

Symposium: Challenging Whiteness and/in Writing Program Administration and Writing Programs

In the Fall of 2015, in tandem with the CWPA Executive Board's call for an increased commitment to diversity, we issued a CFP for a Symposium on Challenging Whiteness and/in Writing Program Administration and Writing Programs.

The violence in Ferguson and DC; the creation of #blacklivesmatter; the killings of Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Ramarley Graham, Freddie Gray, Sean Bell, Jonathan Ferrell, Darius Simmons, Ernest Hoskins and Oscar Grant; the deaths of Sandra Bland, Kindra Chapman, Joyce Curnell, Ralkina Jones and Raynette Turner while in police custody brought national attention to the realities of majority minority citizens in this country. We call out these names to remind us that many of us are able to turn our heads and close the doors, as our privilege allows, to these injustices. All too often we forget the names of these individuals because our communities, our cultures, our families, and our homes are not subject to the violence of racial intolerance.

This symposium is one attempt to provide a place—both physical and intellectual—to keep looking, to keep the door open, to keep the conversation going and to keep learning.

We spent a fair amount of time deliberating with our Editorial Board about the merits and disadvantages of a special issue versus a symposium, despite our first instinct to do a special issue. A special issue, to be sure, marks the topic in ways that a symposium can't—a full issue dedicated to a single topic draws attention in a way that is difficult to do otherwise. For us, however, the significant disadvantage to a special issue was the time it would take to put together a special issue: a minimum of one and a half to two years. Steps such as issuing a call for proposals, getting manuscripts, editing and revising manuscripts, and copyediting do not happen quickly. A symposium, on the other hand, could move more swiftly (well, as swiftly as the academic publishing cycle can move); we issued the call for proposals

for the Symposium in September of 2015 and are publishing the responses less than a year later.

We chose seven pieces to be published from the submissions, all of which drove home to us the diversity of our discipline, the many ways it is possible (and needed) to challenge whiteness, and the multiple ways it is possible to work towards social justice. We are grateful to the authors for expressing their perspectives and sharing critical scholarship relevant to the work of WPAs. We have enjoyed working with the authors on their pieces, and we look forward continuing to hearing their voices in our disciplinary conversations.

We hope you find the conversations here thought-provoking and practical, theoretical and useful, and a call to action in the same way we did.

“Rhonda Left Early to Go to Black Lives Matter”: Programmatic Support for Graduate Writers of Color

Jasmine Kar Tang and Noro Andriamanalina

Benignly, it seems, this handwritten sentence exists on our Shut Up and Write retreat’s Wall of Accomplishments, nestled amidst other statements (e.g., “90% done with diss proposal!”, “finished coding two interviews”).¹ The sentence stands out to us, and, as administrators/researchers, we are intrigued by a few things: that a student found value in documenting Rhonda’s decision to end her retreat early; that on first thought, the statement has nothing to do with a so-called writing accomplishment; and that this statement reflects the work of our relatively new Writing Initiative housed in the graduate diversity office on our campus.

Our writing program—and this article—acknowledge that race and writing are inextricable: Racial formation cannot be removed from writing program administration in the US nation-state.² We need a hard look at what it would mean to support graduate writers of color at the programmatic level.³ Pointedly, this isn’t about promoting what Chandra Mohanty calls the “Race Industry” in which racial difference becomes managed and subsumed by the institution (196). We argue for a comprehensive writing program for graduate students of color that is defined by the following: 1) equal emphasis on research and practice on the part of the WPA, especially with respect to local contexts and histories of communities of color;⁴ 2) acknowledgement of how non-mainstream epistemologies connect to writing practice; 3) relatedly, recognition that for many students of color, connection to community is inseparable from one’s academic identity;⁵ and 4) the integra-

tion of writing support in a robust, institutional effort that focuses on the academic and personal well-being of graduate students of color.

THEY MUST HAVE A LOT OF LANGUAGE ISSUES

At a Research 1 institution like the University of Minnesota, the student community is as heterogeneous as it is disparate. With a campus of nearly 50,000 students, it is easy (and perhaps likely) for members of the university community to feel like a number, to be lost in the red tape of a campus large enough that you might need to walk across the Mississippi River to get to your next class. If you are a person of color at this historically white institution (82% white), your numeric minority status can add another layer to the impersonal nature of the place. Further, if you are a person of color in a graduate program, the percentage declines from 18% to 3.5% of the total student body.

“I work with a writing program in the Office for Diversity in Graduate Education,” one of us recently told a white female colleague. “Oh, that’s important. The students must have a lot of language issues.” As the exchange progressed, it was revealed that by language issues, our colleague wasn’t referring to the challenge that graduate students have with navigating disciplinary writing expectations.⁶ She was assuming that the students with whom we work are not US born, and—to use the outdated moniker—ESL. This exchange is emblematic of the circumstances and ideologies that concern and surround many people of color, regardless of citizenship or language status.

Studies of graduate students of color paint a bleak picture, citing racial isolation and racial microaggressions as part of the everyday experiences of this student community.⁷ Gildersleeve, Croom, and Vasquez also identify what they call the “Am I going crazy?!” narrative, “a racialized social narrative . . . that reveals the harmful institutional and systemic factors contributing to the possible derailment of Latina/o and Black doctoral students” (94). In addition, too often at large universities where graduate student resources are decentralized, student success relies on individual connections and relationships. To reduce the sense of racial isolation and to address the fact that support should not rely on such individual networks, our university established a central unit called the Community of Scholars Program (COSP) in 1998, providing academic and professional development support across academic disciplines for graduate students of color who are US citizens and permanent residents. Since its inception, COSP has expanded to involve numerous workshops, fellowships, mentoring and research opportunities, and, within the past two years, a Writing Initiative

to provide resources to aid in degree completion and to build community among those in the writing stages of the thesis/dissertation. The Initiative involves writing workshops, individual consultations, writing groups, retreats, and a research project that features focus groups and interviews in which doctoral writers of color reveal to us their experiences navigating academic spaces and writing conventions. To use the language of the *WPA: Writing Program Administration* symposium call for proposals, the Writing Initiative challenges whiteness head on: We are guided by the philosophy that writing is an embodied practice in which personal experiences and background inform one's approach to researching and writing in the academy. Resources and programming are only available to graduate students of color, facilitating the possibility of (what students report as) writing and thinking in spaces where being a person of color is the norm. We lead a program that responds to the need to carve out, as one student puts it, an "ideological and physical space" for graduate writers of color.

I DON'T TRUST THE SPACE

This sentence from a focus group transcript gets louder and louder the more we hear from student research subjects. The speaker here refers to the physical site of the graduate seminar classroom and the ideological site of academia at the doctoral level. She continues, "I don't trust the space to give it my genuine voice. . . . It is a little bit about, in my case, policing my own voice and then being careful about what I put out there." We wonder: What is the cost of leaving your voice and parts of your identity at the door? What does this mean for one's writing? How do we as writing program administrators mount an institutional "critique for" bringing one's whole, embodied self to the writing (Diab, Ferrel, Godbee, and Simpkins)?

We like to think that beginning a writing program in the atypical location of a diversity office is one approach. Our unit began by doing what many offices and departments on a college campus do: We outsourced our writing needs by asking for assistance from the writing center. We trust our readers to be familiar with this framework of "leaving the teaching of writing to the writing experts." Perhaps analogously, addressing diversity gets outsourced, too, when a unit on campus participates in a one-time workshop on race, facilitated by diversity office staff, therefore "leaving the teaching of race to the race experts." Doing so trivializes racial difference and does not get at institutional change, for the work of writing and the work of race should be a sustained effort undertaken in collaboration across campus units, disciplines, and communities. We want to trouble these parallel phenomena of outsourcing and bring them in conversation

with one another—to have a program that not only recognizes the relationship between race and writing but also recognizes the great potential and the synergy produced when placing race and writing side-by-side on a programmatic level.

The result would be a writing program that takes up writing as an embodied act and that recognizes a multiplicity of personal and community histories and epistemologies and how they are tied up in racial formation. For example, we are continuously surprised by student evaluations of our monthly Shut Up and Write retreats. Limited to 15 participants, it is one of our most well-attended events, for in a predominantly white university that's the size of a small town, we can offer an intimate writing space. A participant reflects:

To me, my own identity is really complicated and really personal. And I don't feel comfortable sharing it in this space. Well, *this* space is great, but I mean, like, in the university space, right? And actually that's why I really appreciate the Community of Scholars Program. It's great to be able to sit and write with others. I don't know them personally, maybe, but I know, I can sense some sort of shared understanding, right, that doesn't necessarily have to be verbal. But the fact that we can sit together and write, have it be a work space and support each other in producing our work and writing—that's really valuable.

Here the student names an intangible “shared understanding” that comes out of having a physical writing space for graduate students of color. Our program's individual writing consultations may be an alternative or supplement to what a research subject described as a “deracinated” writing center that exists “in a vacuum”: The writing center “doesn't talk about language . . . It's just like this place, this block that writing happens, and you get help. *You* get help. *You*, this unmarked body.” Our intervention is to have a writing program that centers equity and embodiment, with a focus on racialized communities and the histories and experiences that inform their/our work.

JUSTICE FOR JAMAR

This past winter, a protest called 4th Precinct ShutDown developed a few miles northeast of our campus. Community members, including Black Lives Matter organizers, camped out at a police station in protest of the circumstances surrounding the death of Jamar Clark, a 24-year-old African American man shot in the head by a police officer in November 2015 (“What We Know”). 4th Precinct ShutDown was eventually forcibly shut

down itself, with law enforcement and city officials evicting protesters and tearing down the site after 18 days of peaceful occupation (the exception being the shooting of five protesters by masked civilians) (Golden; Williams). Justice for Jamar was the leading story on the local news for weeks, and Black Lives Matter continues to make headlines in the Twin Cities in a number of ways, including highly visible events at the Mall of America and the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. The circumstances of Clark's death continue to be in dispute.

"Minneapolis and Ferguson are more similar than you think," *The Washington Post* reports, with a racial climate disguised by the calm surface of white liberalism (Guo). When we picture our college campus, the Justice for Jamar protest signs and banners seem distant. The university—pristine, untouchable, reflecting a whiteness in numbers, despite the diverse racial make-up of our city—seems disconnected from something like ShutDown or a protest at the largest mall in the country. Within the university, in the daily goings-on of, say, a writing program, Justice for Jamar may appear incongruent, unbelonging. WPAs may ask, "What does Black Lives Matter have to do with our work?" To say that racial justice is peripheral to WPA work would ignore the realities faced by student writers. We need to listen and learn from—and with—the voices and epistemologies of historically underrepresented communities. Our research among graduate writers of color reveals that what happens nationally, let alone what takes place locally in their own backyard, can directly affect them—and often cannot be separated from their writing as they progress through a graduate program. For many, their ties to community are intimately connected to academic life. We need to talk to graduate writers of color and understand the dynamics that are particular to our local contexts. We need to get a pulse on the racial climate of a place, for interrogating race and writing/WPA does not involve a one-size-fits-all model. A comprehensive model of support must involve equal attention to theory and practice. We call for WPAs to employ research and practice that unapologetically center race and writing.

NOTES

1. Name has been changed. The IRB number is 1410E54662.
2. Racial formation is "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (Omi and Winant 55).
3. When we refer to people of color, we include African American, American Indian, Asian American, and Latina/o communities.
4. See Poe's discussion of race and writing across the curriculum in which she makes the case for "situating race locally" (5).

5. Delgado Bernal challenges readers to consider the “critical raced-gendered epistemologies” that students of color bring to higher education (105).

6. See Brooks-Gillies, Garcia, Kim, Manthey, and Smith for a discussion of the contexts and needs of graduate writers.

7. See, for example, Gay; Lewis, Ginsberg, Davies, and Smith; and Solórzano.

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Jasmine Kar Tang is Postdoctoral Associate and Writing Initiative Coordinator with the Office for Diversity in Graduate Education at the University of Minnesota, a Research 1 institution. Her research interests include writing studies and critical race and ethnic studies. She is committed to enacting equitable and accessible administrative and pedagogical practices especially with respect to communities of color and multilingual communities. Jasmine is also co-principal investigator with Noro Andriamanalina on a study examining the strengths and challenges of doctoral writers of color.

Noro Andriamanalina earned her doctoral degree in educational policy and administration from the University of Minnesota, a Research 1 institution, where she is also Director of Academic and Professional Development for the Office for Diversity in Graduate Education. She is responsible for developing and evaluating programs to assist graduate students through the thesis/dissertation writing process while connecting them to research, teaching, and community engagement opportunities.

A Story-less Generation: Emergent WPAs of Color and the Loss of Identity through Absent Narratives

Sherri Craig

Storytelling, an important and intimate cultural act, allows us to show interest and concern for each other by building a common knowledge set, which, in turn, constructs stronger relationships through the discovery of shared experiences. Stories and institutional histories are two of the strongest foundations for WPA work. When we come together each year at the annual CWPA conference, we take time to learn from others' tales of victories and mistakes. For a young Black woman earning her doctorate at a top-tier university such as myself, the chance for renewal and inspiration at the conference has become a time for both reflection and resistance. Susan Miller's *Textual Carnivals* began to break the model of a single male-dominated narrative of WPA work with her discussion of historiography and composition programs, but Miller herself admits that she did not create a space for people of color in the book (566) and therefore, despite its brilliance, *Textual Carnivals* does not acknowledge the strengths of presenting numerous administrative histories that may include experiences from people of color.

Two popular narrative collections, Theresa Enos and Shane Borrowman's *The Promise and Perils of Writing Program Administration* and Diana George and Patricia Bizzell's *Kitchen Cooks, Plate Twirlers, and Troubadours: Writing Program Administrators Tell Their Stories* have the privilege of primacy to present a formal viewpoint for the writing program administrator experience. Like *Textual Carnivals*, both of these WPA narrative collections

are also missing narratives from perspectives of WPAs of color. In *Kitchen Cooks, Plate Twirlers, and Troubadours*, the WPA is a disgruntled, fatherly graduate student and savior, but the program administrator in these identities is never a person of color. While the stories presented in these collections remain relevant, they do not fully encapsulate the complexities of identity, power, politics, and socialized histories for people of color in (and entering) administrative positions, especially at predominantly white institutions.

An historical examination of the HBCU Xavier University of Louisiana by Deany Cheramie reveals no evidence of a person of color administering the program in the first fifty years of the university's existence. Although there is evidence that an external reviewer recommended the development of a special fund for African American faculty to create a population of role models for Xavier students (159), there is no evidence that the university carried through with the recommendation. Even this historical look at HBCU writing program administration does not provide a view of WPA work from the perspective of a person of color. Rather, Cheramie's chapter reinforces the absence of stories that counter the unacknowledged view that WPA work does not belong to people of color. To address this false assumption of ownership, writing program administration scholarship and the CWPA organization must collect more narratives that link the individual experience of WPAs of color to the social collective and internal conversations that help validate the long-established use of storytelling in defining and decoding WPA work. Overall, the absence of people of color in the field's common histories, whether intentional or not, silently and systematically reaffirms the marginality of non-white, unprivileged narratives.

For emergent WPAs of color, the stories shared inside and outside the organization do not often portray our experiences. The few examples available are woeful tales of loss and critique. Collin Craig and Staci Perryman-Clark's "Troubling the Boundaries: (De)Constructing WPA Identities at the Intersections of Race and Gender" presents a heartbreaking narrative about racism and stereotyping as the experience for people of color at the CWPA annual conference. Their tale of exclusion and physical and emotional displacement dominates the field's existing narratives. While I applaud *WPA: Writing Program Administration's* bravery and ability to publish such a polarizing account, I also ask myself, "Is that it? Is this the only narrative the journal has for people of color? Why this?"

Upon reading the article, I experienced every stage of grief: denial of the events; a feeling of isolation from my white male peers who could never relate; anger at the control structures in place that allowed the events to happen; bargaining with myself about studying WPA work in my doctoral program and my attendance at the conference; depression about my

position as a person of color in WPA studies; and finally, acceptance that I could not change what happened to two young Black professionals like myself. I could investigate the culture fostering the professional development of young Black professionals and establish ways to share my own story as an emergent WPA of color with only a few other storytellers to move our experiences out of the margins. With the exception of Craig and Perryman-Clark, the presence of people of color in WPA studies is non-existent in 21st century scholarship. Such an absence and silence creates a clear and dangerous presentation of the work as uniquely gendered and racialized.

There must be more stories. The stories, much like the people who tell them, must be in hiding. We just have to find them.

There is precedence for this call to provide more narratives. Jacqueline Jones Royster and Jean Williams' seminal article "History in the Spaces Left" not only resists dominant narratives by offering a fully developed discussion of Blacks in composition studies, but also advocates in the closing statement that we need to "counter mythologies" (579) of composition scholarship in two ways: 1) by sharing that the presence of Blacks in composition studies is typically disregarded; and 2) by stating that there are ways that the experience of Blacks should change the histories of composition studies. In the National Census of Writing, only 7.1% of the 757 respondents to the question "With which racial groups and ethnic groups do you identify?" identified as belonging to a race or ethnicity outside of Caucasian at four-year institutions (writingcensus.swarthmore.edu), and a meager 2.4% of respondents identified as Black/African American specifically. Simply put, there are no narratives because—at least according to the census data—there are so few WPAs of color. I believe sharing the history of the few Blacks and other people of color in writing program administration would not only enhance the history of WPA studies but in turn, also alter its future for a generation of students who do not read themselves and their experiences in the pages of existing WPA narrative collections or hear their experiences at the annual conference. If we want to address the presence of whiteness within WPA work, then we cannot allow the harrowing experiences of Craig and Perryman-Clark be the only presentation of the people of color working tirelessly in administrative roles.

bell hooks affirms the importance of sharing narratives in *Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. hooks writes that longing to tell one's story and the process of telling is symbolically a gesture of longing to recover the past in such a way that one experiences both a sense of reunion and a sense of release (158). In addition to constructing spaces for reunion and release, hooks argues that failure to promote the construction of alternative narratives creates spaces where stories that do not fit the dominant model are

“deemed illegitimate or unworthy of investigation” (hooks 110). I contend that seeking out and producing more narratives about WPAs of color takes up Royster and Williams’ activism to resist the “official” narratives that create “symbolic systems of reality by which we draw the lines of the discipline and authenticate what is ‘real’ and not, significant enough to notice and not, or valuable and not” (580–81). To find the stories is to give them value. The stories would give people of color in WPA roles value and would, potentially, give stories to an emerging generation of writing program administrators.

In writing program administration, our stories inform our future. Every topic, every story, every victory, and every mistake presented in the many texts on WPA work in collections such as *Kitchen Cooks, Plate Twirlers, and Troubadours* and *Promise and Perils* inform us that WPAs are resilient accidental basement dwelling boat rocking fathers in an army of one. Our field is rich with scholars dedicated to change and advocacy. I believe the change is in the air. There are at least 7.1% of WPAs that can give voice to the silent narratives in *WPA: Writing Program Administration* and other publication venues. These stories deserve further investigation—for the next generation of WPAs and anyone who wished to understand the reward and rigor in WPA work as a person of color. I hope that someone takes up the challenge of presenting a new story time. I’ll bring the milk and cookies.

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Sherrri Craig is a doctoral candidate studying rhetoric and composition with specializations in writing program administration and professional writing at Purdue University, a Research 1 institution. Her research considers the intersections of mentoring, teacher preparation, and programmatic structures.

Troubling the Boundaries Revisited: Moving Towards Change as Things Stay the Same

Collin Lamont Craig and Staci M. Perryman-Clark

In our *WPA: Writing Program Administration* essay, "Troubling the Boundaries: (De)Constructing WPA Identities at the Intersections of Race and Gender," we examined "how looking at WPA work from both a gendered and racial perspective extends the implicative roles of identity politics in navigating administrative work within the context of university writing programs" (38). We wish to share how our experiences with race and gender identity politics in relation to WPA work have followed us in the work force. While these experiences indicate that the more things change, *the more they still stay the same*, they also demonstrate that, through rhetorical action, we can engage in the kinds of coalition building that bring awareness to inequities and racial microaggressions in strategic ways.

STACI PERRYMAN-CLARK SAME SONG, DIFFERENT VERSE: A SISTA'S EXPERIENCE WITH MICROAGGRESSION AND THE NEED FOR ALLIES

Microaggressions often reveal themselves when negotiating issues of power, authority, and *ethos*. These micoragressions require allies for faculty of color who are limited in power and authority when the WPA is both a person of color and untenured. As an untenured WPA, I was once asked to negotiate conflict between a white female TA and an African American male student. The TA claimed the student had been intimidating and disrespectful towards her during several meetings both inside and outside of class. While I observed disrespect and resistance in his attitude when he and the TA met with me about his work for her class, I had seen no evidence that he had been threatening or intimidating. The TA, nonetheless, requested that he be removed from her class because of her fears that a workable teacher/student relationship was no longer possible. My then department chair, a

full professor and previous WPA, and I agreed to remove the student so the chair could work with him because we were less confident that she would grade him fairly since she was adamant that she never wanted to work with the student again. After reviewing and assessing samples of the student's work produced for the TA, we determined that it improved considerably over the course of working with my chair. The TA, however, sent an email request to assign the student's final grade because she assumed that the student was still enrolled in her course and was simply working one-on-one with the department chair outside of her class.

Because the TA's grade calculation differed from ours, the TA and her white, creative writing female graduate advisor (without any rhetoric and composition training) challenged our decision, even though the faculty advisor admitted that she found no fault in how I handled the situation when we spoke in a private conversation. After much discussion between us, the TA and faculty member microaggressively went behind our backs to our college dean and University Provost and requested that our jobs be terminated. However, the upper administration sided with the department chair and me and validated our assessment of the student's work.

Several issues of *ethos*/authority and power emerge. First, there is the assumption that a WPA and a faculty administrator, who had also been a WPA, must justify writing assessment decisions to an inexperienced, first-time TA with little background in composition pedagogy beyond a single composition methods course. While I believe that these can be learning moments for teaching assistants to cultivate best approaches to handling unfavorable tensions that occur on the job, these opportunities are undermined by the lack of regard and respect for my expertise as an administrator and assessment scholar of color.

Second, when WPAs of color do the work of running a writing program or protecting our students, our efforts also run the risks of being read only as agenda-driven race work, even when it is not. As a young, Black female administrator who has worked in writing programs that are predominately staffed with white faculty and TAs, the balancing act of advocating for racial and other marginalized minorities while ensuring a commitment to faculty and students across racial and gender lines can be a tricky one. Working from an intersecting racial and gender politic frequently positions us under a gaze that scrutinizes the ethical nature of the work that we do as Black women administrators. For example, after some discussion, the TA felt that neither my department chair nor I protected her from the male student's intimidation. The TA and her faculty advisor didn't understand why I as a female supposedly overlooked the student's lack of respect for women. So because I was Black, I questioned whether or not the TA and her faculty

advisor assumed that I was playing favorites to the Black male student. Such accounts put us in positions to have to choose allegiances between our gender and race, as if they are not inextricably bound to each other.

Finally, untenured WPAs face the challenge of having to defend both the instructor/teaching assistant and student with fear of retaliation from faculty members. As a WPA building healthy mentoring relations with TAs, race can be a signifier that troubles the boundaries between racial paranoia and external attitudes of skeptical, white TAs who bring their issues with their students of color to my office. After I informed my department chair of the student's disrespect sans evidence of intimidation, my chair discussed the issue with the student who wept and apologized. Despite the student's apology, the TA and faculty advisor felt no remorse and still wanted to assign a lower grade, as if this would give them vindication for how they were treated. Despite my own reputation as a published and professionally recognized scholar in my field, the illusion of administrative agency or how "we" are seen as qualified directors becomes realized in our day-to-day interactions on the job. It is our allies, such as my departmental chair, who can be vital for navigating conflicts and survival as WPAs of color, especially microaggressive behaviors that seek to undermine the *ethos*, power, and authority of WPAs of color.

COLLIN LAMONT CRAIG—BUILDING ALLYSHIP: WRITING
PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AS COLLECTIVE RACE WORK

During the first year of my first tenure-track position, our Black female WPA left for another job. She left a card in my mailbox saying, "It's been great working with you in this short period that we shared in the program. I wish you well." She would later write about her experiences serving as our WPA in an article entitled "Teaching While Black: Witnessing and Countering Disciplinary Whiteness, Racial Violence, and Race-Management." She would recount the perils of navigating a predominately white institution as a Black female professor/administrator. She would expound on racial microaggressions she experienced from white faculty. These were colleagues whose offices were next to mine. So I figured I was next.

Patterns of racial violence in the form of institutional practices were all too familiar in my experiences as an assistant WPA while in graduate school. I had borne witness to and written about WPAs of color and the very few Black and Brown folks we saw at CWPA conferences. I had complained about the minimal scholarship that was written about intersectional microaggressions that faculty and WPAs experience (Craig and Permyan-Clark). I was aware of them. But I was also aware that my WPA's

mentorship through these experiences was a critical component for my professional development as a junior tenure-track faculty of color.

After her swift exodus, I hit the ground running with my new job and buried myself in my work and service opportunities. I pursued a new research project to study Black college male literacies with a university mentoring program. Because the research project required me to miss faculty meetings, I notified the dean of the college and our program coordinator about this new research opportunity and was cleared to move forward with the project. But tensions grew from my administrator and my commitment to my program was called into question because of my absence at faculty meetings. He arranged a meeting with me, and I was chastised for these previously discussed and consented absences. He then questioned my overall progress as a junior faculty member. I was confused by this, considering that I was still actively participating in many program initiatives. I was on the committee that revised our program learning goals. I was mentoring graduate students teaching in the writing program. I co-coordinated our end of the year annual conference on student writing two years in a row and had recently published in a popular journal in my field. I found myself at odds and isolated while searching for advice to address my concerns about the experiences that I was having in my program.

In the aftermath of our WPA's exodus, fellow faculty members and I formed a teacher group out of a shared desire to keep race and multilingualism a central conversation for assessment and our pedagogical agendas. Our Race and Language group was a space for me to speak candidly as a marginalized faculty member in the midst of experiencing antagonistic racial encounters on [his] campus (Kynard). We wanted to think collectively about best practices for navigating campus racial microaggressions. This group was comprised of both people of color and white colleagues interested in how race, language, and social justice could inform curriculum development and cross-disciplinary engagement. We theorized and imagined effective strategies for building allyship and thought through how racial allies might equally share in the stakes of those who represent the historically disenfranchised. We candidly spoke about what this said about white privilege. We collectively reflected on how white faculty must consider how much of their own privilege they are willing to forfeit for the cause of social justice. We also designated Perryman-Clark et al.'s *Students' Rights to Their Own Language: A Critical Sourcebook* as a framework for informing our conversations. That following summer we conducted a summer teacher workshop that organically evolved into a space for faculty-to-faculty mentoring. From those discussions we brainstormed ways that

we could shape and shift conversations about why race matters for how we think about institutional whiteness as teachers and administrators.

That following semester a few of us from the Race and Language group enrolled our classes in the university's Learning Community (LC), a program that gives teachers opportunities to design out-of-class learning events for student engagement outside of the classroom. We themed our LC around race and social justice and organized cross-class movie viewings, museum trips, and spoken word workshops to discuss race and belonging at our university. We used university Speaker Series resources to invite a nationally recognized journalist from *The Nation* and prominent writer of the #blacklivesmatter movement to moderate a student panel on the value of college student activism. We forged collaborations with faculty from Education and English and gave workshops at the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) for campus-wide faculty that showcased approaches we used to responding to vernaculars in our classrooms. We believed that if we could also start a conversation about how teachers think about vernacular language practices across the disciplines, we were positioning them to think disciplinarily and institutionally about race, belonging, and culturally relevant teaching. This is the kind of rhetorical action that we believed could create meaningful ways for building efficacy in how we enacted programmatic and larger institutional conversations about whiteness, microaggressions, and racial inequities. This is the kind of rhetorical action that allowed us to imagine possibilities in the wake of experiencing how institutional whiteness and racism can marginalize or, at the very worst, intimidate or chase away faculty of color. We wanted to move from a place of reflection and critique to a place of bringing about programmatic and institutional change that felt real to us. We wanted to transform ways that we could bring about intra- and cross-disciplinary awareness in how race informs our curriculum, program administration and how we live in our bodies as faculty on predominately white campuses. In essence, this group became a safe space for allyship, where we could see the work that we did as faculty members as having a direct effect on the lives of our students and the professional lives of people of color. This was the sort of model I longed to see in other professional spaces.

REVISITING TROUBLING THE BOUNDARIES: WHY WHITENESS STUDIES MATTERS

As our narratives illustrate, racial and power dynamics continue to limit faculty of color's abilities to do WPA work. Yet we believe that while identifying opportunities to be change agents through cross-disciplinary coali-

tion building, faculty-to-faculty mentoring, and program development is not always easy, it is possible. In “Troubling the Boundaries,” we questioned the extent to which composition and CWPA are doing enough to address “how our disciplinary relations are also mediated by cultural difference” (53). We forward this discussion by further interrogating how whiteness functions institutionally, particularly in how whiteness maintains its power by defining (and denying) difference “on its own terms and to its own advantage” (Barnett 10). To CWPA we ask: How do we employ discursive practices through conference themes, scholarship, and missions that variably or invariably position whiteness as a power structure that denies cultural differences that exist among all of its members and constituents? We raise this critical question because we wonder to what extent CWPA becomes implicit and explicit in using whiteness as a discourse that reinforces its own privilege by denying and ignoring cultural difference in relation to white privilege.

Revisiting our recommendations in “Troubling the Boundaries,” then, suggests CWPA members and constituents begin to not only address cultural difference (53); it also suggests that we transform difference into action by being stronger allies and support systems for junior faculty/WPAs, and WPAs of color, especially as they navigate racial microaggressions that may potentially go unchecked and unnoticed. With regard to current initiatives, we applaud CWPA’s Mentor Project and the following dialogue as a step in the right direction. We also acknowledge that WPA faculty of color still need stronger advocacy and broader institutional (white) allies in building administrative support. As we consider the ways in which we might use our understandings of whiteness studies to work for a greater, collective good, we propose CWPA as the next intellectual space that engages whiteness as a call to action.

We propose white allies to work toward a collective good as they support faculty and WPAs of color.

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Staci M. Perryman-Clark is associate professor of English and Director of First-Year Writing at Western Michigan University, a public research university. She is the author of Afrocentric Teacher-Research: Rethinking Appropriateness and Inclusion (Peter Lang, 2013), and the co-editor of Students' Right to Their Own Language: A Critical Sourcebook (2014). She is the 2015 recipient of the Western Michigan University College of Arts and Sciences Award for Research and Creative Activity. She has published widely in rhetoric and composition studies.

Collin Lamont Craig is an assistant professor at St. John's University, a private, Roman Catholic, co-educational university. His research explores Black college male place-making practices as rhetorical production. He specifically explores these practices within university-sponsored affinity groups such as the Black Male Initiative. His book project investigates how Black and Latino college males use a range of literacies for identity formation, cultural production, and place making at predominately white institutions. His interests in cultural rhetoric and 21st century literacy education inform his teaching and commitment to equity and access to higher education.

Notes on Race in Transnational Writing Program Administration

Amy A. Zenger

The global turn in Rhetoric and Composition is evidenced by international and transnational research initiatives, international conferences, transnational writing programs, and cross border teaching collaborations and consultancies (see Thaiss et al; Donahue). Writing programs outside of the US with links to Rhetoric and Composition in the US represent one dimension of an expanded picture of writing studies. David S. Martins's *Transnational Writing Program Administration* highlights the diversity of forms that such programs may take. It is not uncommon for North American universities to open international branch campuses, many of which include writing instruction or writing programs such as required undergraduate courses, WAC/WID, and writing centers. Educational exchanges can also link classrooms or programs in two or more sites across international borders. Many independent universities outside of the US also claim adherence to an American liberal arts tradition, including having composition programs, a commitment typically flagged in the name of the institution (and often with some informal connection to specific American institutions),

as in the American University in Cairo, American University of Bulgaria, and so on. While the global landscape of writing studies and writing program administration is much more complex than this, here I would like to focus specifically on these US-linked or -inspired transnational programs.¹ I write from the perspective of a compositionist trained in the US who is teaching and administering programs in a liberal arts university in Lebanon in which English is the language of instruction for all undergraduate and graduate courses, except for Arabic courses and occasional teaching of other languages, such as Chinese or Turkish.

Many contributors to *Transnational Writing Program Administration* document challenges to familiar approaches and expectations experienced by teachers and administrators trained in institutions in North America and working in non-Western contexts. Defamiliarization can offer insights into previously unquestioned assumptions about writing and writing instruction and the hard-to-see ideological forces at work in everyday decision-making and administrative practices, as Bruce Horner notes in an afterword to the collection. One ideological factor not taken up directly in these essays, however, is race. The relevance of studies emerging in the US context may not be readily apparent for other contexts since race is articulated differently from one location to the next and from one historical period to the next. As David Lloyd observes, “the analysis of the formation of these categories [race, gender, and class, among others] in relation to the subject of ideology ultimately requires an unrelenting specificity” and grounding in material histories (267). As a discipline, Rhetoric and Composition has historically been closely aligned with US national boundaries; when Rhet/Comp pedagogies, administrative structures, and learning goals and outcomes are introduced into different national contexts, they acquire added layers of complexity, not only because they may be difficult to enact for material or other reasons, but also because they then become active as one part of a more complex educational landscape with its own histories and social categories.

One way to set the stage for thinking about how race plays out in writing program administration in different locations is to take global relations of power into account explicitly. My comments here are framed by the work of Charles Mills, whose theory of race attempts to “account for the way things are and how they came to be that way” on a global scale (10). In *The Racial Contract*, Mills argues that Western ideals of social and political organization, the state, and judicial systems, as expressed in social contract theory, are constituted by a pre-political system of race that already demarcates the inequalities in how whites and non-whites may participate. His theory is important because it encompasses both normed/white and

un-normed/non-white individuals and phenomena: “race is in no way an ‘afterthought,’ a ‘deviation’ from ostensibly raceless Western ideals” (14). It becomes our obligation to look at all programs in terms of racial formations, not just those that have primarily non-white populations or that are situated outside of the West.

According to Mills, race as a system “norms (and races) space” on different scales:

The norming of space is partially done in terms of the *racing* of space, the depiction of space as dominated by individuals . . . of a certain race. At the same time, the norming of the individual is partially achieved by *spacing* it, that is, representing it as imprinted with the characteristics of a certain space. (41–42; emphasis original)

Racialized spatial terms structure the experiences and motivations for engaging in composition work differently for different actors involved, depending on what they desire to have or are allowed to obtain from the interaction. People have unequal rights to international mobility, depending on their citizenship or identification. For North American or European citizens, the right to travel to see the world and to work in different locations is often taken for granted, if sometimes limited by fears for personal safety. For Western academics, taking a position abroad is typically a short-term commitment (Badry and Willoughby 167); for some it can be “career suicide” (Healey 66) while for others it represents the experience needed to obtain a permanent position in the West or simply an adventure. For citizens of other nationalities or identity groups, however, the right to travel for work, to study, to attend conferences, or to travel for pleasure is often much more restricted. Even when visas are available, the process of obtaining them can be time-consuming and expensive and still may not guarantee permission to travel. Hiring decisions also mean choosing whether to hire internationally or locally. In a different sense, doctoral programs in Rhetoric and Composition are still located in the West; diversifying the transnational WPA position may therefore be difficult without broadening the search to other disciplines. Conventional administrative structures may also need to be modified, if, as has been the case at my institution, program continuity, cultural knowledge, institutional memory, and local experience inhere in the pool of instructors, while disciplinary expertise and the power to engage in university governance inhere in a rotating population of professorial rank hires.

Inequalities also structure knowledge production and access to knowledge centered in research centers, publications, and universities. Researchers in this region may be committed to making contributions locally but

compelled for professional reasons to publish internationally. Acutely aware of the need to frame their research carefully, they consider who will benefit from it, where it will be published, and in which language it will appear—a local language, such as Arabic, or the universal language of scholarship, English (Riazi). Regional areas, defined in such formations as Southeast Asia and the Middle East, can shape research but also reflect the perspectives of Western academics that are not necessarily the perceptions of inhabitants within those regions (Anderson). As Mignolo cautions: “Regions are not objects of study or mines from which to extract ‘cultural resources’ to be processed in the industrial epistemic centers of Western Europe and the United States” (269). Compositionists working outside of the center will almost certainly share their work in Western venues and would also do well to be critical about how they engage in the field and how they participate in the creation and circulation of knowledge in a system that is heavily weighted towards the West.

Mills also argues that the Racial Contract is “historically locatable in the series of events marking the creation of the modern world by European colonialism and the voyages of ‘discovery’” (20). Historical study is a powerful way to demystify assumptions about common practices and methods in teaching and administration. I can identify two areas that cry out for historicization in the context where I work: 1) the adoption of English as the medium of instruction (circa 1880 at my university) and 2) the common use of particular genres in the teaching of writing. Horner and Trimbur traced the establishment of monolingualist ideologies and practices in the US by studying how American universities shifted away from classical languages and adopted modern languages; I suggest that the shift to monolingualism in the US also specifically championed English in a choice driven by racialized language ideologies (Zenger). While several scholars have noted that students in transnational contexts often struggle to read critically and to produce certain genres successfully, research to address this question has focused primarily on adapting methods to support the academic success of students without questioning the genres students are being asked to perform. I am interested in studying the historical formation of genres that were shaped in the early days of composition when university education defined the cultivated man as one who exhibited independent thinking and the navigation of free choice, individualism, and objective detachment, qualities frequently defined against representations of others, including slaves, former slaves, or students in madrasahs.

Finally, Mills argues that the Racial Contract is epistemological: “*White misunderstanding, misrepresentation, evasion, and self-deception on matters related to race* are among the most pervasive mental phenomena of the past

few hundred years” (19). If defamiliarization can provoke insights about our everyday practices, as Horner suggests, white epistemology is a powerful force that works against new insights. Other conditions can also stand in the way: If faculty members are employed on shorter contracts or are not supported by tenure, they may not be in a position to make significant changes. If they are working outside of their own culture, they may also lack historical and linguistic knowledge needed to have a material understanding of the local context. Challenging whiteness in writing program administration anywhere is necessarily a project of difficult analysis, but it cannot only be about analysis; it must aim to change how we understand and carry out everyday actions in our work. We ought to be willing to hold our knowledge “in parentheses” (to use Walter Mignolo’s expression) as we act in the world to decide goals and outcomes for programs and courses, assessment and placement practices, texts to adopt, and pedagogical approaches. We have traditions of anti-racist thinking and activism in both American traditions and other traditions to which we can turn. The perceived need for English and composition instruction continues to drive the establishment of transnational programs, and we can see these as opportunities to contribute to research outside of the West and to continue to question methodologies and practices both outside and inside American borders. These necessarily brief notes are intended to contribute to further discussion.

NOTES

1. Although I use the term *transnational* to describe programs with administrative and intellectual ties that cross national borders, I am not persuaded that the programs are in fact all characterized by a critical stance in relation to globalization, the sense that led to the coining of the term by Aihwa Ong. This can be a discussion for another time, however.

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Amy A. Zenger is associate professor of English at the American University of Beirut, a private, non-profit, teaching-centered research university in Beirut, Lebanon. The university adheres to an American model of liberal arts education and is committed to serving the peoples of the Middle East and beyond. She directed the university Writing Center at AUB for several years. Her most recent book, co-edited with Bronwyn Williams, is New Media Literacies and Participatory Popular Culture across Borders (Routledge, 2012).

Sustaining Balance: Writing Program Administration and the Mentorship of Minority College Students

Regina McManigell Grijalva

Higher education is rapidly shifting; this shift parallels the changing demographics in the US's population. The once dominant non-Hispanic white social group in the US is dwindling while the number of people

from minoritized groups continues to grow. According to 2014 US Census Bureau data, the general population of adults in the US in 2014 was made up of about 62.1% non-Hispanic whites and 37.9% people from all other minoritized groups (“Quick Facts”). However, the population under age five in 2014 was comprised of about 49.5% non-Hispanic whites and 50.5% people from minoritized groups (Yen). However, the ethnicity and culture of teachers and professors are not changing as quickly. The number of professionals in 2014 with a PhD was around 1.8% of the total native-born US adult population, and only .09% of this population with a PhD was from a minoritized group (“Educational Attainment”). The diversity of professors in higher education cannot match or keep up with the growing diversity of the students that will soon become their students.

Like traditional—e.g., non-Hispanic white—students, diverse students need mentors they can identify with. For students from minoritized groups, having mentors with strong cultural competence might mean the difference between staying in school to graduate or leaving without a degree. In fact, although all minoritized students are at risk for dropping out of college, minoritized males are the most likely to not make it to college, and of those who do, they are the most likely to leave without a degree (Harper). One reason that diverse faculty tend to be more culturally competent is their own personal understanding of and experience with diversity. This is supported by the research of Milem and Umbach which suggested that female faculty and faculty from diverse groups were more likely to employ learner-centered or interactive teaching/learning techniques in the classroom and were more likely to be aware of research in/of race, ethnicity, and gender. As members of minoritized groups themselves, diverse faculty members have had to navigate through a system with few people like themselves. For diverse faculty members, cultural competence, as a skill of adapting to various cultural communication patterns and norms, is often born out of the necessity to survive in a world of difference.

Even with a small number of minority professors, cultural competence is still one of the greatest strengths that the US maintains in a global economy. Damon Williams underscores this idea saying that the global economy “highlights the particular opportunity, and competitive advantage, that the US still holds in the world” (2). But it is not enough that we have a diverse nation. We must ensure that our diverse young students have a chance at higher education, or many will continue to have limited opportunities at earning a college degree. Research points to the “link between low levels of educational attainment and high risks of incarceration . . . of particular subgroups of the population” (Ewart and Wildhagen 3–4). In fact, Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans are less likely to gradu-

ate from high school or even attend college—let alone graduate from college—and are more likely to be incarcerated than their non-Hispanic white counterparts (see Alexander; Cassleman; Ewart and Wildhagen; US Dept. of Justice “Special Report” and *Sourcebook*; Wolf Harlow). Armed with this knowledge about the exigence of educating and retaining college students of color, my approach to battling these depressing facts included creating a community of concern with colleagues across my university campus.

As a multicultural scholar from a Latina and Native background, creating community and building relationships is a cultural asset of mine. However, creating community can take time, and, as an untenured WPA on the tenure track, my job requirements are demanding. My desire to mentor students (and faculty) of color while continuing to fulfill my assigned duties creates the potential for burnout, so I must be wise about how I balance these activities.

My university is a small liberal arts college with a student population comprised of about 70% non-Hispanic whites and 30% minority students, a ratio similar to the US adult population with just a few percentage points under in minority students and a few over in the dominant group’s number (as noted above, the total US population ratio was roughly 62:38 in 2014). The faculty population at my campus is comprised of about 90% non-Hispanic whites and 10% faculty from minoritized groups. Additionally, we have a scholarship program designated specifically for students from underrepresented groups. I work directly with these diverse student-scholars beyond my program and department, and this work has led me to foster relationships with like-minded people across the campus. This common interest in students from underrepresented groups brought faculty from four disciplines (education, English, mathematics, and religion) together with administrators and staff members from Student Affairs to do programmatic planning that enhances the scholarship program for such students. Though the scholarship program had been in place for seven years by the time I came to the campus, it had no previous programming that involved faculty members before this group began collaborating.

We started with an informal discussion of whether a summer bridging program would better meet students’ needs. We formed a Faculty Learning Community, a group of people including but not limited to faculty interested in studying ways to impact teaching and learning, supported by our Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). CETL provided a meeting space and funding for study materials, meals, or conference travel. We studied diversity together, often discussing our findings over a meal. We looked over admissions data and determined that the students who could benefit most from a summer program would be incoming scholars who

identified with an underrepresented group. However, even setting funds aside for minoritized or underrepresented students can be problematic. In collaborating with these colleagues and studying diversity in higher education, I discovered (what my Student Affairs colleagues already knew) how controversial just verbalizing the desire to help minority students can be. For example, in 1978, the Supreme Court ruled in *University of California v. Bakke*, upholding the use of race and ethnicity in admissions, but in Texas in 1996 in *Hopwood v. Texas*, the Court of Appeals denied the use of race and ethnicity. Two more current Supreme Court cases, *Gratz v. Bollinger* in 2003 and *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin* in 2013, affirmed the use of race and ethnicity. Studying diversity in higher education and working with this group of colleagues opened my eyes to how controversial race and ethnicity can be.

After some research together, we decided to implement a summer bridging program called Mind the Gap for students who were awarded the scholarships based on identification with underrepresented groups. Historically, the other scholarship criterion was leadership in the community. For the summer program, we set up service opportunities for students at several nearby nonprofits; a choice of two required general education classes (English Composition, Study Skills, Algebra, or World Religions); an hour of study time with professors for every hour of instruction; and co-curricular activities such as ropes courses, and visits to cultural centers and performing and/or fine art shows. We gathered data before, during, and after the summer program, as well as at the end of each subsequent year through surveys, questionnaires, and focus groups. The scholarship program boasts a 94% retention rate compared to the overall 86% retention rate for the larger university campus.

We have gathered plenty of data over the years to demonstrate the success of our efforts as reflected by students' opinions of their learning and service and by institutional data on the students collected by our institutional research office. Everyone involved in the programmatic planning of Mind the Gap came into direct contact with the scholars. There were eight of us in the beginning: half from the academic side and half from the Student Affairs side of the university. The number of incoming student-scholars over four years averaged 29 per year, but mentoring this group of students has seemed less time-consuming than one might imagine, since there have been a large number of mentors for these student-scholars. In addition, there are upperclassmen mentors, whom we continue to support. Many of the student-scholars take on roles such as sophomore advisors or junior/senior mentors and are available to help mentor the first-year scholars. This

kind of bottom-up and top-down mentoring makes my professional life as a WPA sustainable.

However, though I have forged strong relationships across campus with many fantastic colleagues of diversity, many have found other jobs with either higher pay or better positions or both. Since there are fewer of us on board with the scholarship program now, we have restructured it so it continues to be sustainable work. We still have students taking General Education classes and doing community service projects together, but our number as well as the number of student-scholars has dwindled. There are three mentors today (instead of the original eight), one faculty member and two administrators from Student Affairs and only twenty incoming student-scholars this year. Though the numbers have decreased, the mentors involved still believe we are making a difference in the lives of minoritized students and are hopeful that the number of student-scholars and mentors will increase in the near future.

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Regina McManigell Grijalva is Associate Professor of English and Director of Composition at Oklahoma City University, a small liberal arts college nestled in the urban center of Oklahoma City and affiliated with the United Methodist Church. With her colleague, Amrita Sen, McManigell Grijalva directs the Global and Transnational Migrations Digital Archives Project. Much of her research focuses on pedagogy, learning, and assessment in higher education and the ways they interact with class, race, ethnicity, and/or gender. Her recent longitudinal study of high school to college learning will appear in the forthcoming collection, Critical Transitions: A Question of Transfer.

WPA and the New Civil Rights Movement

Genevieve García de Müller

If writing program administrators are to create an inclusive and diverse environment, then WPA work must be relocated in an activist context aimed at advocating for the rights of students of color. As a way to model how WPAs might work in an activist context, in this article, I look at one student-led civil rights movement. Migrant student activists, particularly DREAMers, have generated pragmatic ways to advocate for migrant rights by appropriating the genres and rhetorical moves of the dominant institution with non-assimilationist methods (García de Müller). The migrant activist WPA seeks to not only engage with the ethnolinguistically diverse migrant population and work towards transference of skills but also to fully accept the fact that migrant activists are adept at appropriating the dominant discourse, manipulating it, and shaping it to their needs. The migrant activist WPA seeks not to use these transference of skills as a mode of assimilation into the academy but as a path for migrant undocumented students to change academic discourse and to combat racist structures on and beyond the university.

THE NEW MIGRANT CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

This new migrant civil rights movement is embedded in the notion that citizenship is a way for a nation state to uphold inequality. Immigration

policy in the US is used to “perpetuate a privileged lifestyle at the expense of foreigners” and so is often written favoring economic benefit over social well-being (Isbister 85). Migrant undocumented students not only have to fight against immigration structures invested in economic disparity and marginalization, they also have to carve out spaces in the university that honor their ethnolinguistic background in the hope of instituting change. WPAs may provide paths for migrant undocumented students to create such spaces.

In his call for the CWPA to self-reflect on diversity, Jonathan Alexander writes

Appreciation isn't analysis. Tolerance isn't critique. Adding a reading by a lesbian or a black man or an Asian woman might be nice, but doing so doesn't examine the very real discourses that might tempt one to make such an inclusion in the first place, much less understand how doing so fails to address substantively the discourses of bigotry and “othering” that circulate so widely in our culture. It fails in so many ways to address the lived and felt experience of walking around, knowing that others think of you as less than. (166)

Including texts by diverse authors is a political move but not a big enough one. Alexander is right in saying that “appreciation isn't analysis,” but the power of representation and precedence for diverse scholars in the classroom—as authors of texts and as instructors—cannot be denied. Representation is vitally important but so is a critical analysis of how and why academia is embedded in white dominant discourses. Many WPAs of color have worked to add diversity to the canon, but rarely do writing programs have systems that value the diverse logics and rhetorics students employ or the diverse rhetorical and discursive skills students already possess. Migrant activist work intersected with WPA work is a fruitful way to include various ways of knowing and strategies of appropriating dominant discourse while avoiding assimilation.

The task to interrogate WPA work through the lens of race and ethnicity is daunting and requires more than a look at the lack of representation of minoritized groups, although that is an important task as well. If the values and principles of WPA work change, then the assessment strategies, the outcomes, and the definitions of academic discourse must too. After their racist experiences at a CWPA conference that included someone calling them the “WPA's bitches” and someone else denying Craig entrance into dinner due to his Black maleness, Craig and Perryman-Clark wrote

as folks of color who have grown too accustomed to reactive rather than proactive responses to racial insensitivity, we wonder if WPA as a sub-discipline in composition and rhetoric is doing enough in addressing issues that reveal how our disciplinary relations are also mediated by cultural differences. (53)

Besides looking at the programs WPAs institute and the values WPAs have in regards to language use, Standard American English, academic writing, and ethnolinguistic diversity, WPAs must also consider the kinds of responses they have when faced with problems concerning diversity.

Reactive strategies to issues of diversity and racism might deal with how to navigate around the issue by avoiding the discussion of diversity and opting for a rhetoric centered on the universality of problems. In a sense, ignoring the race problem by ignoring differing race experiences allows us to homogenize WPA work. These reactions happen too often and don't account for the fact that difference is a very crucial and integral part of how students navigate the university and therefore cannot be ignored:

it is crucial that those in rhetorical and cultural studies who are concerned with interrogating the construction of social identity and formation of structures of social inequality continue to focus on difference precisely because humans have defined and continue to define one another by their differences. (West 32)

Ignoring difference leads to colorblind racist attempts at pretending race does not matter when, even though race is socially constructed in human interactions, it is a very real concept. Because of the gatekeeping aspect of composition and the privileging of the dominant discourses, writing programs are often a place where race matters a great deal and the stakes are high. Ruth Spack argues

[T]eachers are not abstract; they are women or men of particular races, classes, ages, abilities, and so on. The teacher will be seen and heard by students not as an abstraction, but as a particular person with a certain defined history and relationship to the world. (11)

In many ways, the students are affected by the identity of the writing instructor, the writing program, and the values brought into the classroom.

As Craig writes, "I became interested in WPA work because I believed that a writing program was more than just a place that housed required first-year writing courses. For me, the WPA could be a conscious community builder" (Craig and Perryman-Clark 46). Out of necessity and support, WPAs of color are particularly adept at looking at the possibilities for community building within academia and within writing programs.

One example of this is the recent formation of the CWPA People of Color Caucus as a systematic way to increase representation of academics of color in the CWPA and as a means to intersect race and WPA work in a public platform. Looking at WPA work in relation to race and ethnicity produces the kind of interconnectedness Craig is calling for when he writes, “situating intersectionality in WPA scholarship builds on existing conversations that acknowledge how WPAs learn how to navigate and negotiate their multiple identities for institutional agency and program building” (Craig and Perryman-Clark 39). WPAs of color navigate their identities in their dual roles as writing program admins and community builders bridging campus and community in meaningful ways. These community bridging efforts are vital spaces to explore how to create programmatic shifts that honor linguistic diversity.

Writing Across Communities at the HSI University of New Mexico works to create “literacy education programs that foreground the values of community and sustainability” in order to “enhance students’ initiation into a complex ecology of human relationships” (Hall Kells 89). Writing Across Communities is focused on providing “those who have been historically under served, with the tools they need as citizens in the making—to navigate and negotiate the varied linguistic and cultural circumstances they face in their everyday lives both on and off campus” (Guerra 73). In many ways, Writing Across Communities is entrenched in transcultural repositioning or “a notion grounded in the idea that members of historically excluded groups are in a position to cultivate adaptive strategies that help them move across cultural boundaries by negotiating new and different contexts and communicative conventions” (Guerra 299). These kinds of efforts—mentoring networks for scholars of color, programs built to support students of color, and systematic program changes based on theories respecting linguistic diversity—are ways to increase diversity in higher education while also resisting assimilationist deficit-based models. Migrant activist writing is another example of transcultural repositioning. By using genres of the dominant discourse, “DREAMers shift into the public realm by synthesizing and interpreting legislative documents, combatting racist ideologies, and disseminating knowledge to a community of linguistically and socially diverse undocumented students” (García de Müeller). For example, to combat criminalizing and xenophobic rhetoric in US immigration policy, such as the Development Relief and Education of Alien Minors Act, more commonly known as the DREAM act, DREAMers use personal narratives that depict migrants of “good moral character” (García de Müeller). By utilizing migrant activist genres, students develop their own writing identities as emerging scholars by considering how language, power,

and identity influence how writers are shaped by and shape communities and legislation. The migrant rights movement uses pragmatic strategies to affect and change the discourse surrounding US immigration policy. When the US blocks public assembly, DREAMers assemble on the Internet. They control the visuals, control the rhetoric, and interpret and provide quick and easy resources. When the US legislative texts create a criminal profile, DREAMers combat it with personal stories of triumph. Migrant activists show audience awareness and push immigrants into the public. When the US writes impossible legislation, DREAMers re-write it; they make new conditions, create new provisions, and make compromises that still adhere to a central goal. Migrant student activists have created community models and activist genres that align with campus initiatives and provide ways for WPAs to situate their work in an activist context while negotiating their identity in institutions that uphold predominantly white discourses. Instituting a Writing Across Communities program using migrant activist models and writing practices is one way WPAs can reframe WPA work.

This negotiation of identity needs to resist a compromise of values. Thomas West writes

Understanding negotiation as strict compromise or as navigation, as the smoothing over of tensions rather than the exploration and interrogation of them, needs to be supplemented and/or replaced by a model of critical negotiation, a strategy that highlights not only the (re)formation of meaning and subjectivity during moments of social and political interaction but one that also takes into account the role and effect of emotion during these moments. (15)

The migrant activist student uses language for powerful political ends, enters the academy, and changes it. The migrant activist student sees their “self as situated within a discipline and within the world, confronting racism head on as well as other situations that distance women, the poor, and others from the dominant discourse and its racialized and gendered assumptions” (Villanueva 172). The migrant undocumented student-run movement is beyond multiculturalism and its aesthetic, surface-level empty acts of “tolerance” and “appreciation” of various cultures and identities. It works against a deficit model by showing that not only do migrant activist writing practices intentionally and critically appropriate the dominant discourse, they also work against assimilation.

Ultimately, the migrant activist WPA works at the intersections of migrant activist work and student of color transfer into the university while acknowledging and valuing the ways in which migrant students reposition their linguistic skills into an academic setting while also shifting the

linguistic landscape of the university. These changes will cause necessary self-interrogation in WPA work that focuses on the intersections between administering writing programs and race, ethnicity, linguistic diversity, and citizenship. The migrant activist is at the center of this interrogation and may provide ways in which the WPA can implement diversity goals without subjugating ethnolinguistically diverse students to an assimilationist agenda.

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Genevieve García de Müeller is an Assistant Professor at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, a large, majority-minority Hispanic serving institute on the border. Her work focuses on civil rights rhetoric and multilingual composition. She is currently on the Council for Writing Program Administrators Diversity Committee and is the founder and chair of the CWPA People of Color Caucus. Her study on migrant activist genres titled, "Digital DREAMS: The Rhetorical Power of Online Resources for DREAM Act Activists" will be published in the edited collection Linguistically Diverse Immigrant and Resident Writers (Routledge, forthcoming).

The Yardstick of Whiteness in Composition Textbooks

Cedric D. Burrows

During a debate at Oxford University, Malcolm X contended “When you’re in a position of power for a long time, you get used to using your yardstick, and you take it for granted that because you’ve forced your yardstick upon others, that everyone is still using the same yardstick” (qtd. in Ambar 171). He argues that because the holders of power are changing, people who were not previously able to have a yardstick are now able to use their own yardstick to construct their reality. Therefore, one group’s definition of a word will not have the same meaning for another group. Once cultures recognize this, they will better understand why groups use particular methods to shape their reality.

While Malcolm X used the yardstick metaphor to describe how cultures defined extremism, I believe the yardstick metaphor would also make a useful heuristic for WPAs when selecting educational materials for their courses. When administrators select or require textbooks for their courses, do they consider if or how these materials incorporate several yardsticks when anthologizing authors from marginalized cultures? Or do they use what I term *the yardstick of whiteness*—which I define as the reshaping of non-white authors into a one-dimensional framework—to make the marginalized writer/subject more palatable for white audiences? Using Malcolm X’s “Hair” essay in the popular textbook, *Patterns for College Writing*, as an example, I argue that WPAs should review textbooks with more attention to how the yardstick of whiteness universalizes the experiences of African American subjects. Such attention has significance for the adoption, selection, and instruction of textbook materials, all of which shape writing programs and student experiences within these programs.

MEASURING THE YARDSTICK: READING MALCOLM X IN *PATTERNS FOR COLLEGE WRITING*

The main noticeable instance of the yardstick of whiteness is in the biographical headnotes placed before the author’s work. The headnotes serve as an introduction to the author’s life and background for students. However, the background information typically repeats popular narratives about the author’s life while eliminating how the yardstick of whiteness influenced the subject’s life. This framing ultimately constructs the African American writer as an angry victim of racism or a person who succeeds despite racism. For instance, the editors in *Patterns* present Malcolm X as a lawless

Black man who finds religion, hates white Americans, has a religious epiphany, and is assassinated in a gang rivalry—essentially, the same yardstick used by the dominant culture when accessing Malcolm X's life. *Patterns* writes that Malcolm X experienced “a number of run-ins with the law” and “wound up in prison on burglary charges before he was twenty-one” (283). While in prison, he educated himself and joined Elijah Muhammad's “the Black Muslims” or now known as “the Nation of Islam,” a “black separatist organization” (283). After leaving that organization, Malcolm X founded “a rival African-American political organization” (283). The biography presents a terse narrative and removes any information of how whiteness shaped Malcolm X's identity. For instance, his father is allegedly killed by white supremacists; the white state welfare agency separates his family after his mother's breakdown; and his prison sentence is stricter because of his associations with two white women. Likewise, stating that Malcolm X pursued his education in prison omits his formal education before he entered prison, an education that included a white teacher telling him that studying law was an unrealistic goal because of his race. Reading this header, students encounter a false and misleading biography that places the onus of race on the African American writer.

This burden of race continues with the false characterization of Muhammad's organization as Black Muslims, a moniker disliked by the sect. Officially, they were the Lost-Found Nation of Islam, and the contemporary Nation of Islam named in the headnote is not the same group Malcolm X joined.¹ The editors fail to name Malcolm X's organization—The Organization for Afro-American Unity—but settle on describing it as a rival to Muhammad's group, even though Malcolm X never viewed it this way. Labeling it as a rival group brings connotations connected to a gang, as if Malcolm X and Muhammad's groups were merely engaged in turf wars. Such connotations downplay, if not negate, the greater contributions each organization made to the African American Freedom Movement. Students, then, would be left with the impression of Malcolm X as the angry, dangerous Black man without recognizing how the white institutional practices shaped his ideology.

This haunting complexity of whiteness again occurs when *Patterns* presents cultural information before the reading, which is retitled as “My First Conk” instead of “Hair.” Malcolm X argues in the narrative that one can gain agency through their body, and he provides commentary on how people condition themselves to view their body through the yardstick of another culture. Though the background on African American hairstyles offers readers the opportunity to learn about African American hair, the yardstick of whiteness primes readers to think that the main theme in both

the headnote and “My First Conk” is the desire for African Americans to imitate whites. *Patterns* notes that the conk was a popular style for Black entertainers until the 1960s, when “more natural styles, including the Afro became a symbol of Black pride, and conked hair came to be seen as a self-loathing attempt to imitate whites” (283). *Patterns* does not mention that variations of the conk—texturizers, Jheri curls, S-curls, etc.—were popular hairstyles for African American men from the 1960s up to the present day. Even the wave cap—known as the do-rag—is another variation of the conk in an attempt to style one’s hair. Students would miss the opportunity to learn that there is diversity within African American culture, and the textbooks reinforce a master narrative about African American life.

This one-dimensional presentation of African American life continues with the editors’ description of “good” and “bad” hair. According to *Patterns*, “some contemporary African Americans still distinguish between ‘good’ (that is, naturally straight) and ‘bad’ (that is, naturally curly) hair” (283). This information is misleading because “good” hair can have various meanings other than “naturally straight.” Wavy hair, for instance, is considered good hair, along with naturally curly hair. “Bad hair” generally means hair that is naturally tightly curled and hard to comb. Hairstyles in the Black community represent different things, depending on one’s socioeconomic class. Manning Marable notes that in the 1940s—the era Malcolm X writes about in “Hair”—many middle-class African American men preferred wearing their hair in a short, natural style. The conk was a style representative of lower-class African Americans, “the emblem of the hippest, street-savvy Black, the choice of hustlers, pimps, professional gamblers, and criminals” (45). The yardstick of whiteness prevents any meaningful conversation about African American culture by creating narratives that are one-dimensional and avoid complexity. The African American student may not be able to relate to the narratives while the white student views the information as truthful without having any reference point to verify the information.

This simplification is reinforced in the following discussion question: “*The Autobiography of Malcolm X* was published in 1964, when many African Americans regularly straightened their hair. Is the thesis of this excerpt from the book still relevant today?” (286). According to the teacher’s manual for *Patterns*, the main thesis of “Hair” is that “trying to look like a white man is degrading and that Blacks should concentrate on their brains, not their appearances, to get ahead” and that the theme of Black pride is still relevant today (61). Both the question and the answer place the burden of racism on the African American subject instead of the institution that created and fostered racist practices. It makes African Americans students

feel that they have to defend their hairstyles without having white students understand how institutional racism created the need for Black pride which risks having African American students become the representative of a race that is highly diverse within its culture.

ADVOCATING AN ALTERNATIVE: THE YARDSTICK OF EXPERIENCE

As we all know, teaching materials, of which composition textbooks hold a significance place, affect both the manner in which students learn about writing and the pedagogy teachers use. These materials determine how students understand experiences and whether their in-class experiences are rewarding or detrimental to their future societal contributions. Rather than using educational materials based on the yardstick of whiteness, WPAs might develop a yardstick of experience to help them assess (or perhaps create) materials that present rich and complex contextual headnote and information. In the yardstick of experience, administrators will find materials that value the experiences of all students. To make sure that they use materials that contribute to the students' building and interpreting multi-dimensional experiences, WPAs should do the following:

Develop teacher-training sessions highlighting how to teach materials related to race and racism. If WPAs require programs to have a textbook for their course, they should offer substantial preparation to provide teachers with the necessary tools to discuss race and racism in the classroom. One technique would have teachers require students to review the world behind the text. Some questions asked would include: What was the specific racial history at the time the text was produced? What cultural events shaped the specific racial history? Where and how was the original text published? Who was the original audience for the text? If the original audience for the text was geared toward a specific race, what were some cultural literacies shared between the writer and the audience that students should know when reading the text? These questions would help teachers better prepare for class discussion and help students gain a more complex understanding of race and racism than the one provided by the textbook. As a result, the textbook would supplement the course material rather than become the dominant voice in the classroom.

Strongly encourage or request that publishers and editors of textbooks more accurately and fully represent the authors depicted. Publishers are an influential component in composition. They sponsor conferences, advertise in academic journals, survey teachers about educational products, and hire field representatives to market potential textbook adoptions for writing

programs or individual instructors. Consequently, publishers promote textbooks that will have a lasting impact on the people who have to teach from it and the students who will have to read it. WPAs, then, should call for publishers to 1) diversify the editors who produce textbooks and 2) consult a diverse range of voices to create a more complex, detailed representation of groups in textbooks. Such representation would include headnotes showing how whiteness affects an author's life and providing multi-dimensional historical and cultural information. It would also include discussion questions that ask students to explore the complexities of race and white supremacy, helping students to see and build the yardstick of experience.

By acting on these and other initiatives, WPAs will help their programs begin the conversations about valuing the experiences of every cultural group instead of holding a yardstick of whiteness that privileges one group's belief on how students should read a racial group. Considering the complexity of headnotes in textbook adoption is just one of many areas in which WPAs should be attentive: The ways we represent and interpret the world influence all aspects of our writing programs and administrative work from professional development to the recruitment and retention of instructors and WPAs.

NOTES

1. After Elijah Muhammad's death in 1975, his son Wallace Dean Muhammad leaned more toward orthodox Sunni Islam and allowed whites to become members. Lost-Found Nation of Islam was disbanded in the late 1970s and was later absorbed into mainstream Islam. Some members, under national spokesman Louis Farrakhan, formed a splinter organization that revived the original tenets of the Lost-Found Nation of Islam.

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Cedric Burrows is Assistant Professor of English at Marquette University, an urban, research-intensive Jesuit university. His research interests include African American rhetoric and social movement rhetoric. His current research project centers on how whiteness reframes the African American rhetorical presence in composition textbooks.

The Role of Composition Programs in De-Normalizing Whiteness in the University: Programmatic Approaches to Anti-Racist Pedagogies

James Chase Sanchez and Tyler S. Branson

It is well-known by now that the enrollment of college students in the US is changing. According to National Center for Educational Statistics, the next decade will see a 26% increase in Black student enrollment and a 26% increase in Hispanic student enrollment, as opposed to only a 4% increase in white students. However, college graduation rates remain steadily white. A recent report by the American Council of Education (ACE) found that “individuals who earned their baccalaureate degrees in 2007–2008 were not nearly as racially diverse as the overall undergraduate student body.” Moreover, Ben Casselman, chief economics writer for the statistics website *FiveThirtyEight*, writes that “in 2013, about 40 percent of Whites between the ages of 25 and 29 had a bachelor’s degree or more, compared to about 20 percent of Blacks, 15 percent of Hispanics and 58 percent of Asians.” Casselman continues by adding these numbers suggest that “Blacks are catching up to Whites when it comes to going to college. But when it comes to finishing college and getting a degree, they are making much less progress.” Casselman’s piece illustrates a major theme that dominates many campuses across the US: Although many more people of color are entering college at two- and four-year institutions—and thus closing the gaps between students of color and white students—graduation rates for these groups seem to be stagnant.

These numbers challenge a commonly held assumption about college graduation rates, which is that income and parental education levels matter more in determining success in college than race or ethnicity. Daniel Fisher of *Forbes* claimed in 2012 that “millions of otherwise qualified high school students aren’t attending college, either because they can’t afford it or because the admissions system screens them out.” Fisher follows others such as Korn and DeSilver who argue that income levels are the best indicators for admission to and graduation from college. However, other studies, such as one conducted from ACE, suggest race is actually a more important factor when graduation rates are considered. Mikyung Ryu, associate/interim director of ACE’s policy analysis, states that we must take up new policies to help our minority students: “Given shifting student demographics,” he writes, “this gap will likely widen unless we undertake serious efforts to eradicate barriers for nontraditional and disadvantaged minority

students” (American Council on Education). Ryu’s description of barriers might also be described as the normalization of whiteness, which presents obstacles that mostly students of color face. As writing instructors and writing program administrators, we want to urge the field to heed Ryu’s call for action and combat the normalization of whiteness by investigating ways compositionists and WPAs can utilize their disciplinary expertise to better serve the changing student demographics in our own first-year composition classrooms.

We believe that first-year composition (FYC) can be a unique curricular space to resist the normalization of whiteness and better serve the changing demographic of college students. We can safely assume that the required writing course is one of the largest institutionalized curricula in the US, and as such, is in a unique position to impact a wide range of students at an institutional level. However, merely possessing an institutional space is not enough. For instance, a survey of California community colleges first reported at the 2009 CCCC meeting suggests that our nation’s two-year colleges are unable to keep up with the rising demand of freshman English. At two-year colleges across California, the survey showed, FYC courses are suffering from overflowing class sizes, inflated teaching loads, and ever-increasing caps for remedial and non-remedial writing courses (Jaschik). *Inside Higher Ed* reported that the major impetus of the study, according to its authors, was “to document the educational consequences associated with failing to match educational needs with public support” (Jaschik). We are especially intrigued with this connection between educational needs and public support. In the case of the growing disparity between enrollment and graduation rates of minority students at our nation’s two- and four-year colleges and universities, we need to make better arguments about the educational needs of our changing student body. Failing to do so will further maintain whiteness as the status quo, allowing more students of color to fall between the cracks. In addition, composition studies as a discipline would be apt to respond to those needs in ways that garner the kind of public support needed to make an impact. CCCC’s “Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing,” which suggests an ideal class size of 15 students, and no more than 60 students per semester, is a good start, but it doesn’t go far enough in addressing how the changing demographic of FYC may necessitate a changing curriculum. For that matter, even with the “Principles for Postsecondary Teaching of Writing,” for all its good intentions, we still are not in a good position to say for certain who is taking our courses, who is passing them, and whether WPA or not they align with the troubling national numbers referenced above.

One common answer to the broader question of how composition as an academic discipline can be more responsive to public issues is perhaps the oldest one: relinquish freshman composition from its general education requirement. Sharon Crowley is most famous for this view, writing that freshman English, “since its beginnings in the late nineteenth century . . . has maintained an ethic of service” (227). K.J. Peters, moreover, argues that first-year composition, “more than any other college or university courses, serves as the *de facto* homeroom of higher education.” Others, like Ira Shor, who called FYC the “linguistic gatekeeper” to upward mobility (92) or Sid Dobrin, echo the view that the field’s relationship with the general education requirement hinders its ability both to effectively serve our students and to grow as a discipline. But we believe that no matter where you fall on this divisive debate, there are daily realities we all must confront, realities that are morphing and expanding before our eyes, realities that must be met with pragmatic and tangible solutions. In other words, despite the field’s often problematic institutional relationship with FYC, we are nevertheless in a unique position to impact a wider student population and resist whiteness as the educational norm than perhaps any other discipline, and we think that should be an asset, not a hindrance.

The first approach we suggest for aligning FYC to address the changing racial dynamic of college students is to better understand how we deal with race in our own programs. Brij Mohan calls universities “vestiges of *white privilege* [that] continue to promote mediocrity on one hand and demoralization on the other” (2; emphasis original). By conducting more thorough analyses of individual composition programs across the country, we can better combat this pervasive institutionalization of white privilege while also giving us a better sense of the students who are taking our courses—who’s passing, who’s failing, and who’s graduating—which will put us in a better position to address how our programs impact diverse student populations. In this issue, Cedric Burrows argues that one approach for harnessing FYC to combat whiteness as the educational norm is to reexamine how biographical headnotes in composition readers perpetuate whiteness as the norm. Other important work in this area comes from Poe et al., who analyzed how assessment practices impact changing student populations (589). They suggest an assessment strategy called disparate impact analysis as a self-study tool for multidisciplinary teams to implement less discriminatory assessment practices. We need more studies like these to discern both the educational needs of our students and also to garner the public support to address them effectively.

Second, we believe individual programs need to cultivate, nurture, and support curricular innovations or other pedagogical interventions that

make room for nontraditional and/or disadvantaged minority students in the writing classroom. As Gary Weillbacher writes, failing to challenge curricular and institutional standards promotes and maintains whiteness as the status quo (5). One way we can make changes is to focus on how these issues intersect with graduate education and research in the field. Jasmine Tang and Noro Andriamanalina, for example, argue in this issue that universities need to develop broader institutional support for graduate students of color, and Sherri Craig critiques the field for not prioritizing narratives of WPAs of color. Following these scholars, we also need to consider undergraduate pedagogy, whether through interdisciplinary partnerships to better mentor writing students of color, as McManigell Grijalva details, or even through more focused workshops, demonstrations, and other forms of teacher training. This dedicated pedagogical commitment to destabilizing whiteness will not only help teachers elevate their consciousness in the classroom but also will aid in the kind of critical reflection necessary for more inclusive assignments and assessment practices from graduate to undergraduate levels. Elsewhere in the field, Terrance Tucker utilizes writing assignments that specifically deal with race, like his O.J. Simpson trial assignment, which asks students to analyze the opposite of their personal opinions on the O.J. verdict in the context of race and media perceptions, so “students can gain an appreciation of the significance of writing in critically shaping ‘reality’ and of the role that race, in particular, plays in constructing that social reality” (140). Reflexive assignments like Tucker’s allow students and our programs to critique the structure of race and whiteness in society, applying a method of racialized consciousness that might not be applicable in other forms.

These, of course, are only a couple of tangible examples that could be employed in the classroom. As we said above, one of the primary motivations for programmatically addressing changing student demographics is to develop new ways to help match educational needs with public support. There are, ideally, multiple yet uncharted paths that can lead us to these discoveries. But there is even more at stake with this kind of work. For us, the goal is not just about identifying and addressing student needs in the composition classroom, it is also about reimagining the institutions we serve. In one of the foundational texts in critical race theory, “Whiteness as Property,” Cheryl I. Harris claims that “American law has recognized a property interest in whiteness that, although unacknowledged, now forms the background against which legal disputes are framed, argued, and adjudicated” (277). Harris’s explication of whiteness in legal doctrine leads us to reflect on how American education has established what George Lipsitz calls a “possessive investment in whiteness” too, one that dominates the

universities and writing programs we inhabit. We argue that Harris's and Lipsitz's claims issue us a moral imperative to critically reorient our professional identities to combat institutional whiteness, not just in composition programs but within the university itself.

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James Chase Sanchez is a fourth-year doctoral candidate in Rhetoric and Composition at Texas Christian University, a private Research 2 school, where he is currently completing his dissertation, "Preaching Behind the Fiery Pulpit: Rhetoric, Self-Immolation, and Public Memory." His research situates race within public memory, and he is especially interested in the ways the two construct (counter)narratives. His work has appeared in Present Tense and Steinbeck Review, and he is also a 2015 winner of the Scholar for the Dream Award for CCCC.

Tyler S. Branson is a Lecturer in the Writing Program at the University of California Santa Barbara, a public R1 university. His research focuses broadly on how people use rhetoric and writing to collaborate with one another to address public problems, particularly in the context of higher education. His most recent work is forthcoming in the edited collections Cambridge Handbook of Service Learning and Civic Engagement by Cambridge University Press and Writing and Composing in the Age of MOOCs by IGI Global.