven programs with information that demonstrates the qualitative and quantitative measurements of students learning in these courses.

The next series of articles are focused on empowering voices that need to be heard in communities and academia. This editor recently lost a dear friend and colleague in her department, Robb Jackson, who did just that. Willma Harvey, our Assistant Editor, lost Robb as her longstanding mentor who encouraged her to pursue her undergraduate and graduate degrees. Although we knew he loved

working and empowering our mostly first generation students from a Hispanic-Serving Institution in South Texas, this man, originally from Sandusky, Ohio, loved even more his work as a local poetry therapy facilitator in Corpus Christi's mental hospitals, juvenile halfway houses, substance abuse treatment centers and jails to help people better cope with traumatic life experiences. *Reflections* often attracts readers who would rather be out in the communities that they developed meaningful relationships with and/or help students interact with the communities. Sometimes, some of these readers find refuge in these communities from the increasingly constrained environment of academia and institutions. Robb Jackson spent most of his career "on the bus" making numerous stops to help empower voices by helping them make positive changes in their lives through writing. We will miss him.

Continuing on with the bus ride is an article written by Grace Wetzel and "Wes" in "Prison Collaborative Writing: Building Strong Mutuality in Community-Based Learning." We know how important it is to provide students with research on why we do what we do in our writing classrooms. Why should it be any different for others who must also become empowered through research? Wetzel believes that prison inmates, such as Wes, must read, analyze, and write about the research on community-based learning relationships as part of the empowerment process of critiquing his surroundings. Yes, this essay focuses on, as Wetzel point out, "the pedagogical lessons of student-inmate peer reviews conducted during a prison outreach project in a first-year composition class." Yes, the "strong mutuality" occurred between inmates and students through community-based relationships. However, the powerful message in this essay comes through the words of "Wes" when he educates us on what transpires when his personal and academic words empower not only "Wes," but the community of inmates he describes. By using reciprocal "academic" and "prison" scholarships, he eloquently critiques a prison system that robs inmates of their voices and thus humanization. The integration of these two scholarships that only someone like "Wes" can provide through this reciprocal relationship is the much needed "new type of scholarship" that Wetzel and "Wes" call for. When we "get on the bus," we need to make sure we know why we are getting on, who we are inviting to join us by knowing their personal and academic perspectives, and what we hope to achieve through

reciprocity. We understand this when we read the words of Wes: “If followed to its extreme, in my experience, the non-personal works in my sub-society to promote dehumanization. But note how the inmates grasped at rehumanizing themselves through a reciprocal relationship.”

The next article by Octavio Pimentel entitled “An Invitation to a Too-Long Postponed: Race and Composition” is a new approach in social media for *Reflections*. Wendy Strain, our Associate Editor, placed an online version of the article on our *Reflections* Facebook page. She invited our Facebook community to respond, and they did. Although we still come out in print, and I remember an editor of an online journal asking me why we still do this, we are moving in a hybrid direction. We certainly are hybrid by including the Facebook responses from Cruz Medina and Riitta Kirvirinta in our print journal. Pimentel comes from Texas State University, a recently identified Hispanic Serving Institution. One of the shared values of this institution states the following: “A diversity of people and ideas, a spirit of inclusiveness, a global perspective, and a sense of community as essential conditions for campus life.” Minority Serving Institutions are growing at a rapid rate given their federal designated status is predicated on the number of students they have from a targeted identity group, which usually is at 25% or more. Many of these institutions have a long history of service-learning and community outreach. Despite being at a Hispanic Serving Institution, Pimentel often sees that United States White European American (WEA) cultural practices heavily dominate writing classrooms at his universities and universities around the country. These “heavily guided WEA ideologies” create practices that “marginalize people of color” at U.S. institutions around the country. His article is an important one for *Reflections* readers immersed in public rhetoric, civic writing, and service-learning. If WEA ideologies and cultural practices permeate academia, then how does it also “marginalize people of color” outside our classrooms, especially when we send our students out into the community. Octavio Pimentel works at reminding us of SRTOL and therefore we need to honor the home languages that students bring to our writing classroom that are deeply embedded in cultural practices. As Pimentel states,

While it is important that students are exposed to diverse authors (and issues of diversity), which a multicultural reader can do, very little attention is dedicated to the pedagogical changes that are necessary to identify the ways in which students' own cultural knowledge and language practices can be expressed in their writing.

This is also a historical article that pays homage to the voices that came before him. Pimentel interviews one of the founding members of the NCTE/CCCC Chicano Teachers of English, Carlota Cárdenas de Dwyer, who "recounted how in the 1970s UT Austin placed many Mexican Americans in 'foreign' first year composition classes, which assumed that all Mexican Americans were ESL students. These assumptions alone classify these students as 'foreign' and address them as developmental writers." Pimentel not only acknowledges this rich history of scholars and teachers fighting for linguistic and cultural justice, but he also provides readers ways we can embrace the language and cultural practices students bring to our writing classrooms. He provides us with examples of students, such as Quetzin from a Spanish dominant household immersed in Spanish dominant media who is encouraged to "build upon his cultural knowledge and language practices, thereby encouraging him to write in his own dialect." We, at *Reflections*, should recognize the cultural and language strengths Quetzin would bring not only to his collaborations amongst his peers, but when he reaches out to collaborate with communities that possess similar strengths. When we "get on the bus," we need to see Quetzin on board and celebrate what he brings to academia and our communities. Also, we want to encourage readers after reading Pimentel's article to continue the conversations.

I remember Paula Mathieu mentioning to me at one time how nice it would be to include community creative writing in the journal. When Nelly Rosario sent me *Mother Tongue/Idioma: Poetry, Prose, and Photographs* at Guadalupe Home San Antonio, Texas (<http://issuu.com/geminiink/docs/mothertongue>), I fell in love with the project as did Robb Jackson, the reviewer. To pay homage to Robb Jackson's work that was very similar to what Gemini Ink did with local community members, we included his review of *Mother Tongue/*

Idioma Materno. Nelly Rosario, a national award winning writer of fiction and non-fiction, was the writer-in-residence and general editor of this project. Originally from the Dominican Republic, she was raised in Brooklyn, New York and now teaches creative writing in Texas. In Rosario's preface to the online book project she says the following:

A Mother is always writing.

Motherhood is a woman's word made flesh through her process of editing and revising multiple lives, her child's and her own.

This is an anthology of writing by seven women whose personal hopes for a better life are secured in baby carriages and car seats. These writers are at a crossroads: They live in a shelter for mothers of children two years old in San Antonio, Texas.

Nelly hoped to give national visibility to Gemini Ink, The Writers in Communities (WIC) Program in San Antonio. As Anisa Onofre says in the introduction to the project,

Gemini Ink sends professional writers into diverse community settings—from shelters, schools and neighborhood centers to detention facilities and halfway houses—to work alongside students of all ages, needs, interests and abilities. These workshops—always free to participants—focus on oral traditions, reading, and creative writing.

We include in the print version of the journal excerpts from some of these women writers, Mary Morales, Jessica González, and Sonia Marzo, along with photographs. It is our hope at *Reflections* that we will inspire work similar to The Writers in Communities project at Gemini Ink in cities across the nation. The project will be highlighted on our website as well to give it additional visibility.

We conclude our issue journey with two book reviews. Megan Adams begins with Joe Lambert's *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community* (4th edition). This review connects well with

our last issue's featured project "Reflections on Community Future Casting: Digital Storytelling to Inspire Urban Solutions" and our current article, "Composing *With* Communities: Digital Collaboration in Community Engagements." Digital media is increasingly becoming important in our area, and I am happy that Tobi Jacobi, our book editor, invited Megan Adams to review the latest edition of this book. As Adams explains in her conclusion, "The contribution of the work of Lambert that now spans two decades and those who have come to follow and build on the practices and processes developed by those at the CDS is wide-reaching and incredibly significant especially in our current age of media ubiquity."

The second review is Phyllis Mentzell Ryder's book *Rhetorics for Community Action: Public Writing and Writing Publics*. I am reminded of Mother Tongue/Idioma Materno when Rebecca Hayes says this about Mentzell Ryder re-envisioning public writing and nonprofits: "While the work of nonprofit organizations is frequently aligned more with charity than social change, Mentzell Ryder asserts that working with nonprofits and their public writing creates a complex understanding of publics and their formation within democracy." These young mothers writing their lives in hopes of one day leaving Guadalupe Home San Antonio, Texas may indeed be writing "counterpublics" that will "influence mainstream media" to accurately represent their lives and further the social change principles of GeminiInk. We need writers like Mentzell Ryder who complicate "notions of the place and possibility of nonprofits in the public sphere and in our public writing classrooms."

We hope you enjoy the bus ride of this issue and its many connective stops along the way. And, stay tuned, there are more bus rides on the horizon.