
Editors' Introduction

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WHERE WE'VE BEEN

With V3.n2 we celebrate our third full year publishing this open-access journal. Some folks have asked why we didn't publish earlier this year (although a special guest-edited issue came out in late fall 2022), but we are here, just taking our time. Time is a valuable commodity for most of us. But instead of just wanting more of it, we editors have been intentionally trying to slow it down. Editing this journal is not the only thing we do. Like you, at any given moment any one of us might be taking care of an aging parent; raising a puppy or a teenager; getting married; launching a young adult; recovering from Covid; buying or renovating a home. For us, these life activities are not distractions from work; they are vital parts of who we are as whole humans living integrated lives.

Honoring these life dimensions (our own as well as those of writers, readers, editors, production specialists, and reviewers involved with the journal) could be characterized as resisting the "fast-paced, metric-oriented neoliberal university through a slow-moving conversation" (Mountz et al. 2015, 1236). Conversations with our authors and our peer reviewers have taken the amount of time they needed to take. In other words, we traded time's linear drive toward efficiency for a lazy Sunday drive with our community members. As Riyad A. Shahjahan (2015) tells us, "Slowing down is about focusing on building relationships, not about being fixed on products, but accepting and allowing for uncertainty and being at peace without knowing outcomes" (497). As editors, we never quite know the outcome: Who will send us their work? Who will want to revise with mentors? Who will need time to read and reconsider? We don't think the current complaints by other editors and publishers about not finding peer reviewers is a temporary pandemic-induced problem. We think this is a sign that the colonizing grip on our time needs to give way. Slow scholarship intentionally takes a different direction, a road less traveled, to release us into a less fungible space to work and to be. To that end, we invited our reviewers and writers to determine their own pace of labor, and we offered space and guidance on how to meet their reviewing and writing goals.



Our Open Journal System (OJS) platform is maintained at the University of Oklahoma, in a state that is home to 39 tribal nations, each of which has a distinctive culture, history, and government. We acknowledge that the history of the university and the state represents settler colonialism and remains in tension with what we now understand about the lands proclaimed "unassigned" and opened for white settlement in 1889.

COUNTERSTORIES ON THE SCENE: AN INVITATION AND SOME CONSIDERATIONS

One of our intentions, and a natural result of our editor Aja Martinez's work and influence, is to publish counterstories. And we want your counterstories. But we must get it right. In this sociopolitical moment, fraught with disinformation and distortion concerning what critical race theory is and can be (inclusive of its methodology counterstory), our work as counterstory scholars, teachers, and writers must be meticulous

and precise. Any work we do with counterstory must be informed by the tenets of CRT:

- permanence of race and racism
- challenge to dominant ideologies
- interest convergence
- race as social construct
- intersectionality and antiessentialism
- interdisciplinarity
- centrality of experiential knowledge and/or unique voices of color
- commitment to social justice
- accessibility

Our work cannot be sloppy work—it cannot be devoid of the interdisciplinary research involved in doing the reading, developing an awareness of the histories and key figures, and knowing the foundations of CRT. A question to consider when surveying various forms of storytelling is: Are *all* marginalized narratives counterstory? While there are indeed many marginalized narratives, the measure remains whether the tellers and stories subscribe to CRT's tenets, particularly in their critique of a dominant ideology (e.g., liberalism, whiteness, colorblindness) and their sustained focus on social justice as an objective. In other words, what are folks using counterstory to *do*? Expression of minoritized subjectivity is a good starting point, but it is equally important to include the admission of and critical self-reflection on privilege and to use this privilege toward social justice coalition and solidarity.

Examples of counterstories explicitly crafted by CRT scholars whose narratives subscribe to CRT's tenets include the following:

- Derrick Bell's *And We Are Not Saved* (1987) and *Faces at the Bottom of the Well* (1992 1st ed., 2018 2nd ed.)
- Patricia Williams's *Alchemy of Race and Rights: Diary of a Law Professor* (1991)
- Richard Delgado's *The Rodrigo Chronicles: Conversations about America and Race* (1995)
- Tara J. Yosso's *Critical Race Counterstories along the Chicana/Chicano Educational Pipeline* (2006)
- Aja Y. Martinez's *Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory* (2020)

Humanities scholars are in a moment in which we have an opportunity to become leading voices on CRT/counterstory methodology. CRT scholars in the fields of legal studies and education, who have long carried CRT as a movement and area of study, have opened an opportunity for scholars in the humanities to hone and craft a rhetoric and writing of counterstory. We are at a point at which scholars in these fields, along with others, can and will look to those taking up counterstory for guidance on what it is, what it should be, and what it can become; dedicated humanities writers can offer models of their developing expertise at writing counterstories. Increased engagement with counterstory comes with the responsibility to get it right, meaning we must be precise in our engagement with CRT and counterstory.

In this issue we are excited to present shining examples of meticulous and intentional engagement with CRT frameworks and counterstory methodology. So when in doubt, the three counterstories within this issue are representative works to model and reference if you would like to engage this timely and accessible methodology. Send us your stories! But if you are going to call these stories “counterstories,” be sure you’ve done the reading, you’re accountable to the tenets of CRT, and you proceed accordingly. And when in doubt, ask! Part of our mission as a journal and as an editorial team is to be accountable to authors. We will mentor you through the process and are actively building our deepening bench of counterstory-specific reviewers. Should you decide to walk this route, we promise your counterstory journey will be a good one with *WCC*.

IN THIS ISSUE

As with our previous issues, we include a mix of genres and intentionalities: narrative, research, epistle, reflection, review, and counterstory, yes, but also often a blending of these approaches. We begin this issue with CRT counterstory as literature review with Martín Alberto Gonzalez's “Universities ain't what they seem like on TV.” In this essay, Gonzalez models a genre of counterstory that systematically analyzes books, peer-reviewed articles, and reports related to Students of Colors' experiences with racism and resistance in higher education. Based on a lived experience, Gonzalez engages the CRT tenets of commitment to social justice and centrality of experiential knowledge as he uses cultural intuition to weave the literatures into the tapestry of his counterstory.

Our second contribution is again counterstory, but this time counterstory as vignette with a meditation on grief and mourning. In “What It's Like to Lose Papi: A Counterstory on Grief,” Natalie Madruga leans into the comfort of narrating and storytelling her life—a passion she has sustained for fifteen years. As Madruga engages the CRT tenets of centrality of experiential knowledge and intersectionality, this counterstory is a glowing example of an author who took the opportunity to situate her lived experience in an academic conversation that matters to her and to practice a

treasured form of writing, combining argument and storytelling in a beautiful and heart-wrenching piece.

Following Madrugá, Michael Spooner's narrative, "Translating Myself," considers the author's experience translating his own scholarship from English into Spanish for a conference of Latin American writing scholars and teachers. As he thinks through the unique positionality of his identity intersections, Spooner explores a set of linguistic paradoxes we think our readers will find fascinating and instructive. Spooner's essay develops themes grounded in personal interest and experience—all explored via first-person narrative and reflection. Though Spooner diverges from our explicitly designated counterstory contributions, which are rooted in the tenets of CRT, his genre-bending piece is still right at home in the pages of *WCC*, merging narrative conventions with those of critical analysis through inclusion of academic citations and references—which readers will note throughout.

Whereas the first three pieces use language to narrate lived experience, Christie Zwahlen and David M. M. Taffet offer a photographic essay, "Foreigner Within," that "stories" their identities in the current US scene. Zwahlen, a multiracial Korean American woman, and Taffet, a Jew who grew up in the South, reflect on their experience moving to a small college town in rural Ohio and into an almost exclusively white community. Drawing from the intersections of their identities and their creative approaches to artistry and activism, they recall routinely noting the number of confederate battle flags hanging outside otherwise innocuous country homes during their commute to the nearest city center and critically consider their dis-ease. Their photographic story speaks to the hypervisibility of Asianness in the rural US, defying expectations and highlighting the alienation of being Other within a white, rural context.

Our third and final CRT counterstory for this issue is by Ayesha Murtza and is titled "A CRT Counterstory: Intersectionality of Caste, Class, and Womanhood in Pakistani Culture." Murtza engages Richard Delgado's framework of counterstory as narrated dialogue to explore issues of the prevailing caste system, gender hierarchy, colorism, and racism in the context of Pakistan. Murtza's use of counterstory methodology invites readers to experience recurring events and ideas, as well as dialogic exchanges among characters in ways that challenge the status quo perspective. Engaging the CRT tenets of centrality of experiential knowledge and intersectionality, Murtza pulls from her own experiences growing up in Pakistan's middle class in addition to her experience teaching within the lower socioeconomic class in a rural part of Punjab, Pakistan. Through counterstory, Murtza not only reflects on her experiences but also inspires readers to analyze the experiential knowledge she offers from their own perspectives.

Kristiana Perleberg puts lived experience to a slightly different use in her composition entitled "Decolonial Work outside the Technical Communication Classroom: A Personal Narrative of My Journey

from Scholar to Technical Writer." In a piece that began as a traditional book review and evolved into the critical narrative seen here, Perleberg lovingly critiques the field of technical and professional communication (TPC), a field Perleberg maintains has historically upheld white, patriarchal language practices without interrogation. She describes how Gregory Younging's book *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples* inspired her own critical reflection and innovative effort to enact decolonial practices as a technical writer. By interrogating her own understanding of language and rhetoric—especially as a self-identified white, cisgender, able-bodied academic—Perleberg provokes future scholars, rhetoricians, and professional technical writers to do the same. Honoring scholarship that calls for the expansion of the social justice turn in TPC, and a calling for deeper understanding of what it actually means to utilize decolonial methods, Perleberg imagines action steps toward meaningful change. She describes her own sites of intervention at the professional-services firm she works for, modeling how social justice-oriented academic practices can be incorporated into industry, even when that industry doesn't allow for a full overhaul of the status quo.

Rounding out our contributions is Gabriella Wilson's book review of Allison Hitt's *Rhetorics of Overcoming: Narratives of Disability and Accessibility in Writing Studies*. Wilson is a scholar interested in the things, objects, and ideas that compel writing. A graduate student at Syracuse University in the composition and cultural rhetoric (CCR) doctoral program, Wilson researches and writes about embodied rhetorics, new materialism, writing pedagogy, syllabus design, disability, and accessibility. Wilson self-identifies as a person of mixed-ethnicity, who uses she/her pronouns, and has experience with chronic physical and mental-health conditions. The author of the book Wilson reviews, Professor Allison Hitt, is a Syracuse CCR alum; given Wilson's research interests and intersections of identity, we believe her review is an engaging way to demonstrate the throughline of scholarly commitments passing from one generation to the next throughout programs and fields of study.

As many emerge from the constraints of the harshest pandemic-related restrictions and begin to establish what some are calling "a new normal," we editors, along with many of the writers featured here, wonder how critique rooted in lived experience might inspire lasting revisions to the systems, structures, habits, and practices that have defined academic institutions. What have the previous months (years!) revealed about the material implications of our work, productivity, relationships, and time? What insights have we earned about the nature of true resilience—not as individualistic persistence to outlast diversity and return to "normal" rooted in the status quo, but resilience as conceptualized from educational (Gallagher, Minter, and Stenberg 2019; McMahon 2007), race-based (Bachay and Cingel 1999; Griffin 2016), queer (Cover 2016; Malatino 2019; Meyer 2015), disability (Hutcheon and Lashewicz 2015), Indigenous (Kimmerer 2015; Reid 2019), trans (Nicolazzo 2016), and feminist (Bracke 2016; Flynn, Jordan

2004; Sotirin and Brady 2012; McMahon 2007) perspectives as critical, collective, resistant, and transformational? What will it all mean for the scholarship we produce and the ways we go about it?

As always, we honor the labor of the community of folks who made possible this issue of *Writers: Craft & Context* and offer a warm invitation to those who might like to join us in our slow, purposeful move forward. Send us your writing, reach out if you are eager to support and mentor fellow writers through a fulfilling review process, and if you are nurturing fledgling ideas about what you could possibly write or develop, send us a note, we'd love to join you in imagining possibilities.

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Thank you - Reviewers V3.2

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