

Editorial Introduction

*Kenneth J. Fasching-Varner
David Lee Carlson*

Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education is excited to announce the co-editorship of Kenneth Fasching-Varner (Louisiana State University) and David Lee Carlson (Arizona State University). With our co-editorship we bring new and interesting contextual approaches to enhance the important and critically engaged work that *Taboo* is known for. This is our first full issue under our editorial leadership where we ultimately selected the final pieces for inclusion. Over the remainder of this year, and even into early next year, we will be releasing several new issues that combine backlog from the previous editorial team/s and special issues selected by previous editors. In each of these issues we will aim in our introduction to contextualize the genesis of the issue.

By 2019 we aim to be in the full swing of our own independent editorial decision-making. To that extent we have also reached out far and wide to assemble to most critically engaged and prestigious editorial board for *Taboo*. This issue lists the new members in the front matter, and you will see that the board is composed of distinguished scholars who, in their own right, have worked to make their own critically engaged and ‘taboo’ impact on their respective fields of study. This issue also marks our first active publication activity since the inauguration and presidency of Donald Trump, and is being sent to the publisher on what has been described as the worst week in Washington of the Trump Presidency (departure of Press Secretary, Chief of Staff, the incoherent rant of the new White House Communications Director, a new anti-transgendered policy for the military sent by tweet, the public rebuking of the President by the Boy Scouts of America, and the failure of Republicans to repeal or replace ‘Obamacare.’ Since his election on November 8th 2016, his subsequent transition period, and the first months since assuming office we would feel comfortable saying that the new predictable is that nothing is predictable, and the need for critically engaged scholarship more important than ever.

Laid against a backdrop of xenophobia, racism, homophobia, and an under-

whelming lack of engagement with reality and truth, we find ourselves in the most unstable point of our collective lifetimes. The world is treated daily to alternative facts, alternative considerations of truth, and a seeming alternative reality, where even the most inner circle of Trumpdom is subject to his bullying behavior. It was estimated that he has sent around 1,000 tweets in his first six months, but has been responsible for no single piece of legislative advancement. We will treat Trumpdom with its own forthcoming special issue.

What has not changed in these times, however, is the marginalizing of people and communities where oppressed identities exist. In the K-12 sector children of color and those from marginalized and oppressed groups are still receiving sub-par education; within the Higher Education sector, issues related to access (or lack thereof) and financial manipulation still dictate the landscape, and the general condition of the poor, silenced, and oppressed remains complicated. Literally we saw a Secretary of Education confirmed who lacks the basic skills or experience to do the job. It is important for us to note that while rich and accustomed to using her access to money for political persuasion, Betsy DeVos is not unique in many ways compared with other secretaries of education who have represented neoliberal positions driving toward privatization. We have seen the largest chanter of the “Lock Her Up” brigade resign in embarrassment amid lies and compromising national security behavior, and we have seen the vertigo-like spinning orbit of a White House in disarray. In these times it might be easy to crawl into bed and stay there hoping for the next three years and six months to pass by quickly.

But, this issue reminds us that the need for critical voices and perspective is not just necessary in these times but can still flourish as rays of light in what seem to be otherwise dark times. This collection of articles spans considerations from PreK-12 through Higher Education and out to society at large. The unifying theme seems to be looking inward, toward self, and holding ourselves critically accountable at the same time we hold institutions, organizations, and others accountable for their behavior.

As we introduce each piece of this issue we will also share a comment about each article from the reviewers of these pieces that resonated with us in our decision to publish these pieces in this issue. In “The Twin Tales of Whiteness: Exploring the Emotional Roller Coaster of Teaching and Learning about Whiteness,” Cheryl E. Matias, Allison Henry, and Craig Darland explore critical issues related to race broadly and whiteness specifically with a critically self-reflexive set of stances. Well conceptualized within the literature, personal and critical, and engaging we are excited to see the well interwoven personal, theoretical, and practical considerations moved forward by this piece. One reviewer of this piece said “beyond necessary, this piece beautifully pushes readers to find spaces to disrupt and engage with considerations of power, privilege and whiteness.”

In “How We Make Teaching Remain a White Profession: The Teacher of Color in the Urban High School Genre Film,” James L. Holler delicately uses a self-critical

stance to speak to his own complicity in marginalization of students of color while speaking eloquently to the larger issues surrounding the recruitment and retention of teachers of color as well as how students see themselves, using film as a backdrop to look at the pervasiveness in dominant group use of marginalizing text. One reviewer shared “it is so nice to engage with a larger critique where the author also implicates their own positionality and responsibility with work at hand—I say this not in a congratulatory way but in a way that recognizes that we have to take that stance more often to make change.”

In “Where are the People of Color?: Representations of Cultural Diversity in the National Book Award for Young People’s Literature and Advocating for Diverse Books in a Non-Post Racial Society,” Steven T. Bickmore, Yunying Xu, and Myra Infante Sheridan provide a thoughtful qualitatively embedded discussion within a quantitative examination of race/ethnicity and gender in the National Book Award for Young People’s Literature. What we love about this piece is that it was rejected by another journal largely in part because of reviewers fears about the complex notions of race brought up in this piece—in other words the reviewers comments ended up reflecting a very fear the authors have when diverse literature is not operationalized in the literature lives of readers. In a unique approach the authors are able to talk through that rejection of the piece initially in another journal adding a critical and taboo perspective; we are not used to making transparent the processes by which scholarship and journals reflect a dominant conservatism wrapped up in the alleged neutrality of peer review. Having read those initial reviews as well as the manuscript we are thrilled to publish this piece. A *Taboo* reviewer said “Yes. Yes. Yes. We need more pieces in the literature that both trouble the complexities of difference in larger contexts but that also reveal the way that this thing called scholarship operates in pernicious ways to gatekeep a whitewashed perspective on what makes the light of scholarly day.”

In “Following Pebbles By Moonlight: Elementary Students Shed Light on Power, Peace & Violence in Response to the Classic Tale *Hansel and Gretel*,” Molly Quinn and Debbie Sonu examine issues and ideas of power, peace, and violence with children through the use of fairy tale—specifically *Hansel and Gretel*. We engaged with the larger ideas of agency and subjectivity that the authors move forward in this piece as a mechanism to give feet and movement to critical literacy. As one reviewer said “we have in this piece a well conceptualized empirical study that complicates the notion of child as simple and in need of simple contexts to have simple conversations, and I am reminded in this piece how important it is not just to engage students at highly critical levels but those engagements have profound critical engagement opportunities for adults.”

In “A Critical Race Counterstory: Chicana/o Subjectivities vs. Journalism Objectivity,” Sonya M. Alemán provides a much necessary discussion, situated within Critical Race Theory, to look at how notions of objectivity are used to further silence people of color within journalism contexts. We appreciate the use of

counterstory telling in the piece and the way that the counterstory serves as a site of transformation. One reviewer said “when CRT and counterstory telling are done well they move the conversation forward in provocative and interesting ways that are generative and not simple stories of story sake and this piece does just that.”

Finally, in “Critical Multicultural Education as an Analytical Point of Entry Into Discussion of Intersectional Scholarship: A Focus on Race, as well as on Class, Gender, Religion, Sexuality, Dis/Ability and Family Configuration,” Christine Clark, Mara Sapon-Shevin, Mark Brimhall-Vargas, Tarryn McGhie, and Sonia Nieto provide a thorough, in-depth, and nuanced layered analysis that adds a complex dimension to what has become an oft-overused concept—intersectionality. We are grateful for their attention to detail, to the pragmatic and scholarly consideration of how to engage more reflexively as it relates to identity research. Well conceptualized and critically engaged scholarship, like this piece, is important in times that we have already suggested are less than critical. One reviewer said of this piece “reading this article was like engaging with a nesting doll— no detail left unearthed, beautiful and complex at once, and many ways to engage, re-engage, and contemplate the thinking at hand.”

As we close and in addition to the new editorial board, we would also like to welcome Drs. Donna Y. Ford (Vanderbilt University), Renee DesMarchelier (University of Southern Queensland), and Stephen J. Ball (University of London) who have joined the editorial team at *Taboo* as Senior Editors. We look forward to our collaborative endeavors together. If you are interested in reviewing, submitting an article or book review, and/or engaging in other ways please, do not hesitate to reach out: e-mail us at submissions@taboo-journal.com. We accept manuscripts on a rolling basis.

In Solidarity,

Kenny Varner & David Lee Carlson
Co-Editors in Chief
Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education
editors@taboo-journal.com