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**Review of *Active Voices: Composing a Rhetoric of Social Movements*. Edited by Sharon McKenzie Stevens and Patricia Malesh
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In 2008, I attended a symposium that highlighted our university's outreach and community engagement initiatives. Sessions and exhibits ranged from promoting pesticide safety programs in Africa to local community design assistance projects. The symposium was very satisfying, but my conversations with participants often began the same way, with questions arising from my "Rhetoric and Writing" nametag. What was I doing there, and how could rhetoric help one understand and promote local and global social change? In *Active Voices: Composing a Rhetoric of Social Movements*, editors Sharon McKenzie Stevens and Patricia Malesh answer "why rhetoric?" through their cohesive yet diverse collection. They emphasize the possible interplay between rhetoric and social movements and remind us of rhetoric's specific potential for promoting social change.

Active Voices' central argument is that academics are at once theorists, researchers, educators, and agents of social change. These multiple, overlapping roles require an understanding of how we theorize and participate in social change. To this end, *Active Voices* argues that rhetoric and social movements should be studied together as discursive interactions, each providing new ways of viewing the other. Importantly, the collection creates a theoretical and historical space for applying rhetorical theory to social movement studies and vice versa.



For example, the excellent introduction by collection editors Stevens and Maresh walks readers through a variety of definitions of rhetoric, logically leading them to the collection's key concept: understanding rhetoric as transformative action. In this same vein, chapter authors, an even mix of rhetoric and communication scholars, refrain from assuming their audiences' familiarity with any particular discipline, instead providing readers with brief, yet nuanced, descriptions of key concepts and histories from sociology, political science, literacy studies, and communication theory.

The chapters are diverse in topics and methods and are organized into three sections. Part One, "A New Rhetoric for Social Change: Theories," provides theoretical grounding for the collection's argument that combining rhetoric and social movement studies provides new avenues of cultural analysis. In "Vernacular Rhetoric and Social Movements," Gerard A. Hauser and Erin Daina McClellan use rhetorical theory to provide alternative readings of social movement discourses, while in "Dreaming to Change Our Situation" collection editor Stevens uses social movement studies to redefine audience and the rhetorical situation for the writing classroom. This dual focus on the theoretical and the practical, as well as the deliberate attention to both rhetorical studies and social movement studies, are two strengths of the section and the book as a whole.

The collection's emphasis on interdisciplinarity is evident in Part Two, "Public Rhetoric: Analysis," which uses the modes of analysis highlighted in the earlier section to discuss specific social movements and rhetorical constructs. In "The Progressive Education Movement," Brian Jackson and Thomas P. Miller use Hauser and McClellan's theory of vernacular rhetoric to create a nuanced understanding of the turn of the century progressive education movement as well as problematize current educational reform movements. Drawing upon sociology, history, education, political science, and rhetoric, the essay offers readers an excellent example of how the collection's major conceits can be applied. Similarly, Thomas Rosteck's "Giving Voice to a Movement" uses a central moment in social movement studies, the



1960 publication of C. Wright Mills's "Letter to the New Left," to re-imagine one of rhetoric's central constructs: audience. The essay, like others in the collection, provides substantial historical and disciplinary context, opening the analysis up to readers with different levels of disciplinary familiarity.

Part Two is also home to one of the standout essays in the book, Malesh's "Sharing Our Recipes: Vegan Conversion Narratives as Social Praxis." Malesh argues that narratives are "social tools that both reflect and break with cultural norms to help individuals and collectivities digest experience and dramatize processes of becoming" (132). By analyzing narratives as transformative actions, scholars and educators can better understand how stories function rhetorically to promote social change. Malesh writes in an engaging first-person voice, mixing sample conversion narratives into her argument to create a complex yet readable essay. It is a wonderful example of how rhetoric and social movement studies can illuminate each other, and how academics and non-academics alike can use narratives to understand social identity formation and change.

The final section and the concluding response essay continue the diversity of application foregrounded in the introduction and earlier sections. The authors in Part Three, "Changing Spaces for Learning: Actions" showcase a variety of ways in which teachers and community leaders can use the collection's discussions of rhetoric and social movements to teaching and learning. One of the strengths of this section lies in its attention to programs and curricula both inside and outside of the traditional classroom. Combined with the response essay by William DeGenaro, "Politics, Class, and Social Movement People: Continuing the Conversation," the final sections of the collection address theoretical and practical challenges inherent to interdisciplinary, alternative studies, and they offer suggestions for both program development and future academic inquiry.

With its theoretical clarity, interdisciplinary focus, and an emphasis on praxis, *Active Voices* provides an excellent introduction to the rhetoric of social movements. There is occasional tension between individual



chapters' intended audience: certain chapters some speak to experienced writing teachers, while others, to those new newcomers to rhetorical studies. A result of this tension is the collection's refusal to adhere to the standard theory/practice divide, which benefits academic and non-academic readers alike. For *Reflections* readers who have heard "Why rhetoric?," *Active Voices* may help them articulate their own answers.