EDITORS' COLUMN

Rarely before in recent history have so many people and communities felt the ground shifting beneath them so quickly and so radically. A pandemic that has killed more than a million people and wrecked our economies has gutted our social lives as well, distancing us from family, friends, neighbors, students, and colleagues. With the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Armaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks, and others, and the momentous upsurge of the Black Lives Matter movement, white and privileged Americans have begun to recognize the contingencies that have ensured the comfort, health, and safety of only some. As Black Lives Matter agents and allies are now leading the nation to realize, forcing consciousness, the embedded racisms of our institutions and systems work as an undertow at cross purposes with the flow of democracy—a democracy that has never been fully tried. Now is a time to willfully redirect these woeful insidious currents dragging us and the promises of equal access back and back.

Except in the case of special issues, the articles of any particular issue of the journal arise organically based on authors' time frames for writing and revision, coordinated with the journal's schedule for publishing. Fortuitous, however, is the way articles written independently of one another may come into dialogue in the current moment. This issue is yet another instance of that dynamic convergence at work.

Our first article, "'Root and Branch': Resisting a Basic Writing Legacy System," by Sean Molloy, Silvester Fonville, and Abdus Salam, addresses Basic Writing at William Paterson University of New Jersey from a legacy standpoint: a BW system grounded in reactive policies around equal access as the college began to see an influx of students of color. Drawing correspondences to the potential for truly innovative outreach to the underprepared gaining college access through CUNY's SEEK program (which was also re-formed), Molloy and former-BW student co-authors Fonville and Salam recall a 1967 WP teaching initiative called SOUL, or Society of Unlimited Learning, "a bottom up, supportive, racial-justice program . . . provid[ing] financial, academic, and advisement support." SOUL stands in contrast to the retractive moves and conflicts of BW's eradication at WP during its final semester. Fonville and Salam had not known of the extra time and lack of credit their BW placements would entail. They drew hope from a project to acquire college credit for the course through an administrative appeal. In all, the authors convey the harms that people—actual students—experience waiting until "decades-old legacy systems" bearing inequities are "oppose[d],

reth[ought] and reimagine[d]," according to a metaphor taken from a 1968 school desegregation case, "root and branch." As the authors argue, this approach may be the only real assurance of change, following Poe, Nastal, and Elliot, toward "What brings students most dignity?"

Rooting out the implicit racism and experienced harms of programs, policies, and curricula in English Departments, as is being done at WP and other places, means recognizing the possibility of harm even in well-thought out programs and reforms. It means going deep enough into systems to see disparate impacts as something nuanced and uncertain, yet demanding investigation. Our second article, "The Impact of Taking Basic Writing on Later Writing Course Performance and Graduation at a Career-Focused Four-Year Institution," by Justin Nicholes and Cody Reimer, reflects the challenge to deeply explore established systems. On one level, Nicholes and Reimer's study of retention and graduation effects of a Basic Writing stand-alone course appears to align with many previous studies, disaggregated by some of the most familiar demographics—gender, race and ethnicity, and first-generation status. The authors conclude that it barely registers whether students start out in Basic Writing or Composition 1; graduation rates are roughly the same, while grade outcomes align for these populations as well.

A social justice perspective incurs, however, as the picture expands upon further investigation. Basic writing students who make it to Composition 1 and 2 are "statistically significantly more likely to graduate within 4-6 years," yet the authors acknowledge the study's limited purview; BW students who don't make it to Composition 1 and 2 are unaccounted for. Even this is not the final point. The authors elaborate the local context for Basic Writing's actualization inside a "comprehensive, public, career-focused four-year polytechnic university with a reported student employment/placement rate of 98%" and in a "predominantly white university, with 86% of students institutionally categorized as 'White/Caucasian' and with 53% of its students designated as 'male.'" In doing so, they offer a model for the kind of fine-grained observation and critique of Basic Writing contexts that is called for today, moving us towards a better understanding of the larger social justice imperative for setting out critical comparisons. Implicitly, the authors help us to recognize the question of who succeeds in Basic Writing in light of larger questions of who is Basic Writing for? Nicholes and Reimer thereby do more than report statistical outcomes within a unique setting for Basic Writing. They model research in Basic Writing for reinterpreting perceived purposes at a very crucial moment.

Our third article, "Using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra with Basic Writers and in a Graduate Course on Teaching Basic Writing," by Laura Gray-Rosendale and Haley Stammen, similarly presages the current moment by addressing how educational access has shifted to prioritize learning online and at a distance. Written prior to the COVID outbreak, the article introduces a means for teaching and collaborating that, at the time of its composition, seemed novel—now its utilization must be seen not only as essential but also just. Since COVID, the disparate impacts around access to technology can be, and are being, equated with injuries to civil rights, and to the degree that Basic Writing advances or stymies that access, we play our part. Calls to take account of COVID's disparate effects on Black and Brown communities and a paucity of racial justice make digital teaching and learning more crucial than ever, as immigrants, working-class students, first-generation, and students of color bear the largest share of COVID-inequity fallouts. Gray-Rosendale and her graduate student Stammen provide numerous structures for learning using Collaborate Ultra, an accessible and flexible affordance for video conferencing, screen-sharing, and dialoguing through the Blackboard Learn platform. As the authors demonstrate, the modality makes the difference for Basic Writing distance students, as well as for graduate students of Basic Writing Studies like Haley, across settings. Rather than replicate the distance of online learning, Collaborate Ultra for our authors increases engagement, renewing education, again, for *dignity*. Crediting Collaborate, the authors hold, "no longer are we anonymous people behind screens. . . . There's an immediacy and a deep connection between us all as individuals. We have, in essence, become realer, fuller, and more whole to one another." An era of more equality likely will be an era of fuller and deeper relationships.

Apropos of deeper visions and relationships in BW, in our fourth article, "Back to Basics," David Bartholomae invites us to participate in his last semester at University of Pittsburgh in 2018 when he taught a rendition of Basic Writing, renamed, "Workshop in Composition." Since his students were mostly from China, where he also taught, Bartholomae is inspired to reflect broadly on writing as a fluid, transversive activity, engaging the writer in the convergences of culture and experience. It is clear that Bartholomae appreciates his students as his teachers, as he recalls many favorite, long-regarded authors and students, including Min-Zhan Lu, for the lessons they taught him, now becoming fully realized in early retirement. Perhaps most striking is his view of Basic Writing as a source of strength and resilience for translingual composition. Ultimately, he concludes, translingualism is "an orientation," one that fosters "a new way of conceiving the motives and

methods of what we used to call Basic Writing." Grasping translingualism in composition through the lens of "tolerance for variation, humility, and a willingness to negotiate meaning, letting ambiguities pass, a recognition that language is changing, not static," resonates a point of return for Bartholomae, and suggests supportive democratic, anti-racist goals that we should now more than ever expect of our field—however "we used to call" it, or will call it in the future.

This issue also brings on board two new Associate Editors, CUNY professors who in the tradition of *JBW* editorships, have graciously agreed to take on the incessant labor (it is!) of dedication to a mainstay journal of a field that is changing, but which still centralizes our nation's most vulnerable populations among students of writing. We welcome Lisa Blankenship (Baruch College, CUNY) and Dominique Zino (LaGuardia Community College, CUNY).

--**Hope Parisi** and **Cheryl C. Smith**