

Editor's Introduction

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There is an endless stream of media reports on bullying, harassment, racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, and other injustices regularly perpetrated in schools. These abuses and inequalities inside classrooms echo society's many ills, and there is ample evidence that educational systems typically and unfortunately replicate society's status quo (Giroux, 2010; Nieto, 2010; Rouse & Barrow, 2006). Such findings make it difficult to remember an inverse and even more important belief: it is through education that students, teachers, and researchers have the power to reshape our schools and societies to be just for all.

Commitments to greater equality and celebration of diversity have made the phrase "social justice" a common one in education. A simple internet search for "social justice" and "education" returns over 20,000 results; numerous national education organizations, such as [AERA](#) and [NCTE](#), and thousands of school campuses, have issued statements expressing their positions on the importance of socially just educations. Promoting justice in our classrooms and societies is admirable. However, as both this issue's contents and the *JoLLE@UGA* 2014 Spring Conference remind all of us: To discuss social justice is insufficient. Our thoughts must become actions, and those actions must be informed by "reflection—true reflection" so that what we do might catalyze education to truly enable and shape a socially just world (Freire, 2008/1970, p. 66).

A major component of thoughtful and reflective social justice is the recognition of the many intersections that comprise all people's identities. There is no "one size fits all" social justice, and part of not just accepting but celebrating diversity is understanding the complexities that shape each of us and our particular needs. This 2014 Spring issue of *JoLLE* offers considerations of many intersections of being. Some sections of the issue are playful, some heart wrenching, some serious, but all aim to remind *JoLLE*'s readers of the power of education to

truly promote social justice that is reflective, reflexive, inspiring, and always active.

The 11 articles featured could be divided into three sections that not only complement one another but also the Poetry & Arts section, the book reviews, and the Scholars Speak Out piece in this issue. The first section could be titled “**Redefine Our Understandings.**” [JoLLE@UGA 2014 Spring Conference](#) Keynote Speaker Mollie V. Blackburn’s article “(Re)Writing One’s Self as an Activist Across Schools and Sexual and Gender Identities: An Investigation of the Limits of LGBT-Inclusive and Queering Discourses,” emphasizes the importance of action in social justice by questioning and redefining activism through queer theory. Cathy Amanti seeks to redefine what counts as writing in “When School Literacy and School Discipline Practices Intersect: Why Schools Punish Student Writing” by examining the ways that schools devalue and punish unsanctioned writing. The final article in this section, “Adolescent Perspectives on Authentic Writing Instruction,” by Nadia Behizadeh, asks readers to consider what authenticity means in our schools within the context of writing.

The articles that follow build off the first section, with these authors examining **The Power of Applying Reimagined/Redefined Literacy in Classrooms.** Stacia Stribling’s “Creating a Critical Literacy Milieu in a Kindergarten Classroom,” Anne Peel’s “Writing Between the Lines: Aaliya’s Dialogic Strategies for Overcoming Academic Writing Disengagement,” Amy Vetter and Holly Hungerford-Kressor’s “‘We Gotta Change First’: Racial Literacy in a High School English Classroom,” and Patricia Jacobs and Danling Su’s “Students with Learning Disabilities in an Inclusive Writing Classroom” consider the transformative potential of redefining our understandings of education in a variety of K-12 settings. In “Multiliteracies in the Classroom: Confronting the Reality of the First Year of Teaching” Benjamin Boche examines the opportunity for reimagining literacies in preservice teaching.

The Power of Applying Reimagined/Redefined Literacy Beyond the Classroom, a potential heading for the remaining articles, extends the power of reflection and change beyond school walls. “De/colonizing Preservice Teacher Education: Theatre of the Academic Absurd” by Spy Dénommé-Welch and Kristiina Montero applies a touch of serious playfulness through a script that examines educational reform as colonizing indigenous groups and teacher education. In a different look at the ways that education is colonized to the detriment of many, Aimee Papola-Ellis scrutinizes the effects of Common Core standardization on literacy education in “Teaching Under Policy Cascades: Common Core and Literacy Instruction.” The final article in this issue, a practice-based Voices from the Field paper entitled “Turning Schools Inside Out: Connecting Schools and Communities through Public Arts and Literacies,” by Brian Charest, Lauren DeJulio Bell, Maria Louisa Gonzalez, and Veronica Parker celebrate the transformative potential of transgressing the boundaries between schools and their surrounding communities, in this case through art.

Continuing with the power of the arts to advocate for social justice, **JoLLE’s Poetry & Arts Section** offers a variety of pieces that remind us of our multiple identities as we thoughtfully work toward a more just world. Paul Ayo, who was a [JoLLE@UGA 2014 Spring Conference](#) Keynote Speaker, examines the complexity of identities—places, races, languages—in his written and performed poem “Melanin in the Sun.” The multimedia piece “Language Lessons: Poems from Rwanda,” presented by Laura Apol 20 years after the Rwanda Genocide, reminds its

viewers/readers of the role that language has had in establishing and taking away power and agency. *Media Maker* by Theresa Redmond and John Henson prompts viewers to consider the ways that media permits a synthesis of creation and deconstruction/analysis.

Considering the implications of unequal education access, the poem "Adult Literacy" by John S. O'Connor, cartoon "Income Equality Science Fair" by David Lowe, and poem "Conference Room on March 1st" by James Damico show the myriad of ways that school settings deny a wide variety of students not only opportunities but voices. Jerome Harste's watercolor *Casting a Long Shadow*, which serves as this issue's cover art, reminds all of us of the collective humanity involved in working toward social justice. The final four pieces build on the notion of collectivity by reminding us of the ways that we are all shaped by our histories, by our contexts, by our means of communicating. Gabriela del Villar's "Funds of Knowledge" reflects on how teachers devalued her cultural literacies while she celebrated them. Beatriz Rodriguez *Space Queen Style* borrows and reappropriates a teaching tool to celebrate her heritage. James F. Woglom and Jenny Mary Brown, in both *Personal Ad for Jim* and *Another Personal Ad (After Allen Ginsberg)*, examine the many facets of a person's identity.

JoLLE's Book Reviews offer considerations of titles that extend the discussions in this issue's other sections. Both William G. Wraga's review of *The Mismeasure of Education* and Meghan B. Thornton's of *Teaching Writing Grades 7-12 in an Era of Assessment: Passion and Practice* evaluate the titles' critiques of teachers and students working in accountability-obsessed environments. Sherry Sanden's review of *Reading in the Wild: The Book Whisperer's Keys to Cultivating Lifelong Reading Habits*, Darren Rhym's of *A Search Past Silence: The Literacy of Young Black Men*, and Jiani Liao's of *Guided Comprehension for English Learners* deliberate on the unique literacy needs of particular groups and the necessity of acknowledging and meeting those needs in providing socially just educations. Stephanie Anne Shelton's review of *Generation Bullied 2.0: Prevention and Intervention Strategies for Our Most Vulnerable Students* considers the many education policies and teacher and student behaviors that may harm or protect K-12 and postsecondary students.

Finally, this month's **Scholars Speak Out** writers tie many of the threads found in other sections of this issue together in their essay. Former International Reading Association (IRA) President Jack Cassidy and Monash University Senior Lecturer Evan Ortlieb collaborate to explore both IRA's history and the changing landscape of literacy through their discussion of IRA's recent decision to become the International Literacy Association (ILA).

Education is full of instances of injustice and of transformation. A number of the articles and other pieces in this issue recount moments of inequality and even of violence (intellectual, cultural, or otherwise); however, this Spring Issue seeks to remind its readers of the transformative potential of education, and specifically of language and literacy, and in doing so, to offer hope and empowerment. Through mindful critiques of education and of language and literacy, we may engage in the reflective mobilization for social justice that the authors and artists in this issue describe. And our actions might help to establish "social justice" as a consistent element of all people's educations, rather than as an idea that occasionally applies to some. May we begin to act to craft socially just opportunities for all people.

And as *JoLLE* moves forward into 2014-15, I hope that the journal's readers and conference participants will continue to support the journal's efforts to celebrate education's potential while engaging in thoughtful critiques. The incoming Principal Editor, Michelle M. Falter, and the rest of the 2014-15 *JoLLE* Editorial Board are already working to offer spaces for new and transformative thoughts and practices through future issues and the *JoLLE@UGA* 2015 Spring Conference. *JoLLE* offers opportunities through its annual conference, Scholars Speak Out monthly feature, book reviews, Poetry & Art section, and articles to give voice to those who are ready to thoughtfully and actively work toward true social justice.

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