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## Editorial Introduction: Radical Possibilities Invited Special Issue

Kenneth J. Fasching-Varner

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, kenneth.varner@unlv.edu*

David Lee Carlson

*Arizona State University, dlcarslson2@gmail.com*

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## Editorial Introduction

*Kenny Varner & David Lee Carlson*

Many suggest we are living in hard times. We suspect that every generation could make a claim that their times are hard times and they could proffer any number of respectable positions to support their ideas. So, while it appears fair not to claim this time as the only hard time or even the most hard time (perhaps), we feel confident claiming these moments as uniquely hard. The election of what is arguably the most unstable and ill prepared man to occupy 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, a sharp focus and attention to rising white nationalism, mass shooting after mass shooting, a legislative body so disempowered and paralyzed that they seem not to be able to even take the most simple of actions, and a rising tense global climate accented by new trade wars and rising militaristic (often nuclear) discourse from men more obsessed with their nuclear capabilities (and the size of their buttons) than in their capacity and capability to broker peace. These are hard times, and as academics perhaps we have not best engaged the possibilities of our work. That is, what spaces are we leaving unclaimed?, how are we exacerbating issues with our own inaction/s?, how have we shut ourselves out from leading in hard times as opposed to being dictated to in hard times. This journal intentionally stakes a unique claim in the field of scholarly knowledge: namely, *Taboo*, aims to be a space where we can say what often goes unsaid, articulate that which we tend to hold in, and live outside of the comfort and safety of academically sanctioned knowledge claims. As editors, living in this moment, we asked ourselves, what are the radical possibilities in this time of great tumultuousness? How might scholars we respect respond when prompted only by the question “what are your reflections on radical possibilities?” With that question in mind we reached out to a variety of scholars, across levels and institution types, and asked them to write a piece that responded to that prompt. There was to be no more clarification, no safe guiding of an approach, no editorial vision to how these pieces should come together.

This (very) special invited issue is the result of the scholars’ responses to this

prompt. From pieces written in structures that look academically familiar, to poems, to citation-less and raw, the pieces in this collection each offer a unique perspective to push us along in our own efforts (as academics and readers) to ask ourselves, what are the possibilities, radical in nature, given the unpredictability and volatility of the here and now. Cheryl Matias leads off this special issue with one of the most honest, raw, and vulnerably written reflections we have ever read in an academic piece, ripping the Band-Aid off to explore what it means to be a social justice worker in these times. Erica Meiner, through a piece written in four small acts, prompts us to think through ‘Slow Work,’ drawing upon 20 years of engagement to articulate the need and necessity of such an approach. Abraham DeLeon carefully takes us on a stroll, through a daydream metaphor, to understand the possibilities of the intersections of creative and intellectual worlds, pushing the academic and intellectual boundaries of theory and academic practice. Christine Clark uses the writing space of poetry and concept of origin to show the multiplicities of where she is from—a prompting to all thinking through the complexities of where we are from. David Stovall brilliantly articulates a series of seven considerations of educational justice work that lay upon the shoulders and spirit of scholars who work toward abolitionist futures; Stovall’s work brings us underneath the surface, beneath the grass, helping us not get lost in the educational weeds above the surface. The Ayers brothers, Bill and Rick, remind us that the trajectory of the challenges we find ourselves in during Trumpdom (and they draw in part on Betsy DeVos), are not unique but rather far along a path crafted by political ideologies and practices, right and left, over decades, and they masterfully remind us in their piece that “we can always do something—and something is where we [should] begin.” Finally, Valerie Kinloch, in a way that is both beautiful and unique (if you have never engaged with Valerie you should, as she has a powerful way to mix questions, voice, challenge, and care into interactions) in its approach reminds us what is at stake, laying out her commitments, and inviting us to join her in an obligation to Black life and Black love.

This collection of pieces reminds us of the importance of having multiple ways of expressing thought and knowledge. The authors, drawing on such a wide range of approaches, remind us all that a journal like *Taboo*, where content and form challenge the status quo, remains vitally important in a climate that anesthetizes complex conversations and challenges into neat academic packages, censored vis-à-vis the sterile hiding places of peer review. There is a little something for everyone in this issue, and we celebrate the very idea that in these pages something should resonate with everyone. We, and they as contributors, look forward to your joining in the dialogue—reach out and let us all know your thoughts.

In solidarity,  
Kenny Varner and David Carlson