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

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

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

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

Jasmine Kar Tang and Noro Andriamanalina

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

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

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

They Must Have a Lot of Language Issues

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

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

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

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

I Don't Trust the Space

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

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

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

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

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

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

Justice for Jamar

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

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

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

Notes

1. Name has been changed. The IRB number is 1410E54662.

2. Racial formation is "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (Omi and Winant 55).

3. When we refer to people of color, we include African American, American Indian, Asian American, and Latina/o communities.

4. See Poe's discussion of race and writing across the curriculum in which she makes the case for "situating race locally" (5).

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

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

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

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

Sherri Craig

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

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