

Editor's Introduction

Cristina Kirklighter,
*Texas A & M University –
Corpus Christi*

As Editor of *Reflections*, I am pleased to introduce this special issue focused on Disability Studies. I have had the pleasure of working with Allison Hitt and Bre Garrett, the Special Editors to this issue, these past few months. Their commitment to this special issue shows through in the dedication and hard work they've exhibited throughout this process. Although my area is not disability studies, as a personal essay scholar and teacher, I was particularly impressed with the narrative styles of many of the contributors and the courage they had in speaking openly. As I've said many times about my editorship with this journal, we must not just talk about our areas of interest, but walk it as well. These special editors and contributors do just that.

Those who have read my previous introductions know that I work to find a personal connection with each issue. I believe the more subjective I become in my role as editor of this journal, the more objective I

become. Those who distance themselves from the scholarship they write or hide behind its cloak are not better for it. I am inspired by these special editors and these contributors to reveal another layer of myself and go public. However, it was not an easy decision.

I reached out to Disability Studies folks for this special issue not only because I thought it was an important issue for this journal, but for personal reasons that stem from my recent experiences in discovering a few years ago that I have a disability. I was in a counseling session when my psychologist said “You may have ADHD. Would you like to find out?” It was one of those aha moments bringing with it many past memories of a school girl who had trouble following instructions, daydreamed in class, experienced auditory processing problems, and stumbled over words that led to never raising her hand to answer a question. It was the memory of a high school journalism teacher who told me I shouldn’t accompany the rest of the class on a journalism seminar held at the University of Virginia because I wasn’t college material. I defied her and went on the trip. She also canned a few newspaper articles I was writing for the school newspaper and gave it to the white male president of our class who she deemed college material. I believe this teacher showed signs of racism given my Latina background. However, it’s complicated in that way when you’re both Latina and have ADHD not knowing, when reflecting back, what caused certain teachers to dislike you and/or perceive you as lesser than. This intersectionality of race and dis/ability speaks to the kinds of critical inquiries of the scholars who have contributed to this edition. It’s complicated in that way.

And years later, although I know this journalism teacher is long gone, I wonder what she would think of this ADHD Latina Editor of *Reflections*. I’m sure she thought I would never graduate from college. One thing she predicted came true. I never became a journalist. Instead, I was inspired to become an English major by an Irish American high school English teacher and lawyer named Patrick Welsh who taught Supreme Court cases in his English classes long before Linda Brodkey did at University of Texas at Austin. He was the first teacher to acknowledge I was college material, and he knew my mother was a Honduran immigrant.

Years later, I wonder what some academic folks will think about a Latina Editor of *Reflections* revealing she has ADHD. Will the queries to the journal be different? Will they read her introductions differently? Will she be analyzed on how a Latina Editor with ADHD shapes a journal focused on public rhetoric, civic writing, and service learning? One thing that I do know is that if it weren't for this special issue and these disability mentor texts I've read in the following pages, these questions and others would not be present. I would have probably continued to share my disability discretely with relatives, colleagues, friends, and classes. And, most importantly, I would not have walked the talk of this journal in my role as editor. I would thus not honor that which I espouse to believe in for *Reflections*. My dream is that one day we will find many academic journal editors with disabilities who won't have to use a special issue on disabilities to be open with their readers. This will be a fine day indeed for a walk.