

## *Written Communication*— Statement on Anti-Racism in Academic Publishing

The violent deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and Tony McDade, along with many other Black lives, past and present, call urgent attention to a long history of institutionalized racism in the US and the systems of power and authority that both enable and perpetuate it.

The Editor and Editorial Board of *Written Communication* condemn anti-Blackness and anti-Black violence in all forms, and we stand in solidarity with students and colleagues who are most directly affected by and subjected to the malevolence of racism and white supremacy in our culture.

Academic journals have traditionally provided a space within which research communities can negotiate what counts as viable knowledge and, relatedly, who or what should be valued in the production and authoring of that knowledge. They also serve a gatekeeping function that, intentionally or not, can reinforce epistemic exclusion and allow for the marginalization of underrepresented voices.

How we define, study, and assign value to the practice of writing and literacy is of particular relevance to *WC*'s identity and mission as a publishing community. And as a community, we are called upon to examine the assumptions and procedures that guide our work—with the broader aim of realizing the journal's potential to function both as a research venue and as an agent of change.

These are not simple problems; they are complex relationships that we must conscientiously examine, discuss, and engage over time. *Written Communication* asserts its commitment to the work of anti-racism in our publishing operations, and we make it a priority to enact that work in tangible and sustainable ways.

The journal is specifically committed to the following actions and policies:\*

### *Immediate Actions*

- Create a working group composed of Editorial Board members who are committed to the project and practice of anti-racism and who will work with the Editor to create policy and coordinate action over time.†

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\* The Editor acknowledges the need for listening and learning as a basis for action. These issues are structural, and to address them requires time and an ongoing commitment to researching our operations and developing infrastructures that support the type of actions being described.

† The Editor recognizes the labor involved in these endeavors and how it often falls to scholars who may already be working from the margins. Participation will be voluntary; it will be made visible in the pages of the journal; and it will remain open for anyone to take part in or disengage from at any point.

- Conduct a self-study that examines *WC*'s current submission and review processes. The general aim will be to identify areas where the journal can enact principles of anti-racism and decolonialism at various levels of operation.
- Use the self-study to develop target goals and set forth realizable plans for implementing anti-racist editorial processes. These actions will be informed by relevant scholarship, emerging models in academic publishing, and, more generally, by principles of openness, diversity, equity, and inclusivity.
- Design and implement an assessment structure to determine whether and the extent to which the articulated goals are being met. Specific measures will be based on an initial and recurring assessment of journal operations, and findings will be shared with the Editorial Board on a regular basis.‡

### *Developing Policies*

- Increase the number of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color included on the journal's Editorial Board.
- Increase submission and publication of articles by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.
- Increase submission and publication of articles that engage with issues related to racism/anti-racism, decolonialism, and anti-Blackness as applies to areas of focus in Writing and Literacy Studies.
- Highlight and promote theoretical and methodological pluralism and the value it brings to our understanding of writers and the practice of writing and literacy.
- Enact a review process based on principles of transparency, diversity, equity, and inclusivity, with the broader aim of establishing the journal as a space where quality research on issues related to writing, literacy, and injustice can emerge.

The journal will support these policies in different ways, including, initially, by

- Acting on findings from the self-study.
- Inviting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color to join the journal's Editorial Board. This work will begin by developing open and ethical strategies for reaching out to individuals and communities.

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‡ Timelines are difficult to set when engaging with these complex issues. Yet, action is needed, and so, too, accountability. Our goal will be to carry out an initial self-study, communicate findings, and present some directions forward by November 2020.

- Developing issues that highlight topics related to racism/anti-racism, decolonialism, and anti-Blackness as it applies to the study and practice of writing and literacy.
- Developing resources and heuristics we can use to inform anti-racist review processes; sharing those resources with anyone who takes part in the journal's operations.
- Communicating these efforts with members of the Editorial Board and making them visible to the broader field of Writing and Literacy Studies on a consistent basis.

We see these actions as initial steps that require repeated, collaborative efforts to engage in the practice of anti-racism over time. We affirm *Written Communication* as a space where this work takes place and will continue to take place, and we undertake this work informed by the broader mission of publishing exceptional scholarship, fostering dialogue, and engaging conscientiously with issues related to social and racial justice on a global scale.