

MnWE Journal

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The Minnesota Writing and English Journal

MINNESOTA WRITING & ENGLISH

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Welcome from MnWE

RICHARD JEWELL



Welcome to MnWE—Minnesota Writing & English! We have been holding an annual, two-day conference since 2009, and all of us on the volunteer MnWE Committee are very excited to see this first issue of the *MnWE Journal*.

MnWE is a wide-ranging community. Our listserv has over two thousand members who receive the *MnWE News* newsletter every other month by email, along with notices about the annual conference. Subscribers include faculty and students at public and private universities and colleges throughout Minnesota, as well as from nearby parts of North and South Dakota, Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Canada. Conference attendees come from the U.S. and around the world, in person and online. We usually have 140-200 faculty and students at each conference: all events are simultaneously in person and on Zoom. Conference information is at www.MnWE.org or www.MnWEConference.com.

Three unique qualities about our conference—and now our *MnWE Journal*—result in the very high evaluations we receive. First, we pursue practical pedagogy: scholarly knowledge that you can immediately try out in the classroom. Toward this end, in our conference, we also discourage reading of formal papers in favor, instead, of roundtables with participants talking about their ideas for five or six minutes, then engaging in questions and answers with each other and the audience.

Second, we take a strong stance on equity. We encourage faculty and students to speak about issues of color, gender identities and lifestyles, and poverty. We believe the future of students and of higher education itself lies

in acceptance and celebration of much more diversity than academic societies currently may support.

Third, we believe in intelligent kindness. We think scholarly pedagogy and equity are best pursued in a sharing and respectful community, rather than as a competitive sport. Our conferences, and now this journal, are welcoming places for both beginning scholar-teachers and old hands looking for new ideas. We greet your participation, whether you simply are reading the *MnWE Journal* or also would like to publish in it or present at a future conference.

Editor's Introduction

YANMEI JIANG AND DAVID E. BEARD



The *MnWE Journal* exists to support, manifest, and document the mission of MnWE (Minnesota Writing & English). MnWE's mission is to help transform writing and English into teaching and learning experiences using practical methodologies that serve students best.

The *MnWE Journal* supports this mission by encouraging presenters at the MnWE Conference to revise and prepare their innovations for publication. The *MnWE Journal* then documents and disseminates those innovations, after a process of double-blind peer review. The preferred citation style of the author is retained in the essay — typically MLA or APA, depending on whether authors identify more deeply with English or with Education.

As co-editors, Janmei Jiang and David Beard initially worked with Mary Taris of Strive Publishing to ensure that this work was done within a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. As a result, this initial volume also celebrates resources from Minnesota's African-heritage creators, resources we find valuable within the Writing & English classrooms.

We look forward to further issues, spotlighting the best of the convention, the best works of MnWE members, and the best resources of our region.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MNWE CONFERENCE



Minnesota Writing & English (www.MnWE.org) partnered with the Minnesota Humanities Center (MHC) for our 2022 conference with the theme, “Changing the Narrative: Empowering Stories.”

Whether we teach Composition, Literature, or Creative Writing (or we serve students in tutoring centers or libraries), stories frame student and teacher identities, infuse the texts we explore, and inspire our students’ and our own writing. Recent events (from the pandemic and its economic dislocations, social injustices and responses to them, to disruptions of our sense of America in both domestic and foreign arenas) compel us to reassess our cultural narratives and forge new stories to shape paths forward.

We bring some of the best work from the MnWE 2022 conference to you in this section of the first issue of *MnWE Journal*.

Archives, in the Key of Geechee-blue (or Holdin' My Breath in the Archives Til' I Turn Geechee-blue)

MICHAELA DAY

Where

are *our* stories?

?

Our stories ain't *even* in the margins

And on most days I can't tell if the footnotes are a joke

or fightin' words

Where are our stories?

?

They are buried.

under the archives

In mass unmarked...

graves?

A heap of flesh used as fertilizer for the soil

our bodies toiled upon

to grow the food

the nation got thick, rich 'n happy on

Our stories may be buried

But they ain't *dead*

Not even close

They collectively haunt what little conscience this nation has

They will continue to let out ghastly moans

and death rattles that never end

like tortured haints in a Carolina twilight under geechee-
blue painted porches

Until they are gingerly unearthed and laid bare

For the world to see -Our

horrors our delights our genius our fascinating our mundane our
humanity...

Our lives

in the light of day

Every now and then our buried stories

are sung down from ropes in trees by bittersweet melodies

They climb out of their *un*-sacramented

not-so-final-(un)resting places

Rise up.

Organically.

and ceremoniously...

To convene on highways, dance on toppled monuments

and converge in front of police precincts

as their ire sets buildings ablaze

...For the living dead

have nothing to lose

The basements and attics have run out of room for haphazardly discarded bones

they are overflowing with mummified flesh

The gig is up

Say our names

Say our names

Say. Our. Names.

When shiny polished legacies are tainted by the unearthing of our stories

When those gleaming legacies have the curtains pulled back

revealing the gruesome crime scenes and intricate patterns of blood
spattered

all over plantation walls and

courtroom halls

held up by pillars of twisted bones and auction-block-inspected-teeth

When the myth of meritocracy becomes pungent in the air and

Lady liberty's lies crumble

in the fixed gaze

of our *unearthed unarchived* ances-stories

When the archivists who have the honor and duty of caretaking the proof that the dead ever lived

saunter into the vaults and take the hidden bones out of the nooks and crannies

Then and only then

The hauntings of the buried

stories may begin to subside

But will they be digitized?

or remain perpetually -and

perennially

ephemeral

in the etherworld.

Do dig-archives even have margins to exist in

?

or gaping holes to lay eyes on?

Digital Storytelling: A Way to Share Our Experience and Remember Our Journey

BRENT DAIGLE; SYLVIA CAIN; AND JABARI CAIN

Digital Storytelling is distinct in its ability to highlight the narratives of marginalized and underrepresented individuals. Digital Stories are as diverse as the people who tell them. Common elements, however, can be found in each one that is told. As researchers, we have studied and reviewed various uses, sources, and the production of Digital Stories. In our review, the following accounts by Shue-Qa Moua and Jordan King are examples of the range and flexibility of this unique approach to storytelling. Detailed steps and procedures for creating Digital Stories are outlined following those accounts.

Shue-Qa Moua

The versatile use of Choj Nyiaj is a traditional part of Hmong culture. This small rectangular silver bar can be used for a bride's dowry, as a gift for others on a special occasion, or even as a form of currency. For Shue-Qa Moua's father, it was a promise to the family that he would join them as soon as he could escape the war in Vietnam. When the family had to leave their father behind, Shue-Qa Moua's "mother kept her Choj Nyiaj as a token of his love and the only item that she would have in memory of him if she should never see him again" (Moua, 2014).

In 1975, her father was able to eventually join the family in Thailand. A year later the family emigrated to New York City and "began to seek the American Dream" (Moua, 2014). They moved again and finally settled near Brooklyn Park, Minnesota. The mother kept the Choj Nyiaj throughout the years and displayed it proudly for others to see. Reflecting on this part of their family history, Shue-Qa Moua explains:

When I look at this silver bar, I not only think about the love that was shared between my parents, but I also use it to remind me of my par-

ents' struggles from one country to another, the cultural values of the Hmong and, most of all, to reflect on myself and to never forget my roots, and to continue the journey that my parents started for me, and then to have my children continue my journey, and their children continue theirs (Moua, 2014).

Jordan King

Jordan King, an 8th grader at Northeast Middle School in Minneapolis, Minnesota, also relates to these same issues of struggle and cultural identity. At the age of three, Jordan was adopted by a “white mother who loves me very much” (King, 2019). Jordan describes himself as a “light-skinned African American” teenager who loves his adopted family, yet is also acutely aware that he “was shaped by the environment he was raised in” (King, 2019). For example, at a young age, he realized that his mannerisms were similar to those of his mom. As Jordan recounts, he “acted” and “spoke” like his mom (King, 2019).

His peers in elementary school would ridicule and tell him that he was “acting white” (King, 2019). This was especially hurtful, because as Jordan puts it, “I never could understand (even now) what ‘acting white’ meant” (King, 2019).

In middle school, Jordan slowly began to make friends and was accepted by other African-American students. When he realized that he was bisexual, Jordan felt that any public knowledge of this would lead to a new set of insults like the ones he faced in previous years. He also felt that he would lose his friends because of his sexual orientation. According to Jordan, “I had just started getting my friends to hang out and accept me – I knew If I told them this, they wouldn't hang out with me anymore” (King, 2019). One day, on the school bus, Jordan decided to take a public stand (literally and figuratively) by announcing to everyone on the bus: “My message: Let people love whoever they want without judging because at the end of the day we're all human and we should all love each other”. To his surprise, his friends on the bus accepted and supported him; “They were all happy for me [and they] all supported me and are my best friends” (King, 2019).

At a glance, Shue-Qa Moua and Jordan have life stories that are widely disparate from each other. However, in each narrative a core set of commonal-

ities exist; both narratives are grounded by a central question with elements of conflict, emotion, and struggle that eventually resolve with a degree of hope and optimism.

Digital Storytelling

Both Jordan and Shue-Qa Moua recognize how storytelling is a powerful communication tool to foster dialogue, understanding, and learning. Storytelling is a universal part of the human experience that dates to ancient times. According to Nandy and Rashmi, “Almost all ancient civilizations have had a tradition of storytelling. This oral tradition has sustained the handover of valuable knowledge from generation to generation” (2020).

The stories shared by Shue-Qa Moua and Jordan are unique because of the medium in which they are told. Using existing technologies, their narrative is shared in the form of a Digital Story. A Digital Story “makes use of multimedia platforms that integrate audio, video, and text-based technologies to create a narrative that is personal, unique, and meaningful” (Daigle & Sulentic-Dowell, 2010).

Digital Storytelling is supported by research across a broad range of industries and academic fields (Eglinton, Gubrium, & Wexler, 2017; Brailas, 2021; Cain, Cain, & Daigle, 2021; Rong & Noor, 2019; Zhang & Esbert, 2021). An immediate benefit is that the “digital storytelling method promotes active participation” (Ahmad & Yamat, 2020). Experiential learning is another feature because it allows participants to be “actively engaged in working with production tools to create meaningful stories rather than being passive consumers of electronic media” (Corwin, 2020). Finally, meaningful reflection is embedded throughout the Digital Storytelling process. Wolfel, Watson, and Gregory explain that:

Digital stories sit at multiple interdisciplinary points and provides an intentional pedagogy that requires students to think beyond not only traditional disciplinary boundaries, but also requires them to utilize multiple forms of expression to reach conclusions and synthesize knowledge holistically (2020).

Shue-Qa Moua’s Digital Story can be found on the *Minnesota Remembers Vietnam* website: <https://www.mnvietnam.org/story/the-journey-a-hmong-american-immigrant-story/>. Jordan King’s Digital Story is located

on the *Minnesota Youth Story Squad* website: <https://www.youthstoriesquad.org/student-stories>

Digital Storytelling Steps and Procedures

Lambert and Hessler (2020) explain that a well-made Digital Story should contain each of the following elements:

1. Point of View
2. Dramatic Question
3. Emotional Content
4. Voice
5. Soundtrack
6. Pacing
7. Economy

Point of View

In a Digital Story, the point of view is the perspective told by the narrator. Usually shared in the first person, these stories are typically personal, intimate, and recount their own unique experiences, challenges, and achievements. The point of view in a Digital Story allows the listener to feel connected to the narrator because of the way in which the point of view is presented. Rather than reciting a set of facts and statistics about a distant topic, the point of view in a Digital Story allows the narrator to communicate with the audience in a direct, straightforward, and clear manner.

Dramatic Question

The story of the Choj Nyiaj begins in a way that encourages the listener to be invested in the outcome. Shue-Qa Moua introduces the narrative by explaining the Hmong contribution to the Vietnam war, and how her family was directly impacted by these events. Through effective use of conflict and rising tension, she methodically establishes the dramatic question early and eventually resolves it in the end. The dramatic question is an integral part

of a Digital Story because it creates tension early and sustains the listeners' attention until the end.

Emotional Content

A well-made Digital Story is one that stirs emotion and evokes a genuine human response. For example, the story of an 8th grader in Minneapolis, Minnesota, without any additional details, is not overly compelling. When we learn that the 8th grader, Jordan King, is often excluded and ridiculed by his peers because of his racial background and sexual orientation, the listener becomes empathetic and personally invested in his hopeful success and happiness. The willingness to be vulnerable and transparent about his struggle creates a powerful connection for the listener to re-evaluate their own beliefs with the reality Jordan shares in his narrative. For this reason, emotional content is a dynamic and critical part of a Digital Story.

Voice

The ability to listen to a story from the actual voice of the author is a unique characteristic of Digital Stories. This requires the author to record the narrative in their own voice. Hearing the author's voice helps to "convey meaning and intent in a very personal way." (Beverly, 2020).

The goal of an effective Digital Story is to sound conversational. While a script is written to create the story, when it is recorded, the tone should be friendly and conversational. This may require recording the script multiple times to find the right volume, pitch, resonance, and intonation. Consistency is key when working with the various aspects of voice in a Digital Story. Audio editing software is particularly useful to meet these goals.

Soundtrack

Background music can add depth and dimension to a Digital Story. Instrumental is typically a better choice than songs with vocals. The content and message you are trying to convey should be a deciding factor when con-

sidering the use of music in your story. For example, Shue-Qa Moua uses instrumental music throughout her Digital Story to support and augment her narrative. In contrast, Jordan does not use a soundtrack in his story. Instead, he uses images from popular culture in a humorous way to give a brief pause to the heavy emotional content of his story. By making the choice to tell his story with no soundtrack, his message becomes the entire focus, without any possibility of diversion or distraction.

A choice to use background music should be based on the message that is presented. The author should be aware of any potential copyright issues with the use of a soundtrack that is selected for their Digital Story. Fortunately, several resources exist to locate and identify music collections that are copyright-free and permitted for use in your Digital Story.

Pacing

The pace of a Digital Story is “the true secret of successful storytelling” (Lambert, 2010). Attention is sustained by the listener, in large part, because of the pace and rhythm in which the story is told. An effective tool used in Digital Stories is to change the pace in which the narrative is told. Some parts are fast-paced, while others are slow, mindful, and contemplative. The story can pause or stop in places, only to quickly start again. An effective Digital Story has the ability to slow down and then move quickly when necessary to underscore a point or to emphasize a message.

Visual elements can be integrated into this aspect of the Digital Story as well. The use of unexpected sound effects, quick visuals, or a change in the music can highlight aspects of the message that are intended to be emphasized and enhanced. The appropriate use of pacing in a Digital Story can be the difference between one that is highly effective or marginal.

Economy

In traditional storytelling, the audience fills in the narrative gaps with their own imagination, experiences, and background knowledge. Digital storytelling differs because it is both auditory and visual. While the emphasis of a Digital Story is the message, strategic use of images and media adds a level of detail and depth that ultimately leads to closure of the story.

The goal of a Digital Story is not to include a large number of images, but rather to be purposeful, thoughtful, and deliberate in the use of visuals, text, and dialogue. Economy can be a challenging part of creating a Digital Story. For this reason, the goal should be to create a Digital Story that is less than three minutes long using a limited number of images that speaks directly to the narrative.

Through the successful use of economy, Shue-Qa Moua tells a complex story of her family history and journey. In less than three minutes, using only 10 images, the audience learns about her family history, as well as unique and fascinating traditions that are part of the Hmong culture.

Conclusion

Digital Storytelling is a powerful communication tool used to share a personal narrative in a way that captures attention and engages the audience. The author of a Digital Story benefits as well. Problem solving, decision making, and working with each part of the writing process are key features of this strategy. A Digital Story can be useful in multiple disciplines such as private industry and academia. This approach should also be encouraged in K-12 and higher education settings because of the potential impact to student gains in writing and reading.

The Immigration History Research Center and Archives project from the University of Minnesota is an additional resource to consider (<https://immigrantstories.umn.edu/>). Using a broadly defined definition of “immigrant”, this effort by the University of Minnesota is “a research and archiving project run by the Immigration History Research Center (IHRC) at the University of Minnesota. Immigrant Stories helps immigrants, refugees, and their family members create digital stories: brief videos with images, text, and audio about a personal experience ” (UNM Immigrant Stories, 2022). Digital Stories of immigrant experiences, and how to contribute your own story, can be found at their website: <https://cla.umn.edu/ihrcc>.

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Anti-racist Writing for Non-Native English Speakers

ASMITA GHIMIRE; KRISTINA CASHIN; AND ELIZABETHADA A. WRIGHT

This article is an extended version of a conversation between us (Kristina Cashin, Asmita Ghimire, and Liz Wright), and in this article, we contribute from our own personal experience in dismantling the racist pedagogy in writing instruction in the university setting.

Asmita, a multilingual student, currently a Ph.D. student in the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, had not realized that her asset of being multilingual would be considered as a “deficit” model until she came to the University of Minnesota Duluth as a master’s student in 2019. Now, working as a graduate instructor, she is more aware of treating multilingual and bilingual students with respect, and she is working towards developing pedagogy that includes transnational and translingual writing and language.

Similarly, Kristina arrives with humility and empathy regarding speaking and teaching a second language. As a bilingual, with English as her first language, she had experienced the difficulty of writing in Spanish as a graduate student, when a Spanish instructor judged her writing primarily through grammar rather than by the complex ideas she intended to express within the course’s final paper. Now a faculty member in the University of Minnesota Duluth (who teaches both monolingual and multilingual students), she is working towards building inclusive pedagogy to reckon with the linguistic diversity of students.

Elizabethada Wright, who has years of experience teaching both monolingual and bilingual students, is working towards developing a more inclusive space for both faculty and students and is familiar with the work and expertise of both Asmita and Kristina. For example, when Asmita was being “minoritized” as a multilingual in the University of Minnesota Duluth, she pushed Asmita to think more about university policy than to rethink and reconsider her multi-

lingualism as a challenge. Ultimately, they started a project on why transnational students benefit North American monolingual English students. Eventually, Asmita and Liz published two articles on the need for all North American students to learn English.

The three presenters are a diverse group of peers who have learned and experienced racist pedagogy both as students and as faculty. A common goal among the presenters is to dismantle racist tendencies and White fragility or dominant fragility, both in themselves and others as they critique their own habits and challenge others to do the same.

Kristina entered this conversation with Asmita and Liz in a coffee break room chat on campus. Kristina was teaching First Year Writing for non-native English-speaking students and mentioned how international students—and potential employers—want students to learn Standard Written English (SWE), not Englishes. However, each of the three agreed that assuming that just one ‘correct’ version of English exists is inherently problematic because there are, in fact, multiple Englishes. The question of “How do we reconcile employers’ expectations for ‘perfected standard English’ with the inherent racism associated with the idea that there is just one correct way to speak English?” formed from this conversation. Our conversation included addressing this issue in both the classroom and workplace settings, which helped us to rethink how to design the anti-racist pedagogy that would help students to transfer outside the classroom.

As stated above: this presentation continues—and invites others to join—this conversation.

Liz started the presentation by referring to a recent discussion on labor-based writing by Asao Inoue. In his 2019 Chair’s Address at the Conference of College Communication and Composition, Inoue gave a talk titled “How Do We Language So People Stop Killing Each Other, or What Do We Do about White Language Supremacy.” As he discussed language, supremacy, and how White academics need “to stop *saying shit* about injustice while doing *jack shit* about it.” (2019). He argues that the SWE that is so much a part of so many English classes is contributing to people killing each other. In this very thoughtful and detailed argument from the talk, as well as from his book *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for a Socially Just Future*, Inoue states that there is clear bias that harms students when we insist on SWE .

Liz and Asmita pointed out that educators should realize that imposing SWE on students is asking them to repeat what is already there rather than

encouraging them to bring their voice, identity, and language into the classroom. SWE itself is not a problem: what is a problem is the way SWE is valorized and considered a language model that “unites” the ways of communication. What is a problem is how SWE has tacitly treated other language and writing varieties as deficits and how its proponents do not consider the benefits of other language varieties that students bring into the classroom. What is a problem is that SWE silences multilingual students while it augments the language of monolingual students, most of whom do not have acute realization of why the way they write is “right.” What is a problem is the idea that writing might be differently recognized and internalized by multilingual students who, most of the time, have to make extra efforts to “prove” that the way they write is “White,” regardless of the accent they bring while speaking.

Liz continued the discussion by looking at Linda Adler-Kasner and Elizabeth Wardle’s development of threshold concepts for composition and noting that international students achieve these threshold concepts in their efforts to write in American English. In other words, what international students are already doing enhances their abilities to write well. Additionally, a great deal of research suggests that the actual “rules” of SWE are something that international students excel in; their non-tacit knowledge of these “rules” is far greater than that of North American Native English Speakers.

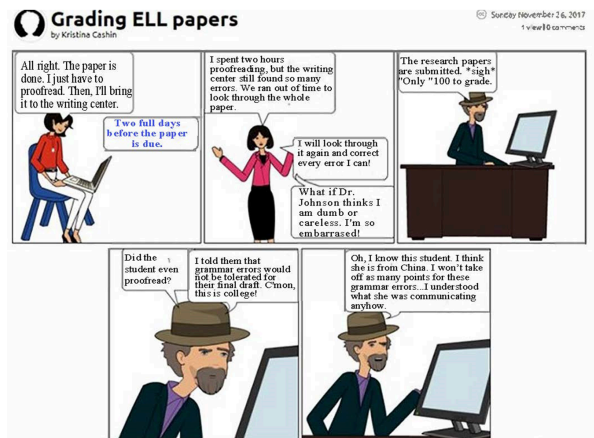
However, as the conversations in the hallway have developed, Liz, Asmita, and Kristina also recognized that such non-tacit knowledge of rules of grammar and high achievement of threshold concepts is not what so many of their colleagues and people in industry think they are teaching—or what they desire from students when they graduate. In other words, many expect writing instructors to be teaching SWE, despite the calls that such teaching might be racist.

Therefore, how do we negotiate this problem?

To reinforce the concern mentioned above, Kristina presented a comic created based off of one her student’s experiences as Kristina worked at UMD’s writing center.

This student was a graduate-level student whose first language was Mandarin Chinese. The student was frustrated because she was working on some high-level conceptual papers, and her content appeared to be very strong. However, she was receiving only negative feedback for grammar and punctuation errors. In this comic, the young woman says two days before the paper is due, “All right, the paper is done. I just have to proofread. Then I’ll bring

it to the writing center.” However, when she goes to the Writing Center, the Center still finds many errors, too many for her time at the Writing Center. Though this student continues to comb through the paper, correcting every error possible, errors remain, and the student wonders, “What if Dr. Johnson thinks I’m dumb or careless. I’m so embarrassed.” And in this comic, Dr. Johnson does indeed have such a response, at first. Noting that Dr. Johnson does have a more understanding attitude when he realizes that English is not the student’s first language is relevant. However, this understanding towards grading grammar and punctuation errors is not something students always can anticipate. It is dependent on each instructor, which can leave students in an anxious state (See Figure 1 below). Interestingly, while working in the writing center, Kristina has had both non-native English speaker students and native English-speaking students come to the writing center and say, “My professor is going to take one point off for every grammar or punctuation error that they find!”



(Figure 1)

Recently, she had a native English speaker student pop into the writing center, working on an APA format psychology research paper in the upper division level, and the student was beside herself with anxiety. Kristina and the student found a few comma and grammar errors that, sure enough, would have resulted in docked points.

So, this comic illustrates how much anxiety a student such as this is feeling, especially since English is not her native language, and content-wise, she

has a lot to say. Both native and non-native speakers apparently face pressure for producing 'perfected' SWE. Kristina pointed to some research reinforcing that non-native English speakers, both in the university setting and in the professional setting in general, have really high pressure to speak this "perfected" English (Beason, 2001; Cimasko & Roberts, 2008). "Yes," students repeatedly tell us, "Perfection is expected." However, the definition of perfection within a language is really vague. Questioning "who defines this 'perfected English?'" is important. A valuable factor to consider is that the perception others have towards the speaker's race can play a critical role in whether or not they are seen to be speaking in "perfected" English (This will be expanded on further below.) Additionally, before asking the "who" question, asking "how is 'fluency' defined within a language?" is also important. From a language acquisition standpoint, when a non-native English speaker starts learning English past the critical language acquisition period of childhood, it's incredibly difficult to ever become what is considered fluent, which again, is in and of itself a hard term to pin down. Therefore the term "ultimate attainment" for language ability has been coined for usage, rather than "fluent" (Juffs, 2011). This "ultimate attainment" is a high level of communication, the best someone's going to get in the second language, which, of course, would apply to any second language that you're learning.

Kristina shared that in her own experiences, Spanish is a second language—her second major of her undergraduate career. She remembers taking an upper-division course and writing on a complex topic, which she found very intriguing. When her paper draft was returned, all she saw were red marks everywhere for grammar and punctuation. Her professor told her essentially what Dr. Johnson, from the comic, states: "Did you even proof-read?" She was glad for that experience because it gave her a bit of empathy for what many of our non-native English speaker students are facing.

Kristina then mentioned another relevant experience. The reason perfection is expected can be illustrated with an example of a woman whose husband came to Duluth to work in the hospital setting. This woman, herself, was a professional, and she wished to work in a professional setting in Duluth as well. However, her English ability wasn't "perfect." So, as she sent out a number of email inquiries to different jobs in the area in her field, most of the time she didn't even get a response. This woman then connected with Kristina through a mutual friend, and the two met in a coffee shop once a week, reading through her emails to edit for grammar and punctuation errors. Once the two started these editing meetings, they started getting callbacks.

So that's part of what we're facing here: understanding that, especially with

adult learners, people need to communicate very, very well in the target language. This perfection is expected, but at what cost? Asmita communicated that this 'perfection' is tacitly connected with the grammar and not with the enriched semiotic diversity that students have earned as they were learning to write and learning language. The students' language history and writing culture are not taken into account. The diverse writing culture that they bring in their writing is examined in the light of writing in the West. Ultimately, students end up polishing the writing at the cost of ideas.

To address some of the exhaustion associated with sacrificing ideas for SWE "perfection," Asmita, in her class, asks her students to bring their history of learning language and learning to write in her first project. In the project, her students bring a diverse history of writing and language. Monolingual students would say more about their inspiration being, for example, their mother or grandmother as their ideal figure for writing. They might mention a Christmas card as the writing they first remember, and so on. For multilingual students, it is more enriching. They shared their experience of going to a mosque where they would write in slate. Some of them came from cultures where oral narratives are more valued and different kinds of bedtime stories rituals. Some students also shared their experiences of transitioning from one writing culture to another. Some others have many horrific stories to tell: the experience of being placed into a multilingual class without being asked, expected to make error-free writing right away in a first draft, not having a friends circle just because of their accents, and so on. So, for all these students, it was more important to learn what writing is *not* rather than what writing is. As the students read each other's writing, for example, by engaging in the peer review process and in rhetorical reading response activities, they would get to see each other's writing. Getting to read and comment on the writing of peers who have different writing and rhetorical cultures attunes them to learning writing and rhetoric different from one's own. After reading V.S Young, Amy Tang and John McWhorter, a monolingual student, however, commented, "If we do not have a standard language, how can we communicate or create a unification in principle language?" Their multilingual classmates, however, were wrestling with whether it was appropriate to tell their story in the classroom. Like the White student in the classroom, who is striving for unification in language rather than the actual communication, much energy is wasted unifying or designing something that could unify people. Eventually, unification becomes a parameter for standardizing. Those who have power to unify also have power to standardize. Consequently, those who have to do extra effort to meet the expectation have to always do something "extra" to make sure that they are

perceived as being as talented as those who look talented without needing to try.

Within this search for the standard, there are assumptions, such as those noted by Paul Matsuda, that the United States has always been English-speaking, and it should always be English speaking. However, as Liz has noted in an article (Wright, 2022), people such as Benjamin Franklin built on very political and racist assumptions to make certain this country would be English-speaking, but that certainly has never really been attained.

Liz noted that there are multiple Englishes within the linguistic tree. Kristina then added that language is very fluid. The Englishes we are speaking now (including their syntax and lexicon) are quite different linguistically than the same language spoken 100 years ago. Language development is very, very fluid. So, this idea of trying to pin down a 'standard' is kind of tricky in general (which is why we have been putting 'standard' in quotations throughout much of this transcript summary.)

Kristina also discussed how, interestingly, a lot more grace is given to non-native English speakers when they speak 'standard' English imperfectly, compared to native English-speaking individuals who speak a form of English other than the common White standard. Indeed, teachers and employers are likely to express even more annoyance at 'errors' related to using AAVE (African-American vernacular English) than they are towards errors commonly associated with non-native English speakers (Greenfield, 2011). Of course, the presenters would argue that a deviation from SWE while using AAVE is *not* an error, as will be explained below.

Looking back to the Dr. Johnson comic, we can see that he was having a bit of grace for the student, a non-native English speaker, because he was able to understand what she was saying overall. So, although multiple factors suggest that non-native speakers are held to a very high standard of English 'perfection', Englishes that are associated historically with non-White speakers (such as AAVE) are criticized even more harshly compared to the standard than is "standard" English spoken or written with some errors. As mentioned previously there's this idea that English dialects that are not associated with White speakers, are somehow dramatically incorrect.

Kristina discussed some elements of AAVE, which is a common dialect of English. (Although, even using the word dialect is kind of elusive, because of the fluid nature of language development.) Is AAVE a dialect? It's in the branch of Englishes and is used by many native speakers in the United States.

Kristina showed an example of a logical and consistent pattern usage in both 'standard' English and AAVE:

“Standard” English

She is happy. (A current emotional state)

She's always happy. (A personality trait)

AAVE

She is happy. (A current emotional state)

She be happy. (A personality trait)

In 'standard' English, *She is happy* refers to the person's current emotional state. *She's always happy* refers to a personality trait. Whereas in AAVE, *She be happy*, using the unconjugated form of the verb 'to be', is a consistent way to express a long-term state of being, or personality trait. Both AAVE and 'standard' English use logical linguistic consistency to communicate meaning (Greenfield, 2011).

Here is another example of consistent verb conjugation within the two dialects:

“Standard” English:

I go, she goes, he goes, they go, we go.

AAVE:

I go, she go, he go, they go, we go

AAVE uses a very consistent conjugation pattern which is actually a little bit less complicated and equally linguistically logical compared to the 'standard' English conjugations (Greenfield, 2011).

Additionally, we can compare variations in pronunciation within Englishes which are viewed as more acceptable. Unfortunately, continuing with the current theme of underlying racism within both SWE and the idea that there is one correct way to speak English, we can often see that pronunciation and spelling variants used within White culture are deemed as 'correct' English, whereas those linguistic variations often used by non-White communities are criticized as incorrect.

For example, with the pronunciation of the word comfortable, both *comfortable* versus *comfterble* are viewed as correct English. However, with the pronunciation of the word ask, both *ask* and *aks* (The common AAVE pronunciation) are native-speaker pronunciations, yet only the first pronunciation is categorized as correct English.

Furthermore, in 'standard' English, we can see these two acceptable spellings of color: *color* and *colour* (The British spelling). However, when we compare this to *talking* and *talkin'* (The common spelling used in AAVE), somehow, *talkin'* would be considered incorrect by 'standard' English (Greenfield, 2011).

Something important to conclude here is that even among native speakers of English, variance within linguistic rules exists. Many native English speakers use AAVE on a daily basis, and what we are confronting here is the idea that one dialect is more appropriate (closer to the elusive 'standard') than another. Kristina pointed out that prominent linguists such as John Rickford (Stanford University) suggest that members of Black American communities should confidently master both dialects ('Standard English' and AAVE) and adds that Black Americans should assert that 'Standard English' does not belong to White America. Yet this means that many Black Americans must learn a second dialect from their first, whereas the native dialect of most White Americans remains comfortably the default (Greenfield, 2011).

In a writing program meeting within Kristina's writing department, instructors were asked to examine the "The 'Standard English' Fairy Tale: A Rhetorical Analysis of Racist Pedagogy and Commonplace Assumptions about Language Diversity" by Laura Greenfield. In the article, Greenfield explains well-intentioned educators posit that, although they recognize the inherent biases within assuming that there is a 'Standard English', it is nevertheless necessary to coach students (both non-native English speaker students and English speakers of distinct dialects like AAVE) towards a standard in order

to help students survive in the professional realm. However, Greenfield (2011) argues that non-White users of 'Standard English' will still face discrimination regardless of their dialect, and that the mindset above is furthering racist practices. Kristina and her colleagues processed through this valuable concept together, which was a further motivator for Kristina to participate in this presentation. The colleagues in her department were left with the same questions that Liz, Asmita, and Kristina have been processing within this presentation. Namely, how can we as educators best coach our students toward success while avoiding the inherently racist biases regarding 'Standard English'?

Liz and Asmita pointed out another relevant point: Some might argue that English is the most common language spoken globally, so it should be the dominant language; however, as Kirkpatrick and Xu illustrate (2012), the most common form of English spoken on this earth is Chinese English.

Along that line, Suresh Canagarajah (2006) addresses the different forms of English, noting that writing classes should be teaching Englishes. There is not one English, and our students need to be able to communicate in these many varieties of English. They need to know because they are going to be working on an international scale, and they need to be able to communicate to speak and read Indian English, to speak and read Sri Lankan English, to speak and read Kenyan English. They need to be able to communicate, when too often too many of our native English speakers of the United States say, "Oh, I can't understand that person." "Oh, communicating with that person is too hard. They need to develop a fluency with English." What we need to recognize is that many of these speakers of Sri Lankan, Indian, or Kenyan English are native English speakers; they just speak a different English.

Even in the United States, there is no standard written English. Liz has published an article with her colleagues Chongwon Park, David Beard, and Ron Regal that looks at textbooks describing the norms of SWE, finding that there are frequent contradictions, and these norms are not borne out in the published material found in the Linguistics database: The Corpus. We discover large percentages of published material do not use these norms so many say we must abide by.

However, we still come back to the problem that Kristina has noted: people expect us to teach SWE. We also encounter with the problem, as Asmita has noted, of how diverse linguistic backgrounds of students can be amplified and addressed to bring the enriching ideas that students bring in the classroom. For us, we questioned what sort of anti-racist pedagogy can be applied in the pragmatic setting of classroom. Can the students learn and transfer

such kinds of writing and communication in their professional setting? What are the affordances of asking students to bring their semiotic resources of home into the classroom, and eventually, in the professional setting? What are the short-term goals and long-term goals of designing the anti-racist writing pedagogy?

So, what is our anti-racist pedagogy of writing?

For us, the classroom is the space for policy-making; teachers are policy-makers. Students approve the policy based on whether it is helpful for them or not. Writing instructors, in contrast to instructors in other subjects, are in a privileged position where they get to listen to students' whole selves through the different varieties of writing they bring in the classroom. Along with the student writings come students' 'bodies', for writing is an embodied experience (Johnson et al. 2015). So, when an instructor is in the position of evaluating students' writing they are also assessing the whole other 'self' that students bring into the classroom.

We don't have the answers. We hope you might. We hope you will join this conversation.

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Toward New Critical Literacies for a Destabilized World: Challenging Narratives of Innocence in Higher Education

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Taken together, the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd turned higher education upside down. As we complete our first academic year back on campuses, we are finding that what once were predictable and stable routines of higher education have been destabilized and put into a state of flux. In this essay, we try to make sense of this destabilized moment as one of both opportunity and danger. We look to past periods of instability and discuss the ways that the concepts of deep learning and critical literacy can be updated to better support BIPOC students who are currently creating new connections between higher education and a more just, democratic public life. We also assess ways that our present circumstances extend an often-overlooked reality: that universities and their faculties have always had an, at best, complicated relationship with progressive demands from students to refigure our work and create more just and inclusive institutions. We conclude with three ideas for language arts pedagogies that invite students to reread and rewrite the longstanding narrative that represents higher education as an innocent purveyor of progressive ideas in the struggle for true democracy.

Before going further with our discussion, we want to situate ourselves and our project in the broader landscape of institutionalized racism, social group privilege, and oppression. As four men (three of us White and one Latinx) working in a predominantly white flagship university, two in tenured faculty positions and two in the more tenuous position of advanced doctoral students, we carry a deep responsibility to all students including the many, many students who will never arrive in our classrooms due to entrenched racism and systemic privilege. In addition, we carry a responsibility to the many teachers and students both in and beyond academic spaces who undertook the work of critical literacy and critical pedagogy before us and from whom we continue to try to learn. The list of important figures could go

on for pages, and include the work of Geneva Smitherman, Malcolm X, bell hooks, and James Baldwin. In a country where so many people face the daily violence of institutions that refuse to acknowledge their talents, we see our role as working with all of our students and colleagues to continue to build on those past efforts to change the narratives of education and the voices who are recognized as contributing to those narratives, so that education is made relevant to the most important struggles of our time: the struggle to truly value BIPOC lives and perspectives and the struggle to truly value the planet that we have inherited. What follows is our modest attempt to join with others in making sense of the opportunities and challenges our circumstances present.

New Realities of Instability

In our new reality, many of the large forces and trends that characterized life before the pandemic have leapt forward in their impact on our practical lives and consciousness. This is true of negative and positive forces and trends. Today, we are reminded moment to moment of how racialized violence, anti-democratic public policy, truth decay, social isolation, political polarization, and the ubiquity of digital surveillance have expanded and deepened. At the same time, each moment also reminds us of progress: demands for police accountability, actions to create more equity in powerful institutions, and popular movements committed to the common good. In our work with students today, we're trying to rediscover and re-invent what we're really doing in classrooms and how our work on campuses engages the positive and negative possibilities that surround us. Any person alive to reality today cannot not know that people have died and continue to die, lives have been damaged and continue to be damaged, and all of us must join in efforts to make change now. In part, the instability we experience in our classrooms reflects a crisis of the dominant narrative of innocence that frames higher education as unconnected to the systematic assaults on democracy and the planet, or to the systemic racism revealed in the murders of George Floyd, Philando Castile, Daunte Wright, and Amir Locke. This moment also presents an opportunity to reframe this narrative of innocence by removing the invisible boundary it erects between education and the "real world," and working with students to continually (re)see how our work in the classroom shapes and is shaped by what is happening outside of it.

Where are students in the present moment? Our institutions tend to provide a negative answer to this question, telling a story of perpetual crisis. Accord-

ing to a recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, students are “checked out, stressed out, and unsure of their future” (McMurtrie). The article quotes faculty from across the country to paint a picture of students as “defeated,” “exhausted,” and “overwhelmed,” and points readers to a Center for Collegiate Mental Health survey of almost 700 campus counseling centers which found that “feelings of social anxiety . . . [along with] academic worries remained higher than they were before the pandemic, as did feelings of generalized anxiety, family distress, and trauma.” Taken together, these assessments of student welfare make a certain kind of sense of experiences we’ve had on the Twin Cities campus of the University of Minnesota. But the seductiveness of the disheartened narrative that *The Chronicle* offers can distract us from what it doesn’t address: namely, the mixed messages students receive from classrooms and campuses regarding who and what university citizens are expected to be and do. These messages range from the familiar encouragements along the lines of “here, you’ll discover your people, begin new adventures, explore fascinating ideas, and find your inspiration” to university pronouncements that project a false consensus on “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” and fold social-justice demands into vacant corporate rhetoric, to bureaucratic emails reminding students that their homework is late, their accounts are overdue, and their health coverage is lapsed. Taken together, such messages should remind us all that the system, and the narratives that sustain it, will not meaningfully change if we don’t continue to build on the legacies of resistance we have inherited.

Looking back to look forward: Deep Learning and Critical Literacy

The current moment is not the first period of pronounced instability in the project of higher education. Coming out of the 1960s and the transformations brought on by the civil rights, black power, and other related movements, scholars and students of the 1970s found themselves in a world of positive and negative possibilities that has parallels to our own time. As Roderick Ferguson explains in *We Demand: The University and Student Protests*, on one hand, students challenged higher education to break with the past and create new roles for “minoritized people [to] occupy in the production of university knowledge and the reshaping of American society” (9). On the other hand, “the same institutions that seemed to honor student requests were also the ones that rejected them” by implementing versions of access and inclusion that actually reinforced individualistic and competitive ideolo-

gies of education, assimilationist understandings of knowledge and citizenship, and disciplinary infrastructures that demonized and even criminalized transformative knowledge making (9).

“Deep learning” emerged as an emblematic concept inside higher education’s history of conflicted responses to student demands for transformed learning experiences. Two Swedish scholars, Marton and Saljo, coined the term in the 1970s to name a desirable alternative to what they called “surface learning.” For them, surface learning refers to passive and mechanical engagement that treats knowledge as fixed content to be absorbed, repeated, and kept separate from the learner. Deep learning, in contrast, happens when knowledge is created by learners as they engage new ideas and integrate them within the realities of their lives. The idea of deep learning struck a chord with scholars, as Nelson-Laird, Shoup, and Kuh’s 2006 summary of the concept’s later development suggests:

Scholars (Biggs, 1987, 2003; Entwistle, 1981; Ramsden, 2003; Tagg, 2003) generally agree that deep learning is represented by a personal commitment to understand the material which is reflected in using various strategies such as reading widely, combining a variety of resources, discussing ideas with others, reflecting on how individual pieces of information relate to larger constructs or patterns, and applying knowledge in real world situations (Biggs, 1989). Also characteristic of deep learning is integrating and synthesizing information with prior learning in ways that become part of one’s thinking and approaching new phenomena and efforts to see things from different perspectives (Ramsden, 2003; Tagg, 2003). As Tagg (2003, p. 70) put it, “Deep learning is learning that takes root in our apparatus of understanding, in the embedded meanings that define us and that we use to define the world.” (4)

This quotation nicely captures the strength and weakness of deep learning as it has been taken up since the 1970s. Usefully, the concept pushes our goals beyond what Freire called “banking” education, to identify activities through which students engage the constructedness of knowledge and wrestle with the implications of different knowledges in terms of how they “define us and . . . define the world” (qtd. in Nelson-Laird, 4). The blocked quote above also reveals a central weakness of the deep learning movement: the absence of explicit attention to the social group relations of power that always factor into knowledge-making and influence how students make sense of new perspectives. Thus deep learning, as it has been passed to us, reinforces the

innocence narrative which frames schooling as contributing to larger social struggles for equity and equality by distributing knowledge, but ignores the question of who has been and will be empowered to participate in the creation of that knowledge. Importantly, students are invited to do deep learning within this system, not about this system.

This important gap in the definition of deep learning is significant because of the way influential bodies such as the National Survey of Student Engagement have institutionalized the concept as a benchmark of quality. In the early 2000s, the huge annual survey of students developed a deep learning scale by assessing how often students report engaging activities associated with three sub areas: higher order learning, integrative learning, and reflective learning (Appendix A). While the activities included in the three subscales are certainly valuable, two significant shortcomings stand out to us. The first is the leap made from activity to learning depth. Engaging a particular activity—discussing a reading with a peer, for example—might point to deep learning, but it might also point to a lot of other factors, such as confusion about assignment specifics. The second, related shortcoming is that by leaving out considerations of power and the partialities of knowledge, the scale enables institutions and their faculty to perpetuate the overarching narrative of innocence and congratulate themselves for engaging students in deep and meaningful learning without ever considering questions of who benefits from the definitions of deep learning they are promoting and in what ways.

A potential corrective to the diluted form of deep learning promoted by the NSSE is critical literacy. As it has grown out of the work of Paulo Freire and social group equity movements in the United States, critical literacy operationalizes this simple but profound insight: There is more than one way to understand the phrase “Knowledge is Power.” In addition to the obvious first sense that most people fasten onto immediately—knowledge gives power—critical literacy also offers an important further understanding, which is that knowledge exercises power. Critical literacy is a way of thinking about reading, writing, and language work that keeps both ways of thinking about knowledge and power active. It emphasizes to students that knowledge about the world—the “truth” about education, or climate change, or police violence, or anything else that a group of people accept—is never complete. All we have are versions of the truth, and the versions of the truth that we encounter are always partial both in the sense of being incomplete and in the sense of favoring particular views, discourses, assumptions, and experiences. So, in this view, knowledge is not just about providing answers to mechanical questions like “what makes a good thesis statement?” or “how many sources do I need in my paper?” Instead, centering critical literacy, our

classes conceive of learning as a way of becoming more consciously involved in struggles over the truth and struggles over power.

At its best, critical literacy can expose how dominant narratives of education – such as the narrative of innocence – are constructed by language in the interplay of knowledge and power, and therefore can be revised through critical thought and collective action. However, some critical literacy scholars have ourselves been susceptible to the lure of innocence narratives, dismissing the significance of our own investments in whiteness and at times ignoring our own insights by supplanting one version of the truth with our own (Fox, 2002). At the 2019 meeting of the 4Cs, Asao Inoue gave a monumental chair's address that challenged us all to recognize our complicities, centering BIPOC voices and directly confronting the narratives of innocence in which white scholars, critical or otherwise, nestle themselves:

I'm not going to say that you—you White folks in this room—are the special ones. You thinking you're special is the problem. It always has been, because you, and White people just like you who came before you, have had most of the power, decided most of the things, built the steel cage of White language supremacy that we exist in today, both in and outside of the academy—and likely, many of you didn't know you did it. You just thought you were doing language work, doing teaching, doing good work, judging students and their languages in conscientious and kind ways, helping them, preparing them, giving them what was good for them. (Inoue, 356-57)

One of the many vital contributions of Inoue's address is the kairotic energy it gives to critical literacy, a project in need of continual recalibration to the realities of the moment. No pedagogy can be neutral, disinterested, or innocent, and Inoue's work, along with so many other critical scholars of color working today, help teachers learn how everyday capitulations to dominant narratives of innocence maintain the violence of the status quo. We interpret this prominent direction of critical literacy as calling us to renewed humility and resolve as we work with students to read and rewrite these narratives.

This renewed version of critical literacy is therefore valuable as an umbrella for all classes because of the momentum it gives and the context it provides for our students to pursue truly deep learning—learning that helps them deepen their understanding of their own positionality within the world they are inheriting and tasked with redefining. Critical literacy emphasizes to students that, as learners and as people who use language, they cannot not be involved in struggles over the truth and the power relations that follow from

those struggles, and as a result of this critical recognition they are enabled to truly engage their work as students on the deepest level—taking ownership of the knowledge they’re participating in creating.

This brings us to the point of implementation—how do we work with students in today’s circumstances to engage ourselves in critical literacy and the deep learning that follows from it? This is a worthy challenge that will require all of us sharing situated answers to help each other develop strategies that fit our different circumstances. As part of that larger effort, we’d like to offer three different pedagogical projects that attempt to open classrooms to deep critical engagement by promoting voices, experiences, and views too often silenced. Our hope is that, in sharing these practical classroom approaches, that readers can build on their pedagogies to continually find new ways to work with students in reading and rewriting dominant narratives of education.

Deep Learning and Critical Literacy in the Classroom: Three Pedagogical Activities

Critically Reading Mediums of Education

As a pedagogical practice, critical literacy can help students contextualize the work they do in their classes — even the seemingly perfunctory tasks — within an ongoing struggle to shape our understanding of and participation in the world. Moreover, approaching these tasks via critical literacy can center continually marginalized BIPOC voices by inviting privileged students to engage the narratives of innocence that shape inequitable education, including the perceived neutrality of educational technologies.

A prominent educational technology that warrants more critical attention today is Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Canvas, Moodle, Desire2Learn, and Blackboard, given our increased reliance on them during and after the pandemic. These are destabilizing forces which might seem like stabilizing forces, as they present learning as a linear set of modules, but they unsettle education by taking it out of an embodied context and placing it into a kind of digital maze for students and teachers to navigate, often seemingly removed from what is happening around them, and from each other. This decontextualization perpetuates the innocence narrative of education, as it

validates the perception that education is a series of tasks to be completed, unrelated to systemic inequities that inform those tasks and their management. Since the pandemic, we have noticed that more and more teaching meetings we attend feature discussions centered on how to do something better on Canvas (the LMS used at our institution), or about new tools on Canvas that we are encouraged to enact in curricula. And—especially in asynchronous online courses, but also in hybrid and in person courses—more and more work by students and teachers focuses on attending to a class’s LMS: making sure its hyperlinks, modules, and to-do lists are in order. To us, these focuses distract education from its vital capacity to facilitate critical praxis. And so to more fully enact deep learning, we propose that writing classes focus not just on how to better use LMS, but to train critical attention on how they use us. We propose that teachers work with students to critically engage with these systems which announce their purpose in a stunningly candid way: they manage learning.

Throughout the different stages of the pandemic, students have expressed complex and dynamic reactions to remote learning and the attendant prominence of LMS in their education. A recent article in *The Chronicle* featured interviews with several students who reported their desire that hybrid learning become permanent, as they feel it makes education more accessible and flexible to a variety of student needs (Lu, 2022). At our own institution, an internal focus-group study of students’ feelings about Canvas, conducted by the Information Technology department, concluded that students “stated a preference for having a Canvas site for their courses as compared to no Canvas site at all” and that students “do not want to lose these technologies moving forward” (“Fall 2021 ...”). Complicating these depictions, students in our classes have repeatedly noted their frustration with the ways Canvas intrudes upon their lives. How its to-do lists feel ever-present, how they feel surveilled, and how their engagement with a course has been measured by the amount of time they’ve logged on a Canvas page (which impels some to always leave a Canvas tab open). Our experiences and those we read and hear from students indicate that LMS does extend access to a certain version of education, and in exchange we give it more access to students’ lives—as well as to their writing, which becomes data, the raw material through which private LMS companies justify their business model.

As students are not a homogenous group, and as education is an embodied, social, political, and situationally contingent process — ever-emergent and not static and finished — we see a need to facilitate opportunities for students to critically reflect on the changing mediums of their education through writing. This approach relies on the belief that students are capable

and eager to critically reflect on the narratives they receive about their own education – how they are presented to them, what they expect of them, and how they can be transformed. Moreover, giving students opportunities to apply critical literacy to their educational environment encourages—and, we think, deepens—Marton and Saljo’s vision of “deep-level processing,” as opposed to “surface-level processing,” in that it invites students to reflect “not only on the substance but also the underlying meaning of the information” (qtd in Nelson-Laird et al., p. 3-4). The approach deepens deep learning by also focusing on the processes that create our understandings of “the underlying meaning of information,” which today requires thinking critically, and deeply, about the mediums through which information and knowledge are transmitted — and managed.

An activity that has proven effective in one of our classrooms is to ask students to apply Neil Postman’s “Seven Questions for New Technologies” (1997) to an educational technology that features in their lives (students have typically chosen either Zoom or Canvas). Postman’s seven questions are as follows:

1. What is the problem to which this technology is the solution?
2. Whose problem is it?
3. Which people and what institutions might be most seriously harmed by a technological solution?
4. What new problems might be created because we have solved this problem?
5. What sort of people and institutions might acquire special economic and political power because of technological change?”
6. What changes in language are being enforced by new technologies, and what is being gained and lost by such changes?
7. What alternative (and unintended) uses might be made of this technology?

This activity is scaffolded by reading Keith Gilyard and Adam J. Banks’s chapter on technology from *On African American Rhetoric* (2018), as well as excerpts from Sofiya Noble’s *Algorithms of Oppression* (2018) and Postman’s *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985). Students then work through the above questions in small groups, and complete a short writing assignment reflecting on central insights gleaned from the exercise. The hermeneutics supplied by Postman’s questions can help us to temporarily stabilize a destabilized world by exposing contradictions and power dynamics latent in our interactions with emergent technologies. The hermeneutics also helps students reject the reductive impulse to either accept technologies as they are or dis-

regard them, and rather to mobilize their ideas toward a deeper understanding of how we can exert critical thought to transform the paradigms under which technologies are created and naturalized. As one of our students eloquently wrote this semester, by “continually and invariably working to enact and strive toward a more just world, critical literacy can be utilized to help technologies become more equitable, and potentially work to integrate justice into the larger systems that technologies arise from and are based in.”

Critically Reading the Internet

Another disruptive space that has been underexplored within the educational spaces for learning is the internet itself, because of the challenges that exploration presents to teachers and students. One challenge involves the question of how to develop an assignment that enables learning outcomes that are beneficial to students. Dominant narratives in digital literacy have attempted to enable students to think critically about the internet within a dichotomy of skills and competence. These dominant narratives ask teachers if the learning outcomes of digital literacy should be about knowing how to use the internet (as its designers want it to be used) or about better understanding how the internet works? The two different perspectives are not always aligned and they present challenges for instructors to create pedagogical projects that engage both concepts. However, these challenges reveal the real forces of instability at play within attempts to teach with the internet (often presented merely as a tool) and about it. By employing the metaphor of a tool, dominant narratives of digital literacy get folded into dominant narratives of innocence, as they ignore the wrongdoings of the medium itself, and place any negative outcomes of its use in the hands of the user of that tool. As instructors, we attempt to teach students about the potential of the internet and the skill set required to be a digital entrepreneur. Similarly, we instruct students about the risks as well. However, we should also invite students to engage the power the internet gives users, and, perhaps more importantly, the power it exercises on them. Merely looking at the internet as a tool falls short of our goal of reframing the current practices of teaching through a critical literacy lens. Critically reading the internet requires both the development of digital literacy skills and an engagement with the deeper embedded meaning of what it means to use it.

A way to start thinking about critically reading the internet with a deep learning and critical literacy perspective is to reframe it as a learning space rather than a neutral tool for information. As Ellis and Goodyer suggests,

“[learning spaces] involve mutually shaping interactions between different kinds of nested learning spaces (i.e., spaces within spaces and different kinds of nested learning purposes” (174). Deep learning focuses on similar concepts described in Ellis and Goodyear, one of which is discussing ideas with others and reflecting on how individual pieces of information relate to a larger construct or patterns in the real world. Learning spaces prioritize interactions and ask for a critical awareness of interactions for the user/learner and to understand how the information that one interacts with online does not exist in a vacuum; rather, these interactions are part of larger narratives that go unexplored due to negligence or willful ignorance. Critically reading the internet, therefore, involves recognizing that interactions with information, people, transactions, etc. are partial narratives within a larger narrative. One method we’ve used in the classroom to help interrogate the internet and reframe it as a learning space is to ask students to think and write about how a given space:

1. Positions users as learners. (Who is this space teaching us to be?)
2. Demands attention from users in our daily lives. (How much of our time does this space want?)
3. Invites users to see actions occurring within that space. (What actions does the space invite users to perform?)
4. Introduces or denies certain lived experiences. (What versions of the “real world” come into the space?)
5. Shapes social interactions. (How are different people participating or being shaped by the space?)
6. Disguises the ways that it amplifies some voices and views while marginalizing others. (Whose voices are dominant and how does the space normalize their dominance?)

A way to pragmatically translate these concepts into an assignment is by asking students to think about an argument and a space online where the argument is most prominent which also involves differing views and multiple interactions. Students typically gravitate to social networks such as Twitter or Reddit. More importantly, students are asked to reflect about the attention these spaces present in their daily lives and be self-aware about how views and perspectives are initiated from those complex interactions online. Those complex interactions are more than just internet trolls; they present lived experiences of many. Such as that the information and arguments that are being presented online are what people truly believe. Those lived experiences become social interactions of the status quo of society, or how the loudest voices of society are reducing complex topics into normalized views. Therefore, asking students to interrogate the technology and how it ampli-

fies certain voices over others gives students the opportunity to critically analyze what is the sentiment of people with the loudest voice and how those voices drown marginalized views and voices (see Appendix B: Argument cascade for a detailed view into the assignment).

Each digital space that is analyzed is going to be different but the goal of the framework of critically reading the internet is to provide awareness for students that the internet is not just an information space, as it is portrayed in dominant narratives. Instead, the internet is a space for deep learning where information relates to larger constructs of real world situations, as suggested by Biggs (1989). Furthermore, information online becomes part of one's thinking that does not necessarily define people or the world, but allows us to trace back roots of how ideas and views are made that are different from our own.

Critically Reading Spaces of Literacy

Critical literacy might also come to bear on the physical workspaces of students, which have been remarkably destabilized by the realities of this moment. What was once a relatively easy on-campus/off-campus workspace dichotomy has been thrown into greater relief against actual conditions where students work. Many students elected to stay on or near campus in the two years since we first went online, others decided to access some classes totally online, and still others operated half-online in a hybrid situation. One reality that we saw playing out was that students were electing, or sometimes forced into, new physical spaces (home bedrooms, buses, coffee shops) that accrued new significance and meanings as learning spaces.

In our view, this new set of learning spaces presents an opportunity to reflect with students how such spaces present what appear to be neutral, equally accessible learning situations when in fact all learning spaces are grafted onto social relations involving power and privilege. Nedra Reynolds, drawing on ideas of bell hooks, has written of the idea of home as "paradoxical or contested space," complicating a simple binary of home and a "cold, cruel world" (152-53). We consider the model of working "at home" to be an under-examined situation. Not often discussed is how the workspaces outside of classrooms can further entrench already pronounced differences in material access to education. On a surface level, weak or nonexistent internet connections, lack of up-to-date computer equipment, and weak technological know-how can stand in the way of participation in such spaces.

Just as important, conditions in home or apartment situations may not allow for learning based in a “traditional” class session translated into online learning. Since the pandemic, we have heard from students that siblings home from school make it difficult to gain internet bandwidth and may also appear on camera at inopportune times. Further, students without the assumed advantage of going to a quiet, remote space may not attend an online class, or may not participate as effectively when in attendance. When student cameras are turned off during class video conference sessions, instructors might read the act as a refusal to participate, but might it instead be a case of complicated, difficult access? On an affective level, this new situation can place students in a stressful learning situation characterized as much by managing the situation as by learning with a class.

If non-classroom spaces present uncertainties of access, then campus classrooms have also taken on new significance as spaces that are built to the advantage of certain groups. How readily can students get to classrooms and access the building physically, for example? How are those especially vulnerable to Covid infection disadvantaged by tight, inadequately ventilated classrooms? What does face masking do to a pedagogy that relies on human interaction to create local knowledge? And how are expectations for attendance changed by making our way into classrooms that might be perceived as redundant with online spaces provided by a LMS?

Considerations such as these, and more complex ones, might be part of what we ask students to reflect on in our classes. Readings as various as the American Disabilities Act and Robin Wall Kimmerer’s *Braiding Sweetgrass* can help to sensitize students to thinking more intentionally about spaces and how inhabiting those spaces inevitably involves relationships among people with varying histories and worldviews. Short writing exercises can ask students to consider how their work is advantaged by certain workspaces shaped by histories and relative privilege – not everyone has access to what might be assumed to be equally available to all. Such inquiries can help students to recognize the prominent impact of taken-for-granted narratives that position education as an answer to inequality and not an expression or embodiment of inequalities. Moreover, this work can help students see their participation in the shaping of education as a more or less democratic project.

Conclusions

We find perpetual value in the attention that critical literacy work, as well as the work in the larger field of Writing Studies, calls to the inherent connection between theory and practice. Accordingly, we see our work in this essay as equally informing and being informed by our everyday collaborations with students. Too often, dominant narratives in education exhort us to distrust ourselves, each other, and what we know to be joyful and effective pedagogy, and to instead place our trust in byzantine, contradictory systems that equate curricula with business plans, public institutions with private interests, reflection with box-checking, demands for social justice with profit-driven rhetoric, and inequity with inevitability — all while presenting themselves as neutral or disinterested. Rather, we trust in students and teachers' capacity and eagerness to employ critical thought as part of collective action in order to change the worlds they enter rather than mindlessly join them. At the same time, we recognize that the complex problems that we face today cannot be solved or adequately addressed in a single activity or assignment, or even in the course of a fifteen-week semester. We offer our reading and implementation of deeper learning and new critical literacies not as uncomplicated solutions to these problems but as, we hope, forward steps in imagining a possible context for continued conversations with our teacher and student colleagues that allow us to more fully involve ourselves in the ongoing struggle to revise the dominant narratives that beset critical education, and to collaboratively compose new, more fulfilling and just, directions.

Appendix A: National Survey of Student Engagement measures deep learning through a combination of the 3 subscales listed below (Nelson Laird, Shoup, and Kuh, 2006).

Higher-Order Learning

- Analyzed the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components

- Synthesized and organized ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships
- Made judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions
- Applied theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations

Integrative Learning

- Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources
- Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments
- Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)

Reflective Learning

- Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue
- Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective
- Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept
- Learned something from discussing questions that have no clear answers
- Applied what you learned in a course to your personal life or work
- Enjoyed completing a task that required a lot of thinking and mental effort

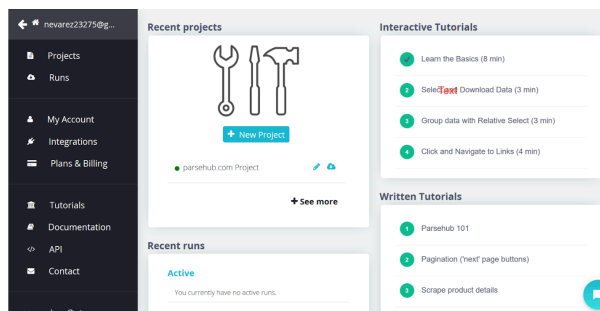
Appendix B: Argument Cascade – Digital Argumentation Assignment

The proliferation of arguments online are due to the affordances of technology's expansive reach in such a small amount of time, the ability to not put a face to the arguer, and the incivility of online discussions inciting actions and reactions. Each of these three components of argumentation makes it difficult to engage in a deliberative argument where people have a voice in a civil discourse. The assignment should help you understand the different landscapes of argumentation and identify a different approach to argumentation and persuasion in digital settings.

Scraping Arguments

You will download ParseHub which is a free online web scraping tool. Follow the instructions on how to use it when you download it. We will have a designated day in class to help with the scraping of content.

1. Identify a platform that you would like to scrape content from. This could be reddit or twitter.
2. Identify an argument that you are interested in exploring further.
3. Scrape the comments exported in a CSV with the following columns: Argument as a constant throughout the column, comments as a column with different arguments in each cell, a column for likes, comments, and shares for each of the ensuing comments from the original argument for each of the comments on the cells under co



Analyzing the Argument

A good argument will contain each of the following three equal parts:

- Good argument
- Argument quality – the argument evokes an understanding of an idea through a rational and reasonable approach.
 - Source quality – the claims contain evidence that enhance the logical understanding of the argument.
 - Impression formation – the quality of the argument will be assessed by the audience by the resonance of the argument in the minds of the audience.

In a general normal argumentative environment, this would suffice to assess a good argument but different mediums demand a larger range of what a good argument is. In digital settings, the ability to discern what is a good argument can be riddled with many cues that aim at diverting the audience from assessing the argument based on reason and evidence to hyperbolic impressions in the form of cues.

Cues

The increased potency of advanced digital technologies which allow immediate, aggregated feedback on online content through comment responses, ratings in the form of likes or dislikes, and promotional features through shares, will masquerade a poor argument with strong acceptance. These features of digital argumentation cause users to doubt themselves and their ideas due to equating popularity with good argument. Be cognizant of all the noise, the argument and the ensuing comments allow for a better understanding of digital persuasion outcomes.

Comments

Network each argument from the original argument in the similar mode as the example below.

Identify the number of likes in two levels:

- Likes
1. The original argument
 2. The ensuing comments

Identify the number of shares in two levels:

- Shares
1. The original argument
 1. The ensuing comments

Writing the Analysis

Your analysis should have a section on the background topic that is being argued. You will need to do secondary research about the argument topic to identify the literature around that topic. This section should include a general introduction of the topic that you chose to scrape off the platform.

Analyze the argument that you chose in relation to the research literature you reviewed. You should be able to discern whether the originator of the argument has a thoughtful argument or an argument that is based on opinion. You should also be able to identify the intention based on what the arguer in the thread stated and the context that it was said.

After conducting an analysis, write a paper describing the cascade of arguments online. Focus on the following:

1. Positions users as learners (Who is this space teaching us to be?).
2. Demands attention from users in our daily lives (How much of our time does this space want?).
3. Invites users to see actions occurring within that space (What actions does the space invite users to perform?).
4. Introduces or denies certain lived experiences (What versions of the “real world” come into the space?).
5. Shapes social interactions (How are different people participating or being shaped by the space?).
6. Disguises the ways that it amplifies some voices and views while marginalizing others. (Whose voices are dominant and how does the space normalize their dominance?).

Conclude the analysis by writing a reflection about the sheer differences of arguments from online spaces and arguments in real life. Think about the advantages and disadvantages it affords to argue online and any foreseeable changes that need to be made to have a better deliberative discourse online. Of particular importance, what do the new mediums of argumentation mean in pursuit of a democratic ideal?

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“Boy With The Bright Smile”

SARAH SPLEISS

Tell me how to move on
his bright beautiful face the ghost
looming over those that lost him
Tell me what they can learn now
when life has violently interrupted
their innocence
Tell me how my two arms
can be enough
when they only stretch so far
Tell me how to erase that porcelain
smile from their memories
every second hour
Tell me how to honor
the truth
not let him be defined by trauma
Tell me how much longer
privilege gets to
keep controlling the narrative
Tell me why
because the how

makes no sense

And my heart keeps breaking

Sarah Spleiss teaches high school English.

REVIEWING MATERIALS FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY



MnWE Journal welcomes work that critically assesses materials useful in the Writing and English classrooms.

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Antiracist Literary Advisory Board: Centering Racially Diverse Voices & Narratives

SUKI JONES MOZENTER; FRIDAY GORA; AND LAITZIA YANG

Abstract

The Anti-Oppression Book Council (ABC) is a collective of undergraduate students associated with an education department of a predominantly white land-grant/land-grab, undergraduate-serving university. The central work of the ABC is a review of the campus library's children's literature collection. During the ABC's inaugural year, students first studied issues of racial representation, censorship, children's publishing, and racial identities. Then, students began a review of the children's literature collection to make deselection and selection recommendations to move the collection toward social justice. Here we present findings from a thematic analysis of qualitative interviews that explored how students of color reacted to working with books that centered the voices and experiences of communities of color. We found that working with books that centered their communities raised students' awareness of the white-washed book choices they had as young people. We also found that they translated this awareness into considerations for their own actions, both as future teachers and as student teachers. We also suggest that there is a need for ongoing study to measure impacts on their ongoing book selection and use as teachers.

Author Note

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Introduction

Minnesota is one of the best states to live if you are white. However, it is one of the worst states to live if you are Black (Hang et al., 2020). These racial disparities are evident across a number of factors, such as employment, income, life expectancy, home ownership, and even rates of drowning. There are similar racial disparities in education in Minnesota. Minnesota's white students have a four-year graduation rate of 88%. This rate is 52% for American Indian students, 70% for Black students, and 69% for Latinx students (Wilder Research, 2022). Although Black students constitute just 11% of students, they account for 40% of disciplinary cases (Minnesota Department of Education, 2019). Minnesota's teachers are 96% white while our student population is only 66% white (Wilder Research, 2019). Given these statistics, it is imperative that we examine how structural racism operates in Minnesota's schools.

Curriculum, including texts, acts as one mechanism of structural racism in schools (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Native children and children of color are less likely to find themselves, their experiences, and their communities represented in school curriculum (Crisp et al., 2016). Additionally, texts that center the narratives and experiences of people of color have become the targets of book banning movements (Harris & Alter, 2022; Powell, 2021). In the majority of PK-12 classrooms, white supremacy reigns over libraries, shared texts, read-alouds, and book boxes. Children and young adult publishing also continues to be dominated by whiteness. According to data gathered by the Cooperative Children's Book Center at the University of Wisconsin, in 2021 just 9% of children's books published were by Black authors and illustrators while 63% were by white authors and illustrators. For Native producers, the total is less than 2%. When we consider who children's books are about, in 2020 they were more likely to have animals as the central characters than Black, Indigenous, Latinx, or Asian characters *combined* (Cooperative Children's Book Center, 2022).

This lack of racially diverse representations in curriculum and texts erases communities of color and centers whiteness. Curriculum, particularly texts, are one way that students come to see themselves and each other. Children's literature can serve as "windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors" (Bishop, 1990) for young people, reflecting their own experiences and communities and providing them with opportunities to learn about and connect with experiences and communities different from their own. When students' communities are absent, they begin to feel invisible or unwanted. When stu-

dents' communities are omnipresent, at the exclusion of other communities, they come to normalize their own experiences and other, or even fear, experiences and communities different than their own. How children are seen and how they see themselves impacts their well-being, their identity, their sense of belonging, and their learning (Boyd et al, 2015; Compton-Lily, 2006; Rosen, 2017).

This paper describes a project that engaged undergraduate teacher candidates in grappling with the issue of racially diverse representations in children's literature. This project, the Anti-Oppression Book Council (ABC), worked with the campus library to review its children's literature collection and make text de/selection recommendations to move the collection toward social justice. We used thematic analysis of qualitative interviews with students in ABC, at the beginning of their participation and at the end of the first year, to identify and understand impacts of participation on the students. In this article, we report specifically on impacts that students of color reported. We also include the voices of two students as co-authors. One student explains how the lack of racially diverse representations she saw in books in her PK-12 classrooms impacted her own identity as Hmong American. The second student explains a program she developed and facilitated to engage a racially diverse group of elementary students with texts that represented and reflected communities of color. We close with some considerations of implications for PK-12 classrooms, teacher education, and research in antiracist praxis.

Conceptual Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT) defines our conceptual framework and commitments. CRT (Crenshaw et al., 1996) is a theoretical, interpretive, and transformative mode that foregrounds the normalization of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). When applied to education, CRT situates educational inequities within the inherent racism of U.S. society (Dixson & Anderson, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 2006; Sleeter, 2016; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). Scholars have expanded CRT with a critical focus on how oppression plays out differently for differently marginalized groups (Annamma et al., 2016; Brayboy, 2005; Dumas & ross, 2016; Haynes Writer, 2008; Jaime & Russel, 2019).

Application of CRT in education includes four elements: awareness, analysis, action, and accountability. Applied CRT can develop students' ability to nav-

igate racism, white supremacy, and internalized oppression (Kohli et al., 2017), specifically through dialogic spaces (Flynn, 2012; Taylor & Otinsky, 2006; Solórzano et al., 2000) and counter-storytelling (Bell & Roberts, 2010; Castagno, 2008; Han, Hazareesingh, & Cao, 2016; Reiter, 2016). This suggests that applied CRT could be a useful approach in nurturing antiracist teacher candidates.

Methods

In this section, we map out the integral elements we see intertwining in this work, paying particular attention to those pertaining to representations in children's literature and the students of color in ABC. We begin by describing where the work was situated, who we are within the work, and who we are becoming. We close this section with a discussion of data collection and analysis before sharing our findings in the subsequent section.

Where We Were

ABC was a program begun at a medium-sized, regional comprehensive, largely undergraduate, public institution in the Midwest. It was also a land-grant/land-grab institution built on the stolen lands of Dakota and Ojibwe people. Settler colonialism, kin to structural racism, has been baked into its being. It is unsurprising, then, that the overwhelming majority of its students, faculty, and staff were white.

ABC began as a collaboration between teacher education faculty and staff in the campus library, specifically the librarian who oversaw the children's literature collection. This collection was intended for teacher candidates to use as they developed lessons, worked in field placements, and completed coursework. This is quite a different role than, for instance, a similar collection at an elementary school or a classroom collection in a preschool. Whereas collections in PK-12 settings are intended primarily for use by PK-12 students, this collection was intended primarily for use by teacher candidates. In this way, it was primarily a pedagogical tool for the development of teachers and secondly a curricular resource for PK-12 students.

Who We Were/Are

ABC was a collective, and we, the co-authors, were members of the collective. The collective was comprised of students associated with the education department's early childhood or elementary programs. Half of the collective identified as people of color; half of the collective identified as white. This was true for the four founding co-conspirators, who held roles as faculty and staff, and for the students. This particular racial make-up was a critical design component of ABC, particularly given that it was situated within such an overwhelmingly white space. Given the focus of this issue and our shared commitments to disrupting white supremacy, we are focusing in this paper primarily on the students of color in ABC.

Of the three co-authors, one identifies as Black, one identifies as Asian American, and one identifies as white. Two of the co-authors are students in ABC, one is faculty. We recognize the power differences in our identities, both racially and in terms of our roles within the institution. We work to nurture relationships of trust that create spaces for collectivity within inequitable power structures.

What We Are Becoming

2021-22 was the initial year for ABC. The collective included 20 students, 3 faculty members, and the librarian. The collective met twice monthly, each session lasting 60-120 minutes. The first semester, the sessions focused on developing the collective and the relationships within it. In each session, we explored different aspects of racial representation and white supremacy in children's literature. We also developed a protocol for reviewing the texts in the campus children's literature collection in order to recommend books for deselection from the collection due to harmful racist representations and books that could be added to the collection so that its books would better reflect racially diverse communities. Some of the work was done in cross-racial groupings, and some work was done in racial affinity groups (Chang et al., 2006).

In the second term, ABC sessions shifted to a focus more exclusively on antiracist praxis. We shared a central antiracist praxis project, the review of the children's literature collection. We also developed smaller antiracist praxis projects that were conducted collectively by 2-3 person groups. We

plan to report on the structures and impacts of these aspects of ABC in future papers. For this paper, however, we are focusing specifically on the impacts on students of color of engaging in antiracist practice through book review.

Data

The data analyzed for this study were qualitative interviews conducted with students of color who participated in ABC and who consented to participate in the research. The interviews were conducted in-person or via Zoom, depending on the preference of the participant. We conducted the first round of interviews late in the first semester and the second round late in the second semester. There were seven interviews with participants of color in the first semester and four in the second semester. Interviews lasted roughly 60 minutes and the first co-author conducted them. The second and third co-authors were also interview participants. The interview protocols had four sections: demographic questions; experiences as a student; ideas about and experiences with racism and antiracist work; and experiences with ABC.

For this study, we conducted a thematic analysis (Lochmiller, 2021). We first identified places in the interview transcripts where participants spoke about children's literature or reading. We then analyzed these portions of the transcripts to identify patterns. We then used these patterns to describe themes that we saw in the participants' responses.

Findings

The themes that we identified through thematic analysis were: impacts on identity (e.g., self, other); considerations as teacher; process of realization. We now describe the findings relating to these themes. We also present extended reflections on two of these themes by the second and third authors.

Impacts on Identity

One theme that we identified through analysis of the transcripts was the impact of the lack of racially diverse representation in books. All of the students reported growing up and attending elementary and secondary schools in the Midwest. They recounted that the books in their classrooms overwhelmingly centered white voices and experiences. They reported that this whitewashing of the books available to them normalized whiteness. This normalization of whiteness, they reported, negatively impacted their identity as people of color. They began to negatively compare their families and communities to the whiteness they saw represented all around them. Whiteness was the norm, but they were not white. Therefore, they could never be the “norm.”

It was not just the presence of whiteness but the lack of characters that looked like them that they reported had a negative impact on their identity. They spoke about their own specific racial identities (e.g., a first-generation immigrant of color, an adoptee of color in a white family, biracial) and how they did not see themselves – or their unique experiences – reflected in the books available to them in PK-12 schools. They reported that not seeing themselves, their communities, and their experiences in books made them feel invisible. They linked this erasure to feelings of low self-worth and esteem.

The third co-author (Author 3) reflected on her own experiences, the impacts on her identity, and her current understanding of the impacts of racially diverse representation on children for this article:

Growing up, I did not see much representation of myself or any Asian culture in children’s books. I read many books about young girls who had blond hair with blue eyes and books involving animals as main characters. At first, many of these children’s books I read were for fun and had no meaning. As I look back, I realized that it affected how I perceived myself. I wanted my skin to be lighter and tried different methods to make sure my skin did not become darker. I became insecure about my brown eyes as I thought they were not pretty enough to be in books. Instead, as a child I thought that any eye color besides my own was better because Asian girls with brown eyes were not beautiful enough to be in books.

Children are very impressionable as they are still learning and discovering the world around them. Children’s books have a great impact on a child’s development and how they may grow to perceive the world around them.

Stereotypes and depictions of any social group can create hostile environments. Children can learn what roles they and others can or can not do through what is portrayed in books. Diverse representation in children's books is important as books can contribute to children's self-worth and connect them with their cultural background. Representation allows for diverse and inclusive stories to be shown and can lead to more antiracist practices within an educational setting. A diverse selection of books allows children to look into the lives of others and be open to different perspectives and voices. With more antiracist practice in place, it becomes a step to work against issues relating to social injustice such as prejudice and discrimination.

Considerations as Teachers

All ABC participants were associated with the university's education department, and the majority were enrolled in early childhood and elementary licensure programs. Given that they were studying to become teachers, it was not surprising that we found that many spoke about the importance of curating and using racially diverse texts as teachers.

The participants described how they were already taking steps to build a racially diverse collection of children's books for their own future classrooms. They talked about utilizing resources they had accessed in the review of the children's literature collection to seek out books by and about racially diverse people. They remarked on the lack of racial diversity they saw in the classrooms where they were placed for their field experiences, and they envisioned their classrooms as being a respite from the whitewashing that their students would otherwise experience. They commented on how critical a racially diverse book collection would be for them as teachers of color. They also commented on the importance of their white colleagues diversifying their classroom libraries as well. When they envisioned their future classroom libraries, they connected this vision with their personal histories, referring in one case to the books they wish they had had as a child.

The second co-author, in collaboration with two other ABC participants, moved from envisioning what to do as a future teacher to taking action as a student teacher. They created and facilitated an event to engage 60 fourth-grade students with books from their school library that centered racially diverse communities and experiences. The second co-author (Author 2) describes this experience here:

A couple of ABC participants [1] had an opportunity to be part of a book tasting with three classes of fourth-graders this semester. The ABC participants and fourth graders had a blast. The preparation for this event included making newsletters to send to the students' families, creating recording sheets for the students, and most importantly choosing books for the students to explore. Since the event included the entire fourth-grade cohort at a local elementary school the ABC participants spent a couple of hours organizing books from the school's library collection into different genres. The books included diverse characters, were written by diverse authors, and highlighted cultures reflected in the school community.

On the day of the event, the ALABbers placed the books at 8 different tables, sorted by genre. There was also a separate section of the library where we displayed books that were not part of the library's collection. The students had a chance to explore these books and write down titles they wanted to see in their school. In this way, they were making selection recommendations similar to what we had done for our campus library in ABC.

When the students first arrived in the library, they were directed to sit on the rug. Once they were situated, they were instructed to take a few minutes to walk around and see what they noticed about the books. After the students explored the different tables for a few minutes, they shared what they had noticed. They mentioned that the books were colorful and that they included different cultures. We then explained that this book tasting was done in collaboration with the Anti-Oppression Book Council (ABC), which led to a brief discussion about the importance of diverse books. They then had more time to explore the books and create their want-to-read lists. We closed by asking students to share some of the books they found. The students stated that they loved to discover different books that they had not known were in their school library collection.

Overall, the event was a great success. It allowed ABC students to work using antiracist practices with fourth-grade students through books. Students were exposed to books in their library that showed representations of diverse cultures. Students recognized this as they started to explore the books at the event. Students and teachers talked about the books together, and students had a chance to suggest books for teachers to add to their classroom libraries. Students also walked away with a list of books that they could read in the future. Students and teachers were excited to read books that they did not even know were in their school's library collection. This helped students get exposure to new ideas, people, and places they may not have seen in books. Students also could relate to the books shown and could start to understand the mirrors, windows, and doors concept (Bishop, 1990).

Process of Realization

The third theme that we identified in our analysis of interviews with participants of color was the process of realization. This theme refers to how participants reflected on their deepened understanding of the impact the lack of representation in books had on them. They attributed this process of realization to their participation in ABC and to some of their coursework in the education program.

They recounted specific moments that started this process of realization for them, and these moments were frequently encounters with a selection of books focused specifically on racially diverse communities. Seeing a group of books that did not center whiteness seemed to raise the idea that 1) not all books had to center white communities and 2) the books they had experienced overwhelmingly centered white communities and experiences. They described this process of realization as ongoing and one which impacted other areas of their lives. They explained how they shared what they were learning with family members. One participant shared how he led a book group discussion at his largely white church community, intentionally selecting a book that did not center whiteness, in order to engage others in a discussion of race, racism, white supremacy, and their impacts.

Discussion

In our work, we are focused on antiracist praxis as a means for interrupting racism in schools while also moving school systems toward social justice. In this paper, we explore specifically how teacher candidates of color made sense of racially diverse representation in children's literature. This is a critical pedagogical concern for them as future teachers, and it is also a critical personal concern for them as people of color.

Given that our participants attended PK-12 schools in the upper Midwest, it is striking that all recalled being surrounded by whiteness in the books they encountered. What is even more striking is that they reported they had been unaware that this was the case until they encountered multiple books that centered communities of color. These interactions revealed for them the ways that white supremacy had excluded books that reflected their experiences, communities, and identities.

This realization was significantly impactful and often emotional for the participants. It is important then to consider the possibly difficult awareness this might raise for students of color. This is not to say that it should be avoided. However, engagement with a rich collection of diverse representations may heighten students' understanding of the myriad ways that racism and white supremacy impacted their schooling. Teacher educators should be aware of this challenge and ensure that they are creating relationships and spaces that support students.

This also suggests that we should not assume that all of the mechanisms of white supremacy are inherently legible to people of color just because of their racialized identities and experiences. It is more common to see "white blindness" to structural racism mentioned in antiracist research and work. However, our study reminds us that we can all come to normalize racist experiences due to the pervasive nature of white supremacy.

It is also important to build the connection from realization to action. In this case, the students were preparing to become teachers. They made the connections to actions they will take as teachers, focusing on building a diverse collection of books for their future students. They mentioned resources, such as award lists focusing on specific communities and publishing companies by and for people of color, that they had already begun to use to diversify the books they used. They also shared conversations with their cooperating teachers about offering students more diverse books. Moving from awareness to action can serve as a protective measure, the empowerment pushing against (Banks, 2016).

This work contributes to our growing understanding of the importance of diverse representations in literature, especially literature for children and young adults. There is still much to consider and understand. For instance, this study focused exclusively on the teacher candidates of color and their experiences. It will be important in future analyses to examine the experiences of white students in ABC and contrast those with the students of color. Additionally, it will be important to compare the experiences of all ABC participants with other teacher candidates who did not engage in the program to see if there are differences in their experiences and understandings. Lastly, there is a need to study how teachers build and sustain diverse classroom libraries. We look forward to continuing to be part of this conversation.

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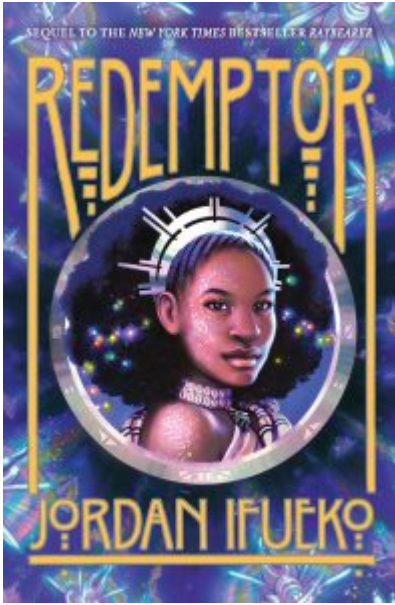
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Review of *Redemptor* by Jordan Ifueko (Abrams, 2021)

MARLY SCHROM



At the end of Ifueko's first book in this series, *Raybearer*, we find our teenage heroine Tarisai making a deal with demons in the underworld in order to create peace in Aritsar. *Redemptor*, the fast-paced and exciting sequel to *Raybearer*, follows Tarisai's journey to accomplish the tasks that were assigned to her by the demons of the underworld: anoint her own council using her newly discovered raybearer power, and willingly embark into the underworld as the final redemptor. Plagued with self-doubt and unforeseen obstacles, completing these tasks is not as easy for Tarisai as it first seemed. But with some help from new friends like Tarisai's shy personal griot Adukeh, and insight from familiar ones

like the optimistic Dayo, Tarisai learns that true strength comes from the support of those who love you. This sequel is filled with the same vibrant colors, incredible magic, and beloved friendships as its predecessor. Sanjeet's "tea-colored eyes" never fail to comfort, and the warmth of the Ray that unites Tarisai to her council-siblings can be felt even by the reader. *Redemptor* nourishes the imagination and soothes the heart.

As Tarisai matures, so do some of the themes of the book. With mild violence and references to intimate relationships, *Redemptor* is better suited to a high school age or older audience. This book also features mainly BIPOC characters, and would make a great addition to any classroom or library to increase the number of young adult stories for BIPOC students to potentially see themselves reflected in, and for all students and readers to read and appreciate. From the magical landscapes like the Olojari Mountains where an alagbato threatens to erupt a volcano, to the vigilante called the Crocodile who

wears a “green, scaly mask made of leather trimmed by jagged rows of animal teeth,” fantasy enthusiasts will love the wonder of the world Jordan Ifueko creates.

Ifueko’s imagination knows no bounds. The world of Artisar is large and thorough, and the rules and laws of the people there are consistent and believable. Tarisai makes an excellent pair of eyes to see this world through, and her character is exactly what a good heroine should be: flawed. She faces universal struggles, like loneliness, peer pressure, and the desire to please those around her. You can’t help but find yourself invested in Tarisai’s growth, lamenting her mistakes when she turns away from her friends instead of confiding in them, and rejoicing in her successes when she allows vulnerability to become her strength. The story takes place in a fictional world, and as such, there is not a direct sense of race playing a key part in the plot of the story. However, there are strong themes of seeking justice for those being oppressed through systemic institutions. *Redemptor* functions as both an escape from the mundane world and a way to examine and critique systems of injustice in our own world, specifically through wealth disparities between the upper and lower classes. Ifueko has spun together a magnificent sequel to Tarisai’s journey that will not let you down.

AMPLIFYING BLACK NARRATIVES



The *MNWE Journal* is proud to spotlight creators, publishers, and book-sellers featured in the University of Minnesota Libraries’ “Amplifying Black Narratives” event series.

The webinars featured some of Minnesota’s most essential creators, workers, intellectuals, committed to sharing Black narratives with Minnesotans and the world.

Amplifying Black Narratives: The Creation of Black Narratives event
held on 11/18/2021

Amplifying Black Narratives: Black Publishers and Bookstores event
held on 10/28/2021

Amplifying Black Narratives: Past, Present, and Future event
held on 9/28/2021

In this section of the journal, we will highlight these events, including articles written about the events.

Casting the Net Wide: Black Authors and Booksellers Identify Ways to Help

ALLISON CAMPBELL-JENSEN

Opening all aspects of publishing to Black people and people of color, bringing everyone into the arena, and putting the responsibility of education about racism on everyone – including white people – were among the recommendations during *Amplifying Black Narratives: Black Publishers and Bookstores*.

The Oct. 28 panel discussion was the second in a three-part Friends Forum series sponsored by the Friends of the University Libraries.

‘Just how white publishing is’

In the 2019 Diversity in Publishing survey by Lee & Low Books showed that 76% of those in publishing overall were white; 78% of publishing executives were white; and 85% of editorial roles were filled by white people. In the face of these structural disparities, Kate McCready, Interim Associate University Librarian for Content & Collections, asked the three panelists what they hope to achieve in the next year or two.

Rekhet Si-Asar is Executive Director of In Black Ink, a nonprofit that seeks to create spaces where intergenerational stories about Minnesotans of African heritage can be shared, documented, and archived. She called for increasing the number of Black publishing arts professionals in all roles – not just authors, but also Black editors, graphic artists, proofreaders, and “marketing folks, who decide where books will be featured.”

“We do need more agents and editors who recognize our stories,” said Mélina Mangal, author of the award-winning *The Vast Wonder of the World: Biologist Ernest Everett Just* and school librarian. She also noted that gaining entry to the publishing world often has required serving in problematic unpaid

internships; there's an increasing emphasis on paid internships but there needs to be more.

"It's difficult to get people to understand just how white publishing is, especially when you're trying to fill bookshelves," said Dionne Sims, founder of Black Garnet Books. She founded the bookshop (currently online but expecting to be bricks and mortar soon) as a response to state violence against Black people, as well as the purposeful exclusion of people of color from the literature community. She has engaged in grassroots networking to find the books by Black and brown people that she wants to sell.

Removing other barriers

Another issue that institutions like schools and universities face, Mangal said, is the limitation on the book vendors that librarians can use. Purchasing needs to open up to "voices we couldn't hear otherwise," to authors who publish independently and smaller publishers. "Doors are opening but not wide enough," she said.

Si-Asar called for recognizing the diversity of Black and African heritage cultures that exist — that one or two titles cannot reflect the whole. She also noted that Black authors write not just for themselves but for all — "it's a window to another world that co-exists with you." Mangal noted the need to "normalize" Black-told stories as not just diverse but as regular stories. "Our world is us — it's all of us."

Sims has found an expectation, especially from white people, that anti-racism work rests on Black and brown people. She has curated lists of books and yet gets the impression that this is not enough. She encouraged everyone to recruit Black and brown people on their teams and in their spaces, not with just an annual push but with an "insistent intentionality." Also urging librarians to do their own work on race and bias was Mangal.

Authentic voices

Staying true to your story as you hear it and feel it is important, Mangal said. She previously worked for a couple of years on a book with an agent before realizing she had lost her voice in the process.

“Find an editor who can relate to what you say,” she advised, while noting that search can take time. Visualize who you want to reach, Mangal said, and recognize your options.

For librarians, inclusive training and seeking out sources for Black authors should be priorities, the panelists said. Black-owned bookshops and publishers for Black narratives in the Twin Cities area include Black Garnet Books, Mind’s Eye Comics in Burnsville, Babycake’s Book Stack mobile bookstore, and Strive Community Publishing.

Intentionally opening up publishing and purchasing systems will make a difference for everyone.

Deserving Recognition: Creators of Black Narratives Reflect

ALLISON CAMPBELL-JENSEN

“You can’t be what you can’t see,” said **Larry McKenzie**, award-winning coach, speaker, and author, during the Nov. 18 Friends of the Libraries event *Amplifying Black Narratives: The Creation of Black Narratives*. Among the important resources for creating Black narratives are people who serve as “mirrors” that reflect possibilities yet may be scarce in the community.

When **Sheletta Brundidge** published her first children’s book, “Cameron Goes to School,” her uncle Tim was especially moved by it. He revealed that 40 years ago, he had written a book for his daughter, but he put it away because he was told no one would buy it because its main character was Black. Had his work been received differently, “we could have had two or three authors in my family,” says Brundidge, who has also published “Daniel Finds His Voice” and hosts a podcasting platform.

Black American Muslim poet, arts educator, and performance artist **Sagirah Shahid** is a writer-in-residence in a program for Minnesota State Colleges called *Write Like Us* to mentor students who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. It’s a way to overcome invisibility.

Each of these participants has overcome the destructive idea from the past, described by moderator **Dara Beevas** as “our stories as Black storytellers are not as important.” During the conversation, they shared ways for creators of Black narratives to battle doubt, celebrate excellence, and share stories throughout the year.

Fighting doubts

Beevas, as the co-founder of Wise Ink publishing, has found that many Black and brown people do not feel worthy of being published. The doubt can be instilled early. When she asked her middle school teacher in a journal how

to become a writer, her question was dismissed; the reply was to only write about things that were important.

To fight doubt in one's abilities, Shahid said writers must find their community, whether in family, peer group, or even one other person who will support you. McKenzie, author of "Basketball: Much More Than a Game," went further: "You have to learn to be your biggest cheerleader."

Advising creators of Black narratives to "shake it off," Brundidge added that "we have to remember what we've overcome. ... If you believe in yourself, there's nothing that can stop you."

Beevas noted that McKenzie has said: "If our kids really knew our ancestors were kings and queens, it would lead to radical change." There's an absence of books that tell the story of Black ancestors in Africa, Beevas said, a gap that needs to be filled.

Standing out

Celebrating excellence means telling stories of Black people like baseball's Jackie Robinson and basketball's Bill Russell, McKenzie said, who were successful yet couldn't stay in the same hotels as their teammates. They may not have started as excellent, but they achieved it. In his work, he strives to build young people into champions in every arena.

While some might criticize her for bragging, Brundidge noted that she does not want to dumb down her achievements. The outstanding NASA scientist Katherine Johnson didn't speak up and did not have her story told for 50 years, until "Hidden Figures" came out. Brundidge is not apologetic: "I come into a room with my own spotlight."

"We are the ancestors for the next generation," Shahid said. Requiring Black people to be excellent in order to be appreciated for their value, humanity, and creativity, even to enjoy basic dignity, is a result of our inequitable society. Pushing back against these circumstances in a joking way, she said being our awkward ordinary selves should be celebrated, too. (Her upcoming children's activity book is "Get Involved in a Book Club.") Creators of Black narratives can convey the truth of being excellent in their own ways, she said.

Being inspired

“Ordinary people did extraordinary things over time,” Beevas said; that’s the Black story. From the spirituals that transcended despair to create joy to the creativity shown in dressing up for church, she said, “Black narratives are so powerful because we make everything dope.”

Yet, they still can be caught up short, as when Brundidge and her daughter were doing a school exercise that called for filling in blanks in a story with emojis representing family members. But there were no Black emojis on the school computer they were using; they couldn’t cut and paste a Black grandfather emoji. Unable to complete the story, they decided to pass on doing that exercise. Everyone should notice when representation is overwhelmingly white.

To be better supporters of Black writers, non-Black people need to move from being allies to being co-conspirators, inviting Black leaders to their homes and libraries to talk, for instance, McKenzie said. And, Beevas added, the Black leaders need to be paid to be part of the un-learning of those who are not Black.

Shahid asked co-conspirators to consider what they would risk to place Black emojis on school computers or to gain representation of people of color in other places where they have been erased. Appropriate recognition is important. Brundidge said when asked to speak at a Black History Month event, she would expect to be paid and not do it just for the offer of “exposure.” She said: “Those days are done.”

Moreover, Black writers and leaders should be recognized every month of the year – and beyond. Inviting, investing in, and celebrating creators of Black narratives every day of the year – that is what will make a difference in amplifying Black narratives and writers.

SPOTLIGHT ON AFRICAN-HERITAGE CREATORS, PUBLISHERS & RESOURCES FOR THE CLASSROOM



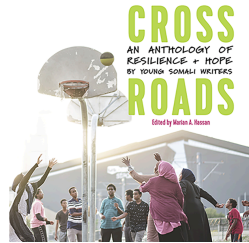
Every issue of the *MnWE Journal* spotlights resources of use for teachers of writing in Minnesota. This issue we spotlight resources that bring African heritage materials into the classroom and that support African-heritage students.

Spotlight on Resources from the Minnesota Humanities Center

The Minnesota Humanities Center maintains an innovative publishing program of materials, in print and online, to support literacy education from the perspective of African-heritage communities in Minnesota.

Print Resources

Crossroads: An Anthology of Resilience and Hope by Young Somali Writers is an anthology of writing by youth and young adult Somali Minnesotans. Edited by author and educator Marian Hassan, this first-of-its-kind collection serves as a necessary pillar of self-representation in this politically challenging time in history. The poets and writers within these pages are at continuous stages of transition and intersection: between childhood and adulthood, Somali and American culture, their own expectations versus the world's.



Expanding on Somalia's rich oral heritage, the poems and stories in this book document the modern struggles and resilience of this community in transition. As these writers explore their own histories, their dreams, determination, and journeys of self-discovery are sure to inspire pride and understanding in all who read them.

Online resources for Crossroads: Please visit <https://www.mnhum.org/program/crossroads/> – for information about the project, plus video of editor Marian Hassan.

Blues Vision, edited by Alexis Pate, Pamela Fletcher, and Otis Powell, copublished with the Minnesota Historical Society Press, is a surprising and compelling anthology that reveals complex realities—beautiful, infuriating, painful, and uplifting—as described by African American writers in Minnesota over the past century. Contributors include:

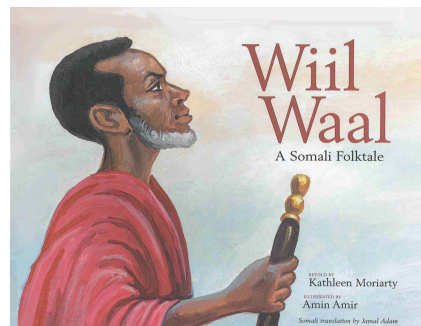


Contributors include: Davida Adedjouma, Louis Alemayehu, E.G. Bailey, Conrad Balfour, Lloyd Brown, Philip Bryant, Shá Cage, Laurie Carlos, Gabrielle Civil, Taiyon Coleman, Kyra Crawford-Calvert, Mary Moore Easter, Evelyn Fairbanks, Pamela R. Fletcher, Shannon Gibney, Taylor Gordon, David Grant, Craig Green, Libby Green, David Haynes, Kofi Bobby Hickman, Kim Hines, Carolyn Holbrook, Steven Holbrook, Kemet Imhotep, Andrea Jenkins, Nellie Stone Johnson, Tish Jones, Etheridge Knight, Arleta Little, Roy McBride, Gordon Parks, Alexis Pate, G.E. Patterson, Anthony Peyton Porter, Louis Porter II, J. Otis Powell?, Rohan Preston, Ralph Remington, Angela Shannon, Susan J. Smith-Grier, Clarence White, and Frank B. Wilderson III.

Online resources for Blues Vision: The Companion Guide (including author insights and reflections) can be found online; please visit <http://humanitieslearning.org/>

Print and Online Resources

In 2006, the Minnesota Humanities Center in collaboration with the Minnesota Somali community launched the **Somali Bilingual Book Project**. Our shared goal was to ensure the community has high-quality authentic resources that promote and preserve heritage languages and increase English literacy skills of refugee and immigrant fam-



ilies. The project culminated with the publication of four traditional Somali folktales in both English and Somali as well as a dual-language audio recording. These stories are available as both book and pdf, online, at the Minnesota Humanities Center website, <http://humanitieslearning.org/>

Out of Print, but Available Online

Braided Lives: An Anthology of Multicultural American Writing was published in 1991 by the Minnesota Humanities Center in partnership with the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English. The work includes selections by African American authors. While the book is out of print, all pieces are available at the resource collection at <http://humanitieslearning.org/>

Other Online Resources

Firsts: Minnesota's African American Groundbreakers is a series of video interviews with six African American Minnesotans who capture what it means to be a "First." The videos are hosted by award-winning author Alexs Pate.

MHC's *Juneteenth Story Lesson Plans* were developed by teachers from Omaha Public Schools, to be used in combination with the play *Kumbayah The Juneteenth Story* by Rose McGee. These resources are available at <http://humanitieslearning.org/>

About the Minnesota Humanities Center

The Minnesota Humanities Center (MHC) collaborates with individuals, organizations, and communities to bring transformational humanities programming into the lives of Minnesotans throughout the state. Using story as a catalyst, we produce, create, and support projects and programs that explore a range of subjects.

Founded in 1971, MHC is an independent nonprofit affiliated with and supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities. MHC is also a grantmaking organization and operates a full-service event center in a historic building on St. Paul's East Side.

For more information, visit <https://www.mnhum.org/>

Spotlight on Black Literacy Matters

Black Literacy Matters, a new companion to Literacy Minnesota's *Journeys: An Anthology of Adult Student Writing*, creates a space for Black voices to be published and heard, celebrates the creativity and diversity of Black culture and lifts up the narratives and lived experience of Black Minnesotans.

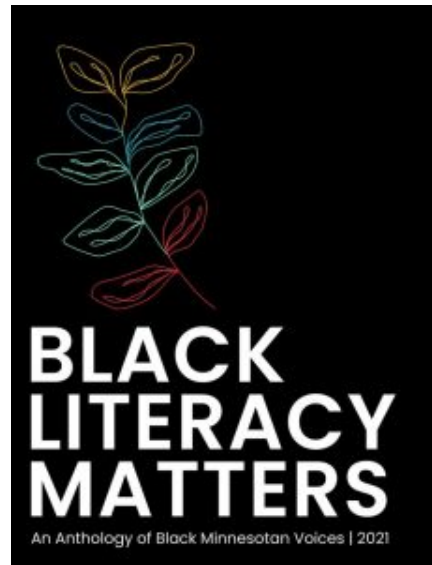
Like *Journeys*, *Black Literacy Matters* functions as both platform and teaching tool, with accompanying discussion guides and classroom resources for the Adult Basic Education (ABE) community and beyond.

According to Literacy Minnesota,

Many studies suggest that culturally relevant texts help increase students' engagement in learning. [*Black Literacy Matters*] provides a text of authentic learner stories for teachers to use in the classroom.

Whether you are a teacher, tutor, supporter of literacy education or you simply believe in the power of words, you will find yourself connecting to the stories because one thing is certain: you are on your own journey. We all are. Hearing the stories of fellow travelers and learning about the struggles and victories they've had along the way, however similar or dissimilar they may be to our own, helps us to better navigate the world and find our place within it.

The inaugural edition of *Black Literacy Matters* was released in November 2021.



LITERACY MINNESOTA began in 1972 when a group of volunteers realized if one person taught someone to read, and that person taught someone to read, they could create a movement. Today, Literacy Minnesota is recognized as a local and national leader and a driving force behind the latest developments in literacy learning. We continue to build a movement of learners, educators, literacy advocates and organizations in pursuit of a world where life-changing learning is within everyone's reach.

MISSION: To share the power of learning through education, community building and advocacy.

VISION: We believe literacy has the power to advance equity and justice, and we envision a world where life-changing learning is within everyone's reach.

CORE VALUES

Lifelong Learning – We believe the pursuit of knowledge is a lifelong journey. We all have something to teach each other.

Individual Dignity – We believe individuals have the power to create their own potential through teaching, learning and community involvement. We create learning environments where the dignity, worth and complexity of each person is honored.

Equity & Justice – We believe access to quality education is a cornerstone of a more just and equitable society. We work to provide transformative learning opportunities to people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities.

Leadership & Innovation – We believe in nimbly responding to a changing landscape, creating new pathways for groups and individuals to reach their full potential.

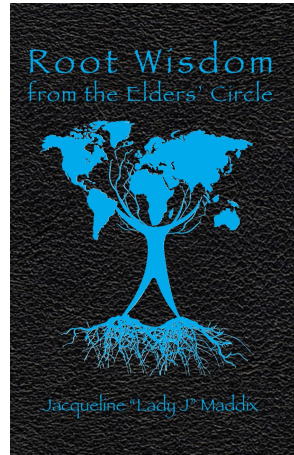
For more information, please visit: <https://www.litera->

cymn.org/, the website from which much of this profile text was taken.

Spotlight on the Minnesota Black Publishing Arts Collaborative

The Minnesota Black Publishing Arts Collaborative is comprised of seven organizations working “to bring beautiful Black books and writers to our community.” Membership includes the following organizations, primarily in the Twin Cities.

- **In Black Ink**, which creates spaces where the stories and voices of people of African heritage are celebrated, documented, and archived through publications, professional development training opportunities, and public presentations. For more information, visit <https://inblackink.org/>
- **Strive Publishing** was founded to help solve two problems: the need for culturally relevant children’s books; and the underrepresentation of Black authors in book publishing. As the founder notes, “we all have a stake in the critical work of uplifting Black voices in literature, and we can make the greatest impact through working together.” Strive works to “inspire community collaboration in publishing stories to heal, teach, learn, and earn, while building an ecosystem that embodies a rich Black culture and heritage.” Strive maintains both a publishing house and a bookstore working toward this mission. For more information, visit <https://www.strivepublishing.com/>
- **Planting People Growing Justice Press** is a Black woman-owned children’s book publisher, bookstore, and social enterprise that seeks to increase diversity in books and promote youth leadership development. Their books “explore history and culture across the African Diaspora with topics such as arts, geography, and science. Each book also supports the development of core leadership skills in these developmental areas: social-emotional learning, emotional intelligence, project-based learning, and anti-racist education.” For more information,



visit <https://www.ppgjbooks.com/>

- **Vermillion Ink Press** is “a literary multimedia collective and independent publisher of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry from the margins.” For more information, visit <https://www.vermillioninkpress.com/>
- **Wise Ink** publishes “stories that support building a better and more equitable world” and “share[s] stories that uplift, inspire, and inform... from voices not typically heard in publishing.” For more information, visit <https://wiseink.com/>

The professional goals of the Collaborative center on “building a network of Black publishing professionals to make diversity more easily accessible for publishing companies, and other publishing arts organizations.”

The Minnesota Black Publishing Arts Collaborative exists primarily in the energy of its membership, and the URLs above are the places to go for more information.

Spotlight on Literacy for Freedom

Keenan Jones, the founder of Literacy for Freedom, is an African American educator who has worked as an Innovative, Design, and Learning Specialist (Teaching and Learning) in Hopkins Public Schools in Minnetonka, MN. Mr. Jones has been committed to literacy and the development of African American males for over 10 years. Soon, Jones will also be a published author: he will publish *Saturday Morning at the 'Shop*, a picture book illustrated by Ken Daley.



His work is inspired by his love for literacy (which was developed early in life). Raised by a mother who is a public school teacher and a father who worked in the business world for over 25 years, he was taught that academics can take you anywhere in life.

According to Jones, “Many African American male students do well in school and go on to important leadership positions in their chosen fields. They make great contributions to the country, raise and support families, and serve as role models to their communities. Unfortunately, many African American males don’t reach their full potential in our schools or society. There is no question that our education system must vastly improve for these intelligent minds to succeed in college, careers, and life.”

Literacy for Freedom works to improve the quality of life and future opportunities for African American males. Literacy for Freedom provides 7th-12th graders opportunities for engagement in their own development using critical literacy and critical media frameworks.

According to Jones, “Black males that I have mentored have gone on to be successful whether that be in college or other career tracks. These young men are now contributing to their communities and raising families. It’s going to take a ‘village’ of support from schools, communities, and families to keep our Black boys in schools and out of these prisons. We can do it, but it’s got to be a collective effort.” Literacy for Freedom also provides consultation

to other organizations around issues impacting the developing AA male student scholars.

Literacy for Freedom was created in the fall of 2019 by 4th Grade teacher Keenan Jones of Hopkins Public Schools (Tanglen) located in Minnetonka, MN. It is a new 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization for African American males in grades 7-12. Literacy for Freedom seeks to dramatically improve academic and life outcomes for African American male students in the Twin Cities metro area.

Mission: It is the mission of LF to empower, inspire, and motivate African American males to achieve greatness.

Vision: Our vision is that African American males will develop a love for literacy, maintain an affirmed sense of identity, and collect all the fundamental tools needed to navigate college, career, and life.

Goals

- Help foster a love for literacy to improve literacy rates for African American males in grades 7-12, provide them with strategies to improve comprehension, and teach them to think critically about different types of text
- Emphasize the importance of postsecondary education and/or career pathways by assisting scholars with tools needed to prepare for those options through seminars, virtual tours, speakers
- Foster youth development socially, emotionally, and psychologically using social emotional learning curriculum and professional mental health support from community resources
- Develop identity as African American males in America using critical literacy and critical media literacy strategies

through the LF Mentorship Group

- Provide consultation to educators/administrators about interventions to improve African American male achievement with key topics such as literacy instruction, access to post-secondary pathways, reducing special education placement, and culturally relevant teaching strategies
- Collaborate with parents/guardians on academic and career goals to guide scholars through the education system and beyond

For more information, please visit: <https://literacyforfreedom.org/> – the website from which most of the information and text of this profile was taken.

Spotlight on the National African American Read-In

The (AARI) is a groundbreaking effort to encourage communities to read together, centering African American books and authors. It was established in 1990 by the Black Caucus of the National Council of Teachers of English to make literacy a significant part of Black History Month. This initiative has reached more than 6 million participants around the world.



During the month of February, schools, churches, libraries, bookstores, community and professional organizations, and interested citizens are urged to make literacy a significant part of Black History Month by hosting an African American Read-In. Hosting an event can be as simple as bringing together friends to share a book or as elaborate as arranging public readings and media presentations that feature professional African American writers.

The format of these events varies widely, but all events have a few things in common:

- Texts written by African American authors are shared.
- Participants either listen to or provide the readings.
- A count is taken of who attends, and that count is documented in the “report card” as a measure of the global reach of this program each year.

Beyond these commonalities, events have included:

- Readings by authors
- Poetry slams
- Musical acts, performances, reenactments, or plays
- Film screenings including discussions of paired texts
- A common reading in advance of a single text, like a book club
- Writing or art-making and the sharing of that by participants
- Featured guests such as local leaders or community heroes
- Book drives to collect books by African American authors to share with

- schools
- Activities for young children (e.g., bedtime stories)
 - Media coverage to raise the profile of local authors
 - Ongoing community outreach after the event that spreads the love of literacy
 - Awards of recognition for African American authors within the community

More information, including recommended books, are available at the NCTE website, from which this text was taken, at <https://ncte.org/get-involved/african-american-read-in/>

About the NCTE

Through collaboration and community, shared stories and shared experiences, NCTE supports teachers and their students in classrooms, on college campuses, and in online learning environments.

For more than 100 years, NCTE has worked with its members to offer journals, publications, and resources; to further the voice and expertise of educators as advocates for their students at the local and federal levels; and to share lesson ideas, research, and teaching strategies through its Annual Convention and other professional learning events.

Mission Statement

The National Council of Teachers of English is devoted to improving the teaching and learning of English and the language arts at all levels of education. This mission statement was adopted in 1990:

“The Council promotes the development of literacy, the use of language to construct personal and public worlds and to achieve full participation in society, through the learning and teaching of English and the related arts and sciences of language.”

Vision

NCTE and its members will apply the power of language and literacy to actively pursue justice and equity for all students and the educators who serve them. As the nation's oldest organization of pre-K through graduate school literacy educators, NCTE has a rich history of deriving expertise and advocacy from its members' professional research, practice, and knowledge. Today, we must more precisely align this expertise to advance access, power, agency, affiliation, and impact for all learners.

Access: NCTE and its members will strengthen or create inclusive hubs for state-of-the-art practices, research, and resources, providing access for more diverse voices to create, collaborate, and lead, within and beyond the organization.

Power: NCTE and its members will actively engage families, community members, administrators, colleagues, and other stakeholders and contribute to and critique policy at the local, state, and national levels.

Agency: NCTE and its members will be leaders in nationally recognized instruction, research, and assessment practices that support diverse learners in their journeys to becoming critical thinkers, consumers, and creators who advocate for and actively contribute to a better world.

Affiliation: NCTE's member-created communities will strengthen cross-community connections, information sharing, and organizing to collaborate more powerfully.

Impact: Ultimately, NCTE and its members' efforts will deepen every student's consciousness of worth and widen possibilities for all students' access, power, agency, affiliation, and impact, across a lifetime.

NCTE members will see the benefits of our collective work through the successes of our instruction, research, public advocacy, and, most critically, our students.

Spotlight on the Givens Foundation

Givens Foundation for African American Literature remains the only organization in Minnesota exclusively dedicated to advancing and celebrating black literature and writers.

The Givens Foundation is named for the philanthropists Archie and Phebe Givens. Archie Givens, Sr., was born in Minneapolis in 1919. According to a profile on WCCO-TV, “Givens started an ice cream parlor that thrived, and then he and Phebe opened the first integrated nursing homes in Minnesota. When Black people were finally able to legally own new homes, he developed houses in south Minneapolis. He became the state’s first Black millionaire in 1974.” The foundation established in their name has grown from offering scholarships to individual students to a central role in sustaining and celebrating black literature and writers.



The Givens Foundation maintains several programs that make African-heritage literature and culture the center of life in Minnesota and the world.

The Givens Foundation’s Culture Matters K-12 Residencies Program

The Givens literary arts education residency program brings writers into the classroom. This program has supported the academic engagement of nearly 15,000 Twin Cities students, by using African American literature as a springboard for teaching reading and writing in a culturally responsive classroom experience.

The Givens Foundation’s Emerging Writers Mentor Program

The Emerging Writers’ Mentor Program engages Black writers from diverse genres in a six-month program that promotes the “writing life,” hones literary craft, and supports the production of new works by the participating writers.

Since 2007, The Givens Foundation has offered ten emerging Min-

nesota-based writers the opportunity to work intensively with one National Mentor and two State of Minnesota Mentors, all of whom are nationally acclaimed writers.

Givens Foundation's Public Programs (Readings, Talks, Podcasts & Media)

Through programs and events such as the NOMMO African American Author Series and the Black Market Reads Podcast, writers and readers participate in the sharing of story in all its forms.

NOMMO African American Author Series

The Givens Foundation's NOMMO African American Authors Series brings national and regional authors to broad and diverse audiences in the Twin Cities cultural landscape. (In West Africa, the Dogon people of Mali believe that the African concept of Nommo, the power of the spoken word, carries an energy that produces all life and influences everything from destiny to the naming of children.) Past NOMMO speakers have been Angela Davis, Nikki Giovanni, Amiri Baraka, Sonya Sanchez, Ishmael Reed, Patricia Smith, Gary Jackson and Yusef Komunyakaa, Kevin Young, Nikki Finney, Elizabeth Alexander, Ntozake Shange, E. Ethelbert Miller, Percival Everett, Judge Judy Hatcher, and Roxane Gay.

Select NOMMO videos (produced in partnership with Twin Cities PBS MN Channel's *The Power of the Word* series) are available online.

Black Market Reads Podcast

The podcast *Black Market Reads* is a menu for Black literary consumption and all of its spin-offs. The podcast is hosted by Lissa Jones (the creator of *Urban Agenda* on KMOJ FM, 89.9) and produced by iDream.tv, featuring conversations with nationally known authors like Roxane Gay, Mat Johnson, Paul Beatty, Sharon Flake, James McBride



and local treasures such as Duchess Harris, Mahmoud El-Kati, Beverly Cottman, Robin Hickman, Carolyn Holbrook, David Lawrence Grant and more.

Givens Foundations New Collection, *Voices from Within*

The Givens Foundation has recently released a zombie apocalyptic drama conceived and drafted by select residents of the Hennepin County Juvenile Correctional Center in Minnesota (with editorial assistance provided by members of United Artist Collaborative, Verona Publishing, and The Givens Foundation).

About the Givens Foundation for African American Literature

The Givens Foundation for African American Literature is dedicated to enriching cultural understanding and learning through programs that advance and celebrate African American literature and writers. Each year, they serve nearly 5,000 students, educators, readers, and writers.

For more information, visit <http://www.givens.org/>, the website which was also the source of much of the text in this resource guide.

Spotlight on the Givens Collection at the University of Minnesota

The Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature consists of over 10,000 books, magazines, and pamphlets by or about African Americans. Its strengths include the following collections, which may be of value to teachers of English and Writing.

Lou Bellamy Rare Book Collection

This collection, donated in honor of Penumbra Theatre founder and Artistic Director Lou Bellamy, contains over 850 titles, many of which are first editions or signed by the author. The collections include the self-published *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* as well as other books that predate the Emancipation Proclamation.

Penumbra Theatre Company Archives

The Penumbra Theatre Company Archives document the theater's founding in 1976 by Lou Bellamy, its extensive repertoire of productions, and its unique collaboration with Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson. From annotated scripts to costume designs, programs, educational materials, reviews, and administrative records, the Penumbra Theatre Archives captures the inner-workings and history of one of the country's preeminent African American theater companies. Much of Penumbra Theatre production records have been digitized and are available online.

Phillis Wheatley

An original first-edition copy of her work *Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral*, published in 1773. It is the first book published by an African American writer.

Countee Cullen Correspondence

An intimate collection of letters from 1918–the 1930s, including drafts of many published and unpublished poems, between the Harlem Renaissance poet to his childhood friend and literary confidante William Fuller Brown. Brown spent much of his career as a professor of electrical engineering at the University of Minnesota.

Clarence Major Papers

The Clarence Major Papers include the manuscripts, correspondence, and personal papers of the poet, novelist, and painter who

was active in the Black Arts Movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Clarence Major is a professor of English at the University of California Davis.

The collection also includes digital materials. For example, select images and book covers from the Givens Collection and related African American materials across the University of Minnesota Libraries collections are digitized and online. Teachers of English and Writing may want to access these materials for their classrooms.

About the Givens Collection

The Givens Collection began in the hands of New York private collector Richard Lee Hoffman. With leadership from the University of Minnesota professor and founding curator, Dr. John S. Wright, and the support of the Givens family and an 11-member Patron's Council of leaders in the Twin Cities African American community, the collection was purchased in 1985.

In 1986, the Collection was renamed in honor of Archie Givens, Sr. (1919-1974), a successful Minneapolis businessman and entrepreneur who was a visionary supporter of higher education, particularly for young people of color. The Givens Foundation for African American Literature has been a trusted partner since the Collection's founding.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.lib.umn.edu/collections/special/givens>, which is also the source for much of the text of this resource guide.

About MnWE



Mission and Vision: MnWE’s mission is to help transform writing and English into teaching and learning experiences using practical methodologies that serve students best. Our vision is to bring scholarly ideas and practical pedagogy together to help create the future of our disciplines.

Who We Are: The MnWE Coordinating Committee facilitates all MnWE activities as unpaid volunteers. The committee is comprised of university and college tenure-line and adjunct faculty, graduate students, administrators, editors, and high school faculty who teach advanced writing and English in the high schools.

What We Do: Minnesota Writing and English–MnWE–offers a two-day academic conference each spring in the metro area of Minnesota or occasionally in Greater Minnesota. Our annual conference is held in person and online simultaneously, which allows us to host speakers from around the world. Our annual gathering has been described at times as being better than some national conventions.

Annual MnWE Conference: The MnWE Conference includes interactive plenaries during lunch, free time to talk with colleagues, entertainment, and many daily roundtable breakouts. Our roundtable sessions confound the usual conference style by replacing typical formal presentations with non-traditional, interactive events. Roundtables begin with several presenters talking for several minutes each. After the short presentations, they and the audience discuss the viewpoints and experiences that have been offered. Most breakouts offer small groups where we encourage presenters to offer

the new, the untried, and the old-but-revised in order to precipitate friendly, respectful questions and thoughtful answers.

MnWE also sponsors an online *MnWE Journal*, issued free online yearly; an online newsletter, issued six-times-per-year; and the *MnWE News*, which is privately circulated and free to over 2500 English and Writing faculty (see below to subscribe). Both the *Journal* and the *News* offer teaching ideas, updates about our academic disciplines and events, reviews, and resources.

Subscribing to the MnWE News: If you are not on the listserv and would like to join it, simply send your request and email address to richard at jewell dot net. We always enjoy signing up new list members.

History of MnWE: MnWE was started officially by Richard Jewell, an Inver Hills College tenured faculty member, who had taught previously at both the University of Minnesota and St. Cloud State University. In January 2007, he asked Donald Ross at the University of Minnesota if the two of them might work to develop a joint conference in their two systems and throughout the state.

When Donald agreed, Richard then went to the annual MnSCU English and writing discipline meeting in Minneapolis in February to ask whether its members would like him to develop an annual state conference that would include all Minnesota colleges and universities.

About eighty faculty from throughout MnSCU were present; they voted by over 80% to support the conference. A founding committee coordinated by Richard formed immediately to organize the first conference.

The initial committee has grown to include several dozen active members and MnWE representatives at their schools who come from campuses in both Minnesota and Wisconsin. The conference and the newsletter reach out to all states surrounding Minnesota.

Members of the committee represent a wide diversity of college and university professors, instructors, and graduate students from University of Minnesota campuses, Minnesota and Wisconsin state universities and public two-year colleges, and a variety of nonprofit and for-profit private colleges and universities. We also are proud to include graduate students in the conferences and on our committee, and we are glad to see an increasing number of high school faculty attending the conferences, who teach college writing and English in their schools.

The first conference was in fall 2009. Attendance normally varies from 150 to

200. Richard Jewell continues to serve as the General Coordinator. In about 2011, two additional central positions were added: Larry Sklaney as Conference Coordinator, and Danielle Hinrichs as Conference Program Coordinator. Both of them have, since 2015, been Conference Co-Coordiators.

The MnWE Committee



David Beard, UMD Advisor, University of Minnesota-Duluth

Mary Ellen Daniloff-Merrill, SMSU Advisor, Southwest Minn. State Univ.

Judith Dorn, 2023 Site Coordinator, St. Cloud State University

Gene Gazelka, Web Docs Coordinator, North Hennepin Community Coll.

Edward Hahn, Web and Registration Coordinator, North Hennepin Coll.

Ryuto Hashimoto, Undergr. Connection Coord., Mn. State U.-Mankato

Danielle Hinrichs, Program/Conf. Coordinator, Metropolitan State Univ.

Richard Jewell, Co-founder & Gen. Coord., Inver Hills Coll. (Emeritus)

Yanmei Jiang, Plenary Coordinator, Century College

Carla-Elaine Johnson, Plenary Coordinator, Saint Paul College

Eric Mein, 2024 Site Coordinator, Normandale Community College

Gordon Pueschner, Secretary & Conf. Floor Co-Manager, Century Coll.

Beata Pueschner, Conference Floor Co-Manager, North Hennepin Coll.

Donald Ross, Co-founder, Univ. of Minnesota-Twin Cities (Emeritus)

Carol Saalmueller, Volunteer Coord., University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

Larry Sklaney, Conference & Cost Center Coordinator, Century College

MnWE Journal Editorial Board.: David Beard and Yanmei Jiang