

# Peitho

Volume 24.1

Fall 2021

*Editorial Leadership:*

**Editors:** Rebecca Dingo, Clancy Ratliff

**Associate Editor:** Temptaous McKoy

**Editorial Assistants:** Ashley Canter, Stacy Earp, Stacie Klinowski

**Web Coordinator:** Kelli Lycke

**Editorial Board:**

Suzanne Bordelon, San Diego State University

Tamika Carey, State University New York, Albany

Christina Cedillo, University of Houston, Clear Lake

Casie Cobos, Independent Scholar

Kirsti Cole, Minnesota State University, Mankato

Rebecca Dingo, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Jessica Enoch, University of Maryland

Jenn Fishman, Marquette University

Tarez Samra Graban, Florida State University

Lisa Mastrangelo, Centenary University

Gwen Pough, Syracuse University

Christina Ramirez, University of Arizona

KJ Rawson, Holy Cross College

Rachel Riedner, George Washington University

Wendy Sharer, East Carolina University

Nathan Shepley, University of Houston

Bo Wang, California State University, Fresno

**About the Journal:** Peitho seeks to encourage, advance, and publish original feminist research in the history of rhetoric and composition and thereby support scholars and students within our profession. For submission guidelines and requirements, please see <http://peitho.cwshrc.org/submit/>. Peitho (ISSN 2169-0774) is published twice a year, in the Spring and Fall. Access to back issues of Peitho are part of the Coalition membership package. Coalition membership is \$10 for graduate students and \$25 for faculty; more information is available at cwshrc.org.

**Cover Art:** "Sunrise at the International Space Station" from NASA.

**Image description:** a vertical rectangle showing a dramatic sunrise, with the bottom half of the image black. The sunrise is shown as bands of color: red, orange, yellow, with the sun at the right side of the image. Above the sun is a gradient blue sky with a light blue band surrounding the sun and progressively darker blue toward the top of the image. In the bottom left corner is the word Peitho in a sans-serif font in a sunrise gradient. Underneath that are the words "Volume 24.1 Fall 2021."

In This Issue:

## **Editor's Introduction**

Rebecca Dingo, Clancy Ratliff

## **In Memoriam: Lisa Ede**

### **How to Get a Nonacademic Position An Essay on Serendipity—Personal, Professional, and Intellectual**

Lisa Ede 8

### **For Lisa: A Patchwork Quilt**

Michael J. Faris 19

### **Deep Doldrums: On Loving (and Learning from) Lisa Ede**

Jessica Restaino 29

### **A Letter to Lisa Ede: Thank You for a Life of Listening**

Asao B. Inoue 36

### **The Last Time We Saw Lisa**

Vicki Tolar Burton, Tim Jensen, Kristy Kelly, Sarah Tinker Perrault, & Ehren Helmut Pflugfelder 40

### **The Gift of Feminist Mentoring**

Rachel Daugherty 43

## **Articles**

### **Ghostwriting for Racial Justice: On Barbara Johns, Dramatizations, and Speechwriting as Historical Fiction**

Zosha Stuckey 45

### **Indigenous Women's Voices in the Colonial Records of South Africa: Asking for Permission**

Emily January Petersen & Breeanne Matheson 66

### **Rhetorical Failures and Revisions in the Second-Wave: Emerging Intersectionality in the Ethe of Activist Zelda Nordlinger**

Megan J. Busch 85

**Silently Speaking Bodies: Affective Rhetorical Resistance in Transnational Feminist Rhetoric**

Ashley Canter

104

**Recoveries and Reconsiderations**

**Research on the Literate Practices of Field Matrons on the Hopi Reservation**

Mary Le Rouge

120

**Recoveries and Reconsiderations: Feminist Coworking Spaces as New Sites for Feminist Rhetorical Inquiry**

Jaclyn Fiscus-Cannaday

134

**Overlooked Sources of Feminist Material in Unlikely Archival Collections:**

**Recoveries and Reconsiderations of Writer Elizabeth Stuart Phelps' (1844-1911)**

**Letters to 19th Century Physician S. Weir Mitchell (1829-1914)**

Susan Ghiaciuc, Cathryn Molloy, & Vanessa Rouillon

144

**Book Reviews**

**Review of Retellings: Opportunities for Feminist Research in Rhetoric and**

**Composition Studies**

Nanette Rasband Hilton

152

# Editor's Introduction

**Authors:** Rebecca Dingo, Clancy Ratliff

Dr. Rebecca Dingo is Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Rebecca's research has addressed transnational rhetorical and composition studies and in doing so she forwards a transnational feminist lens attuned to global political economy. She is the author of *Networking Arguments: Rhetoric, Transnational Feminism, and Public Policy Writing*, which received the W. Ross Winterowd Award in 2012. She has published widely in both the field of Women's Studies and Rhetorical Studies. Rebecca has also offered workshops and trainings across the globe on her research, writing pedagogies, and writing development. Her pedagogy seeks to connect theory with practice and all of her classes tend to offer on-the-ground case studies paired with theoretical lenses. Rebecca earned her Ph.D. in English with an emphasis on Rhetoric and Composition from The Ohio State University.

Clancy Ratliff is Professor in the English department at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Her research and teaching interests are in feminist rhetorics, writing program administration, and copyright and authorship. She has published research in *Women's Studies Quarterly*, *Kairos*, *Pedagogy*, and other journals and edited collections. She is involved with several community advocacy organizations, including Sierra Club Delta Chapter, Move the Mindset, Citizens Climate Lobby, Acadiana Regional Coalition on Homelessness and Housing, and Louisiana Association of Sports, Outdoor Adventure, and Recreation (LASOAR).

We are so excited to be launching the first issue of *Peitho* as a new editorial team! We, co-editors Rebecca Dingo (overseeing articles), Clancy Ratliff (overseeing Recoveries and Reconsiderations), and Temptaous McKoy (overseeing the book reviews) along with our stellar team of assistants Ashley Canter, Stacy Earp, and Stacie Klinowski, and our web coordinator Kelli Lycke, we've been working together to curate this issue since this summer and to continue the most excellent work of out-going editor, Jen Wingard and her assistant, Rachelle Joplin. We thank Jen and Rachelle for taking the time to on-board our new team and to pass on to us a well-organized journal with cutting-edge feminist scholarship. Amid our enthusiasm for this issue, we also mourn the passing of Lisa Ede, who died on September 29, 2021, and we take the work of memorializing her very seriously. The pieces in this issue are thoughtful, heartfelt reflections on Ede's legacy as a scholar, mentor, and teacher. We would like to thank The Ohio State University Press for granting permission to republish Ede's final published essay. The essays by Michael Faris, Jessica Restaino, Asao Inoue, Vicki Tolar Burton, Ehren Pflugfelder, Tim Jensen, Kristy Kelly, Sarah Tinker Perrault, and Rachel Daugherty remind us, through their memories of Lisa Ede, what our work means: its purpose and significance.

Rebecca Dingo, Co-Editor, articles

I feel fortunate, that my first issue as co-editor follows the timely and powerful summer issue (*Peitho* 23.4) on "[Race, Feminism, and Rhetoric](#)" edited

by Gwenolyn Pough and Stephanie Jones. Although some of the essays for this Fall 2021 issue were already in the pipeline prior to me coming on as co-editor, it was my goal in editing this first issue's articles to make sure that the powerful and challenging conversations, methods, and critical theories developed in the summer issue be taken up in our current issue. Indeed, I asked each of our article contributors—all of whom were in some way addressing race, geopolitics, nation, feminism, and rhetoric in their articles—to extend the conversation from the special summer issue. I felt it was important that the articles printed in this Fall 2021 issue reflect the vision that Pough and Jones assert: that feminist rhetorical scholarship must address the “ways that race, feminism and rhetoric intersect across time, in this moment, and around the world.” In this issue, I sought to extend their commitments, and their sentiment resonates strongly with my vision for the journal’s articles over my next four years as co-editor.

I see the feminist study of rhetoric, composition, and communication to be at an interesting and important place. I believe that *Peitho* is poised to address the deep cultural tensions—around race, gendered violence, white supremacy, and imperialism that exist within the U.S., within the US’s complex transglobal relations, and often throughout the globe. These tensions make it necessary for feminist work to evolve and change. As the contributors from the “Race, Feminism, and Rhetoric” special issue make clear, feminist scholars must think about gender and race in “nuanced” (Jones and Pough), intersectional (Dziuba and Fain), “collaborative” (Browdy), and “contextually driven” (Plange) ways. Current events in the U.S. and across the world demonstrate quite readily that these scholars’ approaches (and more approaches!) are desperately needed in our field. For example, in the U.S., we continue to see blatant and deadly racism, sexism, and gendered violence at the hands of white people in power, which has fueled activist commitments to social justice movements like Black Lives Matter and MeToo. Yet, in broadening outside of the U.S., we are (hopefully) emerging from a global pandemic that has laid bare the deep racial, gendered, and geopolitical *systematic* inequalities that were (for those with privilege, at least) until then, more hidden. Beyond the pandemic, we are seeing the continued punishment and inhuman treatment of migrants as they seek to escape prosecution—Muslims in China, children at the US-Mexico border, Yemini and Syrians scattered throughout the Middle East and Europe (and other places), desperate migrants from the Middle East used as political pawns between Belarus and Poland, to name a few. Likewise, scholars and activists are now actively naming the structures of white supremacy that imbue all aspects of U.S. and global culture; at the same time, transnational feminist scholars, particularly U.S.-based Black scholars and women of color from the U.S. and Global South, have for a long time challenged all feminists to address how imperialism, settler colonialism, neocolonialism, and neoliberal political economies (e.g. Kaplan and Grewal, Lowe, Mohanty, Hong, Spivak, to name a few) thrive and persist through the rhetorical processes of racialization, gendering, and exclusion (see e.g. in our own field, Dingo, Orr, and Flores).

These are the conversations that I believe ought to be at the forefront of *Peitho*; these are the approaches and topics I hope to forward during my time as co-editor overseeing article publication. While many feminist rhetorical scholars such as Aja Martinez, Strom Christine Piloff, Jennifer Lin LeMesurier, and Kyle Larson have already begun to take on these issues within *Peitho* and *Peitho* continues to extend its commitment to racial justice, more work needs to be done to identify the rhetorical patterns and processes that support intersecting structures of racism, white supremacy, ethnocentrism, heterosexism, gender, imperialism, and inequalities within political economies. I have been excited by the queer and decolonial feminist rhetorical scholarship *Peitho* has recently showcased that start to make these connections. Using a queer feminist lens, scholars such Rachel Presley and GPat Patterson and Leland G. Spencer importantly have re-imagined ways to decenter whiteness. Similarly, Sophia Maier, V. Jo Hsu, Christina V Cedillo, & M. Remi Yergeau demonstrate the ways disability, imperialism, colonialism, and heteronormativity are fractally related. Yet, following scholars such as Lisa Flores, Lisa B. Y. Calvente, Bernadette Marie Calafell, and Karma R. Chávez, it is also time to begin examining critically the field of feminist rhetorical studies' theoretical underpinnings, commitments, methods, and practices to account for its own raced, gendered, imperialist, and ethnocentric focus. As co-editor, in addition to displaying new work in already established areas, I would like to draw *Peitho* readership's attention to new approaches in the field that address these sorts of structures of power. Indeed, I call for more work that draws attention to how rhetorics can shape (and re-shape), continue, structure, and expose systems of power.

In this Fall 2021 issue, I asked for article contributors to name and site the places where knowledge-making specifically around race, feminism, and rhetoric was coming from and, as a result, readers will see the direct ways that the contributors have taken up the work of the summer issue. I deeply appreciate that the authors took up this challenge, and I hope that doing so sets the tone for the future of *Peitho*.

Yet, I also want to highlight that each essay critically forwards new feminist methods and lenses that draw readers' attention toward how white women's relationships to intersectionality developed, how to engage in reparative historiography to highlight buried voices, how to consider rhetorical agency under settler colonialism and within a racist imperial system, and how neoliberal political economy limits, links, and asks for new feminist rhetorical practices and feminist rhetorical methods that attend to silences and bodies. For example, in the essay, "Ghostwriting for Racial Justice: On Barbara Johns, Dramatizations, and Speechwriting as Historical Fiction," author Zosha Stuckey examines how reparative historiography methods can offer feminist scholars ways to recreate texts that have not been archived. Likewise, in "Rhetorical Failures and Revisions in the Second-Wave: Emerging Intersectionality in the *Ethe* of Activist Zelda Nordlinger," Megan Busch considers how white women were reframing their feminist approaches to think about race and class in the 1970s, during the second wave U.S.-feminist movement. Much like Stucky's essay in this issue, in "Indigenous Women's

Voices in the Colonial Records of South Africa: Asking for Permission," authors Emily January Petersen and Breeanne Matheson search through colonial records in South Africa to see how indigenous women developed agency to survive and maintain their cultural practices (even when their direct voices were absent from archives) within a violent settler colonial system that thrives on racial hierarchies. Working between the continents of Africa (specifically Uganda) and North America (specifically the U.S.), in the essay "Silently Speaking Bodies: Affective Rhetorical Resistance in Transnational Feminist Rhetoric," author Ashley Canter considers how two groups of women from different locations and cultures used their bodies to protest when their voices were ignored in order to draw attention to environmental degradation in the local communities; in each case, women physically strip themselves of clothing or hair to draw attention to the destructive strength of neoliberal political economies and the resulting land loss. Taken together, these articles turn our attention to the various ways that feminist scholars can highlight individual rhetors while making visible the operations of rhetoric in both structuring and resisting the interconnected systems of structural racism, white supremacy, ethnocentrism, heterosexism, gender, imperialism, and inequalities within political economies. I hope that you find these essays continue to grow and showcase the feminist commitments and spirit of our field.

### Clancy Ratliff, Co-Editor, Recoveries and Reconsiderations

When I was in graduate school in the early 2000s, I did a fair amount of rabble-rousing online (in the early days of the blogosphere) in an effort to push the field of rhetoric and composition studies toward more online, open-access scholarly publishing. I and other graduate students from various universities would get together at conferences and proclaim that more senior scholars needed to be publishing in these journals so that they would have more prestige: in other words, using their privilege to support these journals. I am now trying to be the full professor I wanted to see in the world when I was a student. I have always read and valued Peitho, and I admire the Coalition's forward-looking thought in transforming the Peitho newsletter into an open-access journal. I still believe in paywall-free scholarship and am grateful to have the opportunity to serve the discipline as co-editor of Peitho. Like Rebecca, the editorial team and I share the commitment to making Peitho a journal that centers intersectional and global feminisms and critiques caste systems in the United States and elsewhere (Wilkerson) and that respects the labor of authors, reviewers, and everyone else involved in the production of each issue. Rebecca and I have read and will be observing the practices in "Anti-Racist Scholarly Reviewing Practices: A Heuristic for Editors, Reviewers, and Authors." This statement of best practices is a vital guide for anyone involved in academic publication.

My primary role as co-editor is working with the Recoveries and Reconsiderations section of the journal. The [CFSHRC](#) announced this new feature in 2019, envisioning it as a space for shorter pieces of scholarship that may engage new and emerging developments in feminisms and rhetorics, or that provide some initial analysis of archival materials, or a

new perspective on an old topic. Recoveries and Reconsiderations is a space for starting new conversations in feminist studies.

This issue features three Recoveries and Reconsiderations essays. Taken together, these articles illustrate the complexity of the kyriarchy (as Rachel Presley has used the term), the simultaneity of workings of power, and the ways that people struggle against some aspects of systems of laws, norms, and practices while benefiting from other aspects. Mary Le Rouge's essay "Research on the Literate Practices of Field Matrons on the Hopi Reservation" is a vivid example; Le Rouge writes about one of her ancestors, her great-great-grandmother, who was a field matron on the Hopi reservation. The field matron program was one of many functions of settler colonialism: white women were hired to go into Indigenous people's homes and teach Indigenous women how to keep house like white settler women. This program served to erase Indigenous foodways and medical knowledge, among other traditions, and field matrons also played a role in the removal of Indigenous children from their homes and placement in violent boarding schools. Le Rouge explains that this is a program that she has directly benefited from, as her great-great-grandmother was able to support herself and her sons financially by doing this work. Le Rouge shows that white women in 2021 need to sit with the knowledge of this particular way that white women perpetuated settler colonialism. Jaclyn Fiscus-Cannaday's article provides an examination of feminist coworking spaces. While perhaps the most well-known service for renting office space is WeWork, Fiscus-Cannaday investigates spaces that are specifically designed for women, like CAMPspace and The Riveter, and raises interesting questions about how space can be used rhetorically. Susan Ghiaciuc, Cathryn Molloy, and Vanessa Rouillon offer a notable reconsideration: S. Weir Mitchell was a physician who is remembered primarily for the restrictive "rest cure," which served as containment for women experiencing emotional pain. The focus of Ghiaciuc, Molloy, and Rouillon's work, however, is not Mitchell, but instead Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, a feminist woman who wrote letters to Mitchell. They suggest that other men in history may have likewise been engaged in correspondence with women who challenged their views, and they encourage scholars to look for these kinds of archival materials.

## Future Plans

We, the incoming editorial team, bring new ideas to *Peitho*, and we welcome feedback on these ideas as well as other new ideas. We are interested in using Creative Commons licensing for articles as a way to concretize our commitment to open access publication. Creative Commons licensing is a way to grant permissions in advance, such as permission for an author to put a copy of their *Peitho* article in their university's institutional repository of scholarship, as some universities require or encourage faculty to do. Some versions of Creative Commons licenses also allow readers to create derivative works of articles, such as a graphic novel version of an article or an audio recording, which increases accessibility. The image used for the cover of this fall's issue is a Creative Commons licensed photograph taken by NASA, titled "Sunrise from the International Space

Station," and its license allows use of the photograph as long as the original source is attributed and the derivative work (our cover, in this case) is for noncommercial use. We are experimenting with audio recordings of articles, and we hope to release these eventually. We are also including image descriptions in the captions of images in our articles; in doing so, we want to help normalize this practice. As we begin our term as editors, we welcome inquiries, recommendations, and ideas of all kinds, including ideas for clusters in future issues and topics for special issues. We hope you learn from the articles in this issue and that they prove to be generative, inspiring response and continued thinking and acting within your communities.

## Works Cited

- Anti-Racist Scholarly Reviewing Practices: A Heuristic for Editors, Reviewers, and Authors.* 2021. [tinyurl.com/reviewheuristic](http://tinyurl.com/reviewheuristic). Accessed 23 Nov. 2021.
- Browdy, Ronisha. "Black Women's Rhetoric(s): A Conversation Starter for Naming and Claiming a Field of Study." *Peitho*, vol. 23, no 4, Summer 2021.
- Calvente, L, Bernadette Marie Calafell & Karma R. Chávez (2020) Here is something you can't understand: the suffocating whiteness of communication studies," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 17:2, 202-209.
- Chávez, Karma R. "Beyond Inclusion: Rethinking Rhetoric's Historical Narrative." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 101, no. 1, Feb. 2015, pp. 162-172.
- Dingo, Rebecca. "Speaking well: The benevolent public and rhetorical production of neoliberal political economy." *Communication and the Public*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2018, pp. 232-246.
- Dziuba, Allison. "We Want to Be Intersectional": Asian American College Students' Extracurricular Rhetorical Education." *Peitho*, vol. 23, no 4, Summer 2021.
- Fain, Kimberly. "Black Feminist Rhetoric in Beyoncé's Homecoming." *Peitho*, vol. 23, no 4, Summer 2021.
- Flores, Lisa A. *Deportable and Disposable*. The Penn State UP, 2021. Print.
- Grewal, Inderpal, and Caren Kaplan. "Transnational Feminism Cultural Studies: Beyond the Marism/Postsrtucturalism/Feminism Divides." *Between Women and Nation*. Vol. 2. Durham: Duke UP, 1994. 430-45. Print.
- Hong, Grace. "Existentially Surplus: Women of Color Feminism and the New Crisis of Capitalism." *GLQ* , vol. 18, no. 1, 2011, pp. 87 – 103.
- Larson, Kyle. "Remonstrative Agitation as Feminist Counterpublic Rhetoric." *Peitho*, vol 20, no. 2, Spring/Summer 2018.
- LeMesurier, Jennifer Lin "Searching for Unseen Metic Labor in the Pussyhat Project." *Peitho*, volume 22, no. 1, Fall/Winter 2019.
- Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Duke UP, 2015. Print.
- Maier, Sophia, V. Jo Hsu, Christina V Cedillo, and M. Remi Yergeau. "GET THE FRAC IN! Or, The Fractal Many-festo: A (Trans)(Crip)t." *Peitho*, vol. 22, no. 4, Summer 2020.
- Martinez, Aja Y. "The Responsibility of Privilege: A Critical Race Counterstory Conversation." *Peitho*. Vol. 21, no. 1, Fall/Winter 2018.

- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. 28.2 (2003): 499-535.
- NASA Johnson. "Sunrise from the International Space Station."  
[www.flickr.com/photos/nasa2explore/29185510223](http://www.flickr.com/photos/nasa2explore/29185510223). Accessed 23 Nov. 2021.
- Ore, Ersula J. *Lynching: Violence, Rhetoric, and American Identity*. U Mississippi Press, 2019. Print.
- Patterson, GPat and Leland G. Spencer. "Toward Trans Rhetorical Agency: A Critical Analysis of Trans Topics in Rhetoric and Composition and Communication Scholarship." *Peitho*, vol. 22, no. 4, Summer 2020.
- Pilloff, Storm Christine. "*Métis* and Rhetorically Listening to #BlackLivesMatter." *Peitho*, vol. 23, no. 1, Fall 2020.
- Pough, Gwendolyn and Stephanie Jones, "On Race, Feminism, and Rhetoric: An Introductory/Manifesto Flow..." *Peitho*, vol. 23, no 4, Summer 2021.
- Presley, Rachel. "Toward a Trans Sovereignty: Why We Need Indigenous Rhetorics to Decolonize Gender and Sexuality." *Peitho*, vol. 22, no. 4, Summer 2020.
- Spivak, Gayatri. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason:Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Harvard UP, 1999. Print.
- Wilkerson, Isabel. *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, 2020. Print.

## In Memoriam: Lisa Ede

# How to Get a Nonacademic Position: An Essay on Serendipity—Personal, Professional, and Intellectual

**Author:** Lisa Ede

**Abstract:** The article is generously reprinted from Women's Professional Lives in Rhetoric and Composition: Choice, Chance, and Serendipity, edited by Elizabeth A Flynn and Tiffany Bourelle. Originally published January, 2018 by Ohio State University Press.

<https://ohiostatepress.org/books/titles/9780814213568.html>

**Keywords:** feminist scholarship, in memoriam

The title of my first Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) presentation is there on my vita for anyone to see. But I expect that few who look at my vita, if anyone does other than to count up numbers of talks, article, books, and so on, have noticed that my first CCCC conference talk was on the subject of "How to Get a Non-Academic Position."

There's a story behind that talk, which when I gave it I assumed would be both my first and last CCCC presentation. Here it is in brief: I entered the PhD program in English at Ohio State University in the fall of 1970 not even knowing that it was possible to undertake study in the field that we have come to call rhetoric and composition (or some related title). My area was Victorian literature, and by the time that Susan Miller and Andrea Lunsford came to Ohio State (Susan to direct the writing program and Andrea to cobble together the first PhD program of study in rhet/comp in the English department), I was well underway on a dissertation on the Victorian nonsense literature of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll.

I was also quite involved with the writing program—not only through my own teaching but also as a result of my participation in the teaching assistant (TA) council that advised the Director of Writing. To say that Susan Miller brought energy and intellectual excitement to the writing program is an understatement. Susan brought in outside speakers (David Bartholomae! Rick Coe! Erika Lindemann!), and she spoke of the development of a newfield. (Later I would learn that depending on your perspective the field wasn't so new. I would also learn of the important role that OSU Professor Edward P. J. Corbett played in the field's contemporary formation. At the time, I knew Professor Corbett primarily as a scholar of eighteenth-century literature.)

I still remember the moment when, in the spring term of my final year of grad school, I was sitting in Susan's office discussing some matter related to the TA advisory council that I then chaired. "Lisa," Susan said to me, "you are going to have to make some decisions about your future career. You're going to have to decide how seriously you want to take the teaching of writing as a profession." Given the job market at the time—reportedly the worst for PhDs in the humanities since the depression—the notion of a "future career" in the academy was hard to imagine. By the time Susan and I had that conversation, I had already gone on the job market once (earlier that year) with no luck, and I was getting ready to put myself out there a second time. I would support myself during what I hoped would be a transitional year by working as an editor at a sociology research center on campus, and I was grateful to have that opportunity for full-time employment.

The year that I completed my dissertation is a blur now, and it probably was then too. But at some point in 1975, I realized that the upcoming 1976 CCCC would be in Philadelphia. My good friends and graduate school colleagues Andrea Lunsford and Suellynn Duffey were planning to go to the conference and would share a university van. I could travel with them if I proposed a talk and had it accepted. Attending the conference would give me a chance to learn more about the emerging field of rhet/comp, and giving a talk there would look good on my vita. I had already decided that when I went on the job market the following year I would apply both for Victorian literature and (newly created) rhet/comp positions and see what happened.

Like many of my peers, I was at a crossroads, and my future looked uncertain. My immediate challenge was to determine a topic and write a proposal. Why not draw upon my good fortune in finding what we would now call an alt academic position? Others might benefit from my experience of turning part-time work that supplemented my TA stipend into a full-time editing position. Hence my topic: How to Get a Non-Academic Position. Given the job market, I knew this would be a useful presentation for others whose situation resembled mine. And indeed the panel on which I participated was well attended.

By the time I gave that talk in the spring of 1976, I thought that my future was clear—and that it would not follow a traditional academic path. I had interviewed for two or three positions (a pitiful but at the time not unusual number) at the MLA the previous December in San Francisco. No job offers came my way. I did get a letter from the State University of New York (SUNY) Brockport saying that they were interested in my candidacy, but their position was frozen. I had been in my editing position for several terms by this point, and I liked it. I had already decided not to put myself through the job market process again. Why humiliate myself a third time?

So I gave that talk. I was energized by the conference, but I thought that my future was set: I would be an editor of scholarly publications—and I was grateful to have work

that I enjoyed and that was meaningful to me. Then in the summer of 1976 SUNY Brockport called. Their position was unfrozen. They wanted to interview me on campus. Could I come? I did, and I was offered a tenure-line position of Director of Composition at that university.

Serendipity indeed.

I will have more to say about the role that serendipity has played in my career later in this essay. For now, I want to note the important role that certain key preferences and predilections have played in my life and career. I should perhaps be embarrassed to admit this, but I knew as early as middle school that I wanted to be a teacher, and looking back I can easily identify teachers who made a huge difference in my life. Mrs. Ryan in middle school, who taught me to love history and affirmed my identity as a serious student who cared enough to get my own subscription to my first scholarly (or semischolarly) journal: the hard-bound American Heritage. Mrs. Falk in high school (AP English junior and senior years) who required students to write an essay (some more formal than others) every day of the school year, and who developed what I later realized was an early form of portfolio evaluation.

I also knew as early as grade school that I loved reading and writing and that they were central to my sense of myself, though of course I couldn't have articulated that at this point. By the time I was in high school I knew what I wanted to be: a high school English teacher. I loved teaching, and I loved literature—and teachers consistently praised my writing. What I discovered when I did my student teaching for my undergraduate English education degree at Ohio State was that I didn't love the public school system—at least not the crowded inner city school where I taught. So I did what seemed natural to many students of my age and temperament at that turbulent but exciting time: I applied to grad school.

I barely knew what I was doing. I applied to only two universities—Cornell and the University of Wisconsin, Madison. I have no idea how I chose them other than that they were outside of Ohio, where my family lived, but not too far away. I ended up in Madison with an out-of state tuition remission scholarship. The English department had just abolished the first-year writing requirement in retaliation against teaching assistants who had spearheaded a failed move toward unionization, so TA positions were available only to a limited number of PhD students. I supported myself during my one-year MA program by working at the Wisconsin State Department of Education, even as I marched with others in massive campus protests against the Vietnam War.

My time in Madison was difficult. I did well in my courses, but the MA program was huge: some of my MA classes that year were larger than my undergrad English classes had been at Ohio State. While some courses and professors were excellent, the goal of the

program—to pass a test that included multiple-choice questions (example: Upon what does the worm sit in Blake's Book of Thel?) at the end of the year—was uninspiring. So I applied to the PhD program at Ohio State. I did so not as a result of serious research about PhD programs or careful career planning but rather to reconnect with my then boyfriend. When I counsel students who are making decisions about grad school applications, I am astonished at the knowledge and professionalism they bring to this task. I had neither.

It was at Ohio State that I had my first experiences teaching undergraduates and my first involvement with the rhet/comp field. My interest in audience also developed in grad school. A chance conversation with a fellow TA about an assignment that he was experimenting with, one that required students to write to real or hypothetical audiences, piqued my curiosity. I began to experiment with nontraditional assignments—assignments that one way or another encouraged students to engage in writing tasks that at least offered the possibility of something resembling an authentic experience. My first publication, a brief essay entitled "Oral History," which appeared in CCC in 1977, explored one such assignment. (Ed Corbett, who by this time was a mentor and also the editor of CCC, encouraged me every step of the way in this, my first publication.) My second publication, also in CCC, attempted to formalize some of the questions that I had begun to ask myself about the role of audience in discourse and in the teaching of writing. This essay, "On Audience and Composition," appeared in 1979.

As I transitioned from the field of Victorian literature to that of rhet/comp, I experienced a satisfying sense of coming full circle. My earliest aspiration had been to become an English teacher, which I knew meant being a teacher not only of literature but also of writing. When I entered grad school, that goal shifted, and I focused on the scholarly work of English studies—at least in my coursework. But my teaching drew me back to my aspirations as a teacher. With my "conversion" to rhet/comp, I felt a renewed sense of pedagogical commitment and purpose, one that was strengthened with my position directing the writing program at SUNY Brockport.

In my early years at SUNY Brockport, I had a very steep learning curve: I was the sole "expert" on the teaching of writing on my campus, even as I was attempting to educate myself about my new field. In hindsight, I see that serendipity played a role here too. While some of my contemporaries entered the field in the late 1970s and early 1980s as graduate students in rhet/comp, many others "converted" to the field after completing PhDs in literary studies. (For a discussion of this phenomenon, see chapter three of my *Situating Composition: Composition Studies and the Politics of Location*). The timing was fortuitous. In the wake of a purported literacy crisis (one that ultimately was more about a new generation of students entering college than a real decline of literacy), funding was available to "solve" the problem of illiteracy. Definitions of expertise in the field of rhet/comp were evolving, and commitment and pedagogical/administrative experience in

many instances counted as much as a traditional graduate education—particularly given the tiny number of rhet/ comp grad programs at the time.

The more I learned about writing and rhetoric, the more engaged I became in questions about the role of audience in writing and the teaching of writing. This quest for understanding led to additional serendipitous moments in my career. The first was when I was accepted into Richard Young's 1978–79 yearlong NEH seminar at Carnegie Mellon. My proposed topic? To explore the concept of identification in classical rhetoric, Burke's dramatistics, and Pike's tagmemics. At the heart of this study was my continued interest in audience. In the years since I "converted" from Victorian literature to rhet/comp, I had gained a much richer understanding of both the classical and contemporary rhetorical traditions, an understanding that was dramatically enriched by my year of study with Richard Young and with fellow seminarians Jim Berlin, Victor Vitanza, Sam Watson, Charles Kneupper, and others.

The NEH seminar was an intellectual and professional boost, and it gave me the confidence to go back on the job market. I valued my work at SUNY Brockport and enjoyed my colleagues—and I continued to marvel at the serendipity that led to my first tenure-line appointment but in the late 1970s, the college was in the midst of a serious financial crisis. Even my colleagues encouraged me to consider other options, grimly citing the possibility of what one referred to with dark humor as tenure on the Titanic. The time seemed right for a change. I interviewed for the position of Director of Writing at Oregon State and was offered it.

OSU looked like a good professional opportunity, but I have to admit that for my husband and me the thought of living in the Pacific Northwest played an important role in my decision to accept the position. Avid hikers and backpackers, we loved the thought of living in a place where we could be in the mountains in two hours and at the coast in one hour. Our friends Andrea and Steve Lunsford also were living in the Northwest—Andrea's first job was at the University of British Columbia—and told wonderful stories of life there.

Once we moved to Oregon, the four of us took advantage of every opportunity we could to be together, traveling the eight hours up and down the I-5 corridor at least once a term, and more often in the summer. Andrea's and my collaboration, which has played such an important role in my career, could not have taken off—especially given the technological limitations of the time (no email, no word processing, etc.) without that physical proximity. Even so, Andrea and I first collaborated almost by accident. With our friend Robert Connors, we were coediting *Essays on Classical Rhetoric and Modern Discourse*, a collection in honor of our mentor Edward P. J. Corbett. We were vacationing on the Oregon coast, and while on a long walk it suddenly occurred to us that it might be rewarding to write a collaborative essay for that collection. We had each planned on contributing an individual essay. Our memories of our motivation differ somewhat. I

remember thinking that it would please Ed Corbett. Andrea remembers thinking that it might be practical and efficient to write together, given our other responsibilities as coeditors. We both agree that serendipity played a role in our decision to write together. Without that chance conversation, our long collaboration might never have happened.

Andrea's and my essay "On Distinctions between Classical and Modern Rhetoric" was published in *Essays on Classical Rhetoric and Modern Discourse* in 1984. We were surprised by how much we enjoyed writing together and, especially, how productive our collaboration was. It was clear to us that working together encouraged us to be particularly ambitious and to challenge ourselves in ways that we might not have done if we were writing alone. So to us, it felt natural to continue to undertake significant collaborations—even as we each engaged in individual projects. However, what felt natural and productive to us was anything but to our colleagues. In fact, we quickly realized that many of our colleagues (including Ed Corbett) viewed our collaboration as shocking—even dangerous. "You will never get tenure if you insist on writing together," Andrea and I remember Ed fretfully warning us. And his concerns were justified. When Andrea prepared her materials for promotion and tenure at UBC she was told by her chair that "of course her collaborative work couldn't be considered." Anticipating similar difficulties, my chair invited Andrea to "spontaneously" send him a letter noting that all of our collaborations were equal. Nevertheless, my college's promotion and tenure committee requested that Andrea and I go through all of our coauthored essays and use colored markers to indicate who had written which sentence. Needless to say, we refused—and fortunately I was promoted and tenured despite this refusal.

Earlier in this essay, I commented on the importance of key preferences and predilections, and in the case of Andrea's and my collaboration I would have to call attention to our stubbornness. The more people challenged our desire to write together, the more persistent we were in attempting to understand—and critique—the preference for single authorship in the humanities. This led to our 1990 *Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing*, and to much additional work. But our very close friendship also played a central role in our collaboration.

In 2012 Andrea and I published *Writing Together: Collaboration in Theory and Practice*, a collection of previously published and new work. The collection gives a good sense of the range of topics we have explored over thirtyplus years of collaboration. In the first section, we address the question "Why Write Together?" The second section includes several chapters from our 1990 *Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing*, as well as more recent thoughts on this topic. The third section focuses on our research on audience and includes our essay "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Practice," our most anthologized work; the fourth, on rhetorics and feminisms, and the final section

on writing centers. Each section concluded with a new essay written especially for this collection.

Putting this collection together was a joyful act; however, I do not want to romanticize our collaboration. In the introduction and in various new essays, Andrea and I attempt to dispel some potential myths about our collaboration. No, we have not always been “together” and not always been in accord. Yes, we have experienced some painful personal and professional moments as a result of our collaboration. But yes, despite the complexities that are part of any human experience, we are grateful for the journey that we have taken together.

One powerful insight that we slowly came to recognize in recent years is the extent to which developments in new literacies and technologies have caused what we always viewed as two more or less separate strands of research—our work on audience and on collaborative writing—to merge. As we note in “Among the Audience’: On Audience in an Age of New Literacies,” another of the new essays in *Writing Together*, we have come to understand that as writers and audiences merge and shift places in online environments, participating in both brief and extended collaborations, it is increasingly obvious that writers seldom, if ever, write alone. In short, when receivers or consumers of information become creators of content as well, it is increasingly difficult to tell when writers are collaborative writers or authors and when they are members of audiences. (238)

This insight has played an important role in our recent research—and also in a relatively new textbook that we have undertaken with coauthors Michal Brody, Beverly Moss, Carole Clark Papper, and Keith Walters. (Our editor Marilyn Moller has also played an essential role in this project.) Everyone’s an Author attempts to respond to the exigencies described in this statement and to present rhetorical strategies appropriate to twenty-first-century readers and writers.

I mentioned earlier that one of the sections in *Writing Together* focuses on Andrea’s and my research on feminisms and rhetorics. I would like to say a bit more about my (and Andrea’s and my) engagement with feminist research in our field. I have already noted how rewarding it felt when I transitioned from Victorian literature to rhet/comp to reaffirm my strong commitment to teaching and to find a way formally to express that commitment. I felt a similar sense of satisfaction in the 1990s as my research increasingly engaged feminist theories and practices. A strong feminist since my undergraduate days, I did not originally see how to make connections between my personal and scholarly commitments.<sup>2</sup> My friend Beth Flynn emphasized the importance of making these connections in her pathbreaking 1988 CCC article “Composing as a Woman.” In my case, that meant making a transition from research that focused primarily on classical and contemporary rhetorical theory to explicitly feminist research. In that regard, I view the article that Cheryl Glenn, Andrea, and I coauthored, “Border Crossings: Intersections of

Rhetoric and Feminism," which was published in *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* in 1995, as a particularly important turning point.

When we published this piece, Cheryl, Andrea, and I knew that it was important work: we believe that our article was the first feminist article published in *Rhetorica*, a journal that until that point had focused on traditional rhetorical historiography and analysis. That article also planted a seed in Cheryl's and my minds. In the fall of 1995, our chair invited us to coordinate a one-time conference on any topic that we thought might draw interest. (At that time, Cheryl was still teaching at Oregon State and had not yet moved to Penn State.) Cheryl and I pinned our hopes and dreams on the then-still-nascent topic of rhetorics and feminisms. In August 1997 the conference "From Boundaries to Borderlands: Rhetoric(s) and Feminism(s)" was held at OSU. Just as I assumed that my 1976 CCCC presentation on how to get a nonacademic position would be my first and last appearance at the CCCC, so too did Cheryl and I assume that "From Boundaries to Borderlands" would be a one-time phenomenon. However, near the end of the conference Lillian Bridwell-Bowles and Lisa Albrecht announced that the conference was so powerful as a site of feminist research, inquiry, and networking that it had to continue, and that the University of Minnesota would sponsor it in two years. (For more on the history of the feminisms and rhetorics conference series, which is now sponsored by the [Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition](#), see the chapter on that topic in *Writing Together*.)

Sometimes we recognize a serendipitous occurrence the moment it happens: that was definitely the case when I was offered my first tenure line position at SUNY Brockport (which I am happy to report has weathered its earlier financial storm nicely). Sometimes we can only recognize serendipity in action in hindsight, as was the case with the chance conversation that caused Andrea and me to undertake our first collaborative project.

I certainly didn't recognize it as a serendipitous moment when during my interview in 1980 at Oregon State the chair nonchalantly mentioned, "We wondered if in addition to directing the writing program you'd also agree to head up the writing center . . ."—but it was. Even though this meant that I would direct two writing programs as an untenured assistant professor, my thirty-plus years of directing OSU's Writing Center, and thus of being able to interact with colleagues like Lex Runciman, Jon Olson, Wayne Robertson, and Dennis Bennett and literally hundreds of writing assistants, has been a highlight of my career. My work with the writing assistants and with student writers at the Center also played an important role in my decision to write a first-year writing textbook. That book has gone through ten editions since it was first published in 1989. The first six editions came out under the title *Work in Progress: A Guide to Academic Writing and Revising*. After a radical revisioning of the text, it reappeared in 2008 as *The Academic Writer: A Brief Guide for Students*. This text is now in its fourth edition.

I am grateful for the opportunity that writing this essay has given me to take a long view of my scholarly work, and of the personal, intellectual, and professional commitments and predilections that, in hindsight, have proven to be constant (if not always visible, and certainly not always conscious) threads. In that regard, I would like to turn again to the dissertation I wrote on the Victorian nonsense of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll. Imagine my surprise when Patrick Bizzaro contacted me in the late 1990s wanting to interview me about possible connections between my dissertation topic and my subsequent work in composition, especially my interest in audience. Up to this point, I had viewed these two research interests as completely disconnected. As Bizzaro persuasively argues in his 1999 CCC essay, "What I Learned in Grad School, or Literary Training and the Theorizing of Composition," the connections that I originally couldn't see were nevertheless there. Bizzaro cites frequent statements of concern about miscommunication, a predilection for ranging broadly in terms of sources and disciplines, and a preference for what Bizzaro terms "a tactic of complication" as connections between my dissertation and my work on audience. (In case you're interested, Bizzaro also looks at connections between the dissertations of other scholars of my generation who "converted" to composition after completing PhDs in literature, including William Irmscher, Linda Flower, Art Young, David Bartholomae, Erika Lindemann, Toby Fulwiler, and Peter Elbow.)

Bizzaro's essay was published in part two of a special issue of CCC, "A Usable Past: CCC at 50." In the introduction to this issue, editor Joseph Harris writes of the importance of uncovering "a people's history of our field" (559). This and other essays in this collection contribute, I hope, to this project. It goes without saying that a true people's history of any field requires diverse contributions from diversely situated participants. A colleague fresh out of grad school or in the first ten years of his or her postgraduate career would necessarily (and refreshingly) have a different story to tell than I have.

In my own narrative, I have tried to emphasize the central role that serendipity has played in my career, while also emphasizing that key preferences and predilections can also be relevant. But I should also acknowledge that what the editors of this volume refer to as accidental sagacity played a role as well. After all, my long-time commitment to teaching encouraged me to take advantage of the kairotic opportunities that I had as a graduate student at Ohio State when Susan Miller took over the writing program. Mentors also played an important role. Some mentors were inspirational intellectually; Susan surely was that. But other equally important mentors intervened in practical ways in my career. When I came to Oregon State, for instance, my contract stated that I would teach eight courses out of a usual nine-course load (over three quarters). When my chair Robert Frank realized how much I was up against directing two writing programs as an untenured assistant professor (no one in the English department knew anything about the writing center, which had been connected with another unit and was radically underfunded), he rearranged my schedule so that I taught one course that entire year. He was also an

advocate for rhet/comp at a time when most members of my department saw it as a new and questionable area—an assumption that I am happy to say has changed considerably over the years.

In turning toward my conclusion, I should acknowledge that as I worked on this essay I found myself troubled by a persistent question: how do I avoid the potential narcissism inherent in a focus on my research, my career? What do I have to say, I found myself asking over and over as I sat fretting at my computer, that might be of some use to those who are earlier in their scholarly and professional paths? At a minimum, I hope that I have documented, however sketchily, a particular moment in the development of the field of rhetoric and composition—a moment when a PhD student could begin writing a dissertation thinking that (if lucky) she was embarking on a career teaching literature only to discover that a (to her) new field would issue her an invitation in the form of mentors and colleagues like Susan Miller, Ed Corbett, Andrea Lunsford, Beth Flynn, Suelynn Duffey, Robert Connors, Jim Berlin, Victor Vitanza, and others.

I hope that this essay reminds readers that ethical questions are always present for any member of any field, including our own. In *Situating Composition: Composition Studies and the Politics of Location*, I attempted to raise some questions about the costs as well as the benefits of composition's professionalization. My goal in this study is not to challenge the value of theory but rather to remind scholars in our field of our responsibilities given academic hierarchies of knowledge, which value the practice of theory over the practice of teaching. In so doing, I call attention to the importance of considering what philosopher Linda Alcoff refers to in her much cited essay "The Problem of Speaking for Others." I appreciate the ongoing efforts of younger scholars to continue this conversation and to find powerful and persuasive ways to act upon it.

Throughout this essay, I have attempted to call attention to the role that serendipity plays in (I would argue) any career in any field—but especially in the academy, where individual success is both highly valorized and (in research universities, at least) narrowly defined in terms of scholarly productivity. Over the years, I have looked for any and every opportunity to share the story of my first CCCC talk with graduate students and colleagues. So often it can be tempting to think that someone who has managed to secure a tenureline position and to publish was somehow destined for success. I like to think that in our current climate—where many are advocating for contingent faculty members and exploring alt-academic careers—this assumption has been vigorously challenged. If my narrative can help further dislodge this assumption, I would be pleased.

### Works Cited

- Alcoff, Linda. "The Problem of Speaking for Others." *Cultural Critique* 37 (1991): 5-32. Print.

Bizzaro, Patrick. "What I Learned in Grad School, or Literary Training and the Theorizing of Composition." CCC 50 (1999): 722–42. Print.

Connors, Robert J., Lisa Ede, and Andrea Lunsford, eds. Essays on Classical Rhetoric and Modern Discourse. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1984. Print.

Ede, Lisa. *The Academic Writer: A Brief Guide for Students*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's P, 1989. (2nd ed., 1992; 3rd ed., 2014; 4th ed., 2017). Print.

———. "On Audience and Composition." CCC 30 (1979): 291–95. Print.

———. "Oral History." CCC 28 (1977): 380–83. Print.

———. *Situating Composition: Composition Studies and the Politics of Location*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2004. Print.

———. *Work in Progress: A Guide to Academic Writing and Revising*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's P, 1989. (2nd ed., 1992; 3rd ed., 1995; 4th ed., 1998; 5th ed., 2001; 6th ed., 2004). Print.

Ede, Lisa, and Andrea Lunsford. "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy." CCC 35.2 (May 1984): 155–71. Print.

———. *Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1990. (Paperback ed., 1992). Print.

Ede, Lisa, Cheryl Glenn, and Andrea Lunsford. "Border Crossings: Intersections of Rhetoric and Feminism." *Rhetorica* 13 (1995): 285–325. Print.

Flynn, Elizabeth A. "Composing as a Woman." CCC 39 (1988): 423–35. Print.

Lunsford, Andrea, Michal Brody, Lisa Ede, Beverly Moss, Carole Clark Papper, and Keith Walters. *Everyone's an Author*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2013. (2nd ed., 2017). Print.

Lunsford, Andrea, and Lisa Ede. *Writing Together: Collaboration in Theory and Practice*. Bedford/St. Martin's P, 2012. Print.

# For Lisa: A Patchwork Quilt

**Author:** Michael J. Faris

Michael J. Faris is an Associate Professor of Technical Communication and Rhetoric in the English department at Texas Tech University. He was writing program administrator for the First-Year Writing program from 2018-2021 and researches and publishes on digital literacies and rhetoric, queer and feminist theory, and writing program administration.

**Keywords:** feminist scholarship, in memoriam, memorial

I was only ten years old when Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford published *Singular Texts/Plural Authors*. I am embarrassed to say, I didn't read this book until after Lisa's death. Less than a week after Lisa's passing, I sat in my colleague Becky Rickly's office as she pointed at her bookshelf and talked about how she'd have to give away all these books when she retires. I noticed Lisa and Andrea's book on her shelf and grabbed it, selfishly. Longingly. Becky explained how she borrowed the book from Mick Doherty and wasn't able to return it before he passed away in 2013. So there it sat. I asked if I could have it, and Becky said yes. How much of our reading and writing is haunted by death and the loss of loved ones? How much of our scholarly work is a collaboration over time, with the voices of our mentors shaping us, and the texts and memories they have given us carried with us?

\* \* \*

I first met Lisa in September 2005 when I started my master's degree at Oregon State and took her class on language, technology, and culture. I had no idea Lisa was such a big deal when I applied to OSU, nor really when I met her. If you met Lisa, you would have no idea she was a big deal. She was so humble, so unassuming.

Lisa's class, along with teaching first-year writing at OSU and taking Vicki Tolar Burton's class on teaching writing, convinced me to switch my MA emphasis from literature to rhetoric and writing. Like Lisa, I had wanted to be a teacher for a long time. And, like Lisa, academia had drawn me momentarily away from teaching towards wanting to study literature, but teaching drew me back to pedagogical commitments. As Lisa writes, "my teaching drew me back to my aspirations as a teacher. With my 'conversion' to rhet/comp, I felt a renewed sense of pedagogical commitment and purpose" ("How to Get" 21-22).

\* \* \*

One of my favorite stories Lisa would tell (and re-tell) was of her time at Wisconsin-Madison during the Vietnam War. I don't remember all the specifics, but she explained that after a protest was broken up, she hid from the police on some family's porch or behind their bushes. When the family saw her, she was certain she'd be kicked off the property and arrested or assaulted by the police, but instead, the family allowed her to stay. I know this was the 1970s, and Lisa was young. But when she told this story, I didn't imagine a young woman. I imagined Lisa from the late 2000s hiding on this porch behind bushes, a 60-year-old woman with gray hair, immensely curious, kind, and stubborn all at once.

\* \* \*

One of the most rewarding activities we did in Lisa's graduate courses was to read each other's I-Search Essays (a brief essay exploring our personal investments in a research project) and then to write short 3-5-sentence "Valentines" to each other about what we enjoyed about the essays (criticism was forbidden). We'd spend part of a class period handing out our Valentines, then reading them privately, and then talking about the experience of reading each other's projects, writing the Valentines, and receiving and reading our Valentines. This was such a wonderful community-building activity—and an affirmation of each of us as individual writers—that I've used it in my first-year writing classes multiple times. Lisa helped me to not only see the value of community-building in my teaching but also how to be intentional in building communities of writers in my classes. (See Lisa's *Situating Composition* 209-215 for a discussion of the I-Search Essay, this activity, and how she approached teaching graduate-level composition courses.)

\* \* \*

Lisa was immensely curious and promoted that curiosity in her students. I wrote a final project for her composition theory class that was hypertextual with multiple nodes and links. It was hard to read and navigate, with very little coherence as a seminar project. I no longer have Lisa's comments on the project (it was a WordPress install on my OSU page that has since been lost), but I do remember her commenting that she felt like she didn't know how to read it. I think Lisa wasn't sure how to read many of my projects in that class. But she also encouraged me to continue the lines of inquiry around composition, composure, and new media theory.

My I-Search Essay for Lisa's composition theory class was inspired by Geoffrey Sirc's "Never Mind the Tagmemics," a queer and anti-racist desire for social justice and change, and punk aesthetics and music. Rather than a traditional essay, I created a collage, cut-and-pasted together with scissors and tape like a zine. I included quotations from Sirc and punk lyrics, and

Faris

For Lisa

I photocopied and taped on handwritten comments from my classmate Marieke, who had provided me feedback on a previous draft.

I had no idea at the time that Lisa had already written these words: "Experiment with ways of expanding scholarly genres and of resisting the conventional ways that knowledge circulates in composition—but recognize the potential difficulty and complexity of such efforts" (*Situating* 200).

\* \* \*

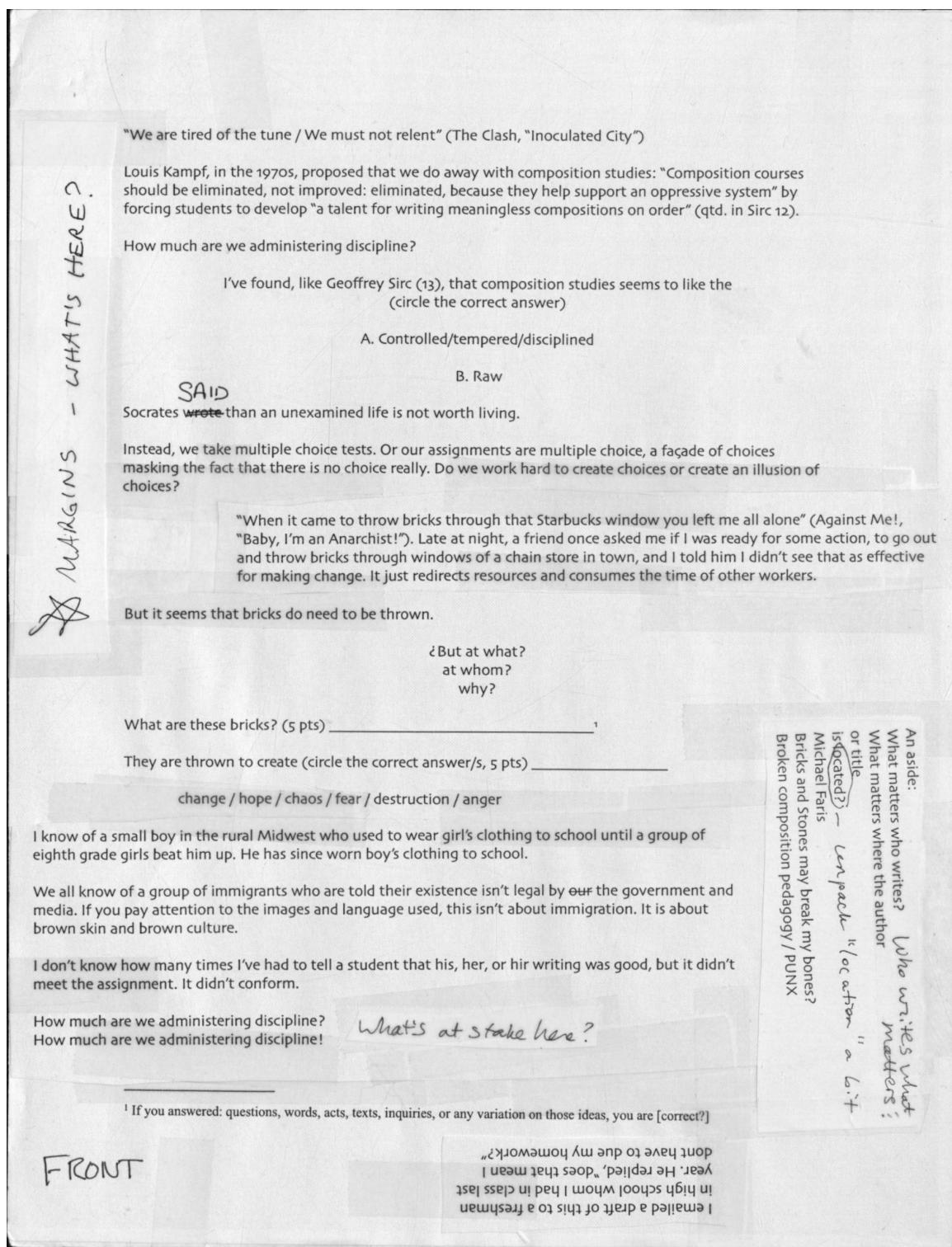


Figure 1. The frontside of my 2006 I-Search Essay for Lisa's class. Image description: a page of typed words, formatted creatively: some lines are upside down, some are in the margin, some are centered, and some are left-aligned. The words mix memoir and analysis, and some of the writing is in the form of test questions, parodizing testing. On the page are Lisa Ede's short handwritten comments.

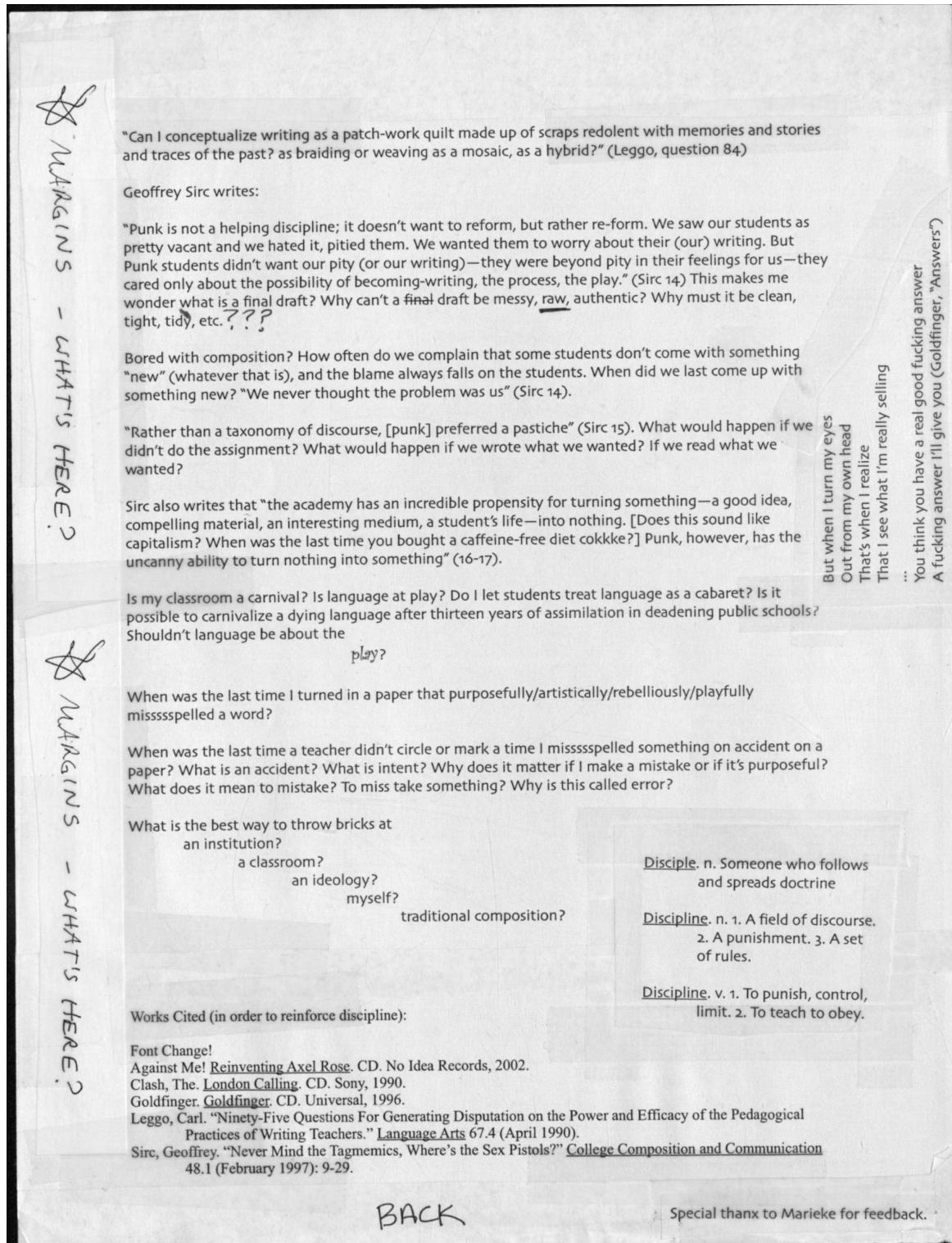


Figure 2. The backside of my 2006 I-Search Essay for Lisa's class. Image description: another page in the same assignment, with quotations from Geoffrey Sirc and short responses. Like the previous page, blocks of text are formatted freely, with some text centered and some running vertically up the right side of the page. Lisa's short comments are encouraging Michael to use the margin space, literally and figuratively.

\* \* \*

Lisa encouraged me and provided space for me to see the connections between my developing queer and antiracist politics, new media, and rhetoric and composition. Late in life, Lisa wrote about how she didn't at first see connections between her scholarly work and her personal feminist commitments ("How to Get" 25). She clearly learned from that experience and encouraged that connection-making in her students, particularly how intertwined the personal and the academic are. Now, 15 years later, as a teacher and an administrator, I see how Lisa's stress on the intertwinement of the personal and scholarly has shaped my commitments and practices. Before I ask why others should care about a project, I ask why my students care. What are our "passionate attachments" (*Situating* 195, quoting Jacqueline Jones Royster) to this project? What drives *you* in this project?

\* \* \*

This memorial is a collage—a “patch-work quilt,” to quote Carl Leggo’s “Ninety-five Questions” (405), one of the first essays Lisa encouraged me to read—because I don’t have faith in linearity. Lisa didn’t know how to read my intertext hypermedia project in her composition theory class. I don’t know how to read my grief.

\* \* \*

When I teach TTU’s graduate course on Histories and Theories of Composition, I assign the opening pages of Lisa’s *Situating Composition*. “What are we talking about when we talk about composition?” Lisa asks (3). The opening questions of *Situating Composition* (3-4) are the opening questions of our field. I don’t know if there are two pages in the field that so succinctly state (or, more accurately, ask) what is at stake in what we do and study.

Lisa gave me a copy of *Situating Composition* when I defended my MA thesis. As I write this, I return to *Situating Composition*, especially the strategies Lisa provides “to encourage readers to consider the advantages and disadvantage of particular practices for their own scholarly inquiry” (192). As I reread, I am astonished again by the integrity and ethics informing these practices, asking scholars to theorize practices but also to see theory as a situated set of practices that requires reflexivity, historicity, and generosity, as well as critique, experimentation, and situating of both oneself and of one’s practices.

\* \* \*

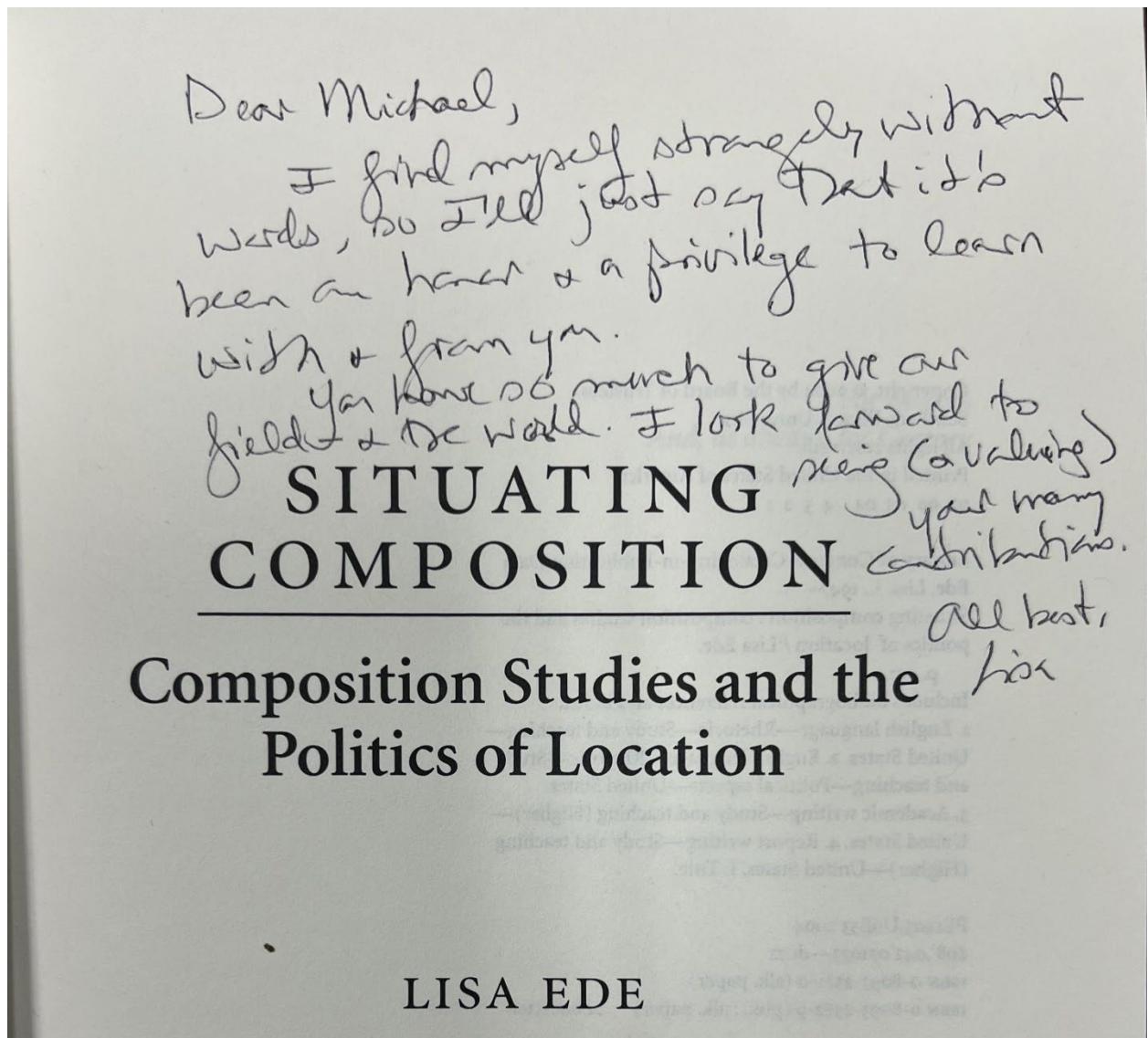


Figure 3. Lisa's 2007 inscription in my copy of *Situating Composition*. I share this because I find Lisa's handwriting so beautiful. In 1990, my third-grade teacher told my class that someone in the Talented and Gifted program had such messy handwriting that they didn't belong in the program. I don't know for sure, but I think she was talking about me. When I look at Lisa's handwriting, I'm reminded of Lisa's immense love but also how her scholarship and teaching challenged the norms of literacy, like the one my third-grade teacher reinforced. Lisa's handwriting is difficult for me to decipher but also incredibly beautiful. I feel all sorts of pleasure in how my third-grade teacher would read Lisa's writing as "messy." Image description: the title page of *Situating Composition* with Lisa's note: "Dear Michael, I find myself strangely without words, so I'll just say that it's been an honor and a privilege to learn with & from you. You have so much to give our field & the world. I look forward to seeing (& valuing) your many contributions. All best, Lisa."

\* \* \*

Lisa wrote to me that it was "an honor and privilege to learn with and from you." I think I learned from Lisa that teaching is a matter of learning with and from our

students. Lisa taught me that while we do have a lot to offer our students, they have more to offer us as we learn together.

\* \* \*

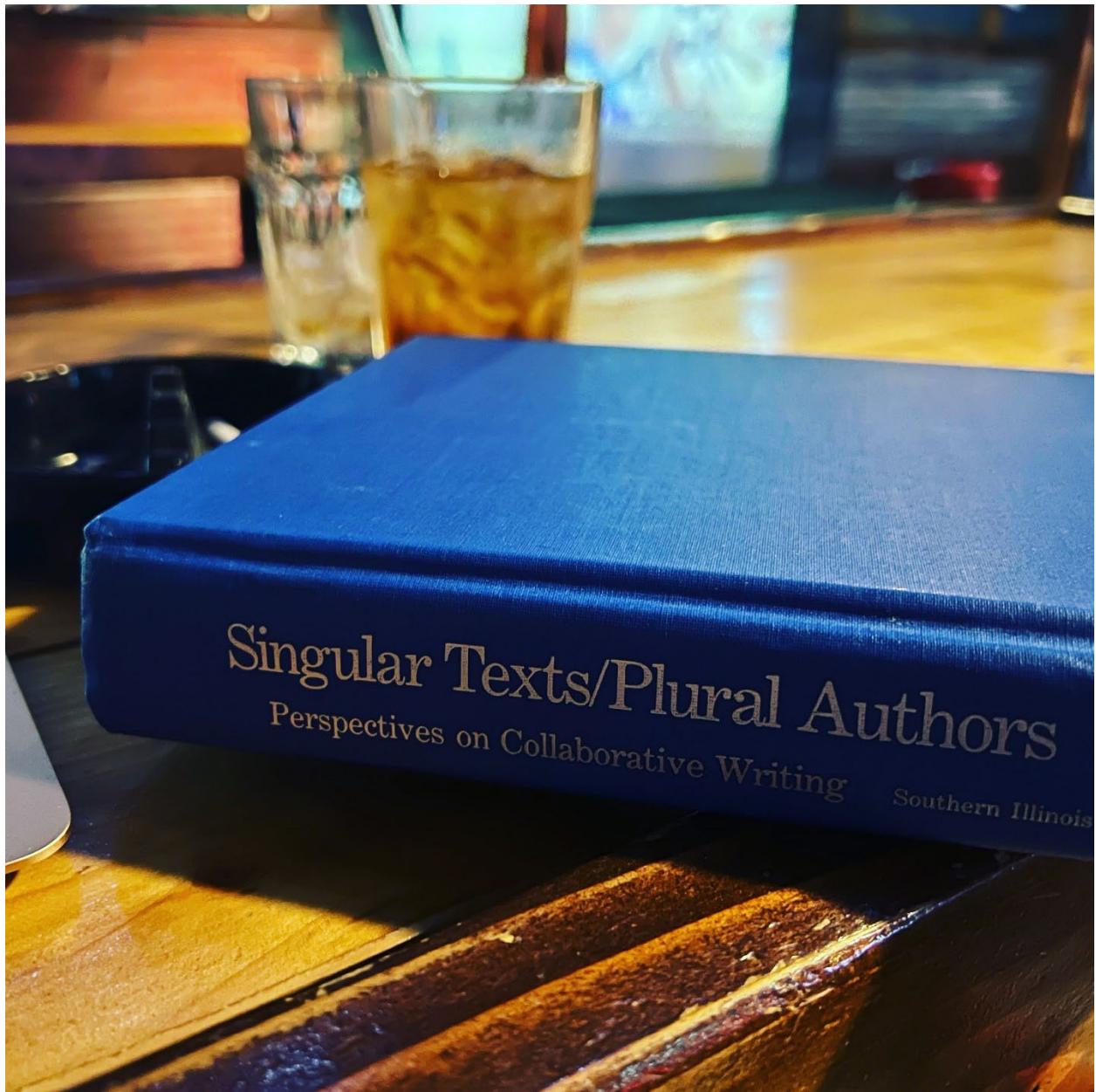
My first conference presentation was a collaboration with Lisa for The New Research Summit at the University of Oregon in 2006, where Lisa discussed Amazon citizen reviews and I discussed student blogging. Most of my publications since have been collaborative—with my mentors at Penn State or with colleagues or graduate students at Texas Tech. Lisa explained to me personally—and to all of us in writing (“How to Get” 23–24)—that collaboration was met with resistance or suspicion from tenure and promotion committees. I believe it was because of Lisa’s (and so many others’) precedents in the field that led to little resistance to the frequent collaboration in my dossier for my tenure case. Lisa changed our field, not simply in ideas in print, but in practices and in values.

\* \* \*

Lisa helped me attend to the situations of composing. I write in coffee shops and bars, with a body—elated, frustrated, crying. I pay attention to the materiality of my writing because of Lisa. I write this at my favorite bar, with Lisa and Andrea’s book near me, a whiskey and coke, a pack of cigarettes, my eyes flooded with tears.

Faris

For Lisa



*Figure 4. Workspace at the bar: Reading Lisa and Andrea's book and writing this essay with a whiskey and coke. Image description: a close-up of the spine of the book *Singular Texts/Plural Authors*, its solid blue cover without a dust jacket. The book is placed on a polished wood bar. Just behind the book, out of focus, is a black ashtray and two drinks: one whiskey and coke and the other empty, finished, except ice.*

\* \* \*

I worry my words in this memorial aren't right. They aren't enough. When Clancy Ratliff emailed me about contributing to this memorial, she wrote, "whatever you give us will be the right thing." I don't know if this is the right thing.

In her essay republished in this issue, Lisa asks, "how do I avoid the potential narcissism inherent in a focus on *my research, my career?* What do I have to say, I found myself asking over and over as I sat fretting at my computer, that might be of some use to those who are earlier in their scholarly and professional paths?" ("How to Get" 27-28). I ask myself similar questions as I fret at my computer. How do I avoid the potential narcissism inherent in a focus on my relationship with Lisa? What do I have to say that can matter to others? One of my many takeaways from my relationship with Lisa and her scholarship (including her essay reprinted in this issue) is that relationships (mentoring, friendships, etc.) are part of what we learn to do when we learn to be part of a discipline or profession. They need to be intentionally fostered and cultivated with care and curiosity. Lisa epitomized that intentional care and curiosity, and she taught so many of us how to practice our commitments to our students and to each other.

### Works Cited

Ede, Lisa. "How to Get a Nonacademic Position." *Women's Professional Lives in Rhetoric and Composition: Choice, Chance, and Serendipity*, edited by Elizabeth A. Flynn and Tiffany Bourelle, The Ohio State UP, 2018, pp. 18-29.

—. Situating Composition: Composition Studies and the Politics of Location. Southern Illinois UP, 2004.

Ede, Lisa, and Andrea Lunsford. Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing. Southern Illinois UP, 1990.

Leggo, Carl. "Ninety-five Questions for Generating Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of the Pedagogical Practices of Writing Teachers." *Language Arts*, vol. 67, no. 4, 1999, pp. 399-405.

Sirc, Geoffrey. "Never Mind the Tagmemics, Where's the Sex Pistols?" *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 48, no. 1, 1997, pp. 9-29.

# Deep Doldrums: On Loving (and Learning from) Lisa Ede

**Author:** Jessica Restaino

Jessica Restaino is Professor of Writing Studies and Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies at Montclair State University. She is the author of *Surrender: Feminist Rhetoric and Ethics in Love and Illness* (SIU Press 2019), recipient of the CCCC 2020 Outstanding Book Award; First Semester: Graduate Students, Teaching Writing, and the Challenge of Middle Ground (SWR/NCTE 2012); and co-editor (with Laura Cella) of *Unsustainable: Re-Imagining Community Literacy, Public Writing, Service-Learning, and the University* (Lexington 2012). Her essays and book chapters have appeared in various venues, including *Peitho*. She continues to serve on a number of journal editorial and advisory boards; she also served three consecutive terms (2012-2021) as a board trustee for Planned Parenthood of Metro NJ, and as board chair for the last two years of her third term.

**Keywords:** feminist scholarship, in memoriam, memorial

*Can scholars find ways to resist the tendency for taxonomies to totalize and to sever the connection between scholarly texts and materially embodied experiences? What if it were a common scholarly practice to read against the grain of—as well as with—taxonomies? (104)*

– Ede, *Situating Composition* (2004)

If I walked out my front door right now, I would be 2,851 miles away from Lisa's front door. Google Maps says it would take me 934 hours of walking to get there. I feel my big loss. I first reached out to Lisa as a young, untenured scholar seeking feedback on an essay that drew on her work. That turned into years of mentorship, which turned into a deep intergenerational friendship, which turned Lisa into one of the most present, steady voices in my adult life. Once we opened our initial conversation in writing, it just kept going. Indeed, I had just heard from her—I was just going to write her back—when she left this world suddenly on September 29. I thus want to write an enormously selfish piece that is all about how much I miss her. I owe her an email and this is just not fair. I also want to count, to label, to weigh. I searched my email and found over a thousand threads between us. Each thread *contains multiple messages. Who knows how many, total? So many. There are probably even threads I'm missing that got lost along the way.* That must count for something. That must get me closer, subtract from the miles I must walk to get to her door. Grief and loss teach us that there is no mercy in this game, no kid gloves with which to handle the absence of someone we love. I can walk but will never arrive. That's the truth. What I hope to do in this space instead is to address something I think Lisa actually got

wrong, to right it as best as I can, and, in so doing, to cast her deep intellect and her endless heart forward in ways I believe we collectively need right now.

Here is a time Lisa was wrong: It was the 2015 Feminisms and Rhetorics conference, which was held at Arizona State that year. My beloved friend Jenn Fishman had been dragging around, from session to session, a bottle of gin she picked up from a local distillery on her drive to Tempe. Who would toast the conference with her? For a while she had almost no takers—the work of lugging this bottle was getting lonely—until Lisa leaned forward after dinner and said, mischievously, “Let’s try that gin.” We had done a panel together—Lisa and I; Jenn and Andrea Lunsford—about intergenerational conversations and longitudinal research. Lisa had recently retired from Oregon State and, as we sat around Jenn’s hotel room sipping the gin, gathered her most reflexive, humble self and said, “Grad students really shouldn’t still be reading my work.” We protested. We insisted yes, they should. Lisa shrugged. This was the natural course of things, she suggested. Deal with it, kids. The ways in which Lisa was wrong in this case are multiple, because Lisa too was multiple: she was steadfast in how settled she could be in herself, rooted to feeling and to place and to her many commitments; and yet she was just as steadfast in rethinking as a practice, a way of being, swimming against the current that first pushed her. She would tell a story to explain how she got to where she was. She had not ruled out changing her mind. Lisa seldom ended an email without a “P.S.” because an afterthought was always available to her. It is here at this juncture that Lisa—the scholar, the teacher, and the person—is as necessary to our field as she ever was. I am calling her out.

Lisa’s impulse to cross her own work off the canon of grad student reading lists, rash as Jenn and I found it, was rooted in her deep resistance to any sense that she or anyone had conceived of anything that might be somehow totalizing or immutable. She takes this up seriously in *Situating Composition: Composition Studies and the Politics of Location* (2004), a critical retrospective of the process movement’s theoretical permutations from “process,” to “social process,” to “post-process” and the ensuing scholarly battlegrounds that she finds largely useless “for those who teach the majority of our composition classes” (153). Of these terms she writes, “I want to emphasize that I see them as both overdetermined and incapable of a fixed definition” (85). This was, in Lisa, a practice of refusal that stretched from her intellect to her spirituality, and that delivered to those lucky to know her a complex person who would meet us squarely, consider us seriously with the full force of her attention. Andrea says it, I think, best in *Writing Together: Collaboration in Theory and Practice* (2012), a collection that catalogues their extensive intellectual partnership and deep friendship:

What first impression did I have of you? What I remember is thinking how interesting you looked, how much—how should I say this—how much yourself. I

wonder if you remember our first meeting—and if so, how you remember it. How I wish this moment were documented in some way, for looking back now I see that it marked a turning point in my intellectual and emotional life: here, I see so clearly now, was a friend (not to mention a coauthor) for life. (52)

Andrea's observation that Lisa was a good friend because she was first and foremost *herself* also illustrates how seriously Lisa took her role as audience. She was all at once paying attention to what you had to say, to how she responded to what you had to say, and also questioning her very response on the grounds that, well, you were you and she couldn't possibly know all the permutations therein. From Lisa I learned to write in the margins of my students' papers, "As a reader, I..." because Lisa responded this way to drafts of my writing and, with this one stroke, embodied the very claim in "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked," coauthored with Andrea: "[because of] the complex reality to which the term *audience* refers and...its fluid, shifting role in the composing process, any discussion of audience which isolates it from the rest of the rhetorical situation or which radically overemphasizes or underemphasizes its function in relation to other rhetorical constraints is likely to oversimplify" (222). Enough with the sweeping gestures: it is poor scholarship, useless to good teaching, and far away from the diverse lives of real people. And as extraordinary as she was, Lisa was a real person.

We need take only a short walk, then, to understand just how broken-hearted Lisa was over the violent failures of audience in our current sociopolitical moment. The *yes-it-is/no-it-isn't* of our contemporary conversations have kept us ill (literally) and disconnected. Lisa described this once to me as the "deep doldrums" which, in her typical fashion, she quickly rethought: "I don't even know where that word came from or if it is a word" (correspondence, 12/20/19). So, I looked it up. Lisa looked *everything* up (in fact when I moved to a new town I received an article from her about the history of my new town, complete with a block quotation featuring what she found most interesting in the piece). The first definition of "doldrums" was what I thought it was upon initially seeing the word. But the second definition, I wrote her, I liked best. From the National Ocean Service, the doldrums are made up by "a belt around the Earth extending approximately five degrees north and south of the equator. Here, the prevailing trade winds of the northern hemisphere blow to the southwest and collide with the southern hemisphere's driving northeast trade winds" (NOS). What ensues is a kind of hot air pressure cooker that only "persistent bands of showers and storms" can eventually break. An unusual sort of air circulation emerges because of the intensity of the competing gusts, one that pushes air "in an upward direction" and thus generates "little surface wind." For this reason, sailors "well know that the area can becalm sailing ships for weeks" (NOS). In other words, the forcefulness of the winds going in opposing directions results in little movement at all, stuck-ness, the doldrums.

I am back to Lisa's scholarship, this time 1995's "Border Crossings: Intersections of Rhetoric and Feminism," coauthored with Andrea and Cheryl Glenn. The violence *and* the impotence of subjective, argumentative force is what I feel—circulating in the air—as the core claim of this piece. They write:

In the same way, we have much to gain by reexamining the traditional rhetorical drive toward closure, with its reliance on those structures that lead readers inevitably to an ending, that follow Aristotle's advice that discourse must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. In this regard, we also have much to gain by crisscrossing the borders of rhetoric and feminism, particularly in terms of long-standing feminist attempts to disrupt the linear orderliness of prose, to contain contradictions and anomalies, to resist closure. (289)

Any notion that we have been clean in our linearity, that we might "lead readers inevitably" to much of anything (except the doldrums) is the stuff of fanciful, unilateral power trips, not actual movement. Nevertheless we often act recklessly while suspended in the doldrums, impatient and ineffective as we have become. I am not waxing theoretical here. My own public university, emboldened by a narrow economic claim (inspired by capitalism) that our administrators tied inexorably to the pandemic (which has proven wrong or at least far more complex as we have just welcomed our largest first-year undergraduate class to date) took the opportunity to gut five contracts for full-time, non-tenure-track faculty in first-year writing and to refuse to replace the lines of retirees. In our department of Writing Studies, which offers the largest general education program and thus touches more undergraduates than mostly any other at our public university, one where the majority of our undergraduates hail from historically marginalized groups, we now have just three tenured folks (of which I am one) and a shrinking crop of talented full-time faculty who wait and wonder if this is the year their contracts will not be renewed. We are teaching writing while perched on a sand bar of sorts, with over sixty percent of our classes taught by folks who are part-time and with *most all*—but for three of us—teaching with the sort of contractual insecurity and instability that could make articulating what I just have a danger to their very jobs. Such force—closure, the inevitability of the obvious ending, the singular solution—delivers us only a system that devours itself.

I am trying to keep the faith about my university, a place I love deeply that is located where I am actually from (I grew up just a town over, how unusual for an academic). We started this academic year with a new university president and I hear he likes to ask questions, that he listens a lot, that he has refused to make fast presidential decisions. Lisa had a habit of titling the subject line of an email thread as a kind of "hook" or half-sentence that she'd finish only when her reader opened the message: "Just a quick email to say that..." or "Can't believe that I forgot to mention..." She was counting on you to

show up, to be an audience, and always in the reflexive spirit she embodied. She once advised me on one of my own personal heartaches: “[T]ime *will* tell, and quite possibly in surprising or complicated or difficult ways. Something may happen that causes you to reconsider your current decision...but it also may not” (correspondence, 5/1/19). Lisa would not tell me what to do or how to know, however much I might have welcomed such a directive in my darkest moments, because I had to be the one to lug my own sets of experiences, needs, histories to the doorway of any (even temporary) position. Who will toast this antidote to the doldrums with me?

Again, I keep the faith: such work is happening in our field right now, work that opens doors we might each differently walk through. Aja Martinez frames her recent “On Cucuys in Bird’s Feathers: A Counterstory as a Parable,” as such: “[T]his counterstory reviews the central topics of this story-as-parable while maintaining pressure on the audience to (based on their own lived actions and experiences) read/see themselves in the fictional characters within” (44). We can be generous in noticing when others are walking towards us; we can respond to Martinez’s invitation to “read/see” ourselves; we can acknowledge the mileage traveled and yet still to go; we can refuse the “drive toward closure,” shaped as it has always been by forces of domination. With such an array of potentialities we might just move together, wind in our collective sails not suddenly but after some time, the way real relationships happen and as Lisa would do it: “[M]y inclination, my desire, with any important scholarly project is always to write slowly, stopping often to monitor and reassess what I have written” (“Collaboration and Compromise: The Fine Art of Writing with a Friend” 36). We need not be stuck anywhere forever, fated to self-destruction, if we resist fundamentally going it alone, forcing a unidirectional argument, and failing to think against our own grains. And so, with that I’ll end with an image of Lisa and me on that night when she was wrong, back in 2015, knowing she would toast to the idea of reassessing herself and in hopes she might—slowly, cautiously—acknowledge her deep and necessary place in our field’s ever-evolving relationship with words.



*Figure 1: Lisa Ede and Jessica Restaino. Image description: Two women, Lisa Ede (left) and Jessica Restaino (right) are sitting together on a bed. On the bed is a colorful throw pillow and an American flag blanket. The women are smiling and holding in between them a bottle of gin.*

### Works Cited

- Ede, Lisa. *Situating Composition: Composition Studies and the Politics of Location*. Southern Illinois University Press, 2004.
- Ede, Lisa and Andrea Lunsford. "Dear Lisa/Dear Andrea: On Friendship and Collaboration." *Writing Together: Collaboration in Theory and Practice, A Critical Sourcebook*, edited by Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012, pp. 51-66.
- Ede, Lisa and Andrea Lunsford. "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 35, no. 2, 1984, pp. 155-71.
- Ede, Lisa and Andrea Lunsford. "Collaboration and Compromise: The Fine Art of Writing with a Friend." *Writers on Writing*, vol. 2, edited by Tom Waldrep, Random House, 1988, pp. 121-27.
- Ede, Lisa, Cheryl Glenn, and Andrea Lunsford. "Border Crossings: Intersections of Rhetoric and Feminism." *Rhetorica*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1995, pp. 401-41.
- Ede, Lisa. "Re: I'm sorry I have been out of touch." Received by Jessica Restaino, 19 Dec. 2021.
- . "Re: 4/29 was the deadline for the Provost's promotion decision..." Received by Jessica Restaino, 5 May 2021.

Restaino

Deep Doldrums

Martinez, Aja Y. "On Cucuys in Bird's Feathers: A Counterstory as Parable." *Writers: Craft and Context*, vol. 1, 2020, pp. 44-46.

NOAA'S National Ocean Service. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, 2021, <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/>. Accessed 24 October, 2021.

## A Letter to Lisa Ede: Thank You for a Life of Listening

**Author:** Asao B. Inoue

Asao B. Inoue is Professor of Rhetoric and Composition in the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts at Arizona State University. He is the 2019 Chair of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. Among his many articles and chapters on writing assessment, race, and racism, his article, "Theorizing Failure in U.S. Writing Assessments" in *Research in the Teaching of English*, won the 2014 CWPA Outstanding Scholarship Award. His co-edited collection, *Race and Writing Assessment* (2012), won the 2014 NCTE/CCCC Outstanding Book Award for an edited collection. His book, *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing for a Socially Just Future* (2015) won the 2017 NCTE/CCCC Outstanding Book Award for a monograph and the 2015 CWPA Outstanding Book Award. He also has published a co-edited collection, *Writing Assessment, Social Justice, and The Advancement of Opportunity* (2018), and a book, *Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom* (2019). His latest book, *Above the Well: An Antiracist Argument from A Boy of Color* (2021) is available through WAC Clearinghouse and Utah State University Press. Additionally, he and his wife initiated the Asao and Kelly Inoue Antiracist Teaching Endowment at their alma mater, Oregon State University, which supports antiracist teaching and research by funding a conference and various scholarships for secondary and post-secondary teachers.

**Keywords:** in memoriam, listening, memorial, mentorship

Dear Lisa,

I know it may seem odd or a belated gesture to write a letter to you after you've died, but it's the only way I know how to express my feelings. You are my real audience, or the one I wish not simply to "invoke" or even "address" but to conjure back into real existence, to bring back for all our sakes. I know, that's impossible. So I suppose this is also a way for me to say goodbye.

As you know, you were my first Rhetoric and Composition teacher in grad school. That's back in the early 1990s. During my first quarter as a new M.A. student at Oregon State University, I took your advanced composition course that had a pretty heavy dose of composition theory in it, as I recall. I don't remember a lot about the course, except for a group project about language and discourse communities. But that's not what I want to talk about exactly.

I want to thank you for the kind of teacher you were in that course and the kind of woman you still are for me in memory. I look back today and realize that there was a teacher-lesson for me to learn in your class, but I wouldn't really learn that lesson until maybe a decade or so later. I don't remember any lectures, nor do I recall you saying a lot in class, although I'm sure you did. What I recall is that we had lots of activities that filled that room in Moreland Hall. I remember my colleagues, our writing things together in class. I remember reading each other's drafts, and the project on discourse communities. I remember the feeling of doing work together as you watched on. I also remember coming to your office to complain about my group members, and you sitting listening to me at your wooden desk that seemed too small for such an important professor—who has a wooden desk anymore anyway? Today, about thirty years later, I'm still learning the lesson. The teacher-lesson is pretty simple: step back and let your students labor through their learning. Listen more than you talk.

Today if I were in front of a group of TAs, I might say something like this: *The more you talk in front of your students in class, the less they are learning.* But as a teacher, *not talking* ain't always listening. And of course, there has to be a balance. We teachers have things to say, as you did to us, to me, Lisa. But the balance is easy to get wrong. It's easy to be pedagogically "cattywampus," to use a word my mom would say, another woman who taught me a lot about words spoken and swallowed.

A scene a few years after finishing my M.A. I'm still in Oregon. I've not yet begun my doctoral work at Washington State. Kelly (my wife) and I are in the feed store on the south end of Corvallis. The store isn't there anymore. We are trying to buy dog food for our Labrador, Boomer. I hadn't seen you in a few years, but you walked right up to us, gave both of us a hug. You'd probably only met Kelly two or three times, maybe it was a department party or get-together. You said, "How are you doing?" Then you turned to Kelly and asked, "and how are *you* doing?"

Then you listened to us. I know this part because mostly what I remember about that 10-minute visit in the feed store is that you stood in the aisle with us as we talked about our new dog Boomer, our life in Monmouth, my job as a technical writer. And you seemed genuinely interested, interested in us, in our excitement about the new dog, in my job that I'd leave a year later to teach at a community college in Salem.

This is what I remember about you. You were always interested and listening. And this obvious teacher-lesson seems so clear now, yet difficult to follow when there's stuff to cover in a course or things to get done before the end of the hour. What I know you understood, Lisa, is that listening takes time, time we are usually short of in writing classes, humble patience, a habit we often forget about because we think we know what's best for our students, and compassion, a practice that always gives both ways but doesn't always feel like it on the front end. It seems when we aren't thinking about it, which is often for me

as a teacher, there doesn't seem time to just listen in the deeply humble, patient, and compassionate way I remember you inhabiting.

Another scene. We are at CCCC, again Kelly and I. It's years later. I don't remember which year but I'm not a grad student. I'm a professor somewhere, maybe it is during my time at Fresno State. I'm trying to make my way down the hall to an engagement. Kelly is gently nudging me, her sign that I'll be late if I don't move along. She is our clock-watcher, and I'm grateful for it. But there are several folks around me, asking me questions, talking to me. Clearly they are interested in my research and my ideas. I'm enjoying the attention, and as usual I get lost in the conversation, perhaps a little drunk off of the attention from others, their questions and admiration.

Out of the corner of my eye, I see you standing there patiently, waiting, smiling. I'm pretty sure you want to talk to me, just say hi. You are maybe five or six feet behind the semi-circle of people around me. You are smiling and listening. And in that moment, I feel really joyful, or maybe I just feel *seen*-ly appreciated, noticed in a deep historical way, a way only someone who knew me as a first-year grad student complaining at the edge of her small wooden desk could see me and appreciate. Or maybe it's my sense of full-circle-ness that I still can't quite describe. I know I'm rehearsing in my head a narrative that likely isn't fully true. The student goes out into the profession while the teacher watches with a smile just five or six feet away. A narrative of validation, yes, but also a narrative of a listener who validates.

Another moment with you. Several years after that CCCC, I invite you to my writing program to give a workshop. After the workshop, we have dinner together at a really nice restaurant. You bring Greg, your husband, whom I know. I bring Kelly. We all know each other, have for years, of course. It's a really nice evening. It's a few years before COVID and it is the last time I see you in person, have dinner with you, talk about mundane things like what you're planting in your yard or our pets or what painting Greg has just completed. We don't talk about composition or business at dinner. We just talk about nothing that now feels like everything.

I'm glad that was the last dinner I had with you, Lisa, and I'm disappointed that I don't get to have another one with you.

My experiences of you, Lisa, is that you were so human, so kind, so thoughtful, and always you listened. In my memories, which are not copious but not so few that I have a difficult time conjuring any, you are always listening. Maybe even now, you listen. Maybe if we're lucky enough, we all can listen a small bit of you into our teaching lives.

I imagine that in your life, both professional and personal, you had to cultivate a disposition toward listening, even as you should have been listened to more often. I imagine that it must have been frustrating to have to listen in rooms that should

have listened to you, at OSU, at CCCC, at home, in feed stores, and in restaurants. Sure, you have been lauded and celebrated, as you should be, but I wonder how many have really listened to you in the ways you taught me?

When I look at the wonderful pictures of you taken at different periods in your life that Greg and others have posted on social media in your honor, remembering you, I cannot help but see a woman patiently waiting and listening, smiling as she compassionately holds her tongue and opens her ears. I don't know how you did it for all those years, but I am grateful for it, for you, for your willingness to listen to me, to listen near me.

In one sense—and I really do mean this, Lisa—you listened me into the professor and scholar I am now. You were not the only one, but you were the first one, and you continued to do that over the almost thirty years I knew you. Thank you, Lisa, for listening to me, to all of us.

Peace to you my friend,

Asao B. Inoue

## The Last Time We Saw Lisa

**Authors:** Vicki Tolar Burton, Tim Jensen, Kristy Kelly, Sarah Tinker Perrault, & Ehren Helmut Pflugfelder

Vicki Tolar Burton is Professor Emerita in the School of Writing, Literature, and Film at Oregon State University where she also serves on the Steering Committee for the Contemplative Studies Initiative. She is the author of Spiritual Literacy in John Wesley's Methodism: Reading, Writing, and Speaking to Believe as well as articles in College English, College Composition and Communication, Rhetoric Review, and Computers and Composition.

Tim Jensen researches and teaches rhetorical theory, environmental communication, and composition pedagogy at Oregon State University, where he serves as Director of the School of Writing, Literature, and Film. His book, *Ecologies of Guilt in Environmental Rhetorics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) illuminates how environmental guilt is provoked, perpetuated, and framed through everyday discourse, and looks to a future where guilt—and its symbiotic relationships with anger, shame, and grief—is shaped in tune with the ecologies that sustain us. Alongside his academic research, he is actively involved in wild salmon advocacy and other ecological restoration projects.

Kristy Kelly is Senior Instructor and Interim Director of First Year Writing at Oregon State University. She received her PhD in 2016 from University of Oregon, and her interests are in rhetoric in digital spaces, new media, and writing centers.

Sarah Tinker Perrault is Associate Professor of English and Director of the Writing Intensive Curriculum at Oregon State University. Her interests are science writing, writing pedagogy, and writing across the curriculum. Her book, *Communicating Popular Science: From Deficit to Democracy*, was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2013, and she is now working on a book about rhetorical approaches to teaching science writing. Her articles have appeared in journals including the *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, *Composition Studies*, *Information Design Journal*, *The American Journal of Bioethics*, and *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, and she has chapters in *Renewing Rhetoric's Relations to Composition: Essays in Honor of Theresa Jarnagin Enos* and in *Public Interest Design Education Guidebook: Curricula, Strategies, and SEED Academic Case Studies*.

Ehren Helmut Pflugfelder is an Associate Professor at Oregon State University where he teaches courses in rhetoric, technical and science writing, and writing pedagogy. His research has appeared in journals such as *College English*, *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, and *Technical Communication Quarterly*, and he is the author of *Communicating Mobility and Technology* (Routledge).

**Keywords:** camaraderie, in memoriam, memorial, mentorship

In the spirit of collaboration, which was one of Lisa's gifts to us and to our discipline, this piece was written collaboratively by those who were there:

Vicki Tolar Burton, Tim Jensen, Kristy Kelly, Sarah Tinker Perrault, Ehren Pflugfelder

August 18, 2021, a perfect Oregon summer afternoon, six of us gathered under a huge oak tree in Cloverland Park, near the Oregon State University (OSU) campus in Corvallis. Fully vaccinated, in a socially distanced circle, we sat in our camp chairs (Tim lounged on the grass)—unmasked and happy to see each other's faces again. Lisa's husband, the artist Greg Pharr, brought Lisa, helping her navigate her walker over tree roots to join the circle. Kristy recalls that Greg treated Lisa like an absolute queen, ushering her out to the group, setting up her chair, clearly enjoying the adulation she was receiving from us. Greg took off for a coffee shop to look at sketches, as Lisa told us about a bad fall early in the summer that made walking still a challenge. But physical therapy was helping, she said with good spirit.

This was the rhetoric group from the OSU School of Writing, Literature and Film, a group so congenial that every meeting, every gathering feels like a gift, and has for many years. We were Lisa's home team, her teaching colleagues and friends. Lisa made it a point to get to know even those rhetoric faculty hired after she retired. Our rhetoric group coordinator, Ehren Pflugfelder, kindly included retirees like Lisa (2014) and me (2020) in the gathering. Rounding out the circle were Kristy Kelly, Sarah Tinker Perrault, and Tim Jensen. Lisa expressed regret at not seeing Chris Anderson and Ana Ribero, who were unable to come. As usual, Lisa was interested in how everyone was doing—she was quick to ask about spouses and colleagues who weren't in attendance, send her regards, and wish them all well. It was in her character to think about community and connections, first and foremost, recalls Tim.

Sarah remembers us talking, with great humor, about Lisa's cat Leo, the squirrel hunter. Lisa told us he's not a lap cat but is loving in his own way, albeit a somewhat distressing way when he brings them fully grown dead squirrels.

We briefly discussed Covid, OSU's imminent return to face-to-face (masks required), fully vaccinated classrooms, and expressed concern for the challenges that incoming freshmen and sophomores face. Lisa shared memories of the OSU writing center's founder, a woman who lived a stone's throw from where we sat. Ehren remembers that as Kristy and Sarah described a workshop both were attending that week on anti-racist teaching, Lisa provided institutional context, including an empathetic reminder of the struggles the workshop leader had as a faculty member of color at a largely white institution in the '90s and forward. Lisa, ever our mentor, saw the complexity in people and situations. She congratulated and was encouraging to those in the circle starting new roles,

naming their gifts: Kristy as Interim Director of First Year Writing, and Tim as Interim Director of the School.

My (Vicki's) primary memory of the day was joy at seeing Lisa and witnessing how happy the gathering made her. Lisa and I had talked on the phone and emailed through Covid and the summer, but had not seen each other in person for a long time, even when Greg called me to come out and share their garden's bounty. Being there in the rhetoric circle seemed to energize Lisa and delight her.

That golden afternoon, Lisa was very much her kind, supportive, and engaging self. She told stories of family and growing up in Ohio in a family of eleven children. Expressing gratitude to Greg for making her come, she said she wanted to be invited again. Everyone wanted to be invited again. We are all so grateful for that August afternoon. It all felt rather charmed—like the universe conspired so that we could see her this last time. We miss you, Lisa. It was a gift and an honor to be your colleagues and your friends.

# The Gift of Feminist Mentoring

**Author:** Rachel Daugherty

Dr. Rachel Daugherty is Assistant Director of First-Year Composition and a Senior Lecturer at Texas Woman's University, where she teaches courses in writing, research methods, and technical communication. Her research focuses on coalition-building practices in activist and educational contexts, as well as feminist pedagogy and writing program administration. Her essays have appeared in *Peitho; Innovative Higher Education*; and *Reinventing Rhetoric Scholarship*. Her book project, *Resisting Shared Threats: Activist Archives in the Women's March on Washington*, examines digital archives of the 2017 Women's March and reveals how intersectional feminist activists build coalitions by constructing archives to positively frame coalitional memory.

**Keywords:** feminist mentoring, in memoriam, memorial, mentorship

Lisa Ede was my first feminist mentor. I say that now knowing what feminist mentoring is *because of her*. At the time, I didn't know what feminist mentoring meant. What I did know is that Lisa cared. Lisa wanted her students to succeed and supported them in every way she could. I will always be in her debt for the great gift of feminist mentoring she gave me and so many others.

Lisa was the first person to introduce me to writing centers. I started working at the Oregon State University Writing Center before I ever knew I wanted to study rhetoric and composition, but I quickly learned that writing center pedagogy would fundamentally shift my understanding of teaching *and* writing. Back then, I had no idea who Lisa Ede was to rhetoric and composition as a field. To me and the other tutors worked with her, Lisa was a calm mentor with seemingly endless resources and support for our questions. Even though Lisa was such a well-known scholar, she never flaunted any acclaim she had received and instead always wanted to know about our interests. For me, this is the epitome of Lisa's feminist mentoring: decentering herself and lifting those around her.

After taking multiple classes with her and expressing uncertainty about studying literature, Lisa asked me if I'd considered studying Rhetoric and Composition. Lisa introduced me to the study of writing and rhetoric through feminism, which sparked a passion in me that now drives my work. She wrote my first grad school recommendation letter and encouraged me to pursue the PhD. That was the start of what is now my career. My whole life changed because of that conversation, and I can never thank her enough.

Because of Lisa, I pursued writing research and feminist pedagogy in my MA, which led me to my first CCCC. I remember running into Lisa on Wednesday night of the conference, where she greeted me with her characteristic big smile and hug. Lisa invited me into the meeting she was attending, which happened to be the [Coalition of Women](#)

(now Feminist) Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition. Once again, I owe Lisa a great debt for this invitation. Little did I know that this organization would become my scholarly community, for which I am grateful Lisa's memory will continue to be honored through the mentoring award.

Lisa was an unassuming intellectual powerhouse. Her work on collaborative writing and feminist pedagogy continue to shape my approaches to teaching, mentoring, and scholarship. I'll always cherish our conversations about feminism, writing pedagogy, and Oregon gardening. Thank you for everything, Lisa.

## Articles

# Ghostwriting for Racial Justice: On Barbara Johns, Dramatizations, and Speechwriting as Historical Fiction

**Author:** Zosha Stuckey

Zosha Stuckey is an Associate Professor at Towson University in Baltimore, Maryland—a Baltimorean through & through—working in the areas of rhetorical theory and history, community engagement, social justice, professional writing, and disability studies. Her book, *A Rhetoric of Remnants: Idiots, Half-Wits, and Other State-Sponsored Inventions* from SUNY Press can be found here: <http://www.sunypress.edu/p-5911-a-rhetoric-of-remnants.aspx>. She helped to create the Diversity Faculty Fellows Program at Towson and is also an active member and facilitator of Intergroup Dialogue. She founded and coordinated the GIVE (Grantwriting in Valued Environments) project where students write grants for community partners in Baltimore City.

**Abstract:** In line with movements that aim to realign power, decentralize whiteness, and employ more nuanced, coalitional approaches to race and rhetoric (Pough and Anderson), this article places the work of two black women at its center: Barbara Johns' 1951 nowhere-to-be-found speech that compelled a school walk out and eventually led to the landmark case of *Brown v. Board* and Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander's ghostwriting of that speech. Johns' speech does not exist in original form—there are no transcripts or audio of it. In making explicit the process of ghostwriting, 1) I explain—via an interview with her—how Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander, historian and Dean of Liberal Arts at Norfolk State University, composed the text of Johns' speech in preparation for its re-enactment; 2) I lay out how other writers have composed and might compose similar projects that involve critical imagination via oral histories and assemblages; 3) and finally, I devise how one might go about using this method as a pedagogical assignment. This method is an attempt to refigure knowledge collection by partially stepping aside as a white scholar; inherent in this move is tension around who should be collecting what knowledge as well as who should be refiguring how we collect that knowledge.

**Keywords:** African American rhetoric, archives, Black Women's Rhetoric, civil rights, feminist pedagogy, gaps, ghostwriting, performance, racial justice, reparative historiography, silence, speeches, Virginia, youth rhetoric

*"Rhetoric is racist and has been used for ill and we need to own that and fix that. Stat. –"*

—*Gwendolyn Pough and Stephanie Jones* (*Peitho*, eds. of special issue on Race, Feminism, and Rhetoric)

*"As a willing dupe of the white male patriarchy, I have been an enemy to Black women, to all women, and to myself. I don't want to continue to be an enemy of feminism. White woman, do you?"*

—Tracee Howell (*Peitho*, "Manifesto")

*"...The concept of amnesty frames appraisal decisions as intentional and issues a call-out charge to archivists to work against white supremacist bias. By refusing to accept that gaps and vagaries in the historical record are accidental or coincidental, but are instead an extension of clemency and amnesty, archivists can better address these gaps and vagaries—archivists and critical archival scholars must first name the problem, and then work collectively with marginalized and vulnerable communities to correct it." (20)*

—*Tonia Sutherland, "Archival Amnesty: In Search of Black American Transitional & Restorative Justice"*

## Prologue

The work below is about Prince Edward County, Virginia in 1951, but, more broadly, I wish to—as Gwendolyn Pough and Stephanie Jones urge in "On Race, Feminism, and Rhetoric: An Introductory/Manifesto Flow..."—"center the voices of feminists of color who are doing the work to ensure our futures" (n.p.). We must, as white women, first be honest with ourselves about how we perpetuate racism in our research and curriculum and, second, figure out how to decentralize whiteness without inflicting further harm. I also wish to manifest my menopausal rage and use force or "*bia*" to move aside, make room, and go beyond lip service as it concerns decentering whiteness (Howell n.p.). As Tracee Howell puts it:

WAKE UP. WAKE UP. WAKE UP AGAIN, WHITE WOMAN.

It's urgent that we, as white scholars and teachers, figure out how to do the anti-racist and coalitional work Pough and Anderson ask us to do and to do it better. The case study below is one attempt to earnestly dislodge a white supremacist bias by "refusing to accept that gaps and vagaries in the historical [and rhetorical] record are accidental or coincidental" and to apply "*bia*" (force) to fill those gaps in our curriculum (Sutherland n.p.). We need to support black women and black women's scholarship and we need to center it in our classrooms. To work towards this, I have studied and recorded the method that a historian outside our field has used to recover—to literally re-write—an erased voice. This ghostwriting method is not my own, and I hope that the voices of the two women I write about here are louder in some respects than my own. In sharing and expounding upon this

method, I hope what is clearly one of many “nuanced approaches to dealing with the intersections of race and rhetoric” will contribute to our feminist futures (Pough and Jones n.p.). I yield to “Black Women’s Rhetoric(s)” (see [Browdy](#); if that is what is decided upon as the name of the field), and while I recognize that my attempts to do this work are flawed, I am invested in doing more and doing better.

This move towards decentering whiteness gives us a more accurate representation of our rhetorical past, and it is part of a project in rhetoric and composition that has been ongoing for some time; I put this work in conversation with scholars in rhetoric and composition doing this work (, Adam Banks, Ronisha Browdy, Jessica Enoch, Candace Epps-Robertson, Keith Gilyard, Cheryl Glenn, Tracee Howell, Ronald Jackson, Stephanie Jones, Carmen Kynard, Shirley Wilson Logan, Aja Martinez, Malea Powell, Gwendolyn Pough, Michelle Bachelor Robinson, Elaine Richardson, Joy Ritchie, Kate Ronald, Jacqueline Jones Royster, Vershawn Young) and those outside the discipline (N.D.B. Connolly, Thomas Couser, Cheryl Dunye, Nirmala Ervelles, Emma Perez, Tonia Sutherland). In what follows, I place Black rhetors and Black scholars at the center, decenter white master narratives, and expand the archive to include re-enactments and an oral performance tradition in order to consider rhetoric that may not have been recorded or transcribed. I also offer caution to other white radicals doing racial justice work as participants of a racist academic culture where imagination often acquiesces to, as Malea Powell puts it, the imperial project of collecting knowledge (116). The discussion as to *who* should be collecting *what* knowledge is important as well as how our methods can also aim to do things other than that.

### Prince Edward County, Virginia, 1951

One of the countless examples of “intentional or unintentional acts of erasure” (Browdy n.p.) includes how most of us don’t yet know to credit Barbara Johns (a.k.a. Barbara Rose Johns Powell) as an early originator of the Civil Rights Movement. But she was. And if we fail to credit Johns, we award the racist Prince Edward Country, VA School Board of the 1950s and 1960s *archival amnesty*, a concept Sutherland describes as “a homogeneity that privileges, preserves, and reproduces a history that is predominantly white and that silences the voices and histories of marginalized peoples and communities” (17). On April 23, 1951, at age 16, Johns delivered a sobering speech to the student body of Moton High School in Prince Edward County, Virginia that catalyzed a walk-out and strike to protest the unequal conditions (overcrowding, disrepair of buildings, lack of resources, etc.) at their all-black high school. But that’s not all. Once securing the support of the NAACP, the students at Moton went on to file *Davis v. Prince Edward County*, which became the only student-led initiative consolidated into the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (Epps-Robertson 14-15; Green 37-56; Kanefield 19-38; Kluger 452-8).

It may come as no surprise that the walk-out speech, which led to a school strike, that Johns' delivered to over 400 of her high school peers was not recorded. By the early 1950s, we had only just begun what's called the "magnetic era" in sound recording in which bulky magnetic tape recorders became the norm for consumer and broadcasting markets but likely would not have been available to students at Moton (Kimizuka 197). It was curious to me also, as I began to learn more about this lesser-known part of our past, that not only was there no audio but the original transcript of Johns' speech was nowhere to be found—whether it be text hand-written by Johns on lined, loose-leaf paper or drafts rehearsed throughout the pages of her diary.

As I embarked on a "deep dive" into this exciting herstory that points to an earlier date to the start of the civil rights movement, historiographic grooves and troughs emerged that not only attend to Sutherland's call but also to Connolly's "Black Power Method," which impels us to further consider how archives can imbibe cultural exclusion. That is, I discovered that I *could* in fact access Barbara Johns' transcript from the speech—but without any original recording or transcript, I could only access an oral performance tradition as a re-creation or re-enactment that was pieced together from oral histories and other sources. A documentary film made in 2012 by New Millennium Studios and actor-director Tim Reid about the 1951 student protests became the source from which I could study the historic speech and walk-out as dramatizations ("Behind-the-Scenes"). Tim Reid, as it turns out, reached out to Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander, an accomplished and respected historian, to author (a form of ghostwriting) a version of the Johns' speech that was to be part of the film he produced which is now available for educational purposes at the Moton Museum (which is on the exact site of the school).

But how does a writer go about composing such a re-creation? How can this help us continue to refigure the field's racist cultural heritage by shifting our sources and rhetors? How might one go about teaching a historiographic activity such as ghostwriting the past or creating dramatized even imaginary archives in order to increase awareness of lesser-known rhetorical histories?

In the essay, I am less concerned with the rhetoric of the speech, though that is still important; rather, my focus is on 1) deciphering—via an interview with her—how Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander, historian and Dean of Liberal Arts at Norfolk State University, composed the text of Johns' speech in preparation for its re-enactment; 2) how other writers have composed and can compose similar projects that involve critical imagination and reparative historiography via oral histories and assemblages; 3) and finally, how one might go about using this method as a pedagogical assignment (in the appendix).

### Barbara Johns & the Walk-out

Barbara Johns was born in 1935 on 129th Street in Harlem, but her family went back generations to Darlington Heights in Prince Edward County, Virginia which lay half-way between Lynchburg and Richmond. This southwestern sector of the county was known as Black Bottom (possibly because the land had been tapped out of its nutrients from hundreds of years of tobacco farming), and Barbara and her five siblings went to live with her maternal grandmother Ma (Mary) Croner while her father served in World War II. Ma Croner recalls that “[Barbara] didn’t have a lot of put-on airs about her. She was a country girl, not some flirty thing worrying about her clothes” (Kluger 452-4). Eventually, the family would reunite and move into an attached apartment to the store that Vernon Johns, who has been documented as being her biggest influence, owned. Barbara would wait on customers and, like her uncle, is said to have reserved no respect for the white man.

By all accounts, Barbara Johns was a pioneering youth leader at a time before youth leadership had fully gained national traction as it would in the 1960s. Formed in 1935, an organization called the American Youth Congress produced a *Declaration of Rights of American Youth*, which they presented in front of the U.S. Congress and which did include advocacy for civil rights for black people; however, young African Americans, though part of that movement, were not its leaders. Historian Sekou Franklin, who charts the black-led youth movements in the twentieth century, lists the NAACP Youth Council (1936-present) and the Southern Negro Youth Congress (1937-1949) as two organizations which precede the Moton speech and walk-out. In looking for connections between the Moton walk-out and national movements, Franklin does list the Youth March for Integrated Schools (1958-9) which, though seven years after the Moton walk-out, took place in Washington D.C. and included addresses by Dr. King. Additionally, connections can be made to contemporary youth activism where children and youth carry on the tradition of positing themselves as agents who produce their own discourse. For too long, our scholarship in rhetoric has tended to not only erase voices of color but has also undervalued the rhetoric of children and youth (Applegarth; Ryder).

Because Johns was highly influenced by her uncle, Reverend Vernon Johns, it is likely that she was indeed aware of these precursor youth organizations. She also was likely aware of how black people in Prince Edward County had been petitioning the school board as early as 1882 (which would mean for the past 69 years) (Epps-Robertson 14) and how Black Colleges had been revolting against ideological, curricular and material white domination on their campuses since the 1920s (Wolters). Barbara’s uncle held a master’s degree from University of Chicago, was known as the “father” of the civil rights movement, and as the “apostle of armed racial self-defence” (Luker 29). He had preceded Dr. King as Pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, led an uncompromising campaign for civil and human rights, and had preached many progressive even radical sermons that his niece no doubt heard such as *“It is Safe to Murder Negros in Montgomery”* (Branch 54). Due to his honest rhetoric, the family had been under fire,

literally, before Barbara led the strike. Protest was not only a survival technology but also a tradition (Banks 18).

Barbara recalled her relationship with her uncle, who it was said "stimulated her mental development" (Kluger 456): "We'd always be on opposite sides in an argument. I'm afraid we were both very antagonistic" (Kluger 601). She read *Up From Slavery* and *Native Son*, and after graduating from the one room, wooden schoolhouse that stood on the perimeter of her grandmother's land, she began to make her way every morning ten miles to Robert R. Moton High School in Farmville. That is, after completing all the lady-of-the-house chores (mending, farm work, child-rearing; her mother had left for D.C. in order to find work), she caught the segregated school bus, which took her to the all-black school. Often, the bus broke down. Or, if she missed the bus, the white bus would pass her by, and she'd have to walk the ten miles. Soon after joining the chorus, drama group, and New Homemakers of America, Barbara began to express dissatisfaction with the inequality she experienced at the segregated school. Students experienced overcrowding, disrepair of buildings—rain coming through the roof—inadequate heat, inadequate transportation to school, and a general lack of resources. Johns explains:

I decided to tell music teacher Ms. Inez Davenport. I told her how sick and tired I was of the inadequate buildings and facilities and how I wished to hell—profane in speaking to her, but that's how I felt—something could be done about it. After hearing me out, she asked simply, 'Why don't you do something about it?' I didn't ask her what she meant—I don't know why. Soon the little wheels began turning in my mind. I decided to use the student council" (Kluger 468; Robert R. Moton exhibit, 2019).

Johns explains how her thinking transpired:

The plan I felt was divinely inspired because I hadn't been able to think of anything until then. The plan was to assemble together the student council members....From this, we would formulate plans to go on strike. We would make signs and I would give a speech stating our dissatisfaction and we would march out [of] the school and people would hear us and see us and understand our difficulty and would sympathize with our plight and would grant us our new school building and our teachers would be proud and the students would learn more and it would be grand.... (Robert R. Moton exhibit).

Shortly before 11am on April 23, 1951, the plan began with a fictitious call and request to Principal Jones asking him to come down to the Greyhound bus station to deal with two students who were in trouble with the law. Meanwhile, the strike committee sent notes to each classroom so that students would assemble in the auditorium, and soon approximately 450 students and 25 teachers gathered to hear what Barbara Johns had to say...

## Walk-Out Speech by Barbara Johns, April 23rd, 1951

Transcript of Re-enactment, written by Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander, 2012

1 Would you all pls stand and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. I would now like  
2 for all the teachers to please be excused. This is a meeting for the students to talk about the  
3 bad conditions here at Robert R Moton High School. I ask that all the teachers please leave.  
4 Before we begin, we don't want any of you to get in trouble with the school board or lose your  
5 jobs. So, before we begin, please leave.

6 May I have your attention please. Fellow students. Many of you know me. I am Barbara  
7 Johns. For too long, we have quietly accepted the hand me downs that end up in this school. I  
8 say no longer. My uncle Dr. Vernon Johns always told me that all right minded people must  
9 stand up and demand that they will no longer remain second class citizens. For years, our  
10 parents, teachers, ministers, and community leaders have tried to convince the school board  
11 to provide us with a decent place to learn. Some of you don't know how bad our school is  
12 compared to even other colored schools. I've been to Huntingon High School and Newport  
13 News and Soloman Russel High School in Lawrenceville and I can tell you we've been given  
14 crumbs from the table. These schools have cafeterias, lockers, showers, a gymnasium and  
15 enough classrooms for all of their students. Some of them even have science labs and a  
16 boiler room to heat the entire school. And what do we have? We have leaky roofs, wood  
17 burning stoves and overcrowded classrooms. How can we sit back and be satisfied?

18 Farmville HS sits a few blocks away but it might as well be another country. What the county  
19 leaders provide the white students is what we can only dream of at Robert R Moton High  
20 School. There are some who tell us that we should be content with what we have. That some  
21 day in the future things will be better. When will that day happen? For five years,  
22 superintendent Mackelwayne promised that we would have a new school. But for us here in  
23 Farmville, the money is never there while it's poured into the white schools. Some of our  
24 boys from the vocational program visited the shop at Farmville High. I heard them talking  
25 about what that school had and how angry they were because of all of the equipment,  
26 supplies and space there. For days, I layed in bed thinking how unfair it was. And then I  
27 remembered the most dangerous thing we can do is sit back and say that we have no problem.  
28 I've prayed for help and decided that it was time to strike.

29 Three years ago, When the adults confronted the school board about the continuing delay  
30 about the rebuilding of our school, what happened? What did they give us? Tar paper shacks?  
31 That is what they make chicken coops out of. Are we animals deserving nothing better than a  
32 chicken coop? As citizens don't we deserve better? Do you want to spend the rest of your  
33 highschool years trying to learn in crowded classrooms and tar paper shacks? Why should we  
34 shiver in class with coats on or have to use umbrellas in the classroom when it rains while the  
35 others student are surrounded by warm, clean, dry modern brick buildings? Why should we  
36 have to leave for school an hour early every day because we have so few buses that are small,  
37 second hand and hardly run? Why do we have to crowd into this school while on the other  
38 side of town, white students have lockers and adequate heating and a cafeteria and all that is  
39 expected of a public school?  
40 Aren't you tired of these conditions? Aren't you tired of us getting all these broken down  
41 desks and worn books? Who will come to our rescue? Not the white people of this town. Do

42 they care about us? Not the teachers whose jobs depend on their acceptance of this unequal  
43 system. And it can't be our parents because they are at risk if they challenge how we are  
44 treated in this town.

45 It is we who must come to our own rescue. We are the future of the colored race. We must  
46 find within ourselves the courage to say no to those who say we must remain content with  
47 these conditions. Our parents tell us to be good students. In church we are told to read the  
48 bible. The bible says that a little child will lead. I say that now it is the time that children  
49 must lead. Because I believe that god is on our side. And, the bible says we that must take  
50 our inheritance. I believe our inheritance includes decent schools that are just as good as the  
51 schools here in Prince Edward County. Weren't we taught that the Declaration of  
52 Independence says all of us are created equal? It's time we stood up and made people in  
53 Farmville listen to us.

54 The Farmville jail is not big enough to hold us all. And if you will join with me, together we  
55 can challenge these injustices. Only with one voice can we hope to change the system.  
56 Together we can show the world that we will no longer live like slaves in America. We will  
57 no longer suffer in silence. With injustice all around us while whites blindly ignore our  
58 misery and yet pledge liberty and justice for all. I call upon you, my classmates, to step out  
59 with the courage and the belief that god is on our side. Let the people here in Prince Edward  
60 County hear our cries. I believe the others will join us. The NAACP may come and once they  
61 see how determined we are, not to fear and never give up until we have equality in our  
62 schools. We must have no fear. Let our action be a symbol for others. But it is only together  
63 that we can achieve this goal. Join me and let us make for a better future. Don't be afraid.  
64 We must walk out we must walk out now and not come back until the school board honors our  
65 promises. We must strike for a better education. Follow us. Just follow us out now.

This definitive call to action accomplishes an intertextual feat that defers to cultural legacies. As Elaine Richardson and Ronald Jackson put it, these "persuasive strategies [are] rooted in freedom struggles by people of African Ancestry in America" (xiii). Newby-Alexander joins with Johns to orchestrate a multi-voiced rhetoric that has strength and directness, not fear, not kowtowing, not wavering. We might identify Johns' tenaciousness and determination as "bringing wreck," or, as Pough tells us, those "moments when Black women's discourses disrupt dominant masculine discourses, break into the public sphere, and in some way impact or influence the United States imaginary" (12). It is clear that she is nowhere near as fiery as her uncle, Reverend Vernon Johns, but is just as impassioned. Not only does the rhetoric look back, but it also compels the action (the walk-out) while foretelling another great rhetor, Fannie Lou Hamer, and her mantra of "I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired" without actually saying that. Because Johns speaks to an all-black audience, there is little indication of the rhetorical practice of signifyin(g) or use of coded language other than her not saying outright how sick and tired she is.

As Royster notes, "over the generations, African American women's achievements as language users have been surprisingly consistent" (*Traces* 5). Elaine Richardson and Ronald Jackson comment that African American discourse is "already polyphous" (xiii). Many

more African American rhetorics emerge from Johns' (Newby-Alexander's) plea to action, including a rhetoric of: "it's up to us" or "only we can do this." This discourse of "racial uplift's inward gaze" (Logan 153) is present explicitly in the lines "we must come to our own rescue." The multi-voiced call to action utilizes accumulation, climax, rhetorical questions, antithesis, anaphora, parallelism, polysyndeton, metonymy and more, which can be viewed as coming from the Greek tradition in name but are also traceable to repetition and other schemes that derive from African-based knowledge (Ampadu 137;143).

As they begin the speech using "I," there is a quick transition into "we" to spotlight the fact that unity is necessary—but it is the in-the-room "we" who share common interests, not the "we" of the white elite (Cliett 171). Also, the indicators of time which include phrases like "few blocks," "for years," and "three years ago," all lead up to the "we must walk out *now*." This operates as the data that propels climax and accumulation into action. There is much descriptive detail of the injustice at hand which attempts to rouse emotion but also to shore up objectivity since description is, to a certain extent, "fact" (Logan 71). As Newby-Alexander will explain in the following section, the decisions she made were relevant to how she understood Johns as an individual, as an individual within the historical moment, and as someone whose acts are immersed in cultural legacy.

### Ghostwriting the Speech Re-enactment/Dramatization

The speech, however, is *not* the original text Johns had written that day and delivered to over 400 students at Moton High School. Rather, it is the words of a ghostwriter. The ghostwritten text was used for a dramatization in a 2012 documentary film. In the next sections, I will offer some context as to how this ghostwriting came to be via knowledge gained from my interview with the writer, and then I will delve into the re-enactment itself and its rhetoric. On the exact site in Farmville where Barbara Johns led the walkout now stands a National Historic Landmark and museum which "preserves and constructively interprets the history of Civil Rights in Education, specifically as it relates to Prince Edward County, and the leading role its citizens played in America's transition from segregation toward integration" (Moton Museum). Actor/writer/director Tim Reid (*Dolly Parton's Heartstrings*, *Greenleaf*, *Treme*, *WKRP in Cincinnati*, and more) directed *Strike: A Call to Action: The Dramatic Story of the 1951 Student Strike* (2012), an educational documentary for the museum that retells the story of student protest against segregation in Prince Edward County—the film includes a dramatization of the Barbara Johns' speech and walk-out. But because the author of the speech re-enactment was not credited at the end of the film, at first it wasn't an easy feat to identify who the author was.

Thankfully, Cainan Townsend, who is Director of Education and Public Programs at the Moton Museum, directed me to one Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander, who was indeed the writer of the re-enactment speech. By the time I finally had the honor of interviewing her in June of 2019, I was overjoyed. Dr. Newby-Alexander—an accomplished and respected historian—is a Professor of History, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, and

Director of the Joseph Jenkins Roberts Center for African Diaspora Studies at Norfolk State University, as well as the author of many monographs, two of which include *An African American History of the Civil War in Hampton Roads* (2010) and *Virginia Waterways and the Underground Railroad* (2017). Tim Reid had reached out to Dr. Newby-Alexander to author a version of the Johns' speech that was to be part of the film he produced. A clip of the making of the re-enactment can be viewed [here](#) ("Behind the Scenes"). The transcript follows:

My interview with Newby-Alexander, the author/ghostwriter of Johns' speech, reveals a method replicable for other writers who want to ghostwrite speeches. Newby-Alexander appears to proceed along a trajectory that includes the following steps:

- identify main motivating factors in the rhetor
- identify main influences in the life of the rhetor
- spend time with the people who were closest to them; listen deeply to them
- gather and absorb sources (primary documents like diaries, newspaper articles, oral histories, biographical material written by secondary sources   \*\*\**all the above have the main goal of trying to understand who the rhetor was.*
- attempt to *channel* the rhetor
- take leaps.

Newby-Alexander works to figure out what guides Johns' life; she asks why she did what she did. She explained to me that she not only tried to understand Johns' motivations but also to listen deeply to those around her including her siblings. She explains:

I'm always asking the question why. Why would a person do this? What motivate you differently than the other. The siblings were close, and so there's a similarity in their that I thought she would say what she said. (Newby-Alexander )

Johns' uncle, Reverend Vernon Johns, loomed large in the life of the rhetor, and therefore traces of him would make sense to include in the speech. Newby-Alexander's thinking is key to historical ethnography as conceived by Jacqueline Jones Royster, where the writer and researcher tries to make sense of lives and experiences (Royster 257). Newby-Alexander explains,

[Reid] had his producer send me a number...of presentations talking about what [the students'] objective was. Everything else was from other people talking about that event, and so I read all of that and I remember thinking this was giving me an understanding of what happened overall but it's not telling me what *she* [Barbara Johns] said. It's not telling me what motivated her because she was a very quiet, studious and unassuming individual. She wasn't a rabble rousing; you kind of expect her to rabble rouse, but that wasn't her. And so there was some mention by her in what I was reading that talked about how her uncle [Reverend Vernon Johns] had influenced her. And so I looked up info about her uncle and I started reading what

he had said...and I realized she was very much influenced by him. That his position resonated with her in a way that probably motivated her to do what she did. Not that he was in control of any of it, but rather he inspired her.

Newby-Alexander is tapping into *sasa time*, the culturally imprinted voice known by those still alive as well as those past (*Traces* 79). The rhetoric is embedded and passed on in practices (*Traces* 88). Newby-Alexander continues to explain that,

...all of us are influenced by one or two people at our core. I've interviewed 200 to 300 people over the years and filmed 40-50 interviews with the Supreme Court of Virginia [as part of] an oral history project. And when you find out [who influenced them], you see how it guides their lives, perception, interpretation, philosophy.

The question as to how Barbara Johns asked the teachers to leave the room (see lines 3-5 of the speech) is unsettled. It may be only one of two approximations in the Newby-Alexander's reconstruction that I noticed from my research where slightly contradictory narratives existed on the subject. Did Johns shout at the teachers when asking them to leave the auditorium so that she could deliver the speech without their presence? Or did she politely ask them to leave? Taylor Branch writes, "*I want you all out of here!* she shouted at the teachers, beckoning a small cadre of her supporters to remove them from the room" (76). But Newby-Alexander comments that,

I felt that she was a very respectful person. And so the challenge was how to get her to say *get out of the room*. You know, that's now what she would say.

And how would this young girl be able to convince teachers to leave? That was probably the toughest part of what I wrote because I was trying to figure out how would she have asked them to leave. And so everything that I read led me to think that she probably would have phrased it like that. But nobody actually said that in all the oral accounts and people's memories. They all said she asked them to leave, and they left, but nobody said what she said to them to get them to leave. And so I was really stretching out on that one. That was the toughest part.

Branch interprets Johns as having a fiery temperament like her uncle (76), yet John Stokes, one of the strike committee members says "she had a quietness" but was persuasive (Kluger 468, Newby-Alexander). In addition to not knowing how, for certain, the teachers were asked to leave, Newby-Alexander concluded that the speech she ghost-wrote may have been a "little preachy," which would certainly align with the fact that Barbara Johns' biggest influence was considered one of the greatest African American preachers of all time, her uncle Vernon Johns.

In situating the speech within the Black Jeremiad tradition, it evokes a multitude of African American rhetorical topoi such as, but not limited to: assemblage/mixed tape

(Banks), emphasis on solution, optimism, call and response, protest/defiance/agitation, the chosen ones, hypocrisy of dominant white culture, common enemy, emphasis on tradition, posting grievances, stories/fabrication (Gilyard, 3-17). This last *topos* of fabrication-as-a-boon edifies what Newby-Alexander is doing as the ghost-writer. The re-invention of the speech is a fabrication but not a falsehood. Her method of using critical imagination and deep listening to fill in gaps is part of the requisite work needed if we are going to “locate” (Connolly) and “correct the past” (Sutherland). Assemblage is also important for Newby-Alexander. She explains that:

I felt that I had gotten all the pieces together and I wrote from what I could, and that I could understand who she was and what motivated her because nobody had recorded the speech. You know, they only mention that she had excused the teachers from the room. And I thought, given how she was how would she have actually asked them to leave? So much of this, stories don’t have a opportunity to be historically created...I knew I had to take some real serious leaps, but strangely I felt comfortable doing that once I read all that I could about her and her uncle and the world she lived and the people around her. I listened to the interviews with her brother and her sister. I felt like I had gotten close to understanding. (Newby-Alexander)

What Newby-Alexander speaks of is similar to Royster’s method of historical ethnography where Royster perfects the research process of triangulating and cross referencing (257; 282-3). Akin to this is the “rhetoric of remnants” developed in Stuckey’s work where rhetorics of the past must be woven together from disparate and incomplete, sometimes even absent, evidence. Often we have to reconcile an incomplete or inconsistent historical record.

Newby-Alexander reveals that she was moved to “channel” her subject. She goes on to explain:

So I took that [inspiration she must have received from her uncle Vernon Johns], and in a kind of weird way, I almost thought that **I was channeling her**—the memory of what she did as I wrote this.

I knew her brother and sister were [at the opening of the film] and some of the friends...I was so ecstatic when I heard [them say], ‘well, yea, that is how it happened, that’s what she said.’ I was happy that I was somehow able to capture her **essence** and to some degree who she was.

Did Barbara Johns have a podium as the film depicts? Probably. Did she slam her shoe against it to get everyone to quiet down? Maybe. In the monumental film entitled *Africa’s Great Civilizations* (“The Atlantic Age” episode), Henry Louis Gates uses the term “approximate” to describe doing the work of uncovering histories. Royster speaks of

"presence & traces" (*Traces* 4). We must continue to adjust our methods in these ways to be sure we do history equitably.

### Archival Ghostwriting, Imaginary Archives, & Dramatizations

Like doing "approximate" histories, ghostwriting is also nothing new. According to Brown and Riley, ghostwriting not only has been around since antiquity but also has direct ties to the origins of rhetoric (711). In their study delving into perceptions of ghostwriting, they discover that people generally approve of it but that nearly all of the responsibility for what is in a ghostwritten speech lies with the speech giver/rhetor, not the writer (718). That may be true for ghostwriters of politicians. However, in a case study such as that of the Barbara Johns' re-creation and others like it, the notion of responsibility reverses, and we begin to understand how much responsibility the writer and researcher does indeed hold. Thomas Couser names this kind of work "autobiographical collaboration" (335). He concedes that, of course, there are different kinds and degrees of collaboration, but in autobiographical collaborations, most often one member supplies the "life" while the other provides the "writing" (335). We can also view collaboration and re-creation as a sort of—what Emma Perez calls in *The Decolonial Imaginary*—"dialectics of doubling" (32-3). Newby-Alexander does a certain kind of doubling of Johns where a new, imagined history is created through the performative act of ghostwriting. While Perez discusses the Yucatan Feminist Congresses of 1916 and "voiced grievances," we're both examining the creation of a "third space" where enunciation (rhetoric) happens (Perez 32-3).

So many more examples of "doubling" exist in women's rhetoric. In "Imaginary Archives: A Dialogue," Julia Bryan-Wilson interviews Cheryl Dunye, film-maker and artist known for her 1996 film entitled *The Watermelon Woman*, where Dunye herself plays a young Black lesbian who tries to make a film about a lesser-known Black actress named Fae Richards from the 1930s but discovers there is not enough factual evidence for a documentary. Dunye thus creates a fictional photo archive (78 prints by Zoe Leonard) of the actress after discovering that the Lesbian Herstory Archive had no African American women in Hollywood in it and the Library of Congress had African American women in Hollywood but no lesbians (Bryan-Wilson 83). The fictitious images "appear to be actual historical documents, including everything from her promotional headshots to casual snapshots of her with friends, family, and lovers. Leonard's images are poignant re-creations of a life we have scant evidence of" (83).

Moreover, Dunye's method of re-creation is similar to what Tonia Sutherland explores in "From (Archival) Page to (Virtual) Stage: The Virtual Vaudeville Prototype." Sutherland explains how if we privilege more than just text-based documents, as we often do, we exclude those histories and communities that have produced temporal events like performances (393). She describes a project created by David Saltz called "Live Performance Simulation System Virtual Vaudeville Prototype" that uses digital technology with real actors to re-create the live performance that no longer exists in the archive. This

way, those performances can be both experienced and archived (396). Like virtual reality, live immersive reality can fill gaps in history and rhetoric too. In "Performing the Archival Body: Inciting Queered Feminist (Dis)locational Rhetorics Through Place-Based Pedagogies," [Bentley and Lee](#) concur with the idea that the "traditional archival paradigm" must be contested. They facilitate pop-up archival performances that do not privilege "perfect" or "pure" tellings of history (191).

A few more projects to mention include the University of Minnesota's "Ancient Greek Rhetoric in Immersive Virtual Reality," which aims to "produce and evaluate accurate virtual reconstructions of ancient Greek sites of rhetorical performance" (the term "accurate" is contestable when considering history as rhetorical) and North Carolina State University's Virtual Martin Luther King Project, which includes re-enactments of the delivery of Dr. King's speeches and more. Well known examples of approximations and refigurings include Glenn's work on Aspasia and Ronald and Ritchie's discussion of Truth's "Ain't I A Woman." Mandzuik and Fitch expand on "the rhetorical construction of Sojourner Truth" by theorizing how both *transformation* (redefinition) and *transfiguration* (exultation and abstraction) are products of the "double layer of facts and happenings surrounding her character with no accounts of her own to balance them" except for her *Narrative* which was told to a white friend (120-1).

Not to mention, we're seeing more African American history in pop culture (e.g., *Watchmen* re-works the Tulsa Race Riot; *To Kill a Mockingbird* on Broadway gives voices to both Calpurnia and Tom Robinson when Lee's original novel does not). The Underground Railroad TV series re-imagines an hour long speech by Harriet Tubman to white abolitionists. There exist many other virtual and augmented reality, immersive technology, and performance and collaborative projects that I am unable to fully explore here. See a short list of additional sources in the appendix, including more on methods. Aja Martinez's dramatization of her in conversation at the table of Octalog I is another such method that is what she calls "counterstory" (71-2). Clearly, ghostwriting, critical imagination, and dramatizations are key to creating a more equitable archive and present moment. As Sutherland reminds us, "If archives are to mitigate vagaries in the cultural record by utilizing digital tools and new media technologies, archivists and researchers must create the space needed for variable cultural forms and expressions to coexist within the same systems" (413).

## Conclusion

It is clear that we must persist in our efforts to identify lesser-known histories and rhetorics so that we can continue to refigure our cultural heritage. Equally, if we fail to credit or know Barbara Johns, we award the racist Prince Edward Country, VA School Board of the 1950s and 1960s archival amnesty (Sutherland). We cannot allow the field of rhetoric to continue to operate by giving amnesty to what feels like an unrelenting white supremacy. Case in point: although the Moton students had in fact received a new building in 1953, these federal civil rights victories made white people resist even more. In 1956,

Virginia adopted a policy called “Massive Resistance”—whose main advocate, U.S. Senator Harry F. Byrd, still has a highway in Virginia named after him (McRae). This particular white supremacist movement gained strength in Prince Edward County when the white-led School Board voted in 1954 to close all public schools rather than integrate them. To circumvent federal law, white people then diverted funds from the closed public schools in order to open an all-white private school while Black students in the county were left without state supported education for the five years (see Epps-Robertson). To fill the gap—where only the most fascist states in the world failed to provide free education to youth—the Black communities rallied to create Prince Edward County Free School Association. Finally, in 1964, a supreme court decision ruled against the Prince Edward County school board and ordered the opening and integration of all county schools.

But 13 years before that Barbara John’s delivered her speech to 450 classmates. This was before Claudette Colvin, at age 15 ,was arrested for resisting bus segregation in 1955. This was nine months before Rosa Parks, before the Little Rock Nine in 1957 (students aged 15 to 17), before Ruby Bridges (at age 6, escorted by federal marshals to integrate all-white school in New Orleans, 1960), before John Lewis (at age 20, founding member of SNCC, leader of 1960 Nashville sit-in movement), before Diane Nash (at age 22, chairperson of the 1960 Nashville sit-in movement), before the Children’s Crusade (1963) where 100 Black children marched in Birmingham.

While most of our timelines put the modern civil rights era between 1954-1968, it is clear that Barbara Johns should be “Overlooked No More” (Booth). Branch writes, “Had the [Moton] student strike begun ten or 15 years later, Barbara Johns would have become something of a phenomenon in the public media. In that era, however, the case remained muffled in white consciousness, and the schoolgirl origins of the lawsuit were lost as well on nearly all...outside Prince Edward County” (65). The first ever Barbara Johns day was celebrated in Virginia on April 23, the day of the speech and walk-out. A building in Capitol Square which houses the Office of the Attorney General in Richmond was named for her. Her statue is central to the Civil Rights Memorial in Richmond in Capitol Square, and yet another statue will soon replace the Robert E. Lee monument that had been inside the Capitol building since 1909. This is all part of de-centering whiteness. Ghostwriting and imaginative reconstruction can serve important social and racial justice aims in and out of the classroom when there are gaps and silences which need to be filled. It’s a call to de-centralize the white rhetorical imaginary via counterstories (Martinez 404). This work is part of the urgent call for truth and reconciliation in rhetoric.

### Works Cited

Agnew, Vanessa. “History’s Affective Turn: Historical Reenactment and Its Work in the Present.” *Rethinking History*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2007, pp. 299-312.

- Ampadu, Lena. "Modeling Orality: African American Rhetorical Practices and the Teaching of Writing." Richardson and Jackson, pp. 136-54.
- "Ancient Greek Rhetoric in Immersive Virtual Reality." *University of Minnesota*, <https://www.msi.umn.edu/research/ancient-greek-rhetoric-immersive-virtual-reality>.
- Applegarth, Resa. "Children Speaking" Agency and Public Memory in Children's Peace Statue Project." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2017, pp. 49-73.
- Banks, Adam. *Digital Griots: African American Rhetoric in a Digital Age*. Southern Illinois UP, 2011.
- "Behind-the-Scenes: Recreating the 1951 Barbara Johns. Speech." *YouTube*, uploaded by motonmuseum, April 19, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9u039ruKj0&t=145s>
- Bentley, Elizabeth and Jamie A. Lee with FARR. "Performing the Archival Body: Inciting Queered Feminist (Dis)locational Rhetorics Through Place-Based Pedagogies. *Peitho*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2018, pp. 183-210.
- Booth, Lance. "Overlooked No More: Barbara Johns, Who Defied Segregation in Schools." *New York Times*, May 8, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/08/obituaries/barbara-johns-overlooked.html>.
- Bormann, Ernest G. "Ghostwriting and the Rhetorical Critic." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 46, no. 3, 1960, pp. 284-288. Branch, Taylor. *Parting the Waters: American in the King Years, 1954-1963*. Simon & Schuster, 1998.
- Browdy, Ronisha. "Black Women's Rhetoric(s): A Conversation Starter for Naming and Claiming a Field of Study." *Peitho*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2021.
- Brown, Stuart C. and Linda A. Riley. "Crafting a Public Image: An Empirical Study of the Ethics of Ghostwriting." *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 15, no. 7, 1996, pp. 711-720.
- Bryan-Wilson, Julia and Cheryl Dunye. "Imaginary Archives: A Dialogue." *Art Journal*, vol. 72, 89. 2 2013, pp. 82-89.
- Cliett, Victoria. "The Rhetoric of Democracy: Contracts, Declarations, and Bill of Sales." Richardson and Jackson, pp. 170-86.
- "Declaration of the Rights of American Youth." American Youth Congress, 1936. [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Declaration\\_of\\_the\\_Rights\\_of\\_American\\_Youth](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Declaration_of_the_Rights_of_American_Youth)
- Epps-Robertson, Candace. *Resisting Brown: Race, Literacy, and Citizenship in the Heart of Virginia*. UP of Pittsburgh, 2018.
- Franklin, Sekou. "Black Youth Activism and the Reconstruction of America: Leaders, Organizations and Tactics in the Twentieth Century and Beyond." *Black History Bulletin*, vol. 79, no. 1, 2016, pp. 5-14.
- Gandy, Samuel Lucius ed., *Human Possibilities: A Vernon Johns Reader*. Hoffman, 1977. Out of print.
- Gilyard, Keith. "Introduction." Richardson and Jackson, pp. 1-18.

- Glenn, Cheryl. "Sex, Lies, and Manuscript: Refiguring Aspasia in the History of Rhetoric." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 45, no. 2, 1994, pp. 180-99.
- Green, Kristen. *Something Must Be Done About Prince Edward County*. Harper, 2015.
- Howell, Tracee L. "Manifesto of a Mid-Life White Feminist Or, an Apologia for Embodied Feminism." *On Race, Feminism, and Rhetoric*, special issue of *Peitho*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2021.
- Kanefield, Teri. *The Girl from the Tar Paper School: Barbara Rose Johns and the Advent of the Civil Rights Movement*. Abrams, 2014.
- Kimizuka, Masanori. "Historical Development of Magnetic Recording and Tape Recorder." National Museum of Nature and Science. *Survey Reports on the Systematization of Technologies*, vol. 17, 2012.
- Kluger, Richard. *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality*. Knopf, 2004.
- Logan, Shirley Wilson. "We Are Coming:" *The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Black Women*. Southern Illinois UP, 1999.
- . *With Pen and Voice: A Critical Anthology of Nineteenth-Century African-American Women*. Southern Illinois UP, 1995.
- Luker, Ralph E. "Murder and Biblical Memory: The Legend of Vernon Johns." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 112, no. 4, 2004, pp. 372-418.
- Martinez, Aja. "Core-Coursing Counterstory: On Master Narrative Histories of Rhetorical Studies Curricula." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2019, pp. 402-16.
- . *Counterstory: The Rhetoric and Writing of Critical Race Theory*. NCTE, 2020.
- McRae, Elizabeth Gillespie. *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy*. Oxford UP, 2018.
- Newby-Alexander, Cassandra. Personal Interview. June 19, 2019.
- Perez, Emma. *The Decolonial Imaginary*. Indiana UP, 1999.
- Pough, Gwendolyn. *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-hop Culture and the Public Sphere*. Northeastern UP, 2015.
- Pough, Gwendolyn, and Stephanie Jones. "On Race, Feminism, and Rhetoric: An Introductory/Manifesto Flow..." *On Race, Feminism, and Rhetoric*, special issue of *Peitho*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2021.
- Powell, Malea. "Dreaming Charles Eastman: Cultural Memory, Autobiography, and Geography in Indigenous Rhetorical Histories." 115-127. *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*, edited by Gesa E. Kirsch, Liz Rohan, and Lucille M. Schultz, Southern Illinois UP, 2008.
- Robert R. Musso Moton Museum. <http://www.motonmuseum.org>.
- Richardson, Elaine and Ronald Jackson, editors. *African American Rhetoric(s): Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Southern Illinois UP, 2004.
- Ritchie, Joy and Kate Ronald. *Available Means: An Anthology of Women's Rhetoric(s)*. U of Pittsburgh P, 2001.

- Royster, Jacqueline. "Disciplinary landscaping, or Contemporary Challenges in the History of Rhetoric." *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2003, pp. 148-67.
- . *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women*. U of Pittsburgh P, 2000.
- Ryder, Phyllis Mentzell. "Beyond Critique: Global Activism and the Case of Malala Yousafzai." *Literacy in Composition Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2015, pp. 175-87.
- Strike: A Call to Action: The Dramatic Story of the 1951 Student Strike*. 2012. Written, edited, and produced by Tim Reid. All rights reserved, Robert R. Musso Moton Museum.
- Stuckey, Zosha. *A Rhetoric of Remnants: Idiots, Half-Wits, and Other State-Sponsored Inventions*. SUNY Press, 2014.
- Sutherland, Tonia. "Archival Amnesty: In Search of Black American Transitional and Restorative Justice." Special Issue of *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies*. From (Archival) Page to (Virtual) Stage: The Virtual Vaudeville Prototype. edited by. Michelle Caswell, Ricardo Punzalan, and T-Kay Sangwand, 2017.
- The American Archivist*, vol. 79, no. 2, 2016, pp. 392-416. Wolters, Raymond.
- The New Negro On Campus: Black College Rebellions of the 1920s*. Princeton UP, 1975.
- Young, Vershawn Ashanti, and Michelle Bachelor Robinson. *The Routledge Reader of African American Rhetoric*. Routledge, 2018.
- "Youth March for Integrated Schools." 1958-  
1959. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/youth-march-integrated-schools>

### Additional Sources & Projects

- "Ancient Greek Rhetoric in Immersive Virtual Reality." University of Minnesota's Supercomputing Institute. <https://www.msi.umn.edu/research/ancient-greek-rhetoric-immersive-virtual-reality>
- Auslander, Mark. "Touching the Past: Materializing Time in Traumatic 'Living History' Reenactments." *Signs and Society*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2013, pp. 161-83.
- Bordo, Susan. "When Fictionalized Facts Matter." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. 6 May 2012). <https://www.chronicle.com/article/When-Fictionalized-Facts/131759>.
- Bowman, Doug, Aaron Johnson, David Hicks, David Cline, and Eric Ragan. "If This Place Could Talk: Using Augmented Reality to Make the Past Visible." *Social Education*, vol. 81, no. 2, 2017, pp. 112-6.
- Connolly, N.D.B.. "A Black Power Method." <http://www.publicbooks.org/nonfiction/a-Black-power-method>.
- Couser, G. Thomas. "Making, Taking, and Faking Lives: The Ethics of Collaborative Life Writing." *Style*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1998, pp. 334-50.
- Enoch, Jessica. "Changing Research Methods, Changing History: A Reflection on Language, Location, and Archive." *Composition Studies*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2010, pp. 47-73.
- Gutenson, Leah DiNatale and Michelle Bachelor Robinson. "Race, Women, Methods, and Access: A Journey through Cyberspace and Back. *Peitho*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2016, pp. 71-92. <https://cfshrc.org/article/race-women-methods-and-access-a-journey-through-cyberspace-and-back/>

- Mandziuk, Roseann M., and Suzanne Pullon Fitch. "The Rhetorical Construction of Sojourner Truth." *Southern Journal of Communication*, vol. 66, no. 2, 2001, 120-38.
- Sims, David. "A New Way of Looking at To Kill a Mockingbird." *The Atlantic*. 17 Dec. 2019. <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2019/12/aaron-sorkin-finds-new-edge-to-kill-mockingbird/603652/>
- Sutherland, Tonia. "Restaging the Record: Opportunities for Collaboration in Event-Based Archiv," *Annual Review of Cultural Heritage Informatics*, edited by Samantha K. Hastings, 2014."Virtual Martin Luther King, Jr. Project." North Carolina State University. <https://vmlk.chass.ncsu.edu/experience/historical/archive/>
- Woods, Carly S. "Barbara Jordan and the Ongoing Struggle for Voting Rights." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 106, no. 3, 2020, pp. 291-298.

## Appendix

### *1.: Pedagogical Assignment -*

From this research, ideas for classroom exercises emerged. How could I re-create some of Dr. Newby Alexander's methods in a rhetoric and writing classroom? How would her method help writing and rhetoric students understand how critical imagination and ghostwriting work in historiography? What ethical issues would arise? Would it work to have students brainstorm historical figures whose rhetoric had been forgotten or sidelined so the students could then re-imagine, re-create or ghostwrite a historically accurate speech that would write that person back into history?

I'd highly recommend this assignment which can work well alongside rhetorical and stylistic considerations, such as audience, constraints, dialect, purpose, but even more importantly, alongside a curriculum that decenters whiteness. Anti-racist teaching must saturate this assignment. Ethical considerations will, no doubt, arise such as having to decide if students are able to write across identities. Contemplating writing "as" others must coincide with discussion of risks and problems inherent in that. I have used this as a lesson in discussing "who can and should write for whom?" This usually leads into a discussion of how Hollywood needs to hire more writers of color to coincide with their needing to be more characters of color on film and tv. Another question that might emerge is "who is at will to take leaps in understanding?" This can become an exercise in acknowledging one's inability to fully understand others and the ethical urgency for not just more diverse representations but a knowledge-making that evolves from more diverse origins. After spending some time studying rhetoric from the standpoint of gaps, silences, counterstories, and anti-racist refurings, here's how I pitched this work:

## Speechwriting Mini-Workshop on Imaginative Reconstruction

For this activity, you will choose an event and a person/character, then you will deliver a short speech of **250 words or less**. The process, which will be recursive, will include:

- researching the person and event
- planning the speech
- composing it
- revising it
- practicing the delivery
- delivering it

### **1. Choose a historical event and a central character.**

Choose someone or something that will fill in a gap in history. You are the ghostwriter for someone. I'd prefer it was a real person, but a fictional (though believable) character and event is an option as well. Try to keep it connected to some of the themes we've discussed so far, or you can connect it to your research project (if you know what that is).

*Example:* Historians recently found a speech written by Phyllis Wheatley, the eighteenth century poet, that condemns her mistress for enslaving her.

*Example:* Oprah is entering the Presidential race and giving a speech to the nation announcing her candidacy.

*Example:* Kittur Rani Chennamma, a nineteenth century Queen from Mysore, India gives a speech before she goes into battle against the British.

*Example:* Agnes Sampson, a woman killed for witchcraft in the North Berwick witch trials of 1591 in Scotland, gives a speech from the stake.

Example: Shirley Chisholm is still alive and writes an election speech in 2020.

*Example:* Mrs. Margaret Park of Wigan giving a speech in England against the 1842 Act that prohibited "Pit-Brow" women from working in the mines.

### **2. Plan**

**Brainstorm and research background details about the historical event.** Spend some time researching the event and person. Take notes and keep a record of sources to include in your transcript.

**Describe the rhetorical and material situation.** Who are the audiences? What are the constraints? What is the purpose? Where is the setting? Describe the time and place of the setting, as well as the time in which the person lives. What other historical or material context exists that will impact the speech?

**Describe the person or character.** What is the person like? Their traits, tendencies, values, etc.?

**Describe the language and style they'd most likely use.** What are their speech patterns? What words might they use? Syntax and rhetorical figures?

### 3. Compose

**As you compose, consider:**

- Write to be spoken; not a policy paper
- Give one or two ideas, not ten
- Give them two or three takeaways
- Be Memorable
- Have a structure
- Don't waste the opening
- Strike the right tone
- Humanize
- Repeat yourself with variability – hammer things home
- Use transitions (signal phrases)
- Include theatrics
- End strong

### 4. Deliver

**How might the person read a speech?** What volume would they speak with? What bodily movements or gestures might they make?

**In practicing, find a partner to read it to more than once. Go back and revise where needed. Follow guidelines from our readings:**

- Be fully present when giving it
- Be sincere; have oral authenticity
- Emphasize words and phrases
- Use eye contact
- Look around the room
- Pause when needed; pause frequently

# Indigenous Women's Voices in the Colonial Records of South Africa: Asking for Permission

**Authors:** Emily January Petersen & Breeanne Matheson

Emily January Petersen, an assistant professor at Weber State University, has conducted research on technical and professional communication in the United States, India, South Africa, and Botswana. Her research focuses on professional identities and organizations from a feminist perspective by examining social media, uncovering archival sources, and conducting interviews.

Breeanne Matheson is an Assistant Professor at Utah Valley University. She frequently conducts international field research in the Global South. She also has pedagogical interests in technical communication and rhetoric through community-centered projects and community action.

**Abstract:** This article tells the counterstories of women's voices in the colonial records of the Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository in South Africa from 1900 to 1932. The documents reveal a common constraint for Indigenous women working inside a colonial system: that of asking for permission from authority, particularly white men within a colonial hierarchy. These stories recognize women as agents who employ survival strategies within racial hierarchies. We call out the violence of racial hierarchies that claim to be restrained by their own self-created policies and continue to recognize that technical documentation can be a tool of violence and oppression.

**Keywords:** Counterstory, Feminist Research, history, Indigenous Histories, racial justice

## Introduction

Much of what we know about women from history comes from the famous or infamous. We often do not know much about the rhetoric that shaped the lives of ordinary women from history. To correct this, we went "in search of the debris of history ... wiping the dust from past conversations, to remember some of what was shared in the old days" from the archives of Pietermaritzburg, South Africa (hooks 338). The antenarrative fragments of women's voices in those colonial records are all that exist on paper of some women's lives in the repository, and such lives can teach us about women's experiences and rhetorical considerations in the face of colonization and whiteness. This article explores a particular set of documents—colonial records from 1900 to 1932—and they reveal a common rhetorical constraint for Indigenous women working inside a colonial system: that of asking for permission from authority.

It is important to acknowledge that we authors are white women who live and work in the United States. We understand that our lenses, turned toward colonial records in an effort to recognize the voices of Indigenous African women, present significant limitations.

We aim to address a call for more international scholarship (Jones, Moore, and Walton), a call for more diverse and international historical instances of women in technical communication (Petersen ), and to use our relative privilege to make space for more of these narratives. "For centuries the world of rhetoric has been anchored by Western patriarchal values ... [with] a focus geographically on the Europeanized/Western world" (Kirsch and Royster 641). Through historical renderings of women whose only trace appears in colonial technical documents, we hope to make them visible, while recognizing that their voices in these records, perhaps the only written records of their lives, are mediated by many forces, including the colonial system and our white, Western gazes. We know that it is "a lack of awareness that turns whiteness from vehicle to weapon" and that our sight may be limited (Martinez 46). Nevertheless, this article is meant to illuminate what and who we can through our available means and positionalities and to open, rather than close, the conversation about these missing stories from colonial documentation. Further, we believe that these stories are a fundamental key to the dismantling of colonial systems of white supremacy and that we have an obligation to study them as a part of our efforts toward racial justice.

We aim to avoid imperialist nostalgia, a form of delusional memory. We will not focus on the fascinations of imperialism that tend to lead white people like us to become enamored with the nostalgia of the past. We instead aim to "illuminate the undocumented ... narratives of Black women's experiences" (Baker-Bell 528). We know that narrative "has important implications for social justice...due to narrative's potential for eliminating marginalizing silences" (Jones 351). Using a postcolonial lens to expand the field beyond Euro-Western narratives is a productive way of learning from and about people worldwide without engaging in a project that simply becomes a recolonization "under Western eyes" (Mohanty 516). We use five stories of women in the archives to accomplish these goals, as "multiple perspectives, especially those from people of color or other minoritized folk, are crucial to get at any sort of truth about racial matters" (Martinez 45-46). Further, "[t]o bear the burden of memory one must willingly journey to places long uninhabited ... for the traces of the unforgettable, all knowledge of which has been suppressed" (hooks 342). We see the archives as an appropriate place for doing so, and our goal is to make the stories of people on the margins more visible.

This article tells five stories based on artifacts in the Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, South Africa. We first review critical race theory (CRT), counterstory, and rhetorical archival scholarship to situate these stories and our analysis of them. Next, we outline our research methods, and then we tell the stories, ranging from 1900 to 1932, outlining the narratives that emerge from the documents we found and following each story with a rhetorical analysis. We chose these particular records for storytelling because they all represent the troubling narrative of Indigenous women asking for permission from white men, especially men within a colonial hierarchy. These stories offer insight into the

rhetorical and logistical norms of colonized South Africa and point to the historical mechanisms of structural violence that Indigenous women faced. Finally, we discuss the implications of these stories, which include using counterstory as a historical method, recognizing women as agents employing survival strategies within racial hierarchies, calling out the violence of racial hierarchies claiming to be restrained by their own self-created policies, and continuing to recognize that technical documentation can be a tool of violence and oppression if it isn't actively working toward social justice. As Plange argued, "the tactics and strategies women in these cultures adopt to confront their subjugation offer rich insights that have the potential to stretch the boundaries of feminist rhetorical studies" (n.p.).

## Literature Review

Counterstories should create action and do so by challenging "the perceived wisdom of those at society's center" and preserving "community memory of the history of resistance to oppression" (Martinez 114). Some counterstory methods include chronicles, narratives, allegories, parables, pungent tales, and dialogues (Martinez 22). Counterstory argues that we, especially white people, "need to stop minimizing the complexity and significance of narrative, stop depoliticizing the personal, and start studying the rich epistemological and rhetorical traditions that inform the narratives of people of color" (Martinez 92-93). Temptuous McKoy makes a similar case in her dissertation through Womanist theory. We should "focus on the narratives of Black women that are shared through various genres that are known to represent their lived experiences" (McKoy 39). This is important because "[n]arratives serve to accentuate, acknowledge, and validate the lived experiences of an individual at the specific moment of the tale recall and also serve to shed light on the lived experiences of those that have come in the past" (McKoy 40).

Counterstory, a methodology that argues that narratives are theoretical, follows the tenets of CRT, including the permanence of race and racism. Despite and because of such systems, Martinez argues:

...people of color have experiential knowledge from having lived under such systems of racism and oppression. POC have thus developed methods and methodologies that serve as coping mechanisms and navigation strategies, while also serving as ways to raise awareness of issues affecting people of color that are often overlooked, not considered, or otherwise invisible to whites. (Martinez 10)

The permanence of race and racism contributes to this double-consciousness that people of color experience, and it connects to Wylie's feminist argument that

...those who are subject to structures of domination that systematically marginalize and oppress them may, in fact, be epistemically privileged in some crucial respects. They may know different things, or know some things better than those who are

comparatively privileged (socially, politically), by virtue of what they typically experience and how they understand their experience. (Wylie 339)

Given this information, “feminist rhetoric studies needs to be more inclusive of (and culturally literate about) global Black feminist practices” (Plange n.p.).

While the artifacts in this article do not necessarily represent the full extent of experiential knowledge, which is key to CRT, the artifacts do challenge dominant ideologies about who is represented in the archives. Despite the fact that the women’s voices are mediated by colonial records, the voices are still documented and visible. Further, the aim of this article is to centralize voices of women of color given the information that we have and to commit to social justice through recognizing and elevating these historical voices. We hope to extend the conversation begun in Peitho’s most recent special issue edited by Pough and Jones, whose work has provided “us with a new understanding of the rhetorical tools that sustain diverse histories across time and space” (n.p.).

Part of centering female voices of color is recognizing that Euro-Western narratives are not the only ones that can inform our theory and practice. The Global South is integral with the rest of the world; it can and should be as centered and central to ideas about rhetoric. Chandra Talpade Mohanty encouraged scholarship that is not so much a production of knowledge on a particular topic but rather a “political and discursive practice that is purposeful and ideological” which “resists and changes our ideas about ‘legitimate knowledge’” (334). While doing such research, recognizing the narratives of women in other contexts, we must “[k]eep in mind that the history of international research by Western scholars mimics the colonial enterprise … International collaborations should be seen as opportunities to share knowledge, and … we should ensure a mutually-beneficial [sic] exchange of resources, information, and recognition” (Crabtree and Sapp 28). We can also push against even calling women in colonized areas “marginalized,” as Spivak said that using the framing of marginalized versus dominant re-centers the narrative around colonizers versus colonized populations. She suggested instead that individuals historically labeled as marginal might instead be recognized as the “silenced center” (Spivak 269). We aim to honor and recognize women’s voices from the silenced center in this article, with self-reflexivity on “how our own training and perspectives may [un]intentionally recreate the status quo” (Rose 4).

Racial issues in South Africa are at the center of the archival documents we examine in this article. During apartheid and colonialism in South Africa, “race was not a fixed, stable category … but rather a legal and bureaucratic construct which could be defined differently, depending on the purposes of particular pieces of legislation” (Posel 92). To understand the different groups and their treatment in South Africa at the time, we must acknowledge that this racial categorization was a hierarchical social construction. “Natives were at the bottom of the heap on the grounds of their alleged lack of civilization, education, and skill;

coloureds occupied the middle rank. ... Racial hierarchies ratified and legitimized the social and economic inequalities that were in turn held up as evidence of racial differences" (Posel 94-95). Whites or Afrikaners were at the top of the created hierarchy.

Considering race is of particular importance in the South African context because of the country's history of colonialism and apartheid. During colonialism, the basis of apartheid, there were appalling mining conditions in the late 1800s and attempts to prevent land ownership for indigenous peoples in the early 1900s. Organizations formed to protest these problems, and Afrikaner nationalism increased during WWII, with whites taking government control in 1948 (Nattrass 167). Apartheid then began, with legalized segregation, discrimination, and the relocation of indigenous peoples (Nattrass 172). Harris observed that "[a]partheid has been described, most usefully, as a form of racial capitalism in which racial differences were formalised and pervasive socially, and in which society was characterised by a powerful racially defined schism" (Nattrass 67). However, it is incorrect to view apartheid's domination as an "all-encompassing relationship between social groupings distinguished by their physical characteristics" (Nattrass 67). Instead, researchers must acknowledge the complexity of identities with factors such as ethnicity, gender, culture, language, politics, and class that contributed to the dynamics of apartheid.

Those familiar with the documents available in South Africa suggest that archives are slivers of "reality" and that they don't ever give us a complete picture of what took place there. This is in part because "between 1990 and 1994 huge volumes of public records were destroyed in an attempt to keep the apartheid state's darkest secrets hidden" (Harris 64). Further, although records are protected and looked after by archivists, documents do not last forever and often reflect the beliefs and values of the person(s) who preserved them. Deciding what gets preserved shapes which documents have survived, and archives reveal what priorities were present when the decision to save some documentation and not others was made. Harris offers three ways to think about South African archives, suggesting the following:

1. Reality is unknowable.
2. Records are a product of process and the process itself is shaped by the act of recording.
3. If archival records do reflect reality, they do so completely and in a fractured way. They are not actors in their own right but are created and changed by people working as record keepers, archivists, and researchers. (64)

From a feminist rhetorical perspective, archival "work is grounded in and points back to the pioneering women, both contemporary and historical, who have insisted on being heard, being valued, and being understood as rhetorical agents" (Kirsch and Royster 643). The agency of women in the archives is central to feminist rhetorical scholarship, but so is expanding our view beyond simply highlighting their existence. We must ask questions

about how we meaningfully represent people from the archives and how “we honor their traditions” (Kirsch and Royster 648). We should “develop a richer understanding of the lives of the women we study” (Mastrangelo et al. 162). Further, we must find ways to express and connect women’s lives to the larger contexts of history. One way to do so is through a transnational lens, as “looking for how archived knowledge and narratives often shore up the political economic objectives of the nation-state and global capital” gives us more information about the rhetorical and agential constraints women face (Dingo et al. 181). This gives us information about context, but it also helps us to see how and why archives may be incomplete because of the surrounding forces in decision making about what is included and what isn’t. Attempting to understand feminist rhetorics from a global lens “tracks rhetorics through which some women and girls are turned over to violence or abandonment while others are protected by the circulation of their heroic stories” (Dingo et al. 188). Not all stories are heroic, and yet we can find agency within archival stories that represent resistance to the control of women within particular historical contexts.

The way to address the above concerns in women’s archival research is through de-centering “the histories of Rhetoric and Composition and ... push[ing] the boundaries to re-landscape our disciplines so that other stories and voices are heard and recognized. ... [There is] a need for indigenous research methodologies and knowledge-making practices grounded in storytelling and relationships” (Legg 7). We know that much historical research, especially in archival spaces, remain colonized, and the field is in need of new methodologies and perspectives in order to expand what we know about the history of rhetoric and women (Legg 10). Archives are spaces that we can explore, interrogate, and refurbish to achieve these goals. We can approach the archives with the goal of exposing power structures and decolonizing women’s lives, spaces, and bodies. There are stories to be told, and, as Powell reminds us, “History isn’t a dead and remembered object; it is alive and it speaks to us” (121).

## Methods

This project is based on rhetorical analysis of historical documents we gathered from the Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository in South Africa. We visited these archives as part of a funded grant project through the CCCC focused on the writing and rhetorical work of women within organizations from the Global South. We aim to make visible forms of technical communication and rhetoric that have historically been overlooked by Euro-Western scholars. We searched these archives for organizational records of women, and the records that were labeled “Native women” caught our attention. We wanted to know more about what a record in the archive meant when it was labeled that way and who these women were. We saw the potential to learn about forgotten women from history, as these colonial records may be the only places their concerns or voices were recorded.

We visited these archives over several days in June 2019, specifically looking for histories of women as told by technical communication documents: letters, memos, meeting minutes, etc. We first combed through the online archival listings, flagging any documents that seemed relevant, particularly those with entries titled “Native Women/Woman,” which is how these records were labeled in the archives. Once at the repository, we presented our list to the archivists who pulled down each relevant box. We sorted through each one, one document at a time, photographing, scanning, and taking notes about any documents that recorded information about Indigenous women’s lives.

For this project, we took the documents that we photographed and narrowed them down for this article to the five that are analyzed. We chose these five because they all represent Indigenous women asking for permission, a common theme that made the five fit together as a snapshot of documents for evaluation. We used counterstory to analyze each document, telling each set of documents about the same incident as stories. Based on those stories, we conducted a rhetorical analysis, noting the way rhetoric was used in each set of documents and how such rhetoric affected the women’s experiences.

In our analyses, we hoped to address Spivak’s concerns about the tired narrative of the “old Third World as distant cultures, exploited but with rich intact literary heritages waiting to be recovered, interpreted, and curricularized” in a way that does not repeat a colonial pattern (114). Historical scholarship in contexts other than one’s own is, unfortunately, poised to recreate unacceptable colonial narratives if left unchecked. We attempt to highlight how “women are not mere victims of the production process, because they resist, challenge and subvert the process at various junctures” (Mohanty 345). We acknowledge Spivak’s instructions that writing should take place as a mechanism of resistance (Spivak 113), and, as scholars, we worked to write these stories from the archives in a way that avoids reifying the status quo and instead aims to call for repatriation for Indigenous peoples. Still, our efforts have been limited by the structurally violent system that created these records in the first place. For example, the records failed to note the tribal affiliations of any of the women highlighted in this article, leaving us little to work with in terms of understanding the specific identities of these women. In fact, the records lump all women into the category of “Native,” erasing their specific identities as a matter of course and for those of us working with the records some one hundred years later.

While documentation reveals much about an organization’s goals and rules, we find that these documents, complete with rubber stamped dates, letterhead, and interoffice notes, first tell a story of colonization, paternalism, and oppression. However, these documents also offer glimpses into the lives of Indigenous South African women’s voices, and those stories must be told. The counterstories that emerge from the documents create “at least the possibility of a genuine rhetorical situation that demands response and forces

dialogue within color-blind racist systems and institutions in which racial practices operate in often obscure and invisible ways" (Martinez 60). This is why telling stories from the archives, particularly counterstories, matters. "[A] rubric for counterstory resides in whether the story is informed by the tenets toward advancing a better understanding of how law or policy operate" (Martinez 16). While the story from the colonial archives could be about how efficient and organized technical documentation is for certain parts of colonial South Africa, the counterstory instead centers the voices of Indigenous women who were written about and who submitted requests in writing to those white males who claimed authority. Counterstory demands that we dig into those records and better understand why such narratives illuminate tenets of CRT.

### Counterstories from the Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository

We have selected the following five stories, based on sets of archival records, to illustrate the complexities of women's agency. Among them, we saw clear themes of women making efforts to gain power amid the violent system of colonialism, despite the excessive limitations placed upon them. Under each story we have included a brief synopsis of what was contained in each document as well as contextual information about how these stories fit together as part of a broader narrative.

#### **1. Widows of Cetshwayo Ask for Permission to Slaughter a Cow**

Meeting minutes by a magistrate in Ndwandwe Division, part of Zululand, record three women, Oka-Nfusi, Oka-Sitshaluza, and Oka-Mkalipi, who were widows of the former king of Zululand Cetshwayo, asking permission to move a red cow from one kraal to another in order to slaughter it. The district native commissioner passed their request to the acting chief native commissioner of Natal Province. Because the cow was owned by Dinuzulu, the new king of Zululand, the colonial hierarchies needed to confer on the women's request. After layers of paperwork, the request was granted, as "Dinuzulu has no objection to the slaughter of the red cow by the women named," and the paperwork was signed by the acting secretary for native affairs and the acting chief native commissioner of Natal Province ("Widows"). That final permission letter is dated 23 October 1911, meaning it took a month for the women to gain permission, as the first letter in the paperwork is dated 20 September 1911.

That Oka-Nfusi, Oka-Sitshaluza, and Oka-Mkalipi's names are in the paperwork is remarkable. Women's names from Indigenous tribes at the time were not well known or well documented. These women, however, were the widows of a king, meaning they had some form of privilege in the hierarchy of South Africa. However, that they had to ask permission to slaughter a cow, an act that would seemingly be part of everyday practice, means that their lives were highly regulated by the colonial system in which they lived. Such regulation is evident from the amount of paperwork and the amount of time it took for them to receive permission.

Of note is the “high language” used in the permission letters from the authorities. They use words and phrases such as “ultimo” for day and “subjoin,” “herewith,” and “beg to inform (“Widows”).” Such language is seemingly unnecessary given that the women simply want to slaughter a cow, but because the paperwork goes through two layers of colonial hierarchy (that we know of, and not counting the original meeting minutes, which are unavailable in the archives), such language may have been required or expected as part of the genre. The paperwork is a template with a letterhead that can be filled in with dates and the permission papers are letters, one with a letterhead and one without. The formality of this process is obvious.

To drive a cow from one place to another involves travel, and “travel as a starting point for discourse is associated with different ... rites of passage, immigration, enforced migration, relocation, enslavement, and homelessness” (hooks 343). Travel has often been forced on BIPOC because of white hierarchy’s decisions and preferences. Even in this record, in which the women wish simply to slaughter a cow, their movements are controlled and their travel is decided by a white authority.

These documents also reveal something about official and unofficial lines of communication. Officially, local meetings were held in which citizens could express concerns or ask permissions. Those representing the hierarchy at those meetings would pass such communications up the line, first to the district native commissioner, who then passed the information to the chief native commissioner. That commissioner then conferred, presumably through his secretaries, with the owner of the cow, the king of Zululand, Dinuzulu. The communication then made its way back down through the same channels, finally reaching the women who are granted permission. The women are unofficial participants, as their communication is verbal and only documented in reference to the original words they spoke. The meeting minutes referred to do not exist in the archives that we could find. Further, these lines of communication are also divided by gender. In general, we see that women must ask permission unofficially, while officials, who are mostly white men, minus the king of Zululand, decide the answers and document them officially.

## **2. Nompi Asks for Permission to Move**

A widow named Nompi wished to move her residence from a district in the Transvaal to Eshowe division in Zululand. She wanted to move because of her husband’s death. She owned one hut and had four children, ages six, seven, nine, and eighteen named Untandori, Ulema, Nomasantu, and Nomtala. The widow Nompi did not have cattle, horses, sheep, or goats, and her move meant that she would go from the territory of chief Mkonko-Mliki to chief Mbango. The magistrate for native affairs had “no objection to the granting of this application” (“Application by Native Woman Nompi”). On 30 May 1906, a colonial authority noted that she and her daughters needed permission from the Transvaal

authorities. The application had previously been granted by the commissioner for native affairs in Zululand, where the woman wished to reside, on 17 May 1906. The issue of permission from the Transvaal is not resolved in the existing records. Attached to the various correspondences is an application for permission to reside in Zululand and passes, which cite pass law No. 48 of 1884. The passes warned, "The duration of this pass must be carefully explained to the Native" ("Application by Native Woman Nompi"). The pass was "available for return at any time during one year from its date" ("Application by Native Woman Nompi"). There are five passes, one for Nompi and one for each of her children.

These papers are rife with contradictions. The cover page describes a widow wanting permission to move her residence, but the passes attached to this record indicate that she and her four daughters were simply visiting. This might be explained by the note on a previous page that they must obtain permission from the Transvaal authorities. Perhaps the passes were temporary until Nompi and her daughters can obtain permission from yet another level of colonial bureaucracy.

The passes are of interest because of their genre and formatting. They are fill-in-the-blank passes with sections for a date, name, chief, where from, destination, purpose, and the officer's name who fills them out. They are labeled as "inward" passes, which seemingly means that they are not for international travel. Pass laws were violently oppressive and controlled Indigenous people in ways that fundamentally violated their rights. Passive resistance to such control was first enacted by Mahatma Gandhi in Transvaal province in the early 1900s (Wells 57). Women in Bloemfontein in 1913 and in Johannesburg in 1958 resisted pass laws in uprisings. In 1958, the "anti-pass campaign lost its momentum and African women reluctantly took passes" (Wells 58).

The fact that Nompi and her daughters needed passes at all is evidence of racial violence typical of colonial control. Not only was Nompi dealing with the recent death of her husband, but in order to move (most likely to be nearer to family, although this is not indicated in the records), she needed to go through paperwork, which appears to have taken about one week to complete, from 8 May to 15 May 1906. However, there are notes from commissioners in Zululand and Natal provinces dated 17 May, 21 May, 27 May, and 30 May that grant permission and raise the issue of needing further permission for her movements. The records do not provide any narrative or correspondence about what happened after that question is raised. While it seems that she and her daughters were able to move and reside under a different chief, the narrative is not clear and leaves open the possibility that further paperwork or permissions were needed. If Nompi did not realize this, she may have had her passes revoked. If Nompi did not file new paperwork, she may not have been able to move or remain in her new residence. We do not know the rest of the story, but we do know that the paperwork of colonialism governed every move in the

lives of women like her. The paperwork went through layers of authority and often took time to make its way back to the original requestor.

### **3. Women Ask for Remission of Husband's Jail Sentence**

A justice of the peace wrote a letter on 20 January 1900 based on an interpretation of what two wives, Umpansi and Nomuva, said in a petition to have their husband, Umsombuluko, released from jail early. The petitioning letter explained that the husband was sentenced to one year in jail on 18 April 1899 for taking meat from a stolen sheep. The man who stole the sheep was sentenced to 2 years in jail, where he died. Umsombuluko was still alive and jailed. He had nine children and two wives, who were kicked off of a farm after he went to jail; they had been staying as refugees at a kraal, with an older man who was unable to earn money. The women and children experienced a "great scarcity of food," and because of continuous droughts, their garden of maize failed ("Petition"). They had become beggars, and neighbors were unable to assist them. They were experiencing starvation and poverty and the children were all too young to work. The letter assured the reader that the jailed man was of good character and had "behaved himself" in jail. They asked "humbly" and prayed for mercy that Umsombuluko's sentence would be remitted early. The letter has two witnesses that the facts stated are true.

The attorney general agreed to remit the sentence if the statements in the letter are true. These statements include the following, as outlined to an investigator who must decide if they are true.

- The number and ages of children
- The place where the women and children are staying
- The lack of assistance
- The state of their gardens
- The general state of poverty

The investigator found that all of the statements were true but that he could not vouch for the behavior of Umsombuluko in jail. He suggested asking the judge or prosecutor in the case for verification of his behavior and character. Judge Beaumont wrote a letter saying he has "no objection to his remission" ("Petition"). The release from jail was approved, and Umsombuluko was released on 4 February 1900. The official certificate and paperwork were completed a few days later. There are several letters in this collection simply informing people within the bureaucracy about the approval and his release.

The letter to the "supreme chief over the native population" is written in flowery and elegant language, with many titles at the beginning to flatter the recipient of the letter. It ends with religious language about prayer, humility, and mercy to show humility and appeal to the goodness of the receiver.

The husband was essentially jailed for poverty and hunger. He used stolen goods to eat and feed his family which resulted in more poverty for his family when he was arrested. Because he was jailed, the women and children became more destitute because of their economic dependence on colonial, patriarchal systems. His incarceration did not solve the problem that caused him to eat stolen goods in the first place; it only created more poverty and misery. The collection of documents that tell this story highlight the economic dependency of Indigenous women on the men in their lives and men in positions of power. It also highlights the racial violence of systems that leverage incarceration against individuals of color and that perpetuate cycles of poverty and loss.

#### **4. Esther Caluza Asks for Exemption from “Native Law”**

Esther Caluza wrote on 22 October 1913 asking for exemption from “native law” in order to keep the land she had worked for and purchased in her name. In her letter, she explained that because she is a “native girl” her relatives can claim her land. She asked for help in procuring an exemption certificate so that she could keep her land. The chief native commissioner of Natal Province responded on 24 October with a letter explaining that she must first return to Natal Province before she can petition for exemption. He explained that her application must be made through the magistrate.

Only two short letters make up this correspondence but in them are intersectional factors that affect Indigenous agency. First, because this young woman is Indigenous, she must apply for exemption from a set of laws that govern her, laws that are presumably legislated and enforced by white colonial powers. Her racial identity is at play in the need for her to ask permission to retain her own property. Second, her gender complicates her agency; she cannot simply rely on having access to the property that she has purchased with her own money, as she explains in the letter. Instead, she must be subject to “native law,” which presumably states that her property can be claimed by relatives (or males). Her predicament is complicated by these two identity factors, and she must then work through official channels to protect her property.

The letter from the commissioner, however, fails to acknowledge the complicated nature of the loss she is fighting against. The reply simply informs her of proper procedure, relying on bureaucratic processes and language to respond. There is no compassion from the commissioner about her situation and how she has come to be in it. There is only instrumental communication about how she must petition at a different time and through a different person. The reply serves to teach her how to get her request granted through the system, but without acknowledgement that the system has caused her problem in the first place.

## **5. Women Ask for Permission to Brew Beer**

This fragmented story is made up of three letters and a cover sheet. In the first letter, dated 28 January 1932, a lawyer named T. J. D'Alton wrote to the town clerk's office in Pietermaritzburg on behalf of "eleven native women" who wanted permission to brew beer at home on the weekends when their husbands were home. These women lived in Maryvale, on land considered part of the "town" (or colonized land) and therefore had to seek permission from those in charge. D'Alton makes the case that others in the town have been given permission by the commission to brew the beer and that the women are willing to abide by any conditions that the town seeks to impose. Additionally, he notes that the "native beer" is a staple food and it would be a hardship to deprive them of it ("Application by Native Women at Maryvale").

R.E. Stevens, a city manager for Pietermaritzburg, addressed the town clerk in an internal communication on 2 February 1932. The letter says that the Urban Areas Act provides for either domestic brewing or municipal brewing. Because Pietermaritzburg abides by municipal brewing only, he cannot "allow domestic brewing in any portion of the town" ("Application by Native Women at Maryvale"). He suggests that the women, instead of brewing their own beer, purchase it from the Canteen, after they get permission from him to consume it at home.

The third letter dated 4 February 1932 is from the town clerk to the lawyer D'Alton, informing him that the City Council has no power to grant permits for domestic brewing within the town. He conveys the information from Stevens, that the women may purchase the beer and obtain permission to consume it at home.

The response of the city manager is clear and direct, written in a way that demonstrates his belief that the decision is not his but constrained by the law. This rhetoric scapegoats the law and claims that the only way around the law is to buy beer, rather than engage in the Indigenous and traditional practice of brewing beer at home. His response negates Indigenous customs, labeling them as impossible because the colonial law, embedded with capitalist idealism, is the final authority. He did not attempt to question the law or consider how the law failed to take into account the Indigenous practices of the people in that area. He used the law to make his decision final, saying, "I can find nothing in the Urban Areas Act which gives the Council power to allow domestic brewing in any portion of the Town" ("Application by Native Women at Maryvale"). And yet, the council ostensibly has the power to make the laws. However, because the law is already in place, Stevens refuses to question the premise of the law in the first place and how such a law regulates Indigenous practices and contributes to cultural erasure.

In cases like this one, individuals inside of the system of white supremacy use the law in an effort to obscure their own agency, despite the reality that their offices possess the power to change these laws if they wished. If the "City Council is not empowered to grant permits for domestic brewing," then who is? The only solution offered erases the Indigenous cultural practices of brewing beer, ignores the possible differences in the type of beer the women brew compared to what is available for purchase, and disregards whether or not the women can afford to or even want to purchase beer.

It is also odd that in the letters, the beer is referred to as "native beer" (first letter), "Kaffir Beer" (second letter), and "Native Beer" (third letter) without acknowledging that what they will purchase at the Canteen may not be the same staple food they wish to brew. D'Alton makes it clear that the beer the women want to brew, just "one gallon, at week ends," is "part of their staple food" and that "these women feel it is a hardship to be deprived of this food" ("Application by Native Women at Maryvale").

Further, we see that the women have engaged a solicitor to help them make the request, an act of agency. This might be due to several realities, including a lack of literacy (basic and/or legal) and a lack of power within a colonial system due to their race and gender. The women, while the driving force behind the request, must use the voice of a white male lawyer to speak for them in order to ask permission to make a staple food in their own homes. Their lives are mediated by this white man, the law, paperwork, colonial systems of power, and paperwork. There is no indication that their concerns or voices were heard by the city manager after he received the letter. They were not allowed to make a case for themselves in person or with emotion. The women have no ethos in this system, despite their efforts to speak up, leaving them without recourse except for a letter written on their behalf by a lawyer, who ultimately fails to ensure their needs.

While these women's concerns over retaining their cultural practice of brewing beer at home have been preserved in these colonial records, their voices are mostly hidden behind the advocacy of a lawyer and colonial law, which fails to consider them as full citizens and does not consider their customs when settling the land and creating the laws. We have a record that eleven women had to find a mediator to ask permission to engage in an activity that was part of their everyday lives, but we do not see a clear record of who they were, how they lived, or what they really thought. We do get a sense that their feelings and thoughts were largely considered unimportant, largely ignored, and that the colonial system had not only failed them in this particular instance but entirely. The laws were drafted as part of the violent effort to erase Indigenous cultural practices and assimilate these women into white, colonial culture.

## Discussion and Implications

An important implication of our historical work is that it aims to normalize using counterstory as a methodology. We see the telling of these fragmented narratives as a tool

for exposing the cruelties of colonial systems as well as a method of honoring and learning from the resistances of the individuals who lived inside of these systems. We recognize the privilege of our positionality and the power that it affords us to make embodied methodologies a norm in the field. We welcome critique, opposition, expansion, and addition to our limited work here. We call for other scholars to join us in this type of work to document and advocate for the historical counterstories of marginalized individuals and to add to and refine our use of these methods.

We see the women in these documents not as victims but as agents working through a brutalized system of racial violence. Their stories show their efforts toward self-advocacy amid deep injustice: hiring lawyers, submitting documents, and working to make their circumstances more just. They are engaged in “survival strategies” (Baker-Bell 535), meaning that they act within the system and its constraints in order to self-preserve, while still advocating for permissions and more agency. Still, the historical record has left us little to understand the intricacies of their lives and of their resistance. This too is a form of violence and erasure.

One of the most important implications of the study of documents like these is that they reveal the historical mechanisms of structural violence that face Indigenous women in South Africa. For example, Zulu women in South Africa are presently engaged in a struggle in which their rights to their homes have been changed or superseded. Zulu women report being required to sign new leases and pay rent on homes they believed belonged to them and, in at least one case, the lease was written in the name of a woman’s boyfriend who was considered the head of household, even though the residence had belonged to her. In many cases, these leases were written in English, even when the Zulu women did not speak English fluently (“Trust Deficit”). Although this system of land governance was implemented at the end of apartheid and intended to offer Zulu people rights to their land, the policy embodies misappropriated notions of decoloniality (Itchuaqiyaq and Matheson), in which notions of sovereignty have been appropriated to become palatable to systems of power and colonial forms of government treat Indigenous people paternalistically. Examples such as these replicate the pattern we see in the above documents, suggesting that the study of the rhetorical history of a particular place can offer us important insights into the ongoing struggle for racial justice.

We know that rhetoric in technical documents can be a tool for liberation, but historical documents remind us that it can also be a tool of oppression and violence (Katz). We recognize that, in some ways, our work here perpetuates the problem further; these documents were written to and for white people only to now be re-interpreted by white scholars. Historical documents offer us a warning that Indigenous sovereignty cannot exist when it is governed by colonial rhetoric that reduces the agency of Indigenous people and serves as a mechanism to prioritize whiteness. Further, policies such as these that require

petitioning structures of power to retain Indigenous cultural practices are often so embedded inside the hegemonic structure of whiteness that the origins of such policies can seem obscured, when, in fact, the same structures that enforce such policies created them in the first place.

We call for those who produce documentation and scholars to revisit the structural systems they help to shape. Collectively, we must ask how these systems shape or reinforce systems of whiteness. We must be willing to push back against these systems and work toward dismantling them in order to move toward Indigenous sovereignty. To this end, Indigenous stories must be centered and positioned within their historical context as a way of seeking repatriation and justice.

While we have told stories of Indigenous people asking for permission, the stories begin much earlier, with stolen land, genocide, forced mining labor, and erasure of languages. These acts of requisite permission seeking began with violence and erasure. We must recognize and dig deeper within historical records and knowledges to center the many wrongs that have been committed in order to make them right. We recognize that such work requires radical change across systems of government, industry, and other stakeholders. We call on researchers to be agents of radical change by understanding, seeking, and amplifying the full story. Not only does this require our field to recover and study the histories of systems of power that laid the foundations of certain stories, but it means that we tell stories that highlight the agency of Indigenous people. We must center their experiences and concerns and honor Indigenous knowledges as worthy of study, informative, and central to rhetoric and documentation. Further, we see this sort of study as vital to the task of decolonizing violent systems of whiteness.

### Works Cited

Application by Esther Caluza. 24 October 1913. MS/TS. CNC Minute Papers, 1819-1900. 1913, 145. Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

Application by Native Woman Nompi. 8 May 1906. TS/MS. Applications from Natives for Permission to Reside in Zululand. Minute Papers 1898-1906. 1/1/283. Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

Application by Native Women at Maryvale. 29 January 1932. TS. 3/PMB, 4/3/76. Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

Baker-Bell, April. "For Loretta: A Black Woman Literacy Scholar's Journey to Prioritizing Self-Preservation and Black Feminist-Womanist storytelling." *Journal of Literacy Research*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2017, pp. 526-43.

- Crabtree, Robbin D., and David Alan Sapp. "Technical Communication, Participatory Action Research, and Global Civic Engagement: A Teaching, Research, and Social Action Collaboration in Kenya." *REFLECTIONS: A Journal of Rhetoric, Civic Writing and Service Learning*, vol. 4, no. 2 2005.
- Harris, Verne. "The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory, and Archives in South Africa." *Archival Science*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2002, pp. 63-86.
- hooks, bell. "Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination." *Cultural Studies*, edited by Lawrence Grossberg, Routledge, 1992, pp. 338-46.
- Itchuaqiyaq, Cana U., and Matheson, Breeanne. "Decolonizing Decoloniality: Considering the (Mis)use of Decolonial Frameworks in TPC Scholarship." *Communication Design Quarterly*, vol. 9, no.1, 2021, pp. 20-31.
- Jones, Natasha N. "The Technical Communicator as Advocate: Integrating a Social Justice Approach in Technical Communication." *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2016, 342-61.
- Jones, Natasha N., Kristen R. Moore, and Rebecca Walton. "Disrupting the Past to Disrupt the Future: An Antenarrative of Technical communication." *Technical Communication Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 4, 2016, pp. 211-29.
- Katz, Steven B. "The Ethic of Expediency: Classical Rhetoric, Technology, and the Holocaust." *College English*, vol. 54, no. 3, 1992, 255-75.
- Kirsch, Gesa E., and Jacqueline J. Royster. "Feminist Rhetorical Practices: In Search of Excellence." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 61, no. 4 2010, pp. 640-72. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27917867>
- Legg, Emily M. *Listening to Our Stories in Dusty Boxes: Indigenous Storytelling Methodology, Archival Practice, and the Cherokee Female Seminary*. 2016. Purdue University, PhD dissertation.
- Martinez, Aja Y. *Counterstory*. National Council of Teachers of English, 2020.
- Mastrangelo, Lisa, David Gold, Nicole Khoury, Michael J. Faris, Rebecca Dingo, Rachel Riedner, Jennifer Wingard, Gesa E. Kirsch, & Jacqueline Jones Royster. "Changing the Landscape: Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies, Five Years Later." *Peitho*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2018, pp. 160-97.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Boundary*, vol. 2, 1984, pp. 333-58.
- Mckoy, Temptaous T. *Y'all Call it Technical and Professional Communication, We Call it# ForTheCulture: The Use of Amplification Rhetorics in Black Communities and their*

Implications for Technical and Professional Communication Studies. 2019. East Carolina University, PhD dissertation.

Nattrass, Gail. A Short History of South Africa. Biteback Publishing, 2017.

Petersen, Emily January. "Feminist Historiography as Methodology: The Absence of International Perspectives." *Connexions: International Professional Communication Journal*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2017, pp. 1-38.

Petition of Native Women for the Remission of the Unexpired Portion of the Sentence of their Husband. 23 January 1900. MS/TS. Minute Papers. 268-643, 1638. Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

Plange, Efe Franca. "The Pepper Manual: Towards Situated Non-Western Feminist Rhetorical Practices." *Peitho*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2021.

Posel, Deborah. "Race as Common Sense: Racial Classification in Twentieth-Century South Africa." *African Studies Review*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2001, pp. 87-114.

Pough, Gwendolyn D., and Stephanie Jones. "On Race, Feminism, and Rhetoric: An Introductory/Manifesto Flow..." *Peitho*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2021.

Powell, Malea. "Dreaming Charles Eastman: Cultural memory, autobiography, and geography in indigenous rhetorical histories." *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*, edited by Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Rohan, Southern Illinois UP, 2008, pp. 115-27.

Rose, Emma J. "Design as Advocacy: Using a Human-Centered Approach to Investigate the Needs of Vulnerable Populations." *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2016, pp. 427-45.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Harvard UP , 1999.

"Trust Deficit." *The Economist*, vol. 437, no. 9225, Dec 19, 2020, pp. 86-8. Wells, Julia C. "Why Women Rebel: a Comparative Study of South African Women's Resistance in Bloemfontein (1913) and Johannesburg (1958)." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1983, pp. 55-70.

Widows of Cetshwayo. 20 September 1911. TS. CNC Minute Papers, 2201-2257, 34. Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

Wylie, Alison "Why Standpoint Matters." *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, edited by Sandra Harding, Routledge, 2004, pp. 339-74.



# Rhetorical Failures and Revisions in the Second-Wave: Emerging Intersectionality in the Ethe of Activist Zelda Nordlinger<sup>1</sup>

**Author:** Megan J. Busch

Megan J. Busch is an assistant professor of English at Charleston Southern University. She earned her PhD from the University of South Carolina's English Composition and Rhetoric program. Her research interests include rhetorical stylistics, rhetoric of the American South, and digital composition pedagogies. She is currently the Managing Editor of Composition Studies.

**Abstract:** The archived materials of Zelda Nordlinger offer a glimpse into this emerging intersectionality in the second wave of feminism through the ethe Nordlinger develops in her writing. Her archived letters, speeches, and essays lean heavily on typical second-wave rhetoric, and much of her language demonstrates a disregard for racial and socioeconomic difference. Yet, there are slivers of emerging intersectionality seemingly at odds with her second-wave ethos, and it is in Nordlinger's consideration of this intersectionality and her steps towards revision that researchers may better understand the historical shifts in second-wave rhetoric.

**Keywords:** archives, ethos, Intersectionality, Revision Zelda Nordlinger, Richmond, Second-Wave Feminism, Virginia

Feminist scholars often characterize the second wave<sup>2</sup> as a movement disproportionately focused on white middle-class issues, led by activists who were unconcerned with the lived experiences, goals, and desires of marginalized women. The movement in the 1960s and 1970s has become known for its ignorance of intersectionality, seeking instead to group all women—regardless of race, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status—into one movement with the same agenda for feminist equality.

<sup>3</sup>In *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, for instance, bell hooks argues that although second-wave feminists urged “unity” among all women, this quest for female solidarity and sisterhood—championed primarily by white, middle-class women—ultimately “ignore[d] the differences between their social status and the status of masses of women” (25). Following hooks in *Rhetorical Feminism and This Thing Called Hope*, Cheryl Glenn embeds this depiction into the field of feminist rhetorical studies, adding that the second-wave movement neglected to address the “range of needs experienced by so-called

---

<sup>1</sup> This archival research was made possible by the generous support of the Ellison Fellowship awarded by the University of South Carolina's Institute for Southern Studies and the contribution of the Rhetoric Society of America's Graduate Student Development Award presented at the 2019 RSA Institute.

<sup>2</sup> There has been much debate by feminists and historians about whether or not to keep the wave metaphor in use when referencing feminist movements (See e.g. Bailey, Hewitt, and Reger). Despite this questioning of the metaphor, it is the most identifiable way to mark the period during which Nordlinger was a politically active feminist. I have adopted the term for this paper for that reason.

<sup>3</sup> See the work of Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde for additional critiques of second-wave feminism.

Others—nonwhite, working poor, lesbian, bisexual, and non-Western women (and men)” (31). Though second-wave feminism did focus on the issues of middle-class white women, Glenn contends that it is this discrimination by the era’s activists that paved the way for intersectionality and hope. She writes, “The fissures within the second-wave feminist movement offered perfect opportunities for rhetorical feminists to disidentify with hegemonic feminist rhetoric...The time was ripe for feminism—and feminist rhetoric—to leave its homogenizing tendencies behind” (31). But how did this unfold, and how did change occur within the second-wave movement? The archived papers of second-wave feminist activist Zelda Nordlinger prove to be a rich resource for examining intersectionality as it was emerging within and in conflict with second-wave ideologies.

In this article, I argue that the archived materials of a local activist in Richmond, Virginia offer a glimpse into this emerging intersectionality in the second wave through the *ethos* Nordlinger develops in her writing. Nordlinger was, in many ways, the most typical of second-wave feminists: white, middle-class, well educated. She organized sit-ins, protests, and meetings, and she was integral in establishing the Richmond chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW). Her archived letters, speeches, and essays lean heavily on typical second-wave rhetoric, and much of her language demonstrates a disregard for racial and socioeconomic difference. Yet, there are slivers of emerging intersectionality seemingly at odds with her second-wave ethos, and it is in Nordlinger’s consideration of this intersectionality that researchers may peek at the shift toward leaving “hegemonizing tendencies behind” in the historical moment of the second wave (Glenn 30).

Using Nordlinger’s archived papers, I demonstrate first how Nordlinger’s comparisons—metaphors, analogies, and similes—function to build an ethos rooted in the “problematic practices” of second-wave feminism (Brown 255). Her documents feature comparisons that are troubling, such as comparing the feminist movement to the civil rights movement and middle-class women to those enslaved in the Antebellum South. By contemporary understandings of intersectionality, these comparisons, and the ethos Nordlinger constructs through them, “failed rhetorically” (Glenn 30). Yet, her rhetoric is more complex than that, and her papers reveal a competing ethos sympathetic to emerging intersectionality, as she learned to be an ally of women across the boundaries of race and socioeconomic status. Specifically, Nordlinger demonstrates a humble embrace of revision to her practices and ideas to become more attuned to the needs of varying communities of women. With these opposing *ethos*—a typical second-wave ethos and a revisionist ethos—Nordlinger stands as an example of the growth and the complexity of crafting a feminist ethos before the term *intersectionality* had a pervasive impact on feminist thought. Through an examination of her *ethos*, I offer Nordlinger’s writing as an archival case

study that captures a brief moment in the emergence of intersectionality and carves a trajectory for continued revision of the practice of rhetorical feminism.

## Context

Many people outside of Virginia are unfamiliar with Nordlinger. She was not a national leader for the second-wave movement, but a mother who, like countless others, read *The Feminine Mystique* and became enlightened and enthralled with seeking equality for women. In a 2007 interview, Nordlinger reflects on that transformative moment in which she became a feminist. She said:

Well, after about a week of simmering [on Friedan's work], I called the YWCA and asked them if they knew of anybody that was interested in the women's movement or the feminist movement. "No," they said, "no." I said, "Well, I wonder if you all down there would agree to let me have a meeting room and let me host a meeting of the people who might be interested in forming a feminist group?" And they said it would be alright. So, I posted the notice, and a week later five of us got together at the YWCA. And that was the beginning of the feminist group here in Richmond. (Nordlinger "Interview" 14-15)

After Nordlinger's introduction to Friedan, she adopted the tenets of mainstream second-wave feminism with moxie and organized a founding group of feminists in Richmond. Although the locus of her influence was Virginia, Nordlinger stands as an example of the many women around the nation who were championing a localized feminist movement. Her position as relatively typical of a second-wave feminist allows for her to serve as a case-study example of the ideologies that influenced the movement on a local-activist level.

Considering that Nordlinger's influence was confined primarily to Richmond, the status of the city in the 1970s is key to understanding her activist movements because "location" and place "matter when we talk about feminist activism" (Gilmore 113). The challenges of Richmond were unique because the city is situated in the American South, where segregation existed in full force, and the practice of slavery and process of emancipation were influential memories for Richmonders. Furthermore, the city in the 1970s was not particularly amicable to the women's rights movement: the state had rejected the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), the traditions of the deep South and "southern belle" mentalities were prominent, and the city's newspapers were overtly skewed conservative (VanValkenberg 17). These factors led to a general opposition to a progressive women's movement that caused Nordlinger to reflect years later (in 1983) that "being a feminist in Richmond can be compared to being an evangelist missionary in a house of ill-repute . . . it's been damned hard" (Nordlinger "Tenth Anniversary" 1). Despite the struggle, she continued to lobby for her convictions. Most notably, Nordlinger was instrumental in beginning the Richmond chapter of the NOW and for leading a sit-in at an all-male

restaurant attached to a department store, Thalhimers. Although the ERA was never ratified in Virginia in her lifetime<sup>4</sup> and progress was excruciatingly slow, Nordlinger and her colleagues remained active in organizing peaceful protests, lobbying, giving speeches, and writing letters to newspapers, magazines, and politicians seeking equal rights for women through the early 1990s.

## Archives

Upon her death in 2008, Nordlinger donated all her personal papers to three libraries in Virginia—the Library of Virginia, James Branch Cabell Library at Virginia Commonwealth University, and Earl Gregg Swem Library at William and Mary. Her collections include stacks of newspaper clippings and notes relating to women's rights, along with letters, speeches, and essays penned by Nordlinger<sup>5</sup>. I approached the archives knowing that Nordlinger's words would be embedded in a movement marked by heightened racial tension, so I sought to heed Tessa Brown's directive:

White women scholars can contribute to this tradition [of critiquing oversight of black influence in white women's rhetoric] by practicing reflexivity as a reflex, persistently centering racial analysis to any study of white rhetors and interrogating how our own rhetoric as white women resurfaces problematic practices. (Brown 255)

Nordlinger's writing certainly includes "problematic practices," and by centering this study in a racial context, I could examine the tensions between Nordlinger's oversight of African American influence in her ethos development and her "reflexivity" as she reflects upon and revises those "problematic practices" while grappling with questions of emerging intersectionality (Brown 255). With each archival document I reviewed, I sought to answer the question, "Is Nordlinger saying *anything* about intersectionality here?" Ultimately, I discovered a more nuanced picture of intersectionality in the second-wave feminist movement than I originally imagined.

## Rhetorical Failures

Feminist rhetorical scholars could deem much of the problematic rhetoric of the second wave to be rhetorical failures, and Nordlinger was certainly not immune to these missteps. Glenn explains:

Despite their best intentions, middle-class white heterosexual feminists failed rhetorically, as they did not consistently attend to the petitions of feminist activists not working in and for mainstream feminist issues, those women who acknowledged what would come to be called "intersectionality" ... Instead, these second-wave feminists used

---

<sup>4</sup> Virginia did finally ratify the ERA in January 2020 (Williams).

<sup>5</sup> This research focuses on those documents written by Nordlinger for outside audiences (not her notes-to-self), as with her compositions for other readers, she would likely have been more attuned to her ethos and rhetorical presentation.

their rhetoric (without giving much thought to their “identities”) to speak and write publicly on behalf of “the” feminist movement (as they so often did and were expected to do). (30-31).

Despite her own best intentions, Nordlinger, as a “middle-class white heterosexual feminist,” often “failed rhetorically” (Glenn 30). Beyond “speaking and writing publicly on behalf of ‘the’ feminist movement” (Glenn 31), Nordlinger, in her writing, strives to craft a second-wave feminist ethos by comparing her own struggles as a woman to the struggles of the civil rights movement and those enslaved in the Antebellum South, disregarding the stark differences between her own plight and those of marginalized groups, specifically African Americans.

Exemplifying this rhetorical failure, Nordlinger relies on two problematic comparisons consistently through her writings that she implements to build her second-wave feminist ethos: (1) being a woman in the United States in the 1970s is a form of slavery and (2) the women’s rights movement is an extension of the civil rights movement. Sometimes, she states these comparisons as metaphors, and other times, she hedges them in similes and expands them as extended metaphors. Fahnestock offers definitions of metaphor, extended metaphor, simile, and analogy that link all four types of comparisons together in their rhetorical function. For Fahnestock, metaphor occurs when a rhetor brings “over a term from an ‘alien’ lexical/semantic field to create a novel pairing that expresses a point trenchantly” (104). The extended metaphor continues to “draw terms from the same newly introduced lexical/semantic field” (107). Similes are like metaphors because the simile “expresses an explicit comparison,” while the metaphor expresses an “implicit” comparison (110). The comparison is the same, but simile executes it in a less powerful way, deeming one entity to be like or similar to the other instead of a substitution for the other (as a metaphor does). Both forms of comparison—metaphor and simile—are “truncated” arguments based on underlying, ideological analogies (110). Put simply, the ideological analogy is the foundation upon which rhetors build a metaphor; an extended metaphor and a simile are alternate expressions of that metaphor. Whatever form the comparison takes, it is the manifestation of an underlying, ideological analogy. For Nordlinger, that analogy is one fairly common among women’s rights activists of the time:

*Womanhood : Modern Slavery :: African-American : Historical Slavery*

*Feminist Movement : Gender Liberation :: Civil Rights Movement : Racial Liberation*

The metaphors, extended metaphors, and similes that Nordlinger employs are truncated versions of the analogies above, and they function as ethos-building mechanisms in her writing that assist Nordlinger in forming connections with her audience.

Comparisons such as those used by Nordlinger are key in ethos-building because they “typically draw on the more familiar...to explain the less apparent” (Fahnestock 106).

The realm of familiarity offers a connection point between the reader and the writer so that the writer may then “create new links” upon which to build her argument (Fahnestock 105). These “new links” function to craft an ethos that the audience identifies with and understands (105). Jonathan Charteris-Black situates metaphors in political contexts to demonstrate the ethos-building that occurs through the use of such comparisons. He explains that the metaphor creates a connection with the reader (often through an affective response) that allows the reader to form an impression of the writer’s character based on the writer’s revelation of shared familiar ideologies (Charteris-Black 20). That is, the connection forms at the familiar ideological meeting point between audience and rhetor. Such a practice of finding a mutual familiarity offers a platform upon which a rhetor can build ethos with her audience. Nordlinger relies on familiar ideas to introduce something new, and in the process, she crafts an ethos for herself that aligns with the causes and practices of the second wave, situates her as a member of a larger and more established movement, and connects her own views to the “ethical ideals” of her reader (Charteris-Black 203). There are numerous examples of Nordlinger comparing the women’s rights movement and middle-class white women to the civil rights movement and enslaved African Americans (respectively) as she leans on shared familiar ideologies to develop her second-wave feminist ethos. In three documents—an untitled early 1970s speech, a letter to Senator Douglas Wilder, and a letter to Jacqui Ceballos—she compares womanhood to slavery. Four documents exemplify her comparison of the women’s rights movement to the civil rights movement: a speech to the Jewish Women’s Club, an untitled early 1970s speech, a speech to the Fort Lee Officer’s Wives Club, and a letter to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

Nordlinger first introduces this comparison that connects womanhood to enslaved African Americans in an untitled speech from the early 1970s<sup>6</sup>. She writes, “Both blacks and females have played distinctive roles in western culture—they serve their white male masters.” (Nordlinger “Civil Rights Comparison Speech” 1). The key embedded metaphor here is that man is a *master*(a term directly associated with slaveholders in the Antebellum South) and, in an extension of the metaphor, women, like African Americans, are servants to those masters. In this speech, Nordlinger forms a link between slavery (with which her audience of Richmonders was likely familiar) and feminine oppression, and this comparative move functions to build ethos because she relies on a

---

<sup>6</sup> The intended audience for this piece is unknown, as there is no indication in Nordlinger’s archives or news reports that reveal where she gave this speech. Based on context clues, such as Nordlinger’s citing statistics from 1968 and referencing Arthur Jensen’s research about IQ differences between race and gender published in 1968 and 1969 as a “recent study,” this speech was likely delivered in the very early 1970s (Nordlinger “Civil Rights Comparison Speech” 2). Between 1970 and 1971, Nordlinger gave fifteen known speeches, and she sent copies of many of the manuscripts to Mereca Jane Pollack in June of 1972. In a cover letter accompanying those speeches that detail their context, Nordlinger indicates that this one could be one of several for which “she cannot recall the occasion” (Nordlinger “Letter to Mereca Jane Pollack” 1). In all of these early speeches, Nordlinger’s audience was primarily Richmonders, as her influence had not yet spread beyond the city.

shared familiar ideology (slavery) to introduce a new ideology (the oppression of females). Leaning on that shared familiar ideology, she introduces a less familiar concept: the plight of women. The shared familiar ideology of slavery acts as a meeting point for audience and rhetor; if Nordlinger and her audience both hold a similar ethical relationship with slavery, they can find commonality at that point to examine new, similar concepts. That space of commonality establishes an ethos for Nordlinger with her audience and grants her a form of credibility to build her argument for the women's rights movement.

Additionally, in a 1972 letter to Senator Douglas Wilder as part of a plea for the senator to ratify the 19th Amendment (ERA), she writes, "Take courage, sir; Frederick Douglas [sic] understood the relationship between slavery and the plight of the female. We are both victims of WASPS!" (Nordlinger "Letter to Senator Douglas Wilder" 1). Leaning on Frederick Douglass to support her own argument, Nordlinger uses the term "relationship" to create a simile, or "an explicit comparison" between slavery and womanhood (Fahnestock 109). Her ethos-building move in this letter is like the comparison she makes in her early 1970s speech as she relies on the shared familiar ideology of slavery as a common foundation for introducing second-wave feminism. Nordlinger's audience in this letter would have been familiar with the work of Frederick Douglass and the horrors of slavery and sympathetic to emancipation and desegregation—Senator Douglas Wilder was the "first African American state senator in Virginia since Reconstruction," his grandparents were enslaved, he attended school during segregation, and Frederick Douglass was his namesake (Virginia Museum of History and Culture "L. Douglas Wilder"). In hopes of building ethos based on a connection to a shared familiar ideology, Nordlinger forms her argument to Senator Wilder for feminism through a comparison to slavery, a problematic simile she uses to build ethos as a new feminist in the second wave.

Even into the 1990s, Nordlinger continues to rely upon a comparison between women and slavery. Nordlinger's archives contain a letter composed in 1998 to Jacqui Ceballos<sup>7</sup> of the Veteran Feminists of America (VFA). In this letter, Nordlinger seeks to be included among the members of that society, so she makes a short case for admission in the group to Ceballos. Looking back on her heyday during the second wave, Nordlinger recounts some of her notable achievements in an ethos-building move to gain credibility with Ceballos: "marches, speech-making, and integrating an all-male soup bar, just to name only a few things I've done" (Nordlinger "Letter to Jacqui Ceballos" 1). Then, in the next paragraph, she writes:

---

<sup>7</sup> Ceballos is a feminist who was active during the second-wave movement in New York City. In 1992, Ceballos founded the Veteran Feminists of America (VFA), a non-profit organization with goals to "honor, record and preserve the history of the accomplishments of women and men active in the feminist movement, to educate the public on the importance of the changes brought about by the women's movement, and to preserve the movement's history for future generations" (Veteran Feminists of America "Mission Statement"). Nordlinger is included in the VFA's book *Feminists Who Changed America*.

Living in the Capitol of the Confederacy presents unique problems... Southern 'gentlemen' are trying to hang on to the last vestige [sic] of the slavocracy, and their women, though reasoned, are keeping themselves in the traditional chains. The young women, thankfully, are emerging from sexual slavery. (Nordlinger "Letter to Jacqui Ceballos" 1)

In this reflective letter, Nordlinger makes an even more direct connection between slavery and the plight of women through this extended metaphor. She first demonstrates that the issues she references are specifically issues of the middle- to upper-class, stating that it is the women of "gentlemen" who are holding on to traditional gender roles. Those roles, she considers to be "slavocracy," and she invokes the image of chains in reference to the women of the middle- and upper-class and notes that a new generation is "emerging from sexual slavery." This passage, again, assists Nordlinger in crafting an ethos, but given its timeframe and its audience, the move is slightly different than in the previous two examples. In the first two passages above, Nordlinger's audiences were being introduced to the budding idea of women's rights. Ceballos, on the other hand, had been lobbying for the same equality as Nordlinger for more than 25 years in New York City. In this letter, Nordlinger uses the slavery comparison to demonstrate an unfamiliar iteration of feminine oppression—one specifically located in the American South. By leaning on the shared familiar concept of slavery, Nordlinger can present a localized picture of the second-wave feminist fight to her audience and build ethos with Ceballos as an activist with a shared sense of necessary liberation. Her repeated, problematic comparisons of white women's struggles with slavery demonstrate the second-wave's lack of understanding of intersectionality.

Nordlinger makes similarly problematic comparisons between the second-wave movement and the civil rights movement. Historically, the civil rights movement was a foundation for the women's rights movement, so this comparison that Nordlinger makes is not uncommon (Key 104). Nordlinger's second-wave feminist movement in Richmond ignited in the years closely following the civil rights movement and the abolition of Jim Crow Laws (which occurred in 1965). Similarities between the two movements are not to be overlooked. Key explains:

As black women in Richmond reinforced progress for the black race, white women piggybacked this approach ten years later as one strategy in the continuing resistance against gender bias... The civil rights movement was in essence a launching pad for feminism in Richmond and elsewhere. (14, 104)

Nordlinger and the feminists of the second-wave owed many of their tactics to the example and effectiveness of the civil rights movement, and many feminists of the time counted the radical women of the civil rights movement to be role models (Roth 8). However, race relations in America in the 1970s and socioeconomic gaps between women made this

relationship between the two movements knotty at best. Nordlinger, a white, middle-class woman, along with her fellow feminists in Richmond, sought to transform the fight from desegregation to “desexigration” (Nordlinger “Letter to Sylvia Roberts” 1), but this was not a smooth transition because differences in race and class complicated the feminists’ desire for all women to become part of a “sisterhood” (Nordlinger “Letter to Chris” 5) fighting for equality for their gender. Nevertheless, Nordlinger makes clear connections between the second wave and the civil rights movement, and rhetorically, these comparisons function in a similar way to her comparisons to slavery. By aligning the second-wave movement to a successful civil rights movement in the recent past, Nordlinger links the ideologies of the civil rights movement with her own to establish credibility with her audiences.

For example, in a speech given to the Jewish Women’s Club in 1976<sup>8</sup>, Nordlinger said, “The civil rights movement was a training ground for the feminist rebellion” (Nordlinger “Speech to Jewish Women’s Club” 2). A Jewish woman herself, Nordlinger was adamant about enacting change within her own religion, but the Jewish women in Richmond were slow to adopt radical feminism. She reflects, “The Jewish women here in Richmond are not at all receptive to the feminist movement...they’re extremely conservative here in Richmond” (Nordlinger “Second Interview” 2). To build ethos with a group of Jewish women, she relied on a common comparison—the feminist rebellion to the civil rights movement. The women in her audience would have experienced the numerous protests of African Americans in Richmond and witnessed the abolition of Jim Crow Laws in their lifetime. The shared familiar ideology of the civil rights movement acts as a familiar meeting point for her to build an ethos with her audience and present a new concept for similar freedom for women.

Nordlinger replicates this comparison of the women’s rights movement and the civil rights movement throughout several of her archived documents. In an undated and untitled speech<sup>9</sup> likely from the early 1970s, Nordlinger compares the civil rights movement to the women’s rights movement. She opens with:

---

<sup>8</sup> There is a possible discrepancy in the date of this speech. There is a hand-written note on the top of the document in the archives that says, “Speech To The Jewish Women’s Club 1976.” However, in a 1972 letter to Mereca Jane Pollack, Nordlinger explains that with the letter she has included a speech “made to The Jewish Women’s Club of Richmond nearly two years ago,” meaning 1970 (Nordlinger “Letter to Mereca Jane Pollack” 1). Either these are the same speeches and the document in the archives has been misdated or Nordlinger gave two speeches, the first of which (in 1970) is missing a transcript. Of the speech that occurred in 1970 (whether this one or another unknown speech), Nordlinger indicates, “The reception to this presentation was cool.... (but polite). Within a day after it was presented, a prominent rabbi contacted me to inquire what I had told his women to get them so disturbed” (Nordlinger “Letter to Mereca Jane Pollack” 1).

<sup>9</sup> See note 6 about the date of this speech.

I would like to draw an analogy between the Black civil rights movement and the Women's Liberation Movement: Black is ugly, Female is inferior...Blacks have been awarded low-paying menial labor, females have been kept as household serfs. White males have perpetuated a Capitalistic system through the cheap labor of Blacks and Females. (Nordlinger "Civil Rights Comparison Speech" 1)

Nordlinger relies again on the civil rights movement in her controversial speech to the Fort Lee Officer's Wives Club at For Pickett in 1971<sup>10</sup>. She states, "The corollary between the Civil Rights movement and the women's rights movement cannot be ignored...there is a definite parallel between the two" (Nordlinger "Speech to Officer's Wives Club" 6). And in 1975, in a letter to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*<sup>11</sup>, Nordlinger solidifies this connection. She writes, "The changes [for women's rights] now taking place in southern politics are the most significant since Reconstruction with credit going to activists in the civil rights movement" (Nordlinger "Letter to *Richmond Times-Dispatch*" 1). In each comparison above, Nordlinger relies on the underlying analogy that the feminist movement vies for gender liberation as the civil rights movement sought racial liberation. Her audiences in Richmond would have been incredibly familiar with the civil rights movement and the liberation it brought to African Americans. According to the Virginia Historical Society, "...many of the most important legal landmarks of the civil rights movement originated in Virginia," and the city of Richmond (as the capital) was the center of much activity during the movement (Virginia Museum of History and Culture "Civil Rights"). For building ethos, Nordlinger uses this shared familiar ideology of the civil rights movement to establish connection with her audience; this shared familiar ideology offers a foundation upon which she argues for women's rights.

While each of these instances of comparison strives for ethos building with the best intentions for equality and were often rhetorically successful with her audiences, they are deeply problematic and indicative of Glenn's depiction of failed rhetoric of second-wave feminists. Viewing these comparisons from the 21st century, the analogy of the plight of white, middle-class housewives to the plight of the African Americans in slavery or under Jim Crow Laws is incredibly off-putting, as there is no just comparison between the suffering of those enslaved and the inconveniences of the comfortable middle class.

---

10 In her letter to Mereca Jane Pollack, Nordlinger explains the context of the speech. She writes in retrospect, "That one was a sensation.... not for its content, but because some of the officers' wives organized a picket to protest my being invited to speak. The small group of women who had asked me to make the speech did not expect a boycott, and the press was thrilled over the 'story'" (Nordlinger "Letter to Mereca Jane Pollack" 1). Despite this uproar, her rhetoric seemed to be successful. In a letter of thanks after the event, TE Ross wrote to Nordlinger saying, "You woke many a stagnant mind and brought on a new surge of awareness to us" (Ross "Letter to Nordlinger" 1).

11 Nordlinger penned this letter to the Richmond Times in response to an editorial piece published on June 6, 1945 about gender-based equality in education. Her overall critique of the news piece was that it presented information with an "ideological bias" and "distorted images" (Nordlinger "Letter to Richmond Times-Dispatch" 1).

The metaphors and similes are inappropriate and built upon faulty analogies. Yet, Nordlinger maintained a local reputation as a relatively successful activist for Virginia's women's rights movement. Despite the insensitivity obvious to contemporary rhetors and feminist scholars, Roth sympathetically explains that such comparisons were perhaps an indicator of "just how seriously emerging white feminists took the struggle" for equality (188-9). Nordlinger's comparisons to slavery and the civil rights movement in her writings work to amplify the significance of her subject matter, link her to the larger second-wave feminist movement, and develop an ethos rooted in a connection to her audience and readership through the of familiar shared ideologies. Because leaning on the oppressive social structures of African Americans is a wholly unethical way to build ethos and craft socially just arguments for equality, though, modern feminists rhetors could view Nordlinger's rhetoric as failing because of her lack of attention to intersectionality.

### Revision

If Nordlinger offers examples of the rhetorical failures of the second wave to recognize the intersectional issues of the era, what might feminist rhetorical researchers learn from her that both recognizes these rhetorical shortcomings *and* realizes that her work in the second wave paved the way for a shift towards intersectionality in later waves of feminism? The prime takeaway from Nordlinger's archived collection is her desire to revise her ideas and her actions to be more attuned to the needs of women in marginalized communities. While she was building the ethos of a second-wave feminist, relying on problematic comparisons, Nordlinger was also building an ethos reflective of emerging intersectionality through a willingness to embrace revision in her thoughts and practices: a revisionist ethos.

In "Constructing Essences: Ethos and the Postmodern Subject of Feminism," Johanna Schmertz argues that feminism should take up a new definition of *ethos* that allows for change in various moments. She writes, "I ultimately want to define ethos for feminism as neither manufactured nor fixed, neither tool nor character, but rather the stopping points at which the subject (re)negotiates her own essence to call upon whatever agency that essence enables" (Schmertz 86). For Schmertz, ethos is not a static entity that remains the same over time or something that a rhetor can pull out of her pocket to engage at a moment's notice. It is in flux. This definition of ethos brings some clarity to Nordlinger's shifting ethos—from one that uses racialized metaphors to one that welcomes revision toward intersectionality (and then at times, returns to those problematical racialized comparisons). This inconsistency is indicative of lived experience, as few rhetors present a consistent ethos through life. Nordlinger, while constructing an ethos that disregards difference in one scenario, was simultaneously, in other instances, building an ethos that accounts for the varying struggles across race and class lines as she acknowledged her shortcomings. It is in those moments of

acknowledgement and revision that modern feminist researchers may see an intersectional feminist ideology as it is unfolding and developing, and Nordlinger's papers offer a mere glimpse of this gradual (and eventually widespread) shift in feminist thought. Alongside Nordlinger's contentious metaphors, similes, and analogies are revisions towards greater inclusivity and acknowledgement of difference among women across racial and socioeconomic boundaries. There are three specific instances in which Nordlinger revises her practices toward greater inclusivity—through critique in the planning of the Women's Political Caucus, through listening to the voices of African American women at a 1971 Women's Policy Council meeting, and through confronting her own privilege and position through reflection.

Nordlinger revised her practices toward intersectionality when presented with critique. When organizing the conference for the Women's Political Caucus in 1971, Sarah Hughes wrote to Nordlinger<sup>12</sup> to criticize the \$10 conference fee, explaining that it would exclude many members of lower socioeconomic status. Hughes wrote to Nordlinger:

...the \$10 registration fee is outrageous. This will certainly severely limit the constituency to affluent and sophisticated middle-class women...And I think the \$10 fee puts the meeting beyond the means of even larger groups of women—for instance all those families who have children and whose paychecks barely stretch in which the woman is interested in women's issues, but doesn't have the kind of total commitment which will make spending \$15 to go to Richmond for the day something other than an unthinkable extravagance" (Hughes 1).

Hughes continues to express disapproval of the venue (the Richmond Holiday Inn) as "a place middle class women can afford and be comfortable in, but at a price which will exclude a number of Virginia Women" (Hughes 1). Between the choice of venue and the cost, for Hughes, the decisions about the conference were "unconsciously made" (Hughes 1). Hughes stood staunchly for intersectionality and criticized Nordlinger's lack of consideration for women of lower socioeconomic status. However, her call for intersectionality was not just directed towards opening access for women based on monetary restraints, but she also recognized that the desires of African American feminists were often different than her own. She writes, "I don't expect Black women to form a coalition with us on the basis of our feminist politics or really to be anything but quite wary of many of our ideas, if not hostile" (Hughes 2). Hughes rebukes Nordlinger's focus on the white middle class and acknowledges difference in the aims of African Americans in the second-wave movement.

Despite this sharp reproach, Nordlinger responds with humility and a desire for revision; she demonstrates appreciation toward Hughes for her critique, acknowledges it

---

<sup>12</sup> Sarah Hughes was a white resident of Hampton, Virginia who was only marginally active in the feminist movement in the 1970s.

as necessary. Then, she moves to action. Showing appreciation, she writes, "Thank-you, Sarah, for your frank letter. I would hate to think that we alienated [sic] anyone for any reason whatsoever" (Nordlinger "Letter to Sarah Hughes" 1). Nordlinger further acknowledges Hughes's critique as "valid and most important," agreeing that "the black women have their own problems, and they are indeed unique" (Nordlinger "Letter to Sarah Hughes" 1). Finally, Nordlinger acts on this rebuke. Sending out a new message about the event through the YWCA and several press releases, she deems the conference fee "not mandatory" and emphasizes in her messaging that "the Caucus welcomes all women" (Nordlinger "Letter to Sarah Hughes" 1). It is important to note that Nordlinger continues in this letter to express hope that she can locate a common ground with African American feminists, a sentiment reminiscent of the second-wave desire for universal womanhood and sisterhood.

Upon further reflection about this specific event, Nordlinger writes to a friend and fellow activist in Mississippi, Llewellyn, stating, "You asked what we accomplished at the Caucus.... that's a large order! First and most important, we brought women together from almost every level of society. We had business women [sic], mothers, social workers, teachers, older women, Black and White women, and young women" (Nordlinger "Letter to Llewellyn" 1). Nordlinger's revisionist ethos in both her response to critique and her report to Llewellyn is different from the ethos she was building with her comparisons to slavery and the Civil Rights Movement; instead, she offers a move toward sensitivity of issues of those with lower socioeconomic status and begins to embrace the emerging intersectionality of the era. She revises through acknowledging her oversights and actively altering her practices. Nordlinger's turn toward intersectionality in this instance is an imperfect step, but one that reveals both small revisionary progress and the friction between intersectionality and the guiding principles of the second-wave movement.

Nordlinger also enacts a revisionist ethos upon listening to the needs of others, specifically an African American woman speaking at a Women's Policy Council meeting in October 1971. In response, Nordlinger wrote to many of her news and press contacts to publicly plead for the inclusion of African American issues in the feminist fight, including Tom Belden (of United Press International), Mary Nell Duggan (of *Women's News*), and Tony Radler (of WRVA Radio). To Radler, she writes:

To quote a Black woman who was in the Va. W.P.C. as well as Women For Political Action: 'Black women have problems that are different from yours; issues we (Va.W.P.C.) have adopted have been watered down as regards to Black Women. Be cognizant [sic] of the Black woman! You don't want to undermine the movement.' I believe, Tony, that the differences between White and Black women revolve mainly around birth-control and abortion repeal. For many years the Black women have been accused of being immoral as regards to illicit sex. They are having to live down that reputation. And here we

are...middle-class White women talking about sexual freedom! ... My dearest hope is that White women and Black women form a solid political block—both State-wide and Nationally! (Nordlinger "Letter to Tony Radler" 1)

In a similar letter to Tom Belden, she invites him to attend a future meeting of African American activists and expresses a desire for understanding between the races and mutual inclusion (Nordlinger "Letter to Tom Belden" 1). At the Women's Policy Council meeting she describes in these letters, Nordlinger was directly confronted with the difference in needs for African American women, and when she learned of these differences, she took action, revising the concept of the second wave that *a//*women stood together on the same women's issues. Here, Nordlinger holds on to the second-wave hope that women may bond together to create an effective "political block," but she lets go of the notion that all within that force would have the same needs and agenda. To help others revise their thinking about homogeneity within the second-wave movement, she wrote to her news and press contacts to increase awareness of difference and incite action from her audience. As in her exchange with Sarah Hughes, Nordlinger takes on a revisionist ethos, revealing her subtle shift toward intersectionality.

Self-examination and reflection further prompted Nordlinger to adopt a revisionist ethos. In an unpublished autobiographical work<sup>13</sup>, Nordlinger writes:

I saw a mix of attitudes and opinions about Civil Rights. Some, like Hubert Humphrey and John Kennedy spoke of basic justice for all citizens. Then there was George Wallace and Orville [sic] Faubus who maintained separation of the races was right and proper. Martin Luther King led marches through the South, cities endured race riots, and angry white people pledged opposition. Friends and relatives deplored the situation, maintaining outward indifference and inner confusion. I found myself hard-pressed to explain to my school-age children that they must accept black children in their schools. I was forced to reach deep inside myself, sorting out feelings and attitudes and examining them against my insulated background...Spurning the indifference I saw around me, I chose to join local demonstrations favoring busing of school children. I provoked arguments among my relatives and friends, taking from the confrontations renewed and more vigorous determination to defend my convictions. (Nordlinger "An Unfinished Odyssey" 5)

Here, Nordlinger reflects on her position in the civil rights movement as a white woman, and her self-examination prompted revision toward an intersectional view of equality. Specifically, Nordlinger recognizes her own shortcomings and her reluctance to

---

<sup>13</sup> This piece was likely penned in the early 1980s. It is undated, but she opens the autobiography with "My life span of nearly fifty years..." (Nordlinger "An Unfinished Odyssey" 1). Nordlinger was born in 1932.

speak to her children about accepting school integration. To do this she was “forced to reach deep inside” herself to understand her own privilege and the injustice at hand (Nordlinger “An Unfinished Odyssey” 5). As in other instances of her revision, she took action—this time by joining demonstrations and challenging the views of her relatives and friends. This practice of self-reflection as a catalyst for revision influenced her stance as a second-wave feminist, during which she continually re-examined “social customs and designs that had shaped [her] life” in an “odyssey from childhood to adulthood” that was “painful” (Nordlinger “An Unfinished Odyssey” 5). Identifying these instances of privilege through self-reflection and examination was not easy for Nordlinger, yet the difficult process led to much needed revision. In moments of critique, listening, and self-examination, Nordlinger reveals a revisionist ethos and a willingness to compassionately alter her second-wave understanding of equality.

### Reconciliation

Even if it is understandable that Nordlinger could have differing *ethos* at different moments in her life (as Schmertz contends), how might feminist rhetoricians today reconcile a revisionist ethos with Nordlinger’s problematic second-wave ethos revealed in the comparisons she makes between her own struggles to those of African Americans? Perhaps the best way to understand these contradictions is to consider Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa E. Kirsch’s concept of “strategic contemplation” in how feminist scholars approach the messy, oft-problematic historical contexts revealed in the archives (84). Royster and Kirsch seek a meditative, intentional, revisionist ideal for the consideration of past rhetorical contexts. They write that strategic contemplation requires:

...linger[ing] deliberately inside their research tasks...imagining the contexts for practices; speculating about conversations with people whom they are studying...paying close attention to the spaces and places both they and the rhetorical subjects occupy...and taking into account the impacts and consequences of these embodiments in any interrogation of the rhetorical event” (84-5).

Specifically, such an approach allows researchers to “withhold judgment” for a time as we “ground the analysis more specifically within the communities from which [the rhetorical subject] emanates” so that we may “enact the belief that rhetorical performances are deeply rooted in sociohistorical contexts and cultural traditions,” as problematic as they may be (as in Nordlinger’s case) (85-6). Research within archives requires a deliberate examination of our research subjects’ ideologies (and the “consequences” of those ideologies) and a contemplation of those subjects not only as whole, flawed individuals, but also as members of complex rhetorical “contexts,” “places,” and “spaces” (Royster and Kirsch 84-5). Nordlinger struggled with the complexity of her context—of wanting women’s freedom, of not quite understanding the goals and needs African American women, and of striving for equality within a stratified social structure. In her struggle, though, there is both

a warning against repeating the rhetorical failures of the second wave (to remain acutely aware that the ethe feminist rhetors construct can carry with them assumptions about race, social status, and the past) and an optimism for a revisionist ethos to prevail. Through Nordlinger's failures, she revised toward inclusivity and intersectionality, but her revisions were not whole (even through the 1990s, she still made comparisons between women and those enslaved)<sup>14</sup>. So, too, modern feminists' conceptions of equality and intersectionality are not whole, and there is still much work to do<sup>15</sup> as we "struggle collectively" towards equity in places of power imbalance (Dziuba).

Nordlinger offers an example of how to move forward: through revision. For her, critique was welcomed and needed, and it required new, revised practices. Learning of another's needs prompted action and speaking up, and critical self-examination led to change. In her "Manifesto of a Mid-Life White Feminist Or, An Apologia for Embodied Feminism," Tracee L. Howell describes that this kind of revision is challenging: "Taking action that reveals one's own vulnerability is often easier said than done within the patriarchy, no matter one's power or privilege" (Howell). And with Nordlinger's example of vulnerable action towards revision, I am left with what-ifs. While many feminist researchers already welcome opportunities to grow and revise toward more inclusive practices, what if that revision moved beyond feminist rhetoric and into the field at large? What if privileged rhetors (myself included) consistently responded to contemporary critiques against problematic or exclusionary practices with active revision? What if we humbly and repeatedly embraced opportunities to revise our ideologies when we learn new, more inclusive ways of acting and being? And what if feminist researchers return to the archives of second-wave activists to reexamine how they were—in small steps—revising their practices towards greater intersectionality? In pursuing these what ifs, I hope that we craft tangible "possibilities" for a more inclusive future (Glenn 193).

### Works Cited

- Bailey, Cathryn. "Making Waves and Drawing Lines: The Politics of Defining the Vicissitudes of Feminism." *Hyspatia*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1997, pp. 17-28. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3810220>. Accessed 17 October 2019.
- Brown, Tessa. "Constellating White Women's Cultural Rhetorics: The Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching and its Contemporary Scholars." *Peitho Journal*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2018, pp. 233-260.
- Charteris-Black, Jonathan. *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor*. New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.

---

14 See "Letter to Jacqui Ceballos"

15 To this point, Cheryl Glenn explains, "All of us—hegemonic and marginal rhetoricians alike—already know that existing rhetorical theories do not yet fully account for the experiences and perspectives of all the humans who embody rhetorical expertise" (203).

- Dziuba, Allison. "We Want to be Intersectional": Asian American College Students' Extracurricular Rhetorical Education." *Peitho Journal*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2021. cfshrc.org/article/we-want-to-be-intersectional-asian-american-college-students-extracurricular-rhetorical-education/. Accessed 01 October 2021.
- Fahnestock, Jeanne. *Rhetorical Style: The Uses of Language in Persuasion*. Oxford UP, 2011.
- Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*, WW Norton & Company, 2013.
- Gilmore, Stephanie. "The Dynamics of Second-Wave Feminist Activism in Memphis, 1971-1982: Rethinking the Liberal/Radical Divide." *NWSA Journal*, vol. 15, no. 1, Spring 2003, pp. 94-117. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4316946>. Accessed 18 October 2019.
- Glenn, Cheryl. *Rhetorical Feminism and This Thing Called Hope*. Southern Illinois UP, 2018.
- Hewitt, Nancy A. "Feminist Frequencies: Regenerating the Wave Metaphor." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3, Fall 2012, pp. 658-680. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23720198>. Accessed 17 October 2019.
- hooks, bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Routledge, 1984.
- Howell, Tracee L. "Manifesto of a Mid-Life White Feminist Or, An Apologia for Embodied Feminism." *Peitho Journal*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2021. cfshrc.org/article/manifesto-of-a-mid-life-white-feminist-or-an-apologia-for-embodied-feminism/. Accessed 1 October 2021.
- Hughes, Mary. "Letter to Zelda Nordlinger." 27 August 1971.  
TS. Zelda Nordlinger Papers. Box 1, Folder 1, Earl Greg Swem Library Special Collections, William & Mary, Williamsburg.
- Key, Leslee. *From Desegregation to Desexigration in Richmond, Virginia, 1954-1973*. 2011. Virginia Commonwealth University, Master's Thesis.
- Lorde, Audre. *The Selected Works of Audre Lorde*, edited by Roxane Gay, WW Norton & Company, 2020.
- Nordlinger, Zelda. "Tenth Anniversary of Richmond Chapter of NOW Speech." 28 April 1983.  
TS. Zelda K. Nordlinger Papers. Box 1, Folder 16. James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond.
- "Civil Rights Comparison Speech." Undated, Estimated Early 1970s. TS. Zelda Nordlinger Papers, 1970-2007. Series 1, Subseries A, Box 1, Folder 12, Special Collections at The Library of Virginia, Richmond.
- Interviewed by Betsy Brinson. "Edited transcription of Oral History Interview with Zelda K. Nordlinger." *Virginia Commonwealth University Oral History Archive*. 20 July 2007. <https://digital.library.vcu.edu/islandora/object/vcu%3A37422>. Accessed 02 June 2020.
- Interviewed by Betsy Brinson. "Edited transcription of Second Oral History Interview with Zelda K. Nordlinger." *Virginia Commonwealth University Oral History Archive*. 20 July 2007. <https://digital.library.vcu.edu/islandora/object/vcu%3A37326>. Accessed 02 June 2020.
- "Letter to Chris." 02 February 1972. TS. Zelda Nordlinger Papers. Box 1, Folder 1, Earl Greg Swem Library Special Collections, William & Mary, Williamsburg.

- "Letter to Jacqui Ceballos." 03 November 1998. TS. Zelda K. Nordlinger Papers. Box 1, Folder 6. James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond.
- "Letter to Llewellyn." 18 October 1971. TS. Zelda Nordlinger Papers. Box 1, Folder 1, Earl Greg Swem Library Special Collections, William & Mary, Williamsburg.
- "Letter to Mereca Jane Pollack." 30 June 1972. TS. Zelda Nordlinger Papers, 1970-2007. Series 1, Subseries A, Box 1, Folder 3, Special Collections at The Library of Virginia, Richmond.
- "Letter to *Richmond Times-Dispatch*." 6 June 1975. TS. Zelda Nordlinger Papers, 1970-2007. Series 1, Subseries A, Box 1, Folder 6, Special Collections at The Library of Virginia, Richmond.
- "Letter to Sarah Hughes." 31 August 1971. TS. Zelda Nordlinger Papers. Box 1, Folder 1, Earl Greg Swem Library Special Collections, William & Mary, Williamsburg.
- "Letter to Senator Douglas Wilder." 30 August 1972. TS. Zelda Nordlinger Papers, 1970-2007. Series 1, Subseries A, Box 1, Folder 3, Special Collections at The Library of Virginia, Richmond.
- "Letter to Sylvia Roberts." 19 October 1971. TS. Zelda Nordlinger Papers, 1970-2007. Series 1, Subseries A, Box 1, Folder 2, Special Collections at The Library of Virginia, Richmond.
- "Letter to Tony Radler." 14 October 1971. TS. Zelda Nordlinger Papers, 1970-2007. Series 1, Subseries A, Box 1, Folder 2, Special Collections at The Library of Virginia, Richmond.
- "Letter to Tom Belden." 14 October 1971. TS. Zelda Nordlinger Papers, 1970-2007. Series 1, Subseries A, Box 1, Folder 2, Special Collections at The Library of Virginia, Richmond.
- "Speech to Jewish Women's Club." 1976. TS. Zelda K. Nordlinger Papers. Box 1, Folder 35. James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond.
- "Speech to Officers' Wives Club." Undated. TS. Zelda Nordlinger Papers, 1970-2007. Series 1, Subseries A, Box 1, Folder 12, Special Collections at The Library of Virginia, Richmond.
- "An Unfinished Odyssey." Undated. TS. Zelda Nordlinger Papers. Box 1, Folder 2, Earl Greg Swem Library Special Collections, William & Mary, Williamsburg.
- Reger, Jo. "Finding a Place in History: The Discursive Legacy of the Wave Metaphor and Contemporary Feminism." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2017, pp. 193-221. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.15767/feministstudies.43.1.0193>. Accessed 17 October 2019.
- Rich, Adrienne. *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985*. New York, Norton, 1986.
- Ross, TE. "Letter to Zelda Nordlinger." 18 October 1971. TS. Zelda K. Nordlinger Papers. Box 1, Folder 6, Earl Greg Swem Library Special Collections, William & Mary, Williamsburg.
- Roth, Benita. *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave*. Cambridge University Press, 2004.

- Royster, Jacqueline Jones and Gesa E. Kirsch. *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literary Studies*. Southern Illinois UP, 2012.
- Schmertz, Johanna. "Constructing Essences: Ethos and the Postmodern Subject of Feminism." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 18, no. 1, Autumn 1999, pp. 82-91. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/466091>. Accessed 20 December 2019.
- VanValkenburg, Schuyler. *Defying Labels: Richmond NOW's Multi-Generational Dynamism*. 2010. Virginia Commonwealth University, Master's Thesis.
- Virginia Museum of History and Culture. "Civil Rights Movement in Virginia." *Virginia Historical Society*. <https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/civil-rights-movement-virginia>. Accessed 02 June 2020.
- "L. Douglas Wilder." *Virginia Historical Society*. <https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/l-douglas-wilder>. Accessed 02 June 2020.
- Veteran Feminists of America. "The Veteran Feminists of America Mission Statement." <http://www.veteranfeministsofamerica.org/about/mission-statement/>. Accessed 02 June 2020.
- Williams, Timothy. "Virginia Approves the E.R.A., Becoming the 38th State to Back It." *New York Times*, 15 January 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/15/us/era-virginia-vote.html>. Accessed 15 April 2021.

# Silently Speaking Bodies: Affective Rhetorical Resistance in Transnational Feminist Rhetoric

**Author:** Ashley Canter

Ashley Canter is a PhD candidate in Rhetoric and Composition and Teaching Associate at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her work focuses on transnational feminist rhetoric, affect studies, and Appalachian literacies.

**Abstract:** In "Silently Speaking Bodies," I theorize affective rhetorical resistance: resistance that is performed both through words as well as physical bodies. I examine two instances of bodily protest: 1) a 2015 protest in the Apaa district of Uganda in which a group of elderly women stripped naked and chanted, "Lobowa, Lobowa"—"our land" in a local Luo dialect — to resist their loss of their land and other violence as a result of conflicts of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and 2) a 2013 protest in which women in West Virginia shaved their heads to protest loss of land and economic security due to mountaintop removal for coal mining in the region. As just two examples in a broader trend of bodily protest, these cases call feminist rhetorical scholars and activists to question certain assumptions about rhetoric: namely, that if one makes use of traditional and appropriate means of persuasion, intended audiences will listen. For these protesters, this is not the case: both had previously spoken to stakeholders and government officials about their causes, but were not listened to. Driven to use their bodies to form collectives and make the destructive forces of global economic and political transformation visible to broader audiences, these protests call us to consider the ways embodied rhetorical action responds to neoliberalism, which cultural theorists and rhetorical scholars have theorized as a configuration of the global economy that upwardly redistributes wealth, circulates the market-based logics of individualism and competition, and authorizes destructive forces of capitalist expansion. By employing an affective rhetorical analysis, rhetorical scholars can continue to see rhetoric where it perhaps is not heard, activists can adopt these successful protest strategies, and stakeholders can listen and look to protests to understand the deep stake that individuals have in global neoliberalism.

**Keywords:** activism, affect, coalition, embodiment, neoliberalism, protest, rhetorical studies, transnational feminism, transnational feminist rhetorics

In 2015, a group of women in the Amuru district of Uganda, engaged in a form of embodied protest to resist their loss of their land and other violence visited upon them in the conflicts of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA): they stripped naked and chanted, "Lobowa, Lobowa"—"our land" in the local Luo dialect. Two years earlier, in West Virginia, U.S.A., twenty-three women shaved their heads on the state capitol steps in order to draw attention to the ways that years of industrial coal mining and subsequent mountaintop removal have degraded their land, livelihood, and health. Noting that coal mining disproportionately affects low-income West Virginians and people of color, leader Marilyn Mullens explained that caring for the land is "part of our Appalachian culture;" destruction wrought by coal mining, then, is antithetical ("Marilyn Mullens"). In both examples, the

breaking of social and gendered norms was seen as necessary in order to secure the attention to the cause.

While just two of many possible instances we might cite of women using their physical bodies to publicly protest injustice, violence, and oppression<sup>16</sup>, both cases raise provocative questions about rhetorical action in the current transnational context and neoliberal age (Bohrer). They call us to question certain assumptions about rhetoric: namely, that if one makes use of traditional and appropriate means of persuasion, intended audiences will listen. For protesters like Mullens and Alum, however, this is not the case: both had previously spoken to stakeholders and government officials about their causes but found themselves unable to intervene through words alone. How might bodily forms of rhetoric bring about action when words alone are not listened to?

Driven to use their bodies to form collectives and make the destructive forces of global economic and political transformation visible to broader audiences, these protests call us to consider the ways embodied rhetorical action responds to neoliberalism, which cultural theorists and rhetorical scholars have theorized as a configuration of the global economy that upwardly redistributes wealth, circulates market-based logics of individualism and competition, and authorizes destructive forces of capitalist expansion (Asen, Chaput, Dingo, Duggan, LeCourt, among others). While neoliberalism can make people less aware of the structural causes of their circumstances due to rhetorics of personal responsibility (Duggan), there are also examples like the ones here where people are acutely aware of the impact on their lived experiences. The effect of neoliberal conditions is a “welling up in the body” (Micciche), and it is expressed through the physical body. It is through physical and emotional manifestations such as rolling on the ground, stripping naked, shaving heads, and shouting, that we truly see 1) the lived effects neoliberalism and 2) that this impact is made visible by protesters to one another. This allows these protesters to work against the ways that individualism spreads by “articulat[ing] relationships” to enable the construction of a collective ‘we’ (Asen 300). “I” am not hurting because I am failing. We are hurting because of the ways that neoliberal institutions like government officials and transnational policy have disrupted our land and enacted violence on the bodies of those we love, the protests in the case studies I present can argue. They can argue this due to their collective, bodily protest; they can do this through affect.

Bodies are at the center of the work that we do as rhetorical scholars. That is, we study rhetoric so that we can understand how oppressive systems, such as neoliberalism, use arguments to persist, circulate, and ultimately impact people physically, emotionally, and mentally and to examine effective rhetorical strategies for resisting those systems. Transnational feminist rhetorical scholars have worked to understand the ways that neoliberal discourses function to marginalize individuals by circulating through policies,

---

<sup>16</sup> Bodily protest has a long history, but bodily and nude protests have become a more prominent trend in protest strategies in recent years (Sassion-Levy and Rapoport).

human rights stories, and more (Dingo, Reidner, Wingard). Transnational feminist scholars have provided a framework for understanding the lived impacts of neoliberalism. Affect scholars have worked to uncover how the impact of rhetoric is not just linguistic and not just heard but also seen, felt, and sensed (Ahmed). Finally, social movement scholars have questioned “what provokes bodies to shift from assigned places” (Jarret and Alexander). My analysis puts affect theory into conversation with transnational feminist rhetoric in order to consider the ways rhetors respond to neoliberal conditions in agentive ways. I examine how these conversations can come together to call us to construct an understanding of rhetoric that allows us as scholars, activists, and community partners to see how rhetors use their physical bodies as well or instead of their words to be seen when they are not heard—to both make visible and call for changes in their daily, lived experiences of damaging global systems like neoliberalism.

I understand these protesters actions through a lens of *affective rhetorical resistance*, a phrase I use to note the bodily and linguistic strategies that protesters together use to make visible the lived realities of neoliberalism, realities too often forgotten, silenced, and not listened to. Marilyn Mullens, Magdalena Alum, and others initially used traditional, linguistic rhetorical channels to bring attention to their marginalization. However, their audiences did not listen. Because stakeholders did not listen, these protesters instead turned to bodily forms of rhetorical resistance. This calls feminist rhetorical scholars to continue to question the ways that rhetorical understanding rely on an audience to listen and the actions rhetors take when they do not. What happens when traditional, linguistic rhetorical techniques do not persuade powerful audiences, such as policy makers, to listen? Both of these cases represent a movement from linguistic rhetorical strategies to embodied ones. These women had previously spoken to stakeholders and government officials about their causes, but because they were not listened to, they instead used what I call an affective rhetorical resistance through nude protest, in one case, and shaving their heads at a government building, in another. I argue that, in moments of seeming rhetorical failure, feminist rhetorical scholars and activists might look closer to see how rhetors use their physical bodies to express resistance in ways their words alone cannot.

In what follows, I begin by overviewing existing work on the body in feminist rhetoric. Next, I will set up the exigence of studying rural areas for particular strategies of rhetorical activism. Then, I will provide more background on the case studies I look at in which West Virginian women shaved their heads in protest of mountaintop removal for coal mining and Ugandan women stripped naked in protest of government sanctioning of ancestral farming land. I look to these two instances to theorize an affective rhetorical resistance that makes visible the lived realities of neoliberalism. Both groups of protesters use their bodies to respond to transnational instances of neolibetally-motivated oppressions surrounding land. I end by calling for this theory of affective rhetorical resistance to be taken up in generative ways by transnational feminist rhetorical scholars, specifically, but also by feminist rhetoricians and feminist activists.

Embodiment and affect in protest, particularly in contexts of economic globalization and neoliberal capitalism, have concerned rhetorical scholars in a variety of conversations. In order to read these protests, it's useful to think about how scholars in three sometimes distinct, sometimes interwoven, rhetorical conversations have advanced collective understandings of embodied protest. I will trace the projects of feminist rhetoric and transnational feminist rhetoric broadly. Then, I question what conceptions of social movements and work surrounding affect may offer transnational feminist scholars and activists. Specifically, I weave these conversations together in order to develop a theoretical framework of affective rhetorical protest.

Responding to the exclusionary nature of rhetorical study — wherein definitions of rhetoric were drawn from primarily economically privileged male rhetors — feminist rhetoricians changed the field of rhetoric by asking: "Where are the women?" (Glenn, *Rhetoric* and Schell). Through studies on Aspasia (Glenn), and Ida B. Wells (Rosyter), for example, feminist rhetoricians contributed to an understanding of rhetoric as not just the available means of persuasion but also a practice wherein power defines rhetorical success. In other words, feminist rhetoric scholars began to address the ways that rhetors' gendered lives impacts who we study and why (Glenn, Jarratt, Lunsford, Ratcliffe, Royster, Swearingen, among others). Early feminist rhetorical scholars essential contributions changed who we study as rhetors and, in so doing, changed our definitions of rhetoric and the methods by which we study it (Kirsch & Royster). The recovery of essential voices that were overlooked in classical rhetorical scholarship set the groundwork for a turn toward the ways that material realities of power impact rhetors and texts.

Outlining the project of transnational feminist rhetorical studies, specifically, Rebecca Dingo explains, "transnational feminism illustrates a matrix of connections between people, nations, economies, and the textual practices present in, for example, public policies and popular culture" (12). Taking up early calls for transnational feminist interventions in feminist rhetoric, which call for us to be "attentive to the constraints of neoliberalism and to the power differentials and inequalities that shape geopolitical alignments," transnational feminists argue for the recognition of "globalization's unequal economic, political, and social relations and gendered, sexualized, and racialized imageries" (Hesford and Schell 467). The overall project of transnational feminist rhetoric thus far has been to construct a model of rhetorical situations that includes not just rhetor, audience, exigence, and purpose, and not just how utterances are contextualized within historical and contemporary power dynamics around gender, race, class, and other matrices of power, but to do this while also contextualizing utterances within nation-state and political economic structures.

If the key questions raised by the feminist rhetorical project were "Where are the women? How can we recover their voices to arrive at a new definition of rhetoric?" then the defining questions of emergent conversations in transnational feminism became: "Who do we hear most loudly, through circulation, and why? How can utterances be contextualized in their political economic moments and interrupted in light of nation-state relationships,

global economic transformation, and social inequity and activism?" Transnational feminist rhetorical scholars have made essential contributions to rhetorical understandings of how objects, places, and work are manifestations of a location in an interconnected neoliberal political economic system.

In 2008, Wendy Hesford and Eileen Schell called for Rhetoric and Composition to shift from a U.S.-centric narrative "of nation, nationalism, and citizenship" (463). Dingo, Rachel Riedner, and Jennifer Wingard responded to this, for example, by conceptualizing a "network" in order to think about how "transnational studies scholars engage concurrently with multiple scales as they consider how globalized power operates through a variety of linked scales—the economic, national, state, and political conditions of contemporary neoliberalism, neocolonialism and neo-imperialism" (518). In general, transnational feminist rhetorical scholars have been interested in how global structures like neoliberalism and biocapitalism are constructed and spread rhetorically to impact rhetors. I continue this project by looking at bodily protests as instances of people flipping the script on these narratives and using their physical bodies to make visible and protest the lived impacts of systems of violence like these (Dingo, *Networking*, Dingo and Reidner, *Beyond*, Riedner, *Writing*, Wingard, *Branded*).

Transnational feminist rhetorical scholars have begun to take up studies of the body in relation to the way rhetorics circulate, or how and why rhetorics move across sites. For example, Dingo, Riedner, and Wingard examine how the rhetorics around Ahed Tamimi and Malala Yousafazi circulate differently based on how their bodies (their skin color, hair color, and physical gestures) are read in relation to nation-state narratives. They state, "...we suggest that the news archive about Tamimi is limited — where she is, what is happening to her, and what she says — is difficult to track because her story does not shore up the political and economic objectives of the nation-state and global capital; it cannot be used to stand for benevolent neoliberalism" (184). In other words, transnational feminists question why some get to speak louder than others based on nation-state interests and gendered performances<sup>17</sup>. In another example, Jessica Ouellette discusses how Amina Tyler's nude body was talked about and how the rhetorics of her protest were taken up in circulation<sup>18</sup>. Whether through an examination of women's health information ([Dicaglio et. al](#)), through a reading of physical bodies as furthering and complicating nation-state narratives (Dingo et. al), or through a look at how nude bodies undercut rhetorical significance in circulation (Ouellette), *we often see the body talked about in relation to rhetoric, not as rhetoric*. Both of these lenses are essential and can further the project of transnational feminist rhetoric.

---

17 For more information on this, see the book by Dingo and Reidner, *Beyond Recovery* which is under consideration with University of Pittsburgh Press. In my reading and conversations with them as a Research Assistant, I have seen how their work shows that rhetorics that circulate to shore up nation-state and global projects of neoliberalism and biocapitalism also depend on gendered performances of the physical bodies — in this case, the bodies of Malala Yousafazi and Ahed Tamimi.

18 These are only some of the many impressive works on the body and circulation within feminist rhetoric.

While scholars like Dingo, Wingard, Reidner, and Oulette have contributed essential understandings of how bodies are talked about/read determines the success of the rhetor's message — how widely and justly it spreads — they also open questions about how the bodies involved here — Tyler, Tamimi, Yousafzai, readers of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* — are sites of rhetorical intervention in and of themselves by virtue of the ways the way rhetors use their bodies to move through space. To be more precise, the cases of Tyler, Tamimi, and Yousafzai all involve women using their physical bodies to respond to governmental decisions that negatively impact them and that, I argue, signal neoliberal narratives of profit over life.

What's needed, in other words, is a theory of resistant rhetorical responses that uses not just words said by or about bodies but a way to fully understand how rhetors use their physical bodies, even without, and sometimes in addition to speaking, to be louder, to be noticed, to be listened to. The cases that I represent below demonstrate our need to develop transnational feminist rhetorical theories that analyze not just the way that bodies are spoken and written about but also methods for how to rhetorically analyze the movement of bodies themselves as powerful, resistant acts. As the cases I examine in this article demonstrate, rhetors can use their physical bodies — the way they are positioned, what they do, where they are — as rhetorical interventions into neoliberal structures of the economy that marginalize them by taking away their land and exploiting their labor. Affect as a method can help us to see the full ways physical bodies work with words to make visible and resist harmful narratives and structures.

A rich source of understanding about emotional and corporeal power is the robust body of rhetorical and theoretical literature on affect. Rhetorical study is about the power of texts. However, as material rhetoric and feminist scholarship evolved, the lived and material realities outside of texts have also been brought to the fore. In what follows, I will draw together various definitions of affect, from across disciplinary perspectives to build a theory of *affective rhetorical resistance*.

Feminist rhetorical scholars are invested in examining how larger circulating structures of power impact individuals so that we can ultimately make that less damaging in interactional and structural ways. Affect theory offers a lens for this, as this theory has made advancements in thinking about how bodies take on their environments — what moves and flows and damages them. For example, in Catherine Chaput's taxonomy of affect theory, she underscores how different conceptions of affect take up the body: some view affect as a description of how external material circulates through bodies, while others view affect as a physical response to those external factors. On one hand, Sara Ahmed and Lauren Berlant think of affect as "energetic matter" which "circulates through environments — molding, producing, and defining them in its wake," while other theorists "foreground affect as the biochemical and neurological patterns of bodily attraction and repulsion" (Chaput 91-92). Chaput ultimately argues that "affect provides a lens for the

rhetorical theorization of how experience moves through and lingers in bodies in a way that engages but is not reduced to scientism" (10).

Though they define affect somewhat differently, Chaput and Ahmed are particularly influential in my own thinking about affect because they reveal how affect describes the ways that bodies physically take on the structure of power around them. Ahmed, for instance, "tracks how the affective patterns of gendered, sexed, and raced bodies follow the ebb and flow of political economic exchanges" (Chaput 96). I argue that an affective lens can illuminate the ways that political economic structures physically fall on the body — such as how political economic realities physically fall on a laboring body and appear as stress, pain, or anger (Ahmed), or how the reality of political economic and legal policy physically falls on immigrant bodies through movement across borders, pain, or violence. However, I want to extend the work of scholars such as Chaput and Ahmed by thinking about how affect cannot just illuminate the ways that bodies take on their environments in the aforementioned ways but also the ways that rhetors use affect — through gesture and movement, for example — to respond to and highlight these impacts. This allows us to see the savvy work that rhetors can do through not just their words, but their physical bodies.

### Affective Rhetorical Resistance in Apaa Region, Uganda and in West Virginia, U.S.A.

I present these examples in Uganda and West Virginia not to be read separately but to be seen as two instances in a larger trend of bodily protest that makes visible the too often invisible lived impacts of neoliberalism, particularly for those marginalized by race, class, gender, regionality, and nation-state relationships. In a future iteration of this project, with appropriate research funding, it would be beneficial to hear directly from the protesters about their experiences and intentions. However, since my primary method is to read visually, I instead take up the protesters' words as mediated through images, videos, and news articles around the protest as my data.

The first protest I discuss occurred in the Amuru district of Uganda, which is a site of exploitation over land. As rural areas, we can see parallels in the ways that both Uganda and West Virginia are impacted by neoliberalism. The Amuru district of Uganda has historically been a site of dispute over land. In sum, the Uganda Wildlife Authority has argued that the people of Apaa occupy a game reserve, while the community of Apaa argue that they occupy ancestral land. Violence by security forces has arisen from this conflict (Byaruhanga). The history of exploitation of land makes this location a site worthy of rhetorical analysis because it is a place from which to see how the community here responds in rhetorically agentive ways when traditional rhetorical means have not persuaded the government officials that make up their audience.

As a sign of protest to impending governmental demarcation of land, the women of Apaa stripped naked. In the way that *BBC News* frames it, "In front of two government ministers, soldiers, policemen and hundreds of people from their community, they started removing their clothes. Off came their tops — then some of the women pulled down their

wrappers and skirts so they were completely naked. ‘Lobowa, Lobowa!’ they chanted, which means ‘our land’” in the Luo dialect” (Byaruhanga 2015).

Before moving on, I want to address the way that the reasonably angry emotion of these women is filtered, and made light of, by a Western news agency, *BBC News*, in the way it is reported here. Rather than having a matter-of-fact tone, the article exclaims, “Off came their tops!” and says that they “shouted” (Byaruhanga 2015). This is one way in which a Western news agency makes light of, and thus, does not do justice to, the cause that these women are fighting for. Though I would like to rhetorically analyze the rhetorics of reporting about the protest, I aim to keep my rhetorical analysis here focused on the rhetorics of the protesters’ words and bodies themselves so as to respond to the exigence for my work that I introduced earlier.

Regarding the protest method itself, *African Argument*, a “pan-African platform for news, investigation and opinion,” explains that this is one instance in a long history of nude protest in Africa and around the world:

According to Florence Ebila Akona, a researcher at Makerere University, this Apaa protest was the ‘culmination of mistrust, frustrations, anger and anxiety over an uncertain future,’ but she also explains that naked protests – in this instance and all others – are much more than just outpourings of desperation. They also convey deep symbolic messages. The undressing was most importantly meant to curse the person who had brought all these suffering to them, says Akona. (Guyson 2018)

The cultural significance of cursing in this instance shows just how rhetorical this act is — these women cultivated cultural values and beliefs into a political stance against land in front of political economic stakeholders in that land.

I argue that these women used rhetorical tactics like *ethos* but did so in a way that is both connected to their cultural, localized intimacy and tied to a broader political economic system that asymmetrically abuses the land and labor of marginalized people for capital gain through a global trend in nude protest. I take up *ethos* here in the way that Kathleen J. Ryan, Nancy Myers, and Rebecca Jones define it as “feminist ecological ethē,” which “open[s] up new ways of envisioning ethos to acknowledge the multiple, nonlinear relations operating among rhetors, audiences, things, and contexts (i.e. ideological, metaphorical, geographical)” (2). They go on to say that examples of “feminist ecological ethē” include interruption-interrupting, advocacy-advocating, and relation-relating as patterns we have observed across the chapters that enact this way of thinking and constructing *ethos*” (3). To this list, this case study adds that ethē should also contain a practice of affect: a physical, corporeal way of responding that, in this case, is used strategically when traditional, linguistic ways of protest did not work or were not listened to. Thinking about *ethos* in relationship to affect is modeled richly by Lorin Shellenberger in a discussion of Serena Williams. She explains that “despite being one of the best tennis players in the history of the sport, Williams often receives just as much attention for the size, shape, and color of her body. As a Black woman originally from a working-class background in a typically white,

country club sport, Williams frequently must speak to and perform for a community whose values do not always reflect her own" (Shellenberger). Shellenberger demonstrates how other's raced and gendered readings of rhetor's physical bodies affect rhetor's claims to ethos. In the case studies I present, I join Shellenberger in considering the ways that physical bodies are not only a part of an establishment of ethos, but also an important part of rhetorical protest.

As Rebecca Dingo pointed out in a conversation about this project, these women force you to look, force you to listen, in a way that channels such as letter-writing and petition-signing, which they had previously done, do not force (Dingo 2019). As Sara Ahmed explains, sometimes "they do not hear you because they expect you to speak in a certain way" (99). These women are expected to perform, speak, and protest in sometimes parallel, sometimes varying ways along racial capitalist and neoliberal narratives of what it means to be a black woman in Apaa or a working class woman in the U.S. South. These women demand to be heard by speaking, moving, and being in places and ways they are not expected to. They craft this rhetorical resistance by using their bodies in ways they are not expected to — they strip though this is thought of as a curse, they strip though elderly women's bodies are not expected to be seen publicly due to agist, sexist conceptions of beauty and sexuality, they position their bodies in unexpected ways by rolling, lying on the ground, and raising their legs: "As a policeman took pictures, one of the women approached him by rolling on the ground and then raised her leg. He ran away" (Byaruhanga 2015). They use their bodies to express the anger that was not listened to in their words.

These women demonstrate an affect of anger, as the image, their bodily positioning and gestures, and volume show. They show the power and productivity of anger in the way that Audre Lorde thinks about its usefulness when she explains that anger is often systematically discussed in ways that undercut its productive uses, but urges that "anger expressed and translated into action in the service of our vision and our future is a liberating and strengthening act of clarification, for it is in the painful process of this translation we identify who are our allies with whom we have grave differences, and who are our genuine enemies" (280). Sara Ahmed also takes up this line of thinking by naming "feminist killjoys:" feminists who refuse to succumb to what is 'supposed to' make them happy, but instead, chose to rest in that misfit in order to point out the ways that their unhappiness is linked to structural causes (57). These protesters act as "feminist killjoys" by expressing their anger and their "hurting" through both their words and their physical gestures.



Figure 1: Unnamed protesters in Apaa village lie on the ground partially naked in front of government official's vehicles. The image depicts women lying down on a dirt road in front of a line of vehicles. The truck on the left of the image is clearly marked "police." The two bodies are blurred to obscure their partially nude bodies.

The wider history of governmental tension and violence that precedes this protest privileges profit over life or converts life into profit, as Alum shows above when she cited the violence that her son endured by government officials, an affective, raced, and economic reality that she uses her body and her emotions to draw attention to. "I have nothing," she says, citing the loss of her land, livelihood, and son. This loss is attributed to a system of neoliberalism that "values strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade as a means through which to assure individual and social freedom (Dingo et. al. 523). At the heart of the land dispute and resulting violence is the privileging of property and profit over the wellbeing of the Apaa community. Alum and other protesters use their words and body work together to produce a rhetorical response to violence that demands to be listened to and that links her suffering to neolibetally-motivated governmental changes. When words alone were not striking enough, these protesters used their physical bodies in "unruly" ways in order to jar their audience and also to physically restrict governmental officials from access to the land that they were there to demarcate. I suggest that this protest strategy offers transnational feminist scholars one way to see how rhetors respond to the lived impacts of neoliberalism.

The affective rhetorical resistance by residents of Apaa proved to be listened to more than their words, as the ministers and government authorities that were there to demarcate land did, indeed, turn around. They did achieve their intended impact through their rhetorical activism, a strategy that responds to years of colonial and neoliberal power colliding into processes of racialization and class stratification that create the governmental

violence and land disputes which these protesters respond to. This is another example of the rhetorical ingenuity that these Apaa women exhibit when their causes are not being listened to. As Plange argues in *Peitho's* recent Special Issue on Race, Feminism, and Rhetoric, "African women have historically organized and acted to make societal changes" (n.p.). Extending Plange's work, I argue that this protest is an instance in which Apaa women are drawing attention to the unique impact of the processes of postcolonialism and neoliberalism that prompt this protest. These protesters' affective rhetorical resistance signals a powerful expression of the collective, accrued, "welling up" of the impacts of postcolonialism and neoliberalism which have resulted in governmental violence and land exploitation (Micciche). In pointing to this particular kind of rhetorical ingenuity, I hope to assert that affective rhetorical resistance is a response to the accumulated impact of networks of material power in a way that words alone are not. Illuminating the rhetorical ingenuity of this group of protesters through a lens of affective rhetorical resistance contributes to the long-standing work that Plange and transnational feminist scholars have done to de-center the rhetorical practices of white women in Western contexts. More specifically, by framing this protest strategy as a response to accrued experiences of postcolonialism, neoliberalism, and racism colliding for these Apaa women, I hope to contribute to the need for "more nuanced approaches to dealing with the intersections of race and rhetoric" that Gwendolyn Pough and Stephanie Jones call for (n.p.).

### Affective Rhetorical Resistance in West Virginia

Another rural geopolitical context that is rich to look toward is the U.S. Appalachian region, as it is a place with a long history of labor and land exploitation, from taking indigenous land and lives to coal mining. It is similarly a place with a history of protest and resistance to that labor exploitation. I aim to draw on the work of Appalachian studies scholars who have studied protest and resistance in order to think about this West Virginia protest as a form of affective rhetorical resistance — a concept that I hope can help Appalachian studies and transnational feminist scholars continue to consider rhetorical meaning-making in rural sites within their political economic context. Appalachian studies helps us to see the ways that activism takes place in rural spaces (Eller, Lewis, NeCamp). In fact, Appalachian studies provides a nuanced framework for thinking about rural sites as places with rich histories of activism and highly contextualized relationships to landscapes and for thinking about histories of women protesting mountaintop removal in Appalachia, specifically (Bell). I suggest that these analyses can be further enriched by an examination of Appalachian protest in connection with transnational political economic rhetorics of neoliberalism. I provide a beginning toward this questioning. As a working-class woman who grew up in Appalachia, among generations of working-class family members, I have seen just how deeply rooted and internalized neoliberal rhetorics become and how often they are forgotten about in wider public discourse. As a white, U.S. born woman, I do also benefit from the racial privilege unjustly afforded to me by historical and contemporary collides between global political economics and racism. In the work that follows, I look at

one example of resistance in West Virginia, one part of the Appalachian region through a transnational feminist rhetorical lens in order to begin to address these gaps.

The same neoliberal economic system that women in Uganda responded to operates as an exigency for protests in West Virginia. Both groups use their physical bodies in ways that play on and subvert local, cultural codes to make their position in the political economy visible and to turn the gaze of the public eye to these intentionally forgotten places. They counter rhetorics of profit by showing how they are actually rhetorics of violence in disguise. Both groups speak not individually but show a collaborative model of rhetorical agency, though more so in the Uganda example, as Marilyn Mullens is the most prominent voice in and organizer of the West Virginia protest.

There are perhaps no better words with which to introduce the 2013 protest where dozens of West Virginian women shaved their heads while standing on the steps of the state capitol building in protest of mountaintop removal for mining than those of Marilyn Mullens, one of the protest leaders. In an interview before the protest, she contextualizes the group's efforts:

Tomorrow we're planning an event in Charleston at the West Virginia State Capitol steps, a silent protest, where women from Appalachia will come together to shave our heads. We want to show a solidarity with our mountains that are being stripped, our people that are getting sick. Just to show that we're willing to give up something to get people to *pay attention*. I grew up in the coalfields in Boone County, in Sand Creek Hollow mostly. Living there, it's coal mining. *That's the big industry.* (Mullens, emphasis added).

Mullens' own words show us the power of affective rhetorical resistance: to make audiences look. These rhetors use their bodies to draw attention to the material impacts of neoliberalism, as she notes when citing the "big industry" responsible for their cause. Like the protest in Uganda, these women also challenge stereotypes of what gendered bodies are supposed to do and look like in public space. One image that depicts this well is their fallen, cut hair lying on the steps of West Virginia state capitol.



*Figure 2: Protester's fallen hair on the West Virginia state capitol building steps. The image shows piles of protesters fallen hair laying haphazardly on white concrete steps of state capitol steps. The chunks of straight and wavy hair range in color from white, black, and brown.*

A striking image of the protesters' fallen hair on the state capitol building's steps is worth discussing. This image and the protest itself is a symbolic, rhetorical act — one that intervenes in public space in ways that both bring attention to the silenced issue of mountaintop removal for mining and that challenges traditional, stereotypical notions of femininity through the act of shaving their hair on the state capitol building's steps. Strategically playing on an audience that might believe in these stereotypes of how women's bodies should exist in public — stereotypically beautiful and silent — these women rhetorically position shaving their heads as a loss, stating that they are "willing to give up something" (Sierra Club).

I chose to include the image of the women's hair fallen on the capitol steps, in particular, because the haphazard nature in which the hair is fallen visually represents the destruction that these protesters intended to draw onlookers attention to. This image shows the way that the highly affective nature of this protest strategy culminates in rhetorical power and moves the audience to awareness surrounding mountaintop removal and the resulting destruction to the lives and livelihoods of the Appalachians in this community. When I look at the images, I am moved and reminded of the destruction that I have also witnessed growing up working class in a different area of the Appalachian region that has only weathered the consequences of environmental destruction for profit. However, for readers who may not be as familiar with this kind of destruction, these protesters use their silence and their body movements to move their audience to

awareness. When I look at this image, I see how these protesters used affective rhetorical resistance to move audiences to action.

As Mullens explains, they wanted people to “pay attention,” a statement that shows how they turned to this affective rhetorical act when traditional linguistic acts did not work. They turn notions of silence in public on its head by using an affective rhetoric to stay linguistically silent but speak volumes with their bodies on the steps of the state capitol. As Cheryl Glenn explains in her theory of rhetorical silence,

...we all inhabit silence: in a kaleidoscopic variety of rhetorical situations, taking up “the politics of space, place, and time” (Schell 923). Ever sensitive to kairos, to the appropriateness of the occasion, we attempt to fashion our communication successfully, through words or silence. After all, the stupendous reality is that language itself cannot be understood unless we begin by observing that speech consists most of all in silences. (263)

They are silent, but they speak volumes.

Taking the two case studies together, we notice strategic uses of both sound and silence alongside the visual and affective rhetorical strategies these women use their bodies to deploy. Whereas the women in Uganda use their bodies and their words, shouting “Lobowa, Lobowa!” which means “our land” in the Luo variety, as they stripped naked, lifted their legs, and rolled, the women in West Virginia chose to use silence while similarly positioning their bodies in unexpected ways that draw on and subvert cultural codes of femininity to draw attention to issues of labor and land exploitation that have not been listened to in traditional rhetorical channels.

Both of these instances show that rural places may call for embodied forms of rhetorical resistance that force audiences to listen and to look, calling attention to this site ignored by governmental officials and news outlets. Protesters demonstrate a keen understanding of the ways that rhetorical readings of their bodies through raced and gendered lenses constrain and frame their meaning-making. They use their bodies in unexpected ways (stripping naked, shaving their heads) to draw attention to their otherwise overlooked causes. The case studies of affective rhetorical resistance that I provided here, I hope, start a conversation about the most meaningful ways that affect and transnational feminist rhetorical analysis can intersect. Affect can show us how economic realities physically fall on bodies through labor exploitation and how women use their physical bodies to protest these conditions.

These two case studies show us that sometimes we must look at not only strictly linguistic situations, but rhetorical situations using the body to see rhetorical success. Both of these groups of protesters used their bodies in unexpected ways in order to achieve governmental changes and attention from a broader audience as they intended. In particular, rural sites that may not receive as much attention from wider audiences may use affective rhetorical resistance in order to draw attention to the lived impacts of

neoliberalism that go unnoticed, as protesters in Uganda and West Virginia have done. We can see how bodies are used when words fail to be listened to. We can see how, particularly in rural contexts that are forgotten, and even more so among people marked by race, class, gender, and problematic conceptions of the Global North and South, these rhetors use their bodies to force us to listen. Where else might we look? How might there be rhetorical success under the surface? In what other instances are rhetors using their bodies to draw attention to the lived reality of neoliberalism?

I urge transnational feminist scholars and feminist rhetoricians to look to spaces that seem like rhetorical failure and see how rhetors might be using their bodies rhetorically in those spaces, to see where rhetorical success might be under the surface. I urge feminist activists to look to protests like those in Uganda and West Virginia to see how they might use an affective rhetorical resistance to make them look, to make them listen. These protests are only a couple of examples in a wider pattern of bodily protest. More than showing two responses to violence in Uganda and West Virginia, my intention is to provide these as examples in effective, affective rhetorical strategies to use when words alone are not listened to and acted upon by audiences who have power to change material circumstances. This allows feminist rhetorical scholars a new way of reading seeming silence, of reading bodily movement along with words, in order to see rhetorical activism. By employing an affective rhetorical analysis, rhetorical scholars can continue to see rhetoric where it perhaps is not heard, activists can adopt these successful bodily strategies, and stakeholders and policy makers can listen and look to protests in these moments of activism.

### Works Cited

- Ahmed, Sara. *Living a Feminist Life*. Durham UP, 2017.
- Alcoff, Linda. "The Problem of Speaking for Others." *Cultural Critique*, no. 20, 1991, pp. 5-32.  
Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1354221>.
- Bell, Shannon Elizabeth. *Our Roots Run Deep as Ironweed: Appalachian Women and the Fight for Environmental Justice*. U of Illinois P, 2013.
- Bohrer, Ashley. "Neoliberalism Laid Bare: Feminism, Intersectionality, and Nude Protest in the 21st century." *Melbourne Journal of Politics*, vol. 37, 2015, pp. 3-19.
- Byaruhanga, Catherine. "The Ugandan Women Who strip to Defend their Land." *BBC News Africa*, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-32938779>. Accessed 28 October 2021.
- Colpean, Michelle, and Rebecca Dingo. "Beyond Drive-by Race scholarship: The Importance of Engaging Geopolitical Contexts." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, vol. 15, no.4, 2018, pp. 306-11.
- Dicaglio, Sara and Lori Beth De Hertogh. "Introduction to "Rhetorical Pasts, Rhetorical Futures: Reflecting on the Legacy of Our Bodies, Ourselves and the Future of Feminist Health Literacy." *Rhetorical Past, Rhetorical Futures: Reflecting on the*

- Legacy of Our Bodies, Ourselves and the Future of Feminist Health Literacy*, special issue of *Peitho*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2019, pp. 565-72.
- Dingo, Rebecca. *Networking Arguments*. U of Pittsburgh P, 2012.
- Dingo, Rebecca, Rachel Reidner, and Jennifer Wingard. "Toward a Cogent Analysis of Power: Transnational Rhetorical Studies." *JAC*, vol. 33, no. 3/4, 2013, pp. 517-528.
- Eller, Ronald. *Uneven Ground: Appalachia since 1945*. UP of Kentucky, 2008.
- Fleitz, Elizabeth. "Key Concept Statement: Material." *Special 25th Anniversary Issue*, special issue of *Peitho*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2015, pp. 34-8.
- Glenn, Cheryl. *Rhetorical Feminism and This Thing Called Hope*. Southern Illinois UP, 2018.
- Hesford, Wendy S., and Eileen E. Schell. "Introduction: Configurations of Transnationality: Locating Feminist Rhetorics." *College English*, vo. 70, no. 5, 2008, pp. 461-70.
- Lewis, Ronald L. *Transforming the Appalachian Countryside: Railroads, Deforestation, and Social Change in West Virginia, 1880-1920*. U of North Carolina P, 1998.
- Lorde, Audre. "The Uses of Anger." *Women's Studies Quarterly*, vol 25, no.1/2, 1997, pp. 278-85.
- "Marilyn Mullens." *The Cost of Coal*. 27 May 2012, <http://vault.sierraclub.org/sierra/costofcoal/west-virginia/marilyn-mullens.aspx>. Accessed 30 September 2021.
- NeCamp, Samantha. *Literacy in the Mountains: Community, Newspapers, and Writing in Appalachia*. UP of Kentucky, 2020.
- Sasson-Levy, Orna, and Tamar Rapoport. "Body, Gender, and Knowledge in Protest Movements: The Israeli Case." *Gender & Society*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2003, pp. 379-403.
- Selzer, Jack, and Sharon Crowley, editors. *Rhetorical Bodies*. U of Wisconsin P, 1999.
- Ouellette, Jessica. "Blogging Borders: Transnational Feminist Rhetorics & Global Voices." *Harlot: A Revealing Look at the Arts of Persuasion*, vol. 1, no. 11, 2014.
- Shellenberger, Lorin. "Imagining an Embodied Ethos: Serena William's 'Defiant' Black Ethe." *Peitho*, vo. 22, no. 2, 2020.
- Stillion Southard, Belinda. *How to Belong: Women's Agency in a Transnational World*. Pennsylvania State UP, 2018.

# Recoveries and Reconsiderations

## Research on the Literate Practices of Field Matrons on the Hopi Reservation

**Author:** Mary Le Rouge

Mary Le Rouge is Director of Writing at the Cleveland Institute of Music. She has a PhD in English Rhetoric and Composition from Kent State University, where she taught composition, argumentative prose and professional writing classes. With a masters in publishing from George Washington University, she previously worked as a freelance editor of award-winning encyclopedias in the social sciences published primarily by Sage. Le Rouge currently volunteers as associate publisher for Monographs, Collections, and Conference Proceedings at the WAC Clearinghouse. She is coeditor of the forthcoming edited collection *Embodied Environmental Risk: Problems and Solutions Toward Social Sustainability*, published by Routledge. Her research focuses on the archival-historical recovery of women's history, environmental communication, and contemporary rhetorical practices using technology and the human-computer interface.

**Abstract:** In this article, family history leads to new archival-historical research on the Field Matron Program instituted by the Bureau of the Interior on Native American reservations in the American West during the early 1900s. Reflection on this history can provide clues as to how such culturally intrusive, destructive government programs can be dismantled and avoided in the future. Field matrons were employed by the U.S. government to conduct the cultural assimilation of Indigenous women by teaching Indigenous women how to cook, clean, sew, and act like white settler farm women. Field matrons were also involved in the forced removal of Native children from their families and placement in boarding schools, although some resisted this practice. The official correspondence of field matrons collected in the National Archives and Idella Hahn's personal writings shows their concerns about assimilationist practices and reflects the rise and decline of the profession (and acceptance of its rhetoric) in the United States until the program's dissolution.

**Keywords:** Assimilation, ethics, Feminist Methodology, Field Matrons, Hopi, Indigenous Women, recoveries and reconsiderations, women's work



Figure 1: "View of lower village road" (Idella Hahn) with her shadow c. 1913-14. Image description: a wide shot of flat land with short shrubs. In the foreground is a shadow of a woman in a long dress.

This is a research story about my great-great grandmother, who was a field matron on the Hopi reservation in the early 1900s. The field matron program was part of the colonial project that the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs instituted to culturally assimilate Indigenous peoples. Other such programs included native children's forced attendance at boarding schools, the reservation system itself that supported landholding and property concepts, and farming/employment programs that disrupted traditional activities and lifeways. Although government intentions were framed as benevolent in public discourse, and some employees who implemented these programs might have believed that their actions were coming from the best intentions, the effect that they had was to destroy native culture. This colonial project served to support the dominance of white culture in the United States, which benefits white people such as myself to this day. I am a white female scholar, writing about my white female ancestor and her relationship with the Hopi people she worked with on the reservation. I feel obligated to tell this story because I feel that such destructive governmental programs should not be allowed to exist – that if the history of the field matron program is forgotten, it could be repeated, and that if there is any chance for restitution and reconciliation with Indigenous people, it is important to have this conversation.

I grew up hearing fantastic stories about my great-great grandmother Idella Senour Hahn (1869-1969), who worked as a field matron on the Hopi reservation in Arizona in the early 1900s. She left her midwestern home in Bourbon, Indiana, after the untimely death of her husband Daniel Hahn from tuberculosis on May 9, 1909, and the death of her mother Sophia Baylor one year later. Idella had two young sons, 13-year-old Harold and 10-year-old Donald. They moved west to Dickinson, North Dakota, where Idella's brother George A. Senour lived. Idella supposedly inherited land there, but her sons were too young to work the farm. She also was trained to give music lessons and thought of opening a music store, but there was not much interest in music in the rural town.

So, her brother recommended that she seek work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as the Sioux and Mandan Indians had settlements nearby. She passed the Civil Service Field Matron Examination on September 10, 1913, which included home economics subjects such as "keeping accounts," "elementary sewing," "cooking and general household management," "sanitation, hygiene, care of the sick, care and feeding of children," "home gardening and poultry raising," and "methods of social work" (U.S. Civil Service Commission). She hoped to be assigned work nearby in North Dakota, but she was instead given a post at the Moqui<sup>19</sup> Agency at Stearns Canyon, Arizona, and she was notified that "This Agency is remote from the Railroad and there are no school facilities for your sons," despite the fact that there was a school on the reservation for the Hopis, which was not considered suitable for her children (U.S. Dept. of the Interior, "Education – Appointments"). Idella would be paid \$660 a year (which was equivalent to about \$18,000 in 2021 purchasing power), but she was responsible



Figure 2: Idella Hahn c. 1913. Image description: a headshot of Idella Hahn, who would have been in her mid-40s. She has short curly hair and is dressed in a white blouse with a dark bow at the throat. She is looking directly into the camera with a serious expression.

<sup>19</sup> The word Moqui was originally used by the Spanish to denote the Hopi people, but the word came to be pronounced in a way that means "dead" in the Hopi language, and is therefore seen as derogatory by the Hopi, although it was used by the U.S. Department of the Interior to refer to the Hopi until 1930.

for paying her own way to the reservation, which would include travel by train, car, and then buckboard or stagecoach (U.S. Dept. of the Interior, "Education – Employees").

my family would tell her story, they would bring out an old photo album, newspaper clippings, and other documents that gave evidence and context to Idella's life. They had a box of Indian artifacts that Idella had collected, either given to her as gifts (as I was told) or purchased, including moccasins, a braided rug, and woven baskets. Idella donated many pieces to the Cleveland Museum of Natural History after it was founded in 1920. My family sold some of the pieces when I was a child, but some are still in boxes in my possession or stored by other family members. I considered donating the items that I had to the natural history museum, some arrowheads and a rug, but then learned about the Hopi reclamation efforts, especially of kachina dolls, from museums around the country and world when I visited the Hopi reservation. The repatriation of such artifacts is important to the Hopi people, and so returning them to the ancestors of the people who made them is a step toward restoration of Indigenous sovereignty.

My family also had essays that Idella had written about the Hopi snake dance, the naming of a Hopi baby, and her "Plea for the Indian" that sought the right for the Hopi to continue their dances and cultural practices (Hahn, "Description," "The Naming," and "Plea"). My family characterized her work by claiming that "she was a teacher" on the reservation, or that "she taught at a school" there. They also said that she wrote one of the first Hopi-English dictionaries, and that it was kept in the Library of Congress or records of the Bureau of the Interior<sup>20</sup>. These artifacts and stories made me curious about Idella's life and work.

When I decided to write a biography of Idella Hahn in 2015 and started researching the field matrons and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, I found a very different view of their work in the history books. Field matrons were employed by the U.S. government to conduct the cultural assimilation of Native American women (Emmerich "Right in the Midst," "Marguerite Laflesche Diddock"; Simonsen "Object Lessons," "Making Home Work"). They were supposed to help improve sanitary conditions and aid in medical matters, but most were not nurses. They taught Native American women how to cook, clean, sew, and act like American farm women (Bryson & Hansen). Field matrons were not formally trained, but instead brought their own understanding of their role to the job and received guidance from "circulars" and letters sent from their supervisors. The program, although ostensibly acting as a form of social work to aid Indigenous peoples, resulted in the further destruction of native culture (after their land was taken and they were moved onto reservations) and created a rift between native women and their communities. For almost 50 years, mostly white field matrons were sent to Indian reservations around the country in the hopes that by assimilating native women in the home through normative domestic practices, native children and the community would also be more easily assimilated.

Field matrons were the embodiment of the program created by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to help solve the Indian "problem," having direct contact with the targeted population, and so their writings provide a window into the moral struggle that they must have felt when they became the instrument of forced assimilation. They joined the service with a Christian missionary spirit to help and "civilize" tribal women, but when they realized the results of their work, and saw the hardships

---

<sup>20</sup> I have been unable to find a copy of, or official reference to, this dictionary. It is possible that it was redacted from government records because of the use of the Navajo language (which is similar in etymology to Hopi) as a secret code during World War II.

and reality of life on the reservation for Native women, many quickly left their job (Hancock, Trennert, Wunder). This was considered “women’s work,” with field matrons primarily focused on Native women’s housekeeping, childbirth, and health care practices. Not all the work that field matrons did was bad for Indigenous people – they helped take care of sick family members, assisted in childbirth, and showed Native women ways that their handiwork could improve their homes and provide extra income for their families. Some features of this education would have been useful to women who wanted to assimilate to dominant white settler ways of life. However, the forced nature of this education on Indigenous women was unethical. How field matrons’ writings changed over time, during their tenure on the reservation, shows an evolving understanding of their purpose and the role set out by the government. The changing focus of correspondence between field matrons and their supervisors over time also shows the development of the program’s goals and ultimately its discontinuation in favor of providing general nursing assistance.

### Representing Indigenous versus Assimilating Rhetoric

U.S. government policy, as enacted by field matrons, forced Native women against their will to accept the dominant culture and ways of acting. However, as Scott Lyons asks, “What do Indians want from writing?” He says, *rhetorical sovereignty*: “the inherent right and ability of peoples to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit, to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse (449–450). He shows this by relating the history of Native American use of rhetorical sovereignty to create laws and treaties to govern their lands and claims that one “pillar of sovereignty” is self-government (457). This is important because “Indigenous people … may constitute the world’s most adamant refusal of current expansions of global capitalism and imperialism that plagues many and benefit so few” (462). He calls for prioritization of the study of American Indian rhetoric (and that of other minorities) in curriculum, including their treaties and laws, both historical and contemporary, with an eye toward social change.

Malea Powell asks how Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins and Charles Alexander Eastman, two Native Americans, used language to survive and resist colonialization. The problem, she sees, is the “Western Eurocentric focus of the American academy” (“Rhetorics of Survivance” 398). She calls for an “imaginative liberation of indigenous peoples from the stories being told about them that insist on nobility or ignobility, that cannot afford to see Indian peoples as humans” (399). She answers her question by giving some historical background and “critically engaging with Native texts,” two memoirs written respectively by Hopkins and Eastman: *Life Among the Piutes* (1883) and *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* (1916). Powell states that “I pay close attention to the language of *survivance* (survival + resistance) that they, consciously or unconsciously, use in order to reimagine and, literally, reconfigure “the Indian” (400). She says that “my hope is that we can begin to reimagine ourselves, our pedagogies, our scholarship, our discipline in relation to a long and sordid history of American imperialism (428). Powell seeks a critical reimagining of the field of rhetoric and composition to right the colonial wrongs that have been done to many peoples.

Alanna Frost asks how Dakelh (British Columbia, Canada, Native Americans) literacy practices can inform the field of rhetoric and composition. She studies the lifework of two prominent Dakelh “literacy stewards,” Mary John and Doreen Patrick, includes a brief history, and comments on their practices in their communities. Frost states, “This term, *literacy steward*, can be applied to any individual who demonstrates persistent dedication to the practice or promotion of a literacy considered traditionally important to his or her community (56). She uses the

term *steward* instead of Brandt's *sponsorship* because with sponsorship, a "dependence on funding sources has implications for how and when cultural composing happens" (56) and is limited by the sponsor's agenda and is market-based. She finds that the "Dakelh use of memory-in-place offers an example of alternative ontologies that directly relate to literacy practices with which community members engage during public and private affairs" (61) in a traditional survivance practice. Literacy stewards are interested in the grassroots development of noncommodified resources.

Malea Powell also writes about Susan La Flesche Picotte (Omaha), asking how Native Americans have used language to navigate relationships with European Americans. She answers this question by recounting history and evaluating La Flesche's writing, stating that "La Flesche's way of dealing with European Americans ... is, for me, powerfully persuasive evidence of the alliance and adaptation tactics some Native people engaged in ..." ("Down by the River, 49). Powell takes up the term *primacy*, or status given to "official" (dominant) viewpoints in relation to the devalued "practices of the everyday, and the knowledge of those who function in this context" (Royster & Williams qtd. in Powell 42). She believes that learning about La Flesche's literary tactics can help rhetoric and composition scholars form an alliance against the "prime" narrative of Western Eurocentric ideology.

These scholars study the rhetoric of Indigenous authors to define their methods of resisting colonization by European Americans. They make these Native people's lives visible and reproduce the meanings of their texts to both preserve the history of their culture and add to the field of rhetoric and composition's knowledge base. In the discipline of literacy, rhetoric, and composition and academia in general, minorities have not been well represented, and their cultural practices have not been as valued in research and pedagogy. In the struggle to address Western ethnocentrism, gender bias, and ableism, there have been recent moves to recover minority and non-Western writings from the archives that were not previously noted or recorded (Wu, Takayoshi). In a feminist methodological response to erasure of women's experience from the archives, I am recovering the experiences of these field matrons and bringing them to light. I hope that study of the writings of field matrons will lead to greater understanding of assimilation processes in society so that they can be dismantled and avoided.

## Feminism in the Archives

Feminist methodology is central to this type of research, and there are certain aspects of this broad methodology to unpack (Enoch and Bessette; Bizzell). First, is the epistemological stance of studying women's history. The researcher wants to bring greater historical context and coverage to the history of women; therefore, the choice of the subject of study reflects this focus. This is the systematic recovery of historical information that would otherwise go untold or become lost in the archives. This research also helps tell the story of field matrons' relations with Indigenous peoples and the Hopi tribe, a group that has experienced systematic discrimination from the U.S. government. Therefore, the site of research is also reflective of a focus on a marginalized population living on the fringes of U.S. society.

Taking this feminist methodology also means acknowledging the role that participants play in developing the knowledge that is obtained from the research and including them in the interpretation of the data (Powell and Takayoshi). Anything that is learned should be reciprocally shared with participants and the researcher should do whatever is possible to return the favor of their time and effort on the project. It is also imperative to be self-reflexive—keenly aware of

personal biases and background in the understanding of events from the past and how the researcher's status as influenced by their identity plays into their research design, data collection, and evaluation of results. This can be done by reflectively analyzing interpretations critically for faults in logic because of misconceptions or assumptions (Kirsch and Rohan).

This methodology is also generative, where one piece of information will lead to another important piece of the puzzle, because rebuilding historical information is a constructivist process. The meaning of events from the past can only be understood through the contextualization of social situations from history, but these are also negotiated by present-day ideologies in the representation of knowledge (Cushman, Gaillet, Gold). This methodology takes an interdisciplinary approach, combining rhetoric and composition, archival historical research, sociology, and ethnography.

## The Journey

I started out collecting information about Idella Hahn from my family, and then I looked to external sources. First, I traveled to Bourbon, Indiana, and Chicago in February 2016 to see where Idella grew up and went to school. Then, I traveled to the Hopi reservation that March, where I spent 5 days tracing the steps of my great-great grandmother and visited the places she had likely been, locating scenery in photographs that she had taken and speaking with residents. I wanted to get a sense of what it must have been like for her to move all the way from Indiana to Arizona, leave her children behind, and work with Native people. I had contacted the Hopi Office of Cultural Preservation to ask the tribe for their permission to use my great-great grandmothers' writings and photos about life on the reservation in the biography. I was invited to meet with legal researcher at the Office of Cultural Preservation Terry Morgart, on the reservation in Arizona, where I also met the Hopi archivist and ethnohistorian Stewart B. Koyiyumptewa, who agreed that the project should proceed, and that they would be willing to work with me on it.<sup>11</sup>



Figure 3: "My house Oraibi" (Idella Hahn) c. 1913-14. Image description: a long, one-story ranch style house seen from far away on flat land with a fence and a line of trees in front. On the left is another structure: another house or a barn. In front of the fence are three adult women and a child.

I had many questions about ethics to consider because they did not want my research to impinge on their cultural privacy. The Hopis do not allow photography on their reservation, and they informed me that some of the ceremonies described in Idella's essays were not usually open to outsiders. Some of the ceremonies described in her writings were not appropriate for Hopi children to read about until they were adults. In addition, I could not speak reliably about their culture while in the process of writing the biography of a field matron because I am not a Hopi. So, I asked Mr. Koyiyumptewa to work collaboratively with me on the project on sensitive cultural issues. He asked in return if I would share my photographs with him, and so I gave him a USB drive with digital copies of all the photographs that Idella had taken and the notes that she had written on them about location and date. I also offered to give 10% of any proceeds if the biography was published to the Hopi Education Endowment Fund, which Mr. Koyiyumptewa found to my surprise is still housed in a building that existed near where Idella lived on the reservation.<sup>21</sup>

---

21 Special thanks to Stewart B. Koyiyumptewa for reviewing this article for accuracy and cultural sensitivity before publication.



*Figure 4: "Looking north view from my front gate. The Drs. house. I made an X on the sheep corral up on the side of the hill. It is quite steep" (Idella Hahn) c. 1913-14. Image description: a small one-story house with a large rock formation behind the house in the background.*

In my search for archival records, I was told that most of the historical documents about the Hopi reservation that would have been kept at the local Keams Canyon office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs had been moved to the National Archives at Riverside, California. There were some documents available at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona, so I traveled there to read correspondence between the superintendent dated around 1906–09 (Moqui Indian Agency [Ariz.]). These documents show how schoolteacher Elizabeth Stanley and field matron Miltona Keith acted as intermediaries to try and defuse the “trouble” at Oraibi, when the government forced parents to send children in the village to a boarding school and caused a split between parents who agreed to send their children (called “friendlies”), and those who refused (“unfriendlies” or “hostiles”). There was an armed uprising, during which many Hopis were captured and imprisoned on Alcatraz Island. The event caused a split in the community, with the unfriendlies moving to the nearby town of Hotevilla in the canyon, and the friendlies staying in Oraibi. Stanley says in her report to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Francis E. Leupp, “My school is nearly all over in the Hostile camp. I am thinking of turning hostile myself, and then maybe you will put me with them. It is hard to give them all up but I hope to stay at Oraibi.” History books that describe these events (of which there are not many) do not usually discuss the role that these women played. This split in the community still existed when Idella arrived in Oraibi in 1914.

In 2019, I traveled to the National Archives in Riverside, California, after receiving funding through a Graduate Student Research Award from Kent State University. I digitized the correspondence of several field matrons and documents pertaining to their service in the early 1900s (U.S. National Archives “75.4 General Records,” “75.19.46 Records”). The documents that I collected at the National Archives are the official records of their field reports and the journals and

correspondence with their supervisors. These are called "Circulars" because some of the messages were circulated throughout the reservations toward the management of operations by the Superintendent in charge. They show a progressive professionalization of the field matron job through imposition of a uniform (that each field matron had to sew out of bolts of fabric provided by the BIA), an increasing number of circulars describing how they should do their jobs, and training programs provided at weeklong conferences across the west. On the reservation, there was no running water and "traditional" white settler ways of farming and crops were forced on a land that could not sustain it. This greatly reduced the community's food sovereignty, which put stress on the reservation's ability to feed its people independently, and resulted in further dependence on government assistance through supplemental food rationing (Wilbur, "Food Sovereignty"). There is mention of how the field matrons should keep track of Hopi births and deaths, a pamphlet called "Indian Babies – How to Keep Them Well" (1916), and correspondence about a "baby contest" meant to showcase their work with Hopi mothers that had to be canceled last minute because of an outbreak of disease on the reservation. The difficulties of various epidemics and World War I are evident from circulars that describe food shortages, prescribe quarantine procedures, and institute a ban on the government employment of U.S. citizens with German heritage in 1917.

Although Idella did not have a German background, her husband's family did, so because of her husband's last name that she still carried (Hahn) she was forced to resign her duties in 1918. This was particularly ironic because both of her sons served in World War I, and her job as a cultural assimilator ended because her personal cultural heritage was invalidated by the very government that had hired her. As recorded on her "Efficiency Report" dated April 25, 1918:

Mrs. Hahn apparently is loosing [sic] interest, evidently largely due to the fact that she expects to leave the service on or before the coming July 1st. She has two sons in the America [sic] army, now in France. She is American, regrets the handicap, as she expresses it, her German name, her deceased husband having been a German. (Nat. Archives at St. Louis)

It is now 2021, and I feel that having just lived through the COVID-19 pandemic, I have even greater empathy for my great-grandmother's loss of her husband to tuberculosis, the difficulties dealing with epidemics on the reservations, and how she patented a design for burial clothes in 1940. Before this year, I thought the last fact strange, but now I can see how there would be a need for this, especially living through the last great influenza pandemic and between the two world wars. I hope that over time, I will develop an even greater understanding of what her life was like and what it means.

In contemporary society, there are a multitude of social service programs that intrude on the home life and privacy of citizens, especially for those who receive government assistance. These types of intrusions, especially regarding medical health tracking, have become increasingly common through modern technological advancements for people at all socioeconomic levels of society. While there are no more field matrons sent out to assimilate people in the United States, many Native people who live on reservations still receive government assistance and social services, and experience high poverty rates. Understanding how intrusive government policies become normalized in historical women's discourse will help reveal the process of policy formation and social norm formation so that such invasive and damaging programs can be dismantled and avoided in the future.

## Questions

How did American women who worked as field matrons for the Bureau of Indian Affairs react to the colonizing forces of their job assignments? What did the field matrons experience on the job, and how did they justify their work to themselves and their superiors? How did they reconcile the underlying ideology of ethnocentrism with the purported aims of improving living conditions of Hopis on the reservation?

What are the ethics of working with archives of groups that the researcher is not a part of? What are the ethical practices for working with culturally sensitive materials? How do we approach working with rhetorical materials that may represent oppressive/colonialist views, especially when the author might be perceived as sharing the same cultural/racial identity as the colonizers?

In what ways does the recovery of women's writing from the archives change the cultural memory of historical events and social processes? Aside from increasing the perceived value of women's writings and traditionally feminine topics, does a contemporary change in ideology that increasingly values women's work also call for an adjustment in the historical record? Or does it simply fill in the gaps where knowledge was missing, to reinforce history as it is already understood?

How can family stories and histories, passed down from generation to generation, add to our shared cultural heritage and understanding of history writ large? The genre is usually viewed as subjective and potentially inaccurate, but when women's stories are so often erased from the written record, family lore is an important way to transmit historical information about women. How can accuracy be ensured, or at least attempted, in the changing oral stories of family members?

## Works Cited

- Bizzell, Patricia. "Feminist Methods of Research in the History of Rhetoric: What Difference Do They Make?" *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 4, 2000, pp. 5-17.
- Bryson, Stephanie A., and Karen V. Hansen. "Satisfactory Accommodations: Cleanliness, Culture, and Compromise in the Fort Totten Field Matron Program, 1913-1915." *American Sociological Association*, n.d., pp. 1-21.
- Cushman, Ellen. "Wampum, Sequoyan, and Story: Decolonizing the Digital Archive." *College English*, vol. 76, no. 2, 2013, pp. 115-135.
- Emmerich, Lisa. "Marguerite Laflesche Diddock: Office of Indian Affairs Field Matron." *Great Plains Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1993, pp. 162-71.
- . "Right in the Midst of My Own People": Native American Women and the Field Matron Program." *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1991, pp. 201-16.
- Enoch, Jessica, and Jean Bessette. "Meaningful Engagements: Feminist Historiography and the Digital Humanities." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 64, no. 4, 2013, pp. 634-60.
- Frost, Alanna. "Literacy Stewardship: Dakelh Women Composing Culture." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 63, no. 1, 2011, pp. 54-74.
- Gallet, Lynee Lewis. "(Per)Forming Archival Research Methodologies." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 64, no. 1, 2012, pp. 35-58.
- Gold, David. "Remapping Revisionist Historiography." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 64, no. 1, 2012, pp. 15-34.

- Hahn, Idella. "A Plea for the Indian." c. 1915. Personal collection.
- . "Description of the Hopi Snake Dance as I Saw It in Aug. 1914." c. 1914. Personal collection.
- . "The Naming of the Little Black Eyed, Brown Skinned Hopi Baby." c. 1915. Personal collection.
- Hancock, Christin L. "Healthy Vocations: Field Nursing and the Religious Overtones of Public Health." *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2011, pp. 113-37.
- Kirsch, Gesa E., and Liz Rohan. *Beyond the Archives: Research as Lived Process*. Southern Illinois UP, 2007.
- Lyons, Scott Richard. "Rhetorical Sovereignty: What Do American Indians Want From Writing?" *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 51, no. 3, 2000, pp. 447-68.
- Moqui Indian Agency (Ariz.). Moqui Indian Agency Collection, 1906-1909. Records and correspondence. Heard Museum. Phoenix, Arizona. Accessed March 2016.
- Powell, Katrina, and Pamela Takayoshi. "Accepting Roles Created for Us: The Ethics of Reciprocity." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 5, no. 4.3, 2003, pp. 394-422.
- Powell, Malea. "2012 CCCC Chair's Address: Stories Take Place: A Performance in One Act." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 64, no. 2, 2012, pp. 383-406.
- . "Down by the River, or How Susan La Flesche Picotte Can Teach Us about Alliance as a Practice of Survivance." *College English*, vol. 67, no. 1, 2004, pp. 38-60.
- . "Rhetorics of Survivance: How American Indians Use Writing." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2002, pp. 396-434.
- Royster, Jacqueline Jones, and Jean C. Williams. "History in the Spaces Left: African American Presence and Narratives of Composition Studies." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 50, no. 4, 1999, pp. 563-84.
- Simonsen, Jane E. *Making Home Work: Domesticity and Native American Assimilation in the American West, 1860-1919*. U of North Carolina P, 2006.
- American Studies, vol. 43, no. 1, 2002, pp. 75-99.
- Sutherland, Christine Mason. "Feminist Historiography: Research Methods in Rhetoric." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2002, pp. 109-122.
- Takayoshi, Pamela. "Finding Ada: Socially Situated Historical Methods and Nineteenth Century Feminist Activism." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2019, pp. 133-45.
- Trennert, Robert A. "Victorian Morality and the Supervision of Indian Women Working in Phoenix, 1906-1930." *Journal of Social History*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2001, pp. 113-28.
- U.S. Civil Service Commission. "Report of Ratings – Field Matron Examination." October 13, 1913. Personal collection.
- U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs. "Education – Appointments." January 21, 1914. Personal collection.
- U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs. "Education – Employees." February 2, 1914. Personal collection.
- U.S. National Archives. "75.4 General Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1801-1952." Riverside, California. Accessed August 2019.
- U.S. National Archives. "75.19.46 Records of the Hopi Indian Agency, AZ." Riverside, California. Accessed August 2019.
- Wilbur, Matika, Desi Small-Rodriguez, and Adrienne Keene. "Food Sovereignty: A Growing Movement." *All My Relations*. Podcast. March 2, 2019.  
<https://www.allmyrelationspodcast.com/podcast/episode/32c173eb/food-sovereignty-a-growing-movement>.

Wu, Hui. "Historical Studies of Rhetorical Women Here and There: Methodological Challenges to Dominant Interpretive Frameworks." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2002, pp. 81-97.

Wunder, John R. *At Home on the Range: Essays on the History of Western Social and Domestic Life*. Greenwood Press, 1985.

### Works Consulted

Ballif, Michelle, editor. *Theorizing Histories of Rhetoric*. Southern Illinois UP, 2013.

Enoch, Jessica, and David Gold. "Introduction: Seizing the Methodological Moment: The Digital Humanities and Historiography in Rhetoric and Composition." *College English*, vol. 76, no. 2, 2013, pp. 105-14.

Enos, Richard Leo. "The Archaeology of Women in Rhetoric: Rhetorical Sequencing as a Research Method for Historical Scholarship." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2002, pp. 65-79.

Gonzalez, John M. "The Warp of Whiteness: Domesticity and Empire in Helen Hunt Jackson's 'Ramona.'" *American Literary History*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2004, pp. 437-65.

Grant, David. "Writing Wakan: The Lakota Pipe as Rhetorical Object." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 69, no. 1, 2017, pp. 61-86.

Haas, Angela M. "Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: A Case Study of Decolonial Technical Communication Theory, Methodology, and Pedagogy." *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2012, pp. 277-310.

—. "Wampum as Hypertext: An American Indian Intellectual Tradition of Multimedia Theory." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 19, no. 4, 2007, pp. 77-100.

Hoxie, Frederick E., Peter C. Mancall, and James H. Merrell, *American Nations: Encounters in Indian Country. 1850 to the Present*. Routledge, 2001.

Hum, Sue, and Arabella Lyon. "Recent Advances in Comparative Rhetoric." *The Sage Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*, edited by Andrea Lunsford, Kirt Wilson, and Rosa Eberly, Sage, 2009, pp. 153-65.

Koyiyumptewa, Stewart B., Carolyn O'Bagy Davis, and the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office. *The Hopi People*. Arcadia Publishing, 2009.

L'Eplattenier, Barbara. "An Argument for Archival Research Methods: Thinking Beyond Methodology." *College English*, vol. 72, no. 2, 2009, pp. 67-79.

Mathes, Valerie Sherer. *The Women's National Indian Association*. U of New Mexico P, 2015.

McConnell, Edwina, and Teddy Jones. *A Stone for Every Journey: Traveling the Life of Elinor Gregg*. R.N. Sunstone Press, 2005.

Moulder, M. Amanda. "Cherokee Practice, Missionary Intentions: Literacy Learning Among Early Nineteenth-Century Cherokee Women." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 63, no. 1, 2011, pp. 75-96.

National Archives at St. Louis. National Personnel Records Center. "Efficiency Report." St. Louis, Missouri.

Petersen, Emily January. "Feminist Historiography as Methodology: The Absence of International Perspectives." *Connexions: International Professional Communication Journal*, 2017, pp. 1-38.

Ramsey, Alexis E., Wendy B. Sharer, Barbara L'Eplattenier, and Lisa S. Mastrangelo. *Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition*. Southern Illinois UP, 2009.

- Royster, Jacqueline Jones. "Toward an Analytic Model for Literacy and Sociopolitical Action." *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Action Among African American Women*. U of Pittsburgh P, 2000, pp. 42-73.
- Royster, Jacqueline Jones, Gesa E. Kirsch, and Patricia Bizzell. *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies*. Southern Illinois UP, 2012.
- Senier, Siobhan. *Voices of American Indian Assimilation and Resistance: Helen Hunt Jackson, Sarah Winnemucca, and Victoria Howard*. U of Oklahoma P, 2001.
- Stromberg, Ernest. *American Indian Rhetorics of Survivance: Word Medicine, Word Magic*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006.

# Recoveries and Reconsiderations: Feminist Coworking Spaces as New Sites for Feminist Rhetorical Inquiry

**Author:** Jaclyn Fiscus-Cannaday

Jaclyn Fiscus-Cannaday is an Assistant Professor of English at Florida State University. She earned her PhD from the University of Washington—Seattle, and specializes in feminist, antiracist, and multimodal composition theory and pedagogy. Her work has appeared in *Composition Forum* and *Composition Studies*.

**Abstract:** In this Recoveries and Reconsiderations article, I present feminist coworking spaces as a new area of inquiry for feminist rhetoricians, mapping the topoi of why these feminist coworking spaces exist—community, inclusivity, and empowerment—to provide insight into future feminist research related to each topos. I conclude with lingering questions about the extent to which these spaces might give insight into how to use classrooms and other university settings to create equitable, inclusive work environments for undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty.

**Keywords:** coworking, feminism, pedagogy, recoveries and reconsiderations, rhetoric

## Introduction

I walked into The Riveter, a coworking space “built by women for everyone,” and took a deep, calming breath as natural light poured in from the floor to ceiling windows that made up one wall of the two-story, loft-like space. I felt a sense of relief as I took the tour of their flagship location, realizing that the combination of a supportive community and inclusive-oriented space could be the jumpstart I needed for my dissertation. Though I had finished data collection a month before, a combination of anxiety, depression, and imposter syndrome had paralyzed my writing progress; I needed a change of pace. The Riveter, my tour guide explained, approaches coworking spaces differently, re-imagining the working body as a woman. She pointed out things that are purposefully designed to empower working women: artwork of women by women, conference rooms named after feminists, bathrooms with free menstrual products, showers with cruelty free products and blow-dryers, a yoga studio available for personal use and classes, healthy snacks and sparkling water, a meditation room, etc. As we walked from the main floor—an open concept kitchen, community tables, call rooms, and conference spaces—to the lower level—individual and small group offices, community couches, a kitchenette, meditation room, a yoga room—I realized that this was the first workspace where I felt like I belong, like the space was designed with my needs in mind. In the next three months of dissertation writing, fueled by engaging conversations with members, inspiring self-care classes, and energizing meditation and yoga breaks, I became enamored with a space that

felt so completely made for me—and interested in how I could replicate its strengths when I returned to the university setting. But, now, as I sit writing this article, considering how coworking spaces like The Riveter might be a new site for feminist rhetorical inquiry, I wonder: would I have felt that deep sense of belonging at the Riveter if I was a woman of color, of a different socioeconomic background, or inhabiting a differently abled body?<sup>22</sup>

My experience at The Riveter led me investigate what I have identified as “feminist coworking spaces,” or the growing collection of coworking spaces that are designed to support the needs of working women and their allies. I identify them as feminist, which I interpret as the “movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” (hooks 1). I conducted this preliminary research in the hopes that I might better understand how to change my pedagogy to be more inclusive—and to advocate for the thoughtful design of spaces on our college campus. Though the coworking spaces I identify in this project often invoke feminist rhetorics of women empowerment, equity, and access, the vast majority do not self-identify as explicitly “feminist.” Therefore, I adopt Royster and Kirsch’s methodology of “critical imagination,” looking for feminist activity “in places at which we have not looked seriously or methodically before” (72) by considering how some niche coworking spaces function as incubators for feminist activity.

Rhetoricians have studied coworking spaces (Spinuzzi, “Working Alone Together”; Spinuzzi et al) and workplaces more broadly (Spinuzzi, “All Edge”), along with the rhetorical practices of working women (Applegarth; Enoch; Gold; Jack; Skinner; Wells) and work-related rhetorics more broadly (Hallenbeck and Smith)—but none to date have considered the rhetorics of spaces that I identify as “feminist coworking spaces,” or coworking spaces that name and practice values of bell hooks’ interpretation of feminism in their conceptualization and design<sup>23</sup>. These coworking spaces are important sites of inquiry for rhetorical feminists because they can give more insight into the way feminism can imbue the rhetorics of a workplace while providing models that can inspire the design of our classroom and university workplace settings. Rhetorical feminists have done the important work of acknowledging how “work, workspaces, and work training are extremely important dimensions of the rhetorical life of women” (Hallenbeck and Smith 206), but work-related rhetorics remain an under-represented area of inquiry in feminist rhetorics and coworking spaces have yet to be studied by feminist rhetoricians. In this Recoveries and Reconsiderations article, I present feminist coworking spaces as a new area of inquiry for feminist rhetorics, mapping the topoi of why these feminist coworking spaces exist—community, inclusivity, and empowerment—while giving insight into future research related to each topos. I conclude with lingering questions about the extent to which these

---

22 I am indebted to a reviewer of this article, whose critical questions about my experience at The Riveter as being so comfortable because of the body I inhabit, helped me consider this question. This reviewer not only shifted my thoughts about why I felt comfortable in this space, but also re-shaped the scope of this project, making the discussion of race and class at the forefront of the analysis in this Recoveries and Reconsiderations article.

23 When I use “feminism” in this essay, I draw from bell hooks’ commonly cited interpretation of feminism that I cite earlier: “Simply put, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” (1).

spaces might give insight into how to use classrooms and other university settings to create equitable work environments for undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty.

### Feminist Coworking Spaces: A New Site of Inquiry

Because of the increasing need for office space that caters to remote employees, start-up companies with limited employees, and freelancers, coworking spaces are the newest iteration of office space (Davis, Sundararajan); they are “shared working environments in which independent knowledge workers gather to create knowledge and benefit from it” (Spinuzzi et al. 113), or put more simply, a place where people gather to “work alone together” (Spinuzzi 229). Coworking spaces first emerged in 2005, beginning with a space in San Francisco that Brad Neuberg created as a way for independent workers to gather in a community to work (Jones et al.). The number of coworking spaces has grown rapidly since 2005 with 15,500 coworking sites reported in 2017 (2018 Coworking Forecast) and a projected growth to 40,000 coworking spaces worldwide by 2024 (Global Coworking Growth Study 2020).<sup>24</sup> Though there are no demographic statistics available of who makes up the population of coworkers, the general coworking population is typically thought of as white and male; though, the “overall population of freelance workers is growing...with black workers making up just under four percent of that population of both incorporated and unincorporated self-employed workers” (Dorsey). In 2020, only 14% of U.S.-based coworking spaces were black-owned, but “black women, for example, are currently the fastest-growing group of entrepreneurs in America—so are spaces for them” (Garrett). Though coworking owners are predominantly white, black-owned coworking spaces are a growing group of coworking spaces, and they tend to be located in diverse neighborhoods and designed to support people of color’s needs and interests (Wingard).

As coworking spaces have become more popular, some owners have chosen to design and cater to a specific interest or demographic like women, working parents, the LGBTQ community, or artists—creating an influx of niche coworking spaces that “some feel are the future of coworking because of the other services they offer” (Coworking Resources). In 2011, Herahub emerged as the first international women-only coworking space, and other coworking spaces quickly emerged. One such U.S.-based women-only coworking space, The Wing, has gotten so popular that its members are well-known in their industries, its social media following attracts the likes of modern feminist icons, and its community events attract presidential candidates (Riley); journalists have gone so far to suggest The Wing, and other coworking spaces like it, function like a modern-day version of women’s clubs (North and Lieber). Feminist rhetoricians are uniquely poised to consider historical archives alongside artifacts of these coworking spaces to consider the validity of these claims—and I encourage future researchers to consider that noteworthy project. This Recoveries and Reconsiderations project serves as a mere conversation starter to this topic of feminist coworking spaces: I introduce feminist rhetoricians to coworking spaces as a

---

<sup>24</sup> Though Covid-19 has affected the coworking industry and caused some to close their doors, many have shifted to lower capacity protocols or digital memberships that incorporate online networking and virtual events to remain in business.

site of inquiry while illuminating the topoi for why feminist coworking spaces exist so that we might emulate their successes in our own feminist pedagogies.

To do this research, I began by investigating U.S.-based coworking spaces that limit membership to women allies<sup>25</sup>. Though all of the coworking spaces I have selected for this study name and practice values of feminism, it is important to recognize that not all of these coworking spaces are indeed successful at their goals at embodying intersectional feminism<sup>26</sup>. The Wing, for example, has functioned as a safe haven for many working women worldwide and has diversity and inclusion initiatives—and yet is often critiqued as elitist and overwhelmingly white, with racist behavior reported from members of colors (Reghay). LC Johnson, founder of Zora's House (a black-owned, women-owned feminist coworking space in Central Ohio) whose website proclaims it helps women of color and their allies "to live their best lives and do their best work" argues that coworking spaces can function as what she calls "fourth places" or "a community gathering space that centers the ideas and identities of a particularly marginalized group" (Johnson). In her TED Talk, Johnson discusses how she hopes that Zora's House and spaces like it will help alleviate what she calls the "brain drain," or the mental energy subconsciously used from POC who are the only (or the few) in the room—mental energy that could be used innovating. Therefore this article specifically includes research on the budding group of U.S.-located, black-owned feminist coworking spaces found through researching each of The Plug's List of Black Co-Working Spaces to find the women-owned coworking spaces (Blackbird, Browngirl Project, Camp Workspace, Ethel's Club, and Zora's House), along with sampling twelve U.S.-located feminist leaning coworking spaces found through researching women-owned and women-only coworking spaces (AllBright, Circle+Moon, EvolveHer, HeraHub, Sesh, The Assembly, The Coven, The Hivery, The Perlene, The Riveter, The Treasury, and The Wing). Upon selecting these 17 sites, I modeled my methodology after work-related rhetoricians Sarah Hallenbeck and Michelle Smith, who used topoi to trace reasonings for why people work, and developed new topoi to describe the lines of argument for why these feminist coworking spaces emerged, using the homepages and "about us" sections on the seventeen coworking websites. Preliminary findings suggest that feminist coworking spaces use the following topoi: community, inclusivity, and empowerment. To better situate my findings with the lived experiences of people designing and working within those spaces, I then surveyed leaders and/or members of the different feminist coworking spaces from

---

25 For the sake of brevity, I narrowed my sites to coworking spaces that had U.S. locations (perhaps in addition to other European locations), but future research can and should be done on feminist coworking spaces with attention to a more representative global sampling. Feminist coworking spaces are a global phenomenon.

26 Like the feminist movement in general, the feminism that is practiced in coworking spaces can be flawed. Some of the coworking spaces can attract and work best for white, upper-class, able-bodied, neurotypical women. I chose to study them anyway because they do try to function as intersectional feminists: they value diversity and try to support it by having scholarship options for members; invite speakers of color and/or inhabiting queer and differently abled bodies; and work hard to listen to their members to fix their accidental but still not excusable incidents of racism, classism, homophobia, or discrimination.

the list above. The next section details my findings, while suggesting lingering questions that feminist rhetoricians might take up in future research.

### Tracing Rhetorical Topoi and Considering Implications

Research shows that community in coworking spaces are “driven by the logic of the market” (Spinuzzi et al, 133), and coworking spaces are built as places for solo-workers to gather “with an explicit purpose of social belonging” (Garrett et al. 822). At feminist coworking spaces, community seems to be for more than “social belonging” but for empowerment. Preliminary analysis suggests that what sets feminist coworking spaces apart is how they define community (as inclusive)—and what they hope that community will help folks do (empower women). The Treasury, for example, markets themselves as “a community of women who believe we are successful when we support each other,” which indicates that the community is for networking and sharing expertise so the community as a whole can succeed. The Coven explains, “We hold space for the magic women, non-binary and trans folks create when they come together as their whole-selves” (The Coven). In their mission, we see a commitment to an inclusive community—in the hopes that the collaboration between members will lead to “magic,” or the betterment of themselves (and perhaps others).

Black-owned coworking spaces, in particular, “[center] access and cultural consciousness” (Martinez), and initial findings indicate that feminism imbues black-owned, women-owned coworking spaces. The New Women’s Space announces, “We envision a world where all people—regardless of their color, culture, gender identity, expression or presentation—are affirmed with dignity, respect and are given abundant access to the resources and opportunities they need to prosper and thrive”; and Brown Girl Project’s about us section explains, “For Black women, community is often paramount as we navigate life in predominantly white, and inherently anti-Black, spaces” (Brown Girl Project). For these coworking spaces, community empowers women in the coworking space but also works to uplift the broader neighborhood or the WOC community more generally. Given that feminist coworking spaces have not been studied by rhetoricians yet, I posit more research into these topoi of community, inclusivity, and empowerment at feminist coworking spaces could complicate findings about the purpose of community and collaboration in coworking spaces. Feminist rhetoricians could gain insight into how the rhetorics of feminism shape the rhetorics of community and collaboration in a workplace.

Feminist coworking spaces support community-building by organizing collaborative activities like mentorship events, self-help workshops, or online message boards that are central to the coworking space (Shaver et al.). In interviews, many members suggested that feminist practitioners should employ similar tactics in their classrooms by “fostering inspiration through collaboration” and creating “event-based activities” where students could learn from each other and/or invited community members. This suggestion to make collaboration central to pedagogy makes sense; fifteen of the seventeen feminist

coworking spaces that I researched offer a membership for people who do not need the coworking space, but still want access to the in person and/or virtual community. Though feminist rhetoricians have already suggested “horizontal mentoring” as useful for professionalization in university settings (VanHaitsma and Ceraso), perhaps more research into the success of feminist coworking spaces’ mentoring could give even more insight into how to better institute formalized community mentoring.

The kind of community that feminist coworking sites strive to curate are inclusive, leading me to locate the second *topos* as “inclusivity.” Though feminist coworking spaces intend to be inclusive, I am not trying to suggest that they always succeed in that goal. Feminist rhetoricians can and should do more research into the membership of these feminist coworking spaces when investigating this *topos* further: we should research the demographic diversity of these self-proclaimed inclusive coworking spaces’ membership and compare to other coworking spaces without an inclusivity commitment and/or to companies of similar size. As another leadership interviewee explained, she was a member of a women-only coworking space and “quickly learned that [she] was not their target audience,” so she decided to open her coworking space because “women, especially women of color need to feel empowered, seen, supported, and safe.” Feminist coworking spaces clearly indicate their goal of inclusivity; for example, Ethel’s Club’s promises of “no ‘-ists,’ ‘-isms,’ or ‘-phobias,” and The Riveter’s proclamations that “equity of opportunity should be a reality, not a promise” (*The Riveter*). Though this move towards inclusivity is a purposeful choice, only one of the seventeen spaces listed accessibility specifications for differently abled folks. It seems, instead, like the main focus is on diversity as it pertains to race, culture, sexuality, and gender-expression. As one leadership interviewee explained, “coworking spaces generally, much like academic spaces, have been critiqued as white-washed spaces—and with their kegs and ping pong tables, it was just another boys club.

We’re hoping to do something different; something where folks who are underrepresented and othered in the workforce—like people of color or LGBT or gender non-conforming folks—might find a safe and supportive environment.” Member interviewees valued inclusive workspaces so much that they suggested, we, in our role as teachers, could “[bring] in a diverse set of practitioners to speak to students to foster discussion” and “[create] spaces that are both independent and collaborative [because it] allows for people with different abilities to be comfortable.” Because office space design reflects industry and workplace values (Ashkanasy et al.), we could also consider how the spatial rhetorics of feminist coworking spaces are indeed inclusive of both the needs of their intended membership population and the population that the coworking space actually attracted. For example, efficiency and cost-saving values are present in cubicle set ups while networked-thought is valued in office space with movable furniture (Dennis). A spatial rhetorical analysis of feminist coworking spaces could help illuminate if the projected value of inclusivity was one echoed in the spaces’ design—or if other values seem to be indicated. Though universal design might be outside of our traditional purview as

feminist rhetoricians, it raises the question of whether feminist rhetoricians might lobby for more inclusive classroom and university workspace design.

Feminist coworking spaces often tied their missions to a *topos* can be broadly defined as empowerment. For example, Blackbird claims that “creating positive change in the world requires a balanced approach to life and work,” and Camp Workspace shares a quote from the founder, stating “The mission is simple: to create a world where people understand their influence, and know that it can be used to sustain their lifestyle and help them accomplish their wildest dreams.” This attention to the relationship between self-actualization and community activism might be an interesting site of inquiry for those interested in shifting topoi of work-related rhetorics. Further research into this *topos* might help us understand the growing trends of healthy food in workplaces, gym-membership discounts, and onsite child care—and the rhetorics that surround them. Perhaps popularized rhetorics of self-care have become intertwined with work-related rhetorics. It certainly seems to be the case in these coworking spaces, who claim to support both “working and personal lives” (Sesh) with one feminist coworking space going so far as calling itself a “wellness club” (The Assembly) rather than a coworking space. Perhaps feminist rhetoricians could consider the extent to which these spaces attention on self-care and community-activism does indeed contribute to the empowerment of the members and the surrounding community.

Though these topoi are new contributions to rhetorical feminist scholarship, the seventeen coworking spaces that I investigated for these preliminary findings are not comprehensive of the multitude of feminist coworking spaces that exist, and therefore the topoi presented and research suggestions are merely preliminary findings presented to inspire conversation and future research. I am hopeful feminist rhetoricians will take up the multiple projects I have suggested: archival projects considering the connection between women’s clubs and feminist coworking spaces; case studies that consider the extent to which feminist coworking spaces are the inclusive, empowering workplaces they claim to be; rhetorical analysis of how feminist coworking space’s community events shift national and local conversations about women’s issues, mental health, and politics in work places. Regardless of what kinds of research projects ensue, I project that future research into feminist coworking spaces might have important ramifications for feminist pedagogy, much like how research in makerspaces has influenced composition pedagogy (Kaupf), along with implications for workplace design in our university settings. Research studies on feminist coworking spaces has the potential to be a robust area of scholarship, and I look forward to the ways that research about feminist coworking spaces will contribute to feminist rhetorical scholarship, and in turn our pedagogies and workspaces.

## Works Cited

- 2018 Coworking Forecast. Retrieved October 10, 2018,  
from <https://www.dropbox.com/s/rjbmdo4wp4aecx/2018CompleteCoworkingForecast.pdf?dl.0.2018>.
- AllBright. [allbrightcollective.com/](http://allbrightcollective.com/). Accessed 31 Aug. 2019.
- Applegarth, Risa. *Rhetoric in American Anthropology*. U of Pittsburgh P, 2014.
- Ashkanasy, Neal M., et al. "Understanding the Physical Environment of Work and Employee Behavior: An Affective Events Perspective." *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, vol. 35, no. 8, 2014, pp. 1169–84.
- Blackbird. <https://www.blackbird.house/>. Accessed 2 Jan. 2021.
- Brown Girl Project. <https://www.brown-girl-project.com/>. Accessed 2 March 2021.
- Camp Workspace. <http://www.campworkspace.com/>. Accessed 20 Feb. 2021.
- Circle+Moon. [circleandmoon.com/](http://circleandmoon.com/). Accessed 31 Aug. 2019.
- Davis, Gerald F. *The Vanishing American Corporation: Navigating the Hazards of a New Economy*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2016.
- Dennis Craven, Valerie. "Open Office Evolution." *Buildings*, vol. 113, no. 9, Oct. 2019, pp. 21-23
- Dorsey, Sherrell. "An (Almost) Comprehensive List of Black-Owned Co-Working Spaces." 24  
Feb. 2020. <https://medium.com/theplug/an-almost-comprehensive-list-of-black-owned-co-working-spaces-70c5d086f9ec>. Accessed 3 March 2020.
- . "The Rise of Black-Owned Co-Working Spaces." Vice. 3 August 2018.  
<https://www.vice.com/en/article/mb4pan/these-entrepreneurs-are-opening-black-coworking-spaces>. Accessed 1 April 2021.
- Enoch, Jessica. "A Woman's Place Is in the School: Rhetorics of Gendered Space in Nineteenth-Century America." *College English*, vol. 70, no. 3, 2008, pp. 275-95.
- Ethel's Club. <https://www.ethelsclub.com/>. Accessed 2 March 2021.
- EvolveHer. [evolveher.community/en](http://evolveher.community/en). Accessed 31 Aug. 2019.
- Garrett, Brianne. "The New Wave Of Co-Working Is Black-Owned, Inclusive And Serving The Underserved." Forbes. 2 February 2020. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/briannegarrett/2020/02/02/the-new-wave-of-coworking-isblack-owned-inclusive-and-serving-the-underserved/?sh=1f41f57d1400>. Accessed 1 March 2020.
- Garrett, Lyndon E., Gretchen M. Spreitzer, and Peter A Bacevice. "Co-constructing a Sense of Community at Work: The Emergence of Community in Coworking Spaces." *Organization Studies*, vol. 38, 2017, pp. 821–42.
- "Global Coworking Growth Study 2020." *Coworking Resources*, July 2020, [coworkingresources.org/blog/key-figures-coworking-growth](https://coworkingresources.org/blog/key-figures-coworking-growth). Accessed 1 Feb. 2020.
- Gold, David. *Rhetoric at the Margins: Revising the History of Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1873-1947*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008. Print.
- Hallenbeck, Sarah, and Michelle Smith. "Mapping Topoi in the Rhetorical Gendering of Work." *Peitho* vol. 17, no. 2, 2015, pp. 200-25.
- Herahub. [herahub.com/](http://herahub.com/). Accessed 31 Aug. 2019.
- hooks, bell. *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Pluto Press, 2000.

- Jack, Jordan. *Science on the Homefront: American Women Scientists in World War II*. U of Illinois P, 2009.
- Johnson, LC. "Women of Color Could Save the World: Here's How We Help Them Do It." TedxColumbus. November 2018.  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/lc\\_johnson\\_women\\_of\\_color\\_could\\_save\\_the\\_world\\_here\\_s\\_how\\_we\\_help\\_them\\_do\\_it](https://www.ted.com/talks/lc_johnson_women_of_color_could_save_the_world_here_s_how_we_help_them_do_it). Accessed 20 Aug. 2021.
- Jones, Drew, et al. *I'm Outta Here! How Coworking is Making the Office Obsolete*. Not an MBA Press, 2009.
- Make Lemonade. makelemonade.ca/. Accessed 31 Aug. 2019.
- Martinez, Janel. "How People of Color are Redefining Coworking for Their Communities." Rewire. 8 Jan. 2020. <https://www.rewire.org/people-of-color-coworking/>. Accessed 25 March 2020.
- "Niche Coworking Spaces." Coworking Resources, March 2019, coworkingresources.org/blog/key-figures-coworking-growth. Accessed 31 Aug. 2019.
- North, Anna, and Chavie Lieber. "The Big, Controversial Business of The Wing, Explained." Vox, Feb. 2019. vox.com/2019/2/7/18207116/the-wing-soho-dc-coworking-feminism-gelman. Accessed 31 Aug. 2019.
- Riley, Griffin. "Fellowship of the Wing." *Bloomberg Businessweek*, Dec. 24, 2018, pp. 69-71.
- Reghay, Nayomi. "The Wing's inclusive, exclusive approach to diversity." *Daily Dot*. 27 Jan. 2021.  
<https://www.dailydot.com/irl/the-wing-diversity/>. Accessed 2 Feb. 2021.
- Royster, Jacqueline Jones, and Gesa Kirsch. *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy*. Southern Illinois UP, 2012.
- Sesh. girlshes.com/. Accessed 31 Aug. 2019.
- Shaver, Lisa, et al. "Making Feminist Rhetorical History Five Pages at a Time: A CrossInstitutional Writing Group for Mid-Career Women in the Academy." *Peitho*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2019.
- Skinner, Carolyn. *Women Physicians and Professional Ethos in Nineteenth-Century America*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014. Print.
- Spinuzzi, Clay. *All Edge: Inside the New Workplace Networks*. U of Chicago P, 2015.
- . "Working Alone Together: Coworking as Emergent Collaborative Activity." *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, vol. 26, no. 4, 2012, pp. 399-441.
- Spinuzzi, Clay, et al. "'Coworking Is About Community': But What Is 'Community' in Coworking?" *Journal of Business & Technical Communication*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2019, pp. 112-40.
- Sundararajan, Arun. *The Sharing Economy: The End of Employment and the Rise of Crowd-Based Capitalism*. The MIT Press, 2016.
- The Assembly. theassembly.com/. Accessed 31 Aug. 2019.
- The Coven. thecovens.com/. Accessed 31 Aug. 2019.
- The Hivery. thehivery.com/. Accessed 31 Aug. 2019.
- The Perlene. theperlene.com/. Accessed 31 Aug. 2019.
- The Riveter. theriveter.co/. Accessed 31 Aug. 2019.
- The Treasury. thetreasury.work/. Accessed 31 Aug. 2019.
- The Wing. the-wing.com/Accessed 31 Aug. 2019.

- VanHaitsma, Pamela, and Steph Ceraso. "Making It in the Academy through Horizontal Mentoring." *Peitho*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2017, pp. 210-33
- Wells, Susan. *Out of the Dead House: Nineteenth Century Women Physicians and the Writing of Medicine*. U of Wisconsin P, 2001.
- Wingard, Monique. "A New Space for Black Women to Thrive is Coming to Chicago." *Chicago Tribune*. 1 Aug. 2019. <https://chicagodefender.com/a-new-space-for-black-women-to-thrive-is-coming-to-chicago/>. Accessed 31 Aug. 2019.
- Zora's House. <https://zorashouse.com/>. Accessed 20 Dec. 2020.

# Overlooked Sources of Feminist Material in Unlikely Archival Collections: Recoveries and Reconsiderations of Writer Elizabeth Stuart Phelps' (1844-1911) Letters to 19th Century Physician S. Weir Mitchell (1829-1914)

**Authors:** Susan Ghiaciuc, Cathryn Molloy, & Vanessa Rouillon

Susan Ghiaciuc is an Associate Professor in James Madison University's School of Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication. Her scholarly work has appeared in *Disability Studies Quarterly*, *MLA Profession*, *Writing on the Edge*, *Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research*. She is co-author of "I am different/So are you: Creating Safe Spaces for Disability Disclosure (A Conversation)" in *Negotiating Disability: Disclosure and Higher Education*, University of Michigan Press, and she serves as co-director of the Disability Studies Minor at JMU.

Cathryn Molloy is Associate Professor and director of undergraduate studies in James Madison University's School of Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication. Her work has appeared in *To Improve the Academy*, *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, *Qualitative Inquiry*, *College English*, *Technical Communication Quarterly*, and *Rhetoric Review*. She is the author of *Rhetorical Ethos in Health and Medicine: Patient Credibility, Stigma, and Misdiagnosis* and coeditor of the edited volumes *Women's Health Advocacy: Rhetorical Ingenuity for the 21st Century*, and *Strategic Interventions in Mental Health Rhetoric*.

Dr. Vanessa Rouillon is an independent scholar who specializes in African American rhetorics and activism during the first half of the twentieth century. Her research is foremost archival, non-traditional, community-engaged, and biographical. Her work has appeared in *Challenge*, *Language Assessment Quarterly*, *The Public i*, and *the Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics*. She is coauthor of *Transnational Literate Lives*. She is also the author of the documentary Albert R. Lee: "A Man of Substance, One of Illinois' Finest Traditions" (November 2018), funded by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, which honored the first though unrecognized dean of African American students. She is currently working on her biography of Mr. Lee.

Highly successful 19th century physician S. Weir Mitchell (1829-1914) is known in feminist circles for his development of the controversial rest cure for hysteria, which evolved from his work with malingered soldiers during the Civil War to whom he would assign "the most disagreeable jobs, so that after a few weeks in the latrines they were eager to return to the front" (Showalter 298). Mitchell recognized that women were "house caged," but his rest cure still "prescribed obedience and sent them home<sup>27</sup>" (Cervetti 91). Mitchell believed that a woman would happily return to the mundane circumstances of her

---

27 As Mitchell put it in his 1877 volume *Fat and Blood*, "When they are bidden to stay in bed a month, and neither to read, write, nor sew, and have one nurse—who is not a relative—then rest becomes for some women a rather bitter medicine, and they are glad enough to accept the order to rise and go about when the doctor issues a mandate which has become pleasantly welcome and eagerly looked for" (41).

day-to-day life after being forced to spend weeks in utter boredom. Mitchell, a leading specialist on injuries of the nerves, worked with Civil War amputees at Turner's Lane hospital in Philadelphia and maintained a clinical practice along with his son John in the same city. He also was well-known for his work with women with mysterious mental health conditions (Schuster).

American writer and novelist Charlotte Perkins Gilman was, arguably, the most famous patient to undergo the rest cure<sup>28</sup>—a treatment she found much more harmful than helpful. In a letter which Gilman poignantly and hopefully wrote to Mitchell to seek out his help, she wrote, “I understand you are the first authority on nervous diseases. Are you on brain troubles too? There is something the matter with my head. No one here knows or believes or cares. Of course, they can't care for what they don't believe. But you will know” (Knight 274). Gilman sensed that she was suffering from something that was “brain”-based. She was quite right; if we were to venture a contemporary guess: Gilman had postpartum depression. Unsurprisingly, the rest cure made her feel much worse.

Feminist researchers have found women’s contributions in archival collections that are largely dedicated to preserving the life and work of male family members and friends. Mitchell’s archives, though, would not be an obvious source of feminist material since he is a known misogynist. In this essay, we ask readers to reconsider Mitchell’s archives via letters a strong feminist woman—American writer and intellectual Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (1844-1911)—wrote to him. These letters show how a woman responded to and interacted with Mitchell’s notoriously misogynistic notions of women’s worth. In so doing, we seek to offer a description and contextualization of specific material in an archival collection that we believe could be of potential interest to *Peitho* readers.

Using Phelps’s letters as a case study, we argue that notoriously misogynistic historical figures’ archival collections might house important material for feminist researchers and that these texts should be recovered and reconsidered for their value in potentially identifying previously unknown or unacknowledged roots of contemporary feminist theories and terminologies. That is, feminist researchers might overlook the papers of figures such as Mitchell as potential sites of feminist work due to their notorious misogyny, yet such collections may house remnants of little-known resistance to that misogyny. Mitchell often turned to women for emotional support (Cervetti 225), especially to published writers who could offer feedback on his own writing endeavors; among them was American author and intellectual Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (1844-1911). Phelps leaves compelling nine letters *only* behind in Mitchell’s archives (1884-1897), yet we focus here on

---

28 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, of course, was arguably the most famous patient to undergo the rest cure—a treatment she found much more harmful than helpful. In a letter Gilman poignantly and hopefully wrote to Mitchell to seek out his help, she wrote, “I understand you are the first authority on nervous diseases. Are you on brain troubles too? There is something the matter with my head. No one here knows or believes or cares. Of course they can't care for what they don't believe. But you will know” (Knight 274). Gilman sensed that she was suffering from something that was “brain”—based. She was quite right, if we were to venture a contemporary guess: Gilman had postpartum depression. Unsurprisingly, the rest cure made her feel much worse.

Phelps as her letters present a clear and assertive feminist engagement challenging Mitchell's problematic views on women; these extant letters are ultimately a reflection of a 25-year friendship of equals. Phelps' letters to Mitchell, along with letters from other women (such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman or Anne K. Williams Mitchell, his daughter-in-law), are part of the archival material housed in the Mitchell Papers, at the Historical Medical Library of The College of Physicians of Philadelphia. Below, we offer samplings from Phelps' impressive feminist texts to show how even archival collections that would seem to be mere celebrations of dominant misogynistic figures could house women's relevant articulations of independent (and early) feminist stances. We hope readers are encouraged to seek out similar texts in other unlikely collections.

### **Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (1844-1911): The "Professional Invalid"**

Born in Boston in 1844 to a religious father and a literary author mother, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps was a prolific fiction writer whose work explores a transitional period in women's lives—a departure from Victorian models, and an opening of professional spaces for women during the second half of the 19th century (Stansell; Tuttle). When she began to write back-and-forth with Mitchell, the forty year-old author was already a self-determined "professional invalid" with an established literary career. Activist, intellectual, frail, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps became a keen observer of her social experiences. Importantly, her health informed her fictional and personal writings as well as her friendships. While she regarded Mitchell on occasion as an acquaintance only, Phelps' friendship with Mitchell as it comes across in her letters to him reveal her efforts to assert her worth and the validity of her embodied knowledges of health via the relationship.

While Phelps' letters persistently portray the author as sickly, she draws from these and other embodied experiences—frail health and bouts of insomnia included—to inform her foremost intellectual self. Her exchanges with Mitchell are sustained peer engagements in which she makes sense of her own condition (or rather surrenders to it and counters his claims to have treatments that could help her) and articulates the difficulties of a professional career in writing for women. She does so while offering Mitchell praise and criticism on his fictional characters and responding to his comments on her work with either gratitude or vigorous distance. Her willingness to engage in a professional literary friendship through letters with this man is an exercise in the art of "personal comprehension between a man and a woman" (Letters to S. Weir Mitchell, Thanksgiving Day, 1884)—a rare occurrence and a modeling of gender equality on her part, and a much-needed intellectual practice between the genders, so she thought. Their professional friendship—her literary feedback, his medical interest in her health—continued for 25 years, until her death in 1911.

In her letters to Mitchell, Phelps pushed back against his misogynistic views of women in three ways: through articulations of her embodied experiences of constant weakness, exhaustion, and insomnia, which only she could comprehend; via feedback

on Mitchell's fiction; and through the creation of an ideal care provider in the form of the protagonist and title character in her novel *Dr. Zay*. Far from merely a fictional character, though, Dr. Zay was an aspirational figure she hoped to make manifest in a specific way—a truth that comes through in her references to her attendant habit of giving financial support to women in medical schools. Indeed, Phelps' references to her patronage of young, aspiring female doctors alongside her polite refusals to succumb to Mitchell's brand of treatment—allopathic—stake out strong feminist positions worthy of recovery and reconsideration.

### Phelps' Embodied Experiences

Sometimes deferent to her physician friend, Phelps nonetheless manages to articulate a complex identity in her letters to Mitchell—at once health broken, yet determined and confident in the validity of her observations, both medical and literary. One kind of awareness—her health—is not severed from her professional awareness—her writing and reviewer sage. In one letter, she claims to have an appreciation of Mitchell's medical training, yet she is clear that she also has a great deal of medical knowledge "from [her] long, varied, and more or less intimate acquaintance with [his] profession" (Letters to S. Weir Mitchell, January 25, 1884). Repeatedly, too, she asserts her authority as a woman who, though enduring a "pretty serious" condition (Letters to S. Weir Mitchell, November 18, 1884), acts upon her patient status rather than solely being acted upon. While she acknowledges, for instance, that drugs have indeed been prescribed, she is clear that she knows they won't help her. In one letter, for example, she makes it clear that while a prescription medication may help her debilitating insomnia, she nonetheless won't take them. As she puts it to Mitchell, "Thank you for your kind wish to do something for me. The main trouble with that is that I am a devout homeopathist ... I do not think it right (for me) to take drugs ... I have been torn to shreds by insomnia." (Letters to S. Weir Mitchell, February 3, 1884).

Ahead of her time, Phelps was well aware that her condition was likely chronic and that she would not see a cure in her lifetime. Her letters make it clear that Mitchell continually offers to treat her and believes he can help her, yet she consistently shows her confidence in her own self-knowledge when she makes it clear that she will not be cured via his methods and that she does not fully trust his type of medical authority. Phelps tells Mitchell: "I thank you for your kind offer of medical help. It is good in you, and I have meant to say so before now (Letters to S. Weir Mitchell, February 16, 1884). She is clear, then, that she will not be availing herself of his medical help and that the nature of the correspondence is not that of a doctor-patient, but of literary and intellectual peers.

### Feedback on Mitchell's Fiction

In her letter dated February 27, 1884, it is clear that the exchanges back-and-forth began not with an understanding of her need for his medical help, but with plans to exchange manuscripts for literary feedback. In her notes to Mitchell on how the relationships between men and women should be represented in fiction, she is clear in her

desire to offer him feedback on his writing and to do so from her vantage point as a woman. As she notes, "The novelist, especially, needs ample room for his hero and heroine to develop that most difficult of arts—personal comprehension between a man and a woman. I think it very rare—very rare; and the lack of it is the saddest thing in the world; especially in women's worlds" (Letters to S. Weir Mitchell, Thanksgiving Day, 1884).

Ever the intellect, Phelps read not only Mitchell's fiction, but also his work published in medical journals. Phelps offers comments about this man's medical stories (per *his* request), yet is careful to bolster the validity of her observations on Mitchell's fictional writing—especially his characterization of women—by referring to her embodied experiences in health and medical settings: "I greatly enjoy the vividness of your characterizations and balance of constructions, and the result of the special training brought to bear upon your material. This last I can perhaps peculiarly appreciate, from a long, varied, and more or less intimate acquaintance with your profession" (Letters to S. Weir Mitchell, January 25, 1884). As she also notes, "Having been a 'professional invalid' in 'good and regular standing' for almost half my life, I have a realizing sense of the 'points' in a well-drawn Doctor, and am rather alive both to the weaknesses and the nobility of the race" (Letters to S. Weir Mitchell, January 25, 1884).

Phelps also is careful to buffer her observations with deference to Mitchell's status as a doctor, yet she still makes space to assert the criticisms in her observations; as she wrote: "The saddest thing about the profession is that it inculcates a kind of self-defence, that may be almost brutal in the tenderest man; to save himself from being spent and wrecked by sympathy, or its correlative thoughtfulness, he may force himself into a coat-of-male that bruises—if not kills—a patient. But what a lecture on the profession. I should beg your pardon" (Letters to S. Weir Mitchell, November 18, 1884).

In response to a critical review of his work, Mitchell must have said that he should not write any more fictional accounts of doctors, to which Phelps replied with encouragement to simply vary his representations: "So. Do not say you will write no more doctors. Write the Other kind of a Doctor. Analyze a nobler one—Say some things no one but a Doctor can say" (Letters to S. Weir Mitchell, November 18, 1884). In all of her correspondence related to his literary works, Phelps is clear that she considers herself his peer in writing and that while she does respect his authority as a medical doctor, she suggests that he should, likewise, respect her authority as longtime consumer of medical care.

### The Creation of Dr. Zay

As is clear above, resistance, awareness, and agency took the form of her treatment choices—she trusted homeopathy, a practice which allowed her to merge her life with her writing. Phelps also displayed these strong traits in her fiction writing, perhaps most notably in her most known novel. Phelps' novel *Doctor Zay* was published in 1882 as was

well-received, and she used references to her strong female character to further assert her value in her letters to Mitchell. "Touching the doctors of fiction," as she put it, Phelps introduces Mitchell to her fictional character Doctor Zay, a physician, a woman, a homeopathist. Rhetorically, using knowledge of her condition, and her acquaintance with male and female doctors, both allopathic and homeopathic—she crafts a woman doctor, doctor Zay, which in the eyes of an ill, male, fictional patient appears to have strong, yet feminine hands. The patient perceives "... a woman of medium height, with a well-shaped head. ... [and] ... dress and carriage of a lady" (Phelps, *Doctor Zay*, p. 44). Confused, ill, posing no further resistance, the patient yields, "I am in a woman's hands!" (Phelps, *Doctor Zay*, p. 44).

Mitchell's reception of Doctor Zay must have been carping. Phelps was equally blunt. In a letter to Mitchell dated November 18, 1884, not only does she disapprove of his comment, but she points to his male ways of knowing. In a related correspondence, she observes:

As to *Doctor Zay*... Were I an old friend, instead of a very new one—or, I ought rather to say, new acquaintance—I should take you to task a little for what you say of women physicians. It doesn't seem to me quite fair; or else you really don't know! ... and most men Doctors do not. I know women physicians thoroughly. For some years my most intimate friend was one of them. I know the career from matriculation to success or failure. I have directly, or indirectly, been the means of putting *four* [our emphasis] young women into the profession; who have all honored it, so far. (Letters to S. Weir Mitchell, November 18, 1884)

Phelps defends women physicians from experience, as patient, observer, and, as she makes clear in this letter, a financial supporter.

She argues rigorously for Mitchell to accept the authenticity of the representation in the form of Dr. Zay: "Although a woman and a homeopathist, you will be liberal enough to grant her professional courtesy, I think" (Letters to S. Weir Mitchell, February 3, 1884). Her insistence on the validity of Dr. Zay as a representation of a medical professional alongside her support of women wishing to become medical doctors impart her strong feminist views in letters written to a man who'd not, by all accounts, held women in very high esteem in professional spaces, and in particular, in medical professions.

## Conclusion

Overall, we contend Elizabeth Stuart Phelps—the "professional invalid," the constant patient—embodies ways of pushing back against medical authority and mainstream medicine and uses writing—novels and letters—to advocate for alternative perspectives. Phelps expressed her dissatisfaction with public medical discourse and practice through her critique of Mitchell's literary works. Beyond simply *resisting* traditional medical advice, Phelps *reconfigures* it to suit her needs in her creation of Dr. Zay and attendant financial support of women in medical schools. Phelps' letters are, thus, examples of early feminist

work in agency, in professional and personal authority stemming from marginalized persons' knowledge of their own embodied experiences and intellect. Phelps's writing is likewise invitational, visionary, stubborn. She breaks through Victorian "morals" and writes her voice into science. Rather than staying mute, Phelps engaged in an epistolary professional friendship with Mitchell to articulate an alternative experience. In Phelps, readers will find a strong writer who challenges a then-prominent medical doctor on medical and literary grounds. The existence of these letters point to important recovery work for contemporary archival feminism—to identify notorious patriarchs and misogynists and to elevate the voices of the women in their lives who dared to challenge and resist their ideologies. After all, it is misogyny and patriarchy we have to blame for the fact that Mitchell is most remembered, quoted, celebrated, and reviled from the 19th century letter writers represented in his archives. We, thus, ask *Peitho* readers:

- What other feminist texts might be hidden in notoriously misogynistic male archival collections, and how can these texts be identified and recovered?
- How might epistolary exchanges and other ephemeral sources of feminist activism inform contemporary practices of feminist scholarship?
- How might archival materials like these help scholars to recover a fuller feminist timeline such that it could inform a more robust set of contemporary feminist archival methodologies?

### Works Cited

- Cervetti, Nancy. *S. Weir Mitchell, 1829–1914: Philadelphia’s Literary Physician*. State Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012. Print.
- Knight, Denise D. "All the Facts of the Case": Gilman's Lost Letter to Dr. S. Weir Mitchell." *American Literary Realism* 37.3 (2005): 259-77. Print.
- Mitchell, Silas Weir. *Fat and Blood*. Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott, 1893. Print.
- Phelps, Elizabeth Stuart. *Doctor Zay: Afterwards by Michael Sartisky*. New York: The Feminist Press at CUNY, 1993. Print.
- Phelps, Elizabeth Stuart. Letters to S. Weir Mitchell, 1884, 1887, 1897. Series 4.3, Box 9, Folder 278. *Silas Weir Mitchell Papers MSS 2/0241-03*. Historical Medical Library of The College of Physicians of Philadelphia.
- Showalter, Elaine. *Hysteria Beyond Freud*. Oakland: University of California Press, 1993. Print.
- Schuster, David. "Personalizing Illness and Modernity: S. Weir Mitchell, Literary Women, and Neurasthenia, 1870-1914." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 79.4 (2005): 695-722. Print.
- Stansell, Christine. "Elizabeth Stuart Phelps: A Study in Female Rebellion." *The Massachusetts Review* 13.5 (1972): 239-256. Print.
- Tuttle, Jennifer. "Letters from Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (Ward) to S. Weir Mitchell, M.D., 1884-1897." *Legacy* 17.1 (2000): 83-94. Print.



## Book Reviews

### Review of Retellings: Opportunities for Feminist Research in Rhetoric and Composition Studies

**Author:** Nanette Rasband Hilton

Nanette Rasband Hilton holds a degree in Writing from Brigham Young University and a Masters in Language and Composition from University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where she is a PhD Candidate in Literature. Her research interests are at the intersections of nineteenth century American literature, rhetorics, and composition pedagogy. Her work has appeared in journals and essay collections including *Studies in American Naturalism* (Summer 2019), *Popular Culture Review* (Winter 2019), and *Teaching American Literature: A Journal of Theory and Practice* (Spring/Summer 2018). Her essay "Feminist Sisters: Margaret Fuller and Ida B. Wells and their Invitational Rhetoric," is in *Feminism: Critical Insights*, edited by Robert C. Evans. Salem/Grey House, 2020.

**Retellings: Opportunities for Feminist Research in Rhetoric and Composition Studies.** Edited by Jessica Enoch and Jordynn Jack. Parlor Press, 2019. 332 pages. \$34 paperback, \$65 hardcover, \$19.99 Adobe eBook.

Considering the title and essays in *Retellings: Opportunities for Feminist Research in Rhetoric and Composition Studies*, evokes for me, a scholar of nineteenth century American rhetoric, images of Margaret Fuller hosting her Boston gatherings. These famous meetings were held over six consecutive years, known as "Conversations." They brought women—each having bought a season subscription to attend—together to discuss feminist concerns in the spirit of equity, eminent value, inclusivity, deep listening, and self-determination. These conversations helped shape feminist thought in the United States as many attendees went on to become leaders in the movements for abolition and suffrage. It was a remarkable moment in history that paved the way for modern iterations of feminist collaboration, like this edited collection of feminist ideas in praxis.

The provoked intimacy inherent in the book's title isn't coincidental; many of the nineteen authors overtly gesture to one another as ideological foremothers, professional mentors, and friends. This collaborative work, the newest installation in the *Lauer Series of Rhetoric and Composition*, was in fact motivated by the twentieth anniversary of Cheryl Glenn's 1997 influential text, *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity Through the Renaissance*, which published "the first continuous history of rhetoric inclusive of women" (3). This collection joins a celebrated body of scholarship reforming and protecting feminist rhetorical history, including Andrea Lunsford's (1995) *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*, and more recently, Lisa J. Shaver's *Reforming Women: The Rhetorical Tactics of the American Female Moral Reform Society* (UP

Pittsburgh, 2018). The simultaneous backward and forward attitude of *Retellings* distinguishes it among projects to recover silent voices because it connects the rhetorical past with projections of rhetorical studies and pedagogy. That is, each contributor acknowledges Glenn as a catalyst to her own work, but then explores what implications their combined work has for future research and classroom implementation in remarkably practical ways. Over two decades later and moving into the future, *Retellings* asks readers to consider "What do we do *now*?"

Collectively, the book's facility is in asking this question in a way that summons individual possibility, converting the question into, "What do /do now?" Reframing the question offers powerful invitation for readers to consider the ways they may implement the rhetorical strategies modeled by the contributors as if they, too, are part of the conversation.

This convivial invitation isn't accidental; Shirley Wilson Logan describes her vision of *Retellings* as the "go-to-text for teachers and researchers" (qtd. 5) wanting real ways to "attend to all that is yet to be done" in both rhetorical recovery and fresh scholarly investigations. The authors of *Retellings* expect their work to be catalytic, like Glenn's, in a generative sense. For example, Krista Ratcliffe discusses in Chapter 3 "the war-on-women" in political campaigns. She works not only to identify the rhetorical problem but also recruits readers to solve it through rhetorical silence and listening.

Like Ratcliffe, all the contributors are quick to admit that their work is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive, but merely the next step on the path to future discovery and resolution. For example, in Chapter 9, Cristina D. Ramirez takes an introspective look at her own scholarly approach to the archives of Mexican women's writings in response to "Glenn and Enoch's [2010] insistence on locating and revealing ourselves within our research" (163). In this way of extending past rhetorical conversations with current responses, the collaborators bridge the past and future of rhetorical history, theory, and praxis.

Ramirez's essay is an example of how contributors extend what Glenn recovered in 1997, creating an ongoing conversation and one that *Retellings* captures in four sections or "four inventionary nodes" (6). I like the maker-sense of these divisions because of the creative interplay between feminism, rhetoric, composition, research, and teaching *it all*. The first section includes essays by Shirley Wilson Logan, Krista Ratcliffe, Brigitte Mral, and Berit von der Lippe discussing feminist concerns of modern politics around the world. Section two addresses identity studies with essays by Rosalyn Collings Eves and Jean Bessette. The third section discusses feminist methods and methodologies with contributions from Heather Brook Adams, Cristina D. Ramirez, Wendy B. Sharer, and Anita Helle. And the fourth section focuses on the "feminist rhetorical commitment to 'paying it forward' through teaching and mentoring" (5) with essays by Elaine Richardson, A. Abby Knoblauch, Sonja K. Foss and Karen A. Foss, and Michelle Eble and Lynée Lewis Gallet.

Each chapter of *Retellings* evidences the ongoing work to reimagine the study of rhetoric and composition through a feminist lens, with selected chapters illustrating this point. In Chapter 2, Logan reminds us that historic feminist rhetoricians faced challenges similar to those women face today, using “the same rhetorical strategies” we see being employed by “present-day transnational feminist rhetoricians” (20-1). It’s a dynamic story of rhetors creatively using the best available means of persuasion with limitless potentialities for understanding and invention. For example, the creative application of place as a rhetorical resource is Eves’s focus in Chapter 6. She explicates how the nineteenth century Utah poet, orator, and community leader, Eliza R. Snow, resisted female marginalization by using the metonymic trope of “Zion-as symbol” (110) to identify Mormon women as “spiritual beings with extraordinary potential” (111-12). Demonstrating how place can function “as a powerful vehicle for group identification (112), Eves extends Glenn’s 1997 work by recovering women’s position in rhetorical history in calling attention to Snow’s strategies for authorizing her feminist message.

This re-envisioning of feminist rhetorical practice is further developed in Sharer’s Chapter 10, which reminds us that not only does the story need retelling (because of recovered omissions from rhetorical histories and the ongoing addendums with history in the making) but it also needs retelling by different voices. Berit von der Lippe enlists different voices as she responds in Chapter 5 to Sharer’s invitation by considering the female “presence as agents [of] change” in traditionally male-dominated war narratives (68) thereby transforming these stories “into peaceful ‘feminist’ protection scenarios” (69). Likewise, in Chapter 11, Helle embraces and extends feminists’ “injunction to ‘stand at the border’ of rhetoric and feminism, to ‘gain new perspectives’ on a deeply gendered site of embodiment, stigmatization, silence, and cultural production” as she examines the archives of breast cancer narratives (203).

In an ongoing effort to broaden feminist work and cross boundaries of privileged perspective, Sharer writes that “embracing, publishing, and circulating scholarly texts that invite collaboration, that forward the research *process* rather than present a research *product*, and that enable broader participation in professional publications is...essential” (184). Again, this argument is made more compelling because *Retellings* itself is just such a collaborative process, illuminating points of entry for readers to enact the methods retold in its pages. It is implied that readers will apply, test, and refine these methods—making *Retellings*, then, just a snowflake on an iceberg of possibility.

Four essays in *Retellings* are especially adept at modeling Sharer’s call for collaborative research and publication. Included in these is Mral’s Chapter 4 on gendered power relations in Nordic countries which is translated from the original Swedish into English by Judith Rinker Öhman. Modeling teamwork is the introductory Chapter 1 written by three authors: Enoch, Jack, and Glenn. In the final section, addressing feminist teaching and mentoring methods, two chapters are co-authored.

Among these is Chapter 14 wherein Foss and Foss reiterate the need for retelling the rhetorical story from different perspectives. They focus on nurturing individual agency and claim that it is through an individual paradigm shift that societal change can occur—especially change in harmony with feminist principles antithetical to a rhetoric of domination. This theory is particularly empowering since it emphasizes self-determination as a first step to affecting grand societal change. This, again, emphasizes the value each reader brings to Retelling's project as they are intricately part of this envisioned social reform. Such pedagogical theorizing doesn't end on the page but translates clearly to the classroom. Whether that is in a composition classroom or a biology classroom, Foss and Foss say that it doesn't matter since the "strategies for changing reality" (269) are the same and can be applied to any discipline.

This fourth section offers practical applications for in-class activities and assignments. In Chapter 12, Richardson models Black and Hip hop feminist pedagogy hoping to show how marginalized girls can "tease out issues of equity and humanity in a critical womanist manner" (242). This section's essays often end with self-reflexivity, "a core tenet of feminist rhetorical pedagogies" (249), and are offered as real sources of inspiration for instructors seeking to achieve Knoblauch's call in Chapter 13 to prepare "the next generation of teacher-scholars to do the same" (260) thereby enacting the reciprocal aspect of feminist ideology.

While each section in *Retellings* is diverse and fresh in its rhetorical analysis, I am partial to Part 4 because of its pay-it-forward, real-world application emphasis. This is a moment when I felt caught up in the energy of *Retellings* and personally invited to "make a difference in the lives of [my] colleagues and students" (13). Additionally, as I read the convivial account of progressive mentor networking by [The Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition](#) (The Coalition), officially held since 1990 at the annual CCCC meeting, I experienced a kairotic pleasure which had me dreaming of a future year; as were many people, I was disappointed to miss the 2020 and 2021 rendezvous due to Covid-19's interference. As I read and reviewed *Retellings*, Eble and Gallet's colorful recounting in Chapter 15 of The Coalition's origins, mission, and activities as a model for creating feminist mentoring networks fed my isolated self with hope for better times ahead. Again, visions of Margaret Fuller's "Conversations" danced in my head—I would have bought a ticket. The two gatherings felt very connected across time and space. I want to attend. I hope to attend to all that *Retellings* conjures in my mind and makes feel so incredibly possible and vital.

Hope is what *Retellings* is all about. Perhaps best articulated in Chapter 7, Bessette writes about the hope to "will' change in the present" (118). She relates the story of the Lesbian Herstory Archives' "archivettes" and their work to "revise the historical narratives that have erased, criminalized, and pathologized lesbians." Or maybe Adam's Chapter 8 is the book's hallmark of hope. Her essay literally begins with, "I hope..." (139). Adams responds to Glenn's Unspoken (2004) in examining the "ethical quandaries" of working with

participants in a discussion of institutionalized silence potentially masquerading as protection “that might run counter to feminist ways of knowing and doing” (141).

This commitment to changing the present permeates *Retellings* and nurtures hope that “discursive power (feminist rhetorical agency, no less) can bring people together to imagine new modes of being, or even to understand the ways our linguistic and embodied practices keep us apart” (7). Ultimately, this collection is historically valuable, immediately relevant, and effectively contributes to the “empowering [of] members of the network as scholars, teachers, and agents of change” (14), inviting all who want to join to be part of the ongoing conversation while showing them ways in which to make their contribution a reality.