

# UCLA

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In the last year, our nerves have worn thin as we have read of daily attempts to degrade social justice gains at educational institutions across the country. From weakening Civil Rights Act protections for survivors of sexual assault (Green, 2018) to completely reversing protections for transgender and undocumented students (Kreighbaum, 2017; Kirk, 2017), the current U.S. administration has made no secret of its animosity towards social justice. This hostility has filtered to state and local levels of governance. In 2017, the state legislature of Arizona introduced a bill to ban social justice courses and activities at public schools that promote ethnic studies and advocate for solidarity based on ethnicity, race, class, religion or gender (Stephenson, 2017). Immigration and Customs Enforcement has detained over 60,000 immigrants from locales across the country's interior (U.S. Immigration Control Enforcement, 2017), often targeting long-term residents with strong family and community ties to the U.S., including well-documented arrests of parents and students on school grounds across the country (LA Times, 2017). In the face of efforts to silence diverse and marginalized communities, a wellspring of resistance has erupted. We have made steps toward positive gains: From removing racist and sexist statues and renaming schools, to organizing massive rallies and marches, we have worked tirelessly to unsettle dominant narratives through art, poetry, and the production of scholarship.

At *InterActions* we consider publishing critical scholarship as part of our moral imperative. Since our inception, we have been a venue for critical commentary and perspectives advocating social change. Now, more than ever, we see the need to publish work that incites thoughtful and informed action in the face of vitriolic attacks on marginalized communities. To this end, the articles featured in this issue are meditations on the way critical practice can pave the way to more liberatory futures.

Most of the authors in this issue identify as Women, and have offered their scholarship to refuse erasures and centralize the importance of praxis in solidarity with the resistance of our allies across the U.S. and beyond. This Winter 2018 issue is a reminder of the impact of writing ourselves into existence – a call to action by the late Gloria Anzaldúa, “Why am I compelled to write?... Because the world I create in the writing compensates for what the real world does not give me. By writing I put order in the world, give it a handle so I can grasp it” (Anzaldúa, 1981 p. 168-69).

Continuously changing demographics in Salt Lake City, UT reflect and affirm the need for programs to support underserved students as presented by Dr. Judith Perez's article on Diverse Scholars Program (DSP) at the University of Utah. This February, the Salt Lake City School District Board of Education, unanimously voted on renaming Andrew Jackson Elementary School for NASA's first Black female engineer, Mary W. Jackson (Edwards, 2018). Like Mary

Jackson, students who participated in the DSP program in Utah are the first in their families to attend college and in the U.S. to participate in these types of programs. Dr. Perez offers a section of her dissertation work to illustrate her understanding of whether or not students in this college retention program had any impact during and after college in predominantly white, conservative Salt Lake City.

Drawing upon the importance of cultural education to promote social justice, Jessica Leila Carranza shares her reflections on her time working at August Immersion Charter in Baldwin Village, a low-income neighborhood in South Los Angeles. Her article shows how learning Spanish as a second language broadens connections that students can form with others. Carranza describes her intervention informed by culturally relevant pedagogy and community cultural wealth to encourage Spanish-resistant students at the school to become excited about their ability to speak a language spoken by many members of their local and global community and foster discussions on inclusion, justice and equity.

Extending the conversation about pedagogical practices into the postsecondary realm, Heather Hensell and Alex Fiano combine insights from their years of teaching with a robust literature review in “Best Practices for Teaching Underserved College Student Populations.” At stake for Hensell and Fiano are the retention and academic success of underserved college student populations. They provide tangible suggestions to make classroom spaces inclusive learning environments for students with mental health concerns as well as students who are low-income, immigrants, and/or LGBTQ+. Hensell and Fiano are concerned with the classroom as a site where educators have agency to disrupt static and uniform teaching practices that perpetuate educational inequality. They advocate attentive and compassionate pedagogical practices that seek to identify and then address the needs of chronically underserved students.

As students and educators across the country have come together in the fight to keep undocumented students safe, Audrey D. Paredes provides us with a significant book review for the times, “U.S. Central Americans: Reconstructing Memories, Struggles, and Communities of Resistance” by Karina Oliva Alvarado, Alicia Ivonne Estrada, Ester E. Hernández. This book is one of the first collections apropos to the Central American experience in the U.S. transgressing beyond the historic narrative of violence, war, and death by shifting the discussion towards “community emplacement and social justice within the United States” (see Paredes, this issue). Paredes’ analysis calls on educators and interdisciplinary scholars to take action and assume the responsibility of challenging the erasure of Latinx communities in the U.S by teaching and integrating the Central American experience.

The recent election of a transgender official to Virginia state legislature (Olivo, 2017), demonstrations (Toppo, 2017), and local governments adopting

non-discrimination laws (Perez Tobias, 2018) speaks to the ways in which a culture of resistance builds power in spite of efforts to marginalize trans, queer, gay and lesbian communities. Natascha Chtena's review of *Sex Media* by Feona Attwood provides an incisive portrait of how contemporary media promotes dominant views of gender, sex and sexuality that are at once largely out of tune with the way these practices exist in the world, and that at the same time, have the ability to bring to the fore conversations on power as it intersects with race, class, sexual orientation, and gender expression.

Each day seems to bring new challenges that scholars in education and information studies must grapple with, as have the authors in this issue. These articles reflect our journal's commitment to social justice through education and information studies scholarship and impel us to take further action. Looking forward, we are excited to announce a symposium in May 2018 in partnership with the Center for Critical Race Studies at UCLA. We hope you will join us as we invite researchers, activists, community members, and educators to present work and hold dialogues at the intersection of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, transphobia and other forms of systematic oppression.

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