

NOTE FROM EDITOR

Kristen N. McNutt

On the 57th anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, at the Get Your Knees Off Our Necks Commitment March on August 28, 2020, organized in response to the racial injustice of police violence and voter suppression, Reverend Al Sharpton declared:

Because they came in '63, we were able to come back in 2020, riding in whatever we wanted to ride, staying in whatever hotels was available. They opened the door for us, but there are still some doors we have to open and some people we've got to straighten out...We must deal with those that want to rob our right to vote. And even though we are here in the midst of a pandemic, socially distanced and telling y'all to distance, and I keep saying spread out, we wanted to come to show with our bodies that enough is enough. (02:05)

This seventh volume of *Penumbra* emerges at the intersection of the 2020 presidential elections, a global pandemic, and racial justice protests after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Both the pandemic and protests have drawn attention to racial, class, and gender disparities in the United States and around the world. The Special Section, "The Politics of Breath: Pandemic to Protest," illustrates how issues can intersect within oppression differently within daily lives. *Penumbra* is committed to scholarship that engages with the intersections of social justice, engaging difference, and the creative process. The journal asks scholars to expand beyond the limits of disciplines by drawing on interdisciplinary scholarship that seeks to disrupt and challenge injustice through critical scholarship.

Interdisciplinarity opens space for critical inquiry by bringing together disciplines not only at their commonalities but within the contested spaces between disciplines. In *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith points out,

The concept of discipline is even more interesting when we think about it not simply as a way of organizing systems of knowledge but also as a way of organizing people and bodies...The colonizing of the Other through discipline has a number of different meanings. In terms of the way knowledge was used to discipline the colonized it worked in a variety of ways. The most obvious forms

of discipline were through exclusion, marginalization, and denial. (71)

It is in these contested spaces that interdisciplinary departments, such as African American and African, Latinx, and Women's and Gender studies, engage in emancipatory scholarship. As Marjorie Rysse points out, "interdisciplinarity conceptualizes a 'space' between the disciplines. Feminist scholars have figured as a gap between the perspectives of women and nondominant men and the assumptions, models, theories, canons, and questions that the traditional disciplines have developed and taught" (para. 6). The in-between is where the excluded becomes included, the marginalized becomes center, and the denied becomes acknowledged.

This volume tells a story of the complexity of achieving social justice. The articles, poetry, and visual arts contributed by the authors and artists shed light on the contested spaces to bring social justice issues out of the shadows through an interdisciplinary lens. Using poetry as a medium, Tammy Nuzzo-Morgan calls into question the white picket fence of the American Dream. In her poem, *Light 'em Up America*, Nuzzo-Morgan asks, "Who the hell were Ozzie and Harriet anyhow, right?" This question brings into the mind's eye the quintessential image of the white, nuclear family and the lust to keep an Americana rooted in white privilege and the desire for change. As she wrestles with this question, her poem invokes a sense of history, sociology, and politics.

Through the autobiographical narrative of Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me* (2015), Chinelo Ezenwa utilizes close reading to deconstruct the black experience of the American Dream. In her piece, Ezenwa summarizes that "when Coates speaks of being stolen away, it is not only a historical reference to stolen bodies that were converted to enslaved people, it is also a lamentation that those bodies are still being molested and killed without accountability (14). By drawing upon recent events, such as the death of George Floyd, Ezenwa engages the autobiographical narrative to challenge readers to move beyond the white normative narratives to see the vulnerability of the black body in American society.

Larry Ellis, in "In Search of My Mother's Garden," examines the intersection of race and gender by discovering the creativity of his mother's and grandmother's gardens. By drawing upon Alice Walker, Ellis explores how generations share the anonymity of creativity. By bringing his mother's and grandmother's garden to the fore, a discussion of creativity has emerged that sheds light on the legacy of creativity within communities of color that is often ignored. Drawing upon social, material, and historical experiences, Ellis offers different meanings to gardening beyond utilitarian purposes to a means to cultivate women's agency and foster resilience of women in black communities.

By deconstructing Beyoncé Knowles's music video and Super Bowl performance of "Formation," Nena Carpenter explores the emancipatory artistry of Beyoncé that she brought into the living rooms of America. Moreover, Carpenter contextualizes the symbolic meaning of Beyoncé as the West African goddess, Mami Wata, to tease out the complex circumstances of Black women's lives as they navigate male privilege and White supremacy. By exploring the imagery both lyrically and visually, Carpenter brings to fore the challenges faced by women of color to achieve agency and survival of all members in Black American communities.

In her conceptual essay, "One Heroine's Journey through the Dissertation," Angela Kraemer-Holland explores her challenges and resilience in completing her doctoral dissertation. By drawing upon Maureen Murdock's concept of the Heroine's Journey and feminist pedagogy, Kraemer-Holland explores how racialized and gendered social norms, economics, and politics informed her experience of doctoral studies. Through metaphor, Kraemer-Holland draws upon her lived experience and existing literature to explore not only her development, but women's personal and professional development in the academy.

Taking a social science turn, Kei Graves traces the exploitation of adjunct labor in the academy. Graves explores the historical politics and economics of adjunct labor through an interdisciplinary lens that includes race, class, and gender. By utilizing Iris Marion Young's "Five Faces of Oppression," Graves explicates how oppression emerges through the use of adjunct faculty. The article concludes with a call to consider the exploitation of adjunct faculty as a social justice issue.

This volume rounds out with visual art and poetry. Tamara White's "Flying by the seat of my pants" asks viewers to examine the complexities of social justice implications of living with diabetes. On a different note, Sherri Moyer, in her poem, "Within My Lane", wrestles with family and social norms that can keep people silent to injustices. Woven within all the pieces included in this volume is a call to end racial, social, gender, and economic injustice. However, for change to occur we cannot be afraid to move from our comfort zones and say, "ENOUGH."

WORKS CITED

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