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# Editorial Introduction: Trump Special Issue

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# Introduction

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On November 8, 2016, Donald Trump secured enough electoral votes to win the electoral college, despite losing the popular vote by nearly 3 million votes, thus becoming the 45th President-elect of the United States. Throughout the campaign various media outlets spent months creating a spectacle vis-a-vis two flawed candidates. We posit that these candidates and the spectacle created of them may be more reflective of a significantly flawed electorate, divided with respect to issues of race, gender, class, (non) religious affiliations, sexualities, and geographic differences.

Donald Trump entered the office of president as one of the most unpopular incoming presidents, and has sustained a significantly low approval rating hovering in the mid to upper 30s for most of his presidency. Through late-night twitter rants, loading his cabinet with the very swamp monsters he claimed to want to drain from Washington, D.C., and ahistorical articulations on a near daily basis, the first 100 days of the Trump administration were seemingly the most (un)predictable start to any U.S. presidency; the trend of Trump's predictable unpredictably has continued throughout the nearly year and half of his presidency to date. While the President claims to have mastered the art of the deal, many are left believing that what has been mastered is the art of distraction. Liberal elected officials impotently watch government dysfunction while being locked out of all three branches of government, reduced to political spectators with no coalesced plan for action, no real organized effort, and an overall spirit that seems not to have learned much from the 2016 election. Conservative elected officials, for their part, have learned that being the party of "no" for the last decade has not positioned them well to learn how to say yes, despite controlling each branch of government. Republicans in Congress, furthermore, co-sign much of Trump's agenda rather than function as a check to his power. Instead of acting as a co-equal branch of government, Congress has be-

come an imprimatur to Trumpian ethics. Those voters who remain loyal to Trump have waivered little in their support for him, while working tirelessly to change the rules of engagement at every turn; those against this administration have made little impact to changing the outcomes of his behavior while crying foul in a game that has never been fair to begin with. Reminiscent of Bricusse and Newley's *The Roar of the Greasepaint—The Smell of the Crowd*, the country appears engaged in a struggle to ensure status quo maintenance at all costs. Both criticisms of, and support for, the Trump administration operate within a superficial range of responses that blur the realities that an era painted with alternate facts and uncertainty should be teaching us.

In the wake of the election responses have varied: some have lamented, some have cheered, others have raged, and yet still others have resigned. Regardless of how one responded, the role of academic and activist communities is to consider the conditions that created the election of Donald Trump, and to examine the potentialities, especially with respect to education, involved with the election results, thinking through the ways to shift the current conditions of the epistochaotic moment, where what we know and how we know it remains in continual flux.

The editors of this journal call this epistochaotic moment the *Radical Normal*. We invited writers to consider the Trump Presidency as the Radical Normal. We received a diverse range of manuscripts from traditional academic articles, to poems, to rants, and/or a combination of these forms. We received manuscripts that push beyond the basic 'for or against' arguments of the Trump Presidency and the resulting consequences. Carroll, in *Alice and Wonderland*, pens that, "imagination is the only weapon in the war against reality." This special issue begins with Erin Casey's thoughtful poem, "What if We Could Make America 'Great' Again?" This poem frames many of the debates in the remaining articles in this special issue, wondering about what it would really mean to make American great again. Casey offers a contrary political agenda to Trump rhetoric and policies. The editors want readers to keep these poetic queries in mind as they read the rest of the articles. To this end, the authors in this special issue use Trumpian tools, such as Twitter, to combat the Trumpian political agenda.

In that spirit, Sally Kitch headlines the special issue with a critical attack on the Trumpian quest to divide the U.S. based on race, class, and gender. She employs twitter to content that feminist theory offers clear directions to counter the Trumpian logic. Feminist theory, Kitch maintains, can be used as a "raucous tent" to counter divisiveness and offer avenues for social justice during this conservative turn in American politics.

In a similar way, Jennifer Asenas and Brittany Hubble focus their work on the issue of protests and dissent. They analyze both Twitter and You-Tube videos of trolling of protests of conservative speakers in Berkeley and the Boston. Their analysis reveals a rather destructive echo-chamber that both trivializes and brutalizes the debate process. Dissent descends into a spectacle and erases its own power

when the troll as trickster employs strategies to diminish the political rhetoric of free speech.

Carey Andrzejewski and Rashida Askia use a narrative collage to describe the feelings post-election day. This compelling narrative illustrates the apparent disconnect between the ideologies of inclusion and social justice in teacher education and the political beliefs of many pre-service teachers. The authors remind us of the social impact of voting on many individuals, as well as the old adage that elections do indeed have consequences.

Jessica Nina Lester, Allison Daniel Anders, and Nicholas Mariner compose an open letter regarding the embodiment of settler-colonialism realized in the election of Donald Trump. Their compelling and potent narratives employ Critical-Race Theory and Post-Critical Ethnography to contest onto-epistemological constraints of qualitative inquiry. The authors contest white supremacy and the permanence of racism ushered in and representative of Trump's election. They offer a forceful critique of objectivity, and problematize positionality and representations and power.

Patrick Hales, Nicole Graves, Tony Durr, and Mary Browne offer a different perspective on teacher education during the Radical Normal. They construct a survey of pre-service teachers' perspectives of both education and the teaching profession. Their study reveals that teachers have a decreased confidence in the government's role in education with the election of Donald Trump, as well as a profound concern for the lack of respect for teachers in general. The pre-service teachers in this article worry about the lack of resources for teachers due to the lack of government support with a Trump administration. The authors implore teacher educations to foster an environment to advocate for teachers. Teachers are perhaps the best advocates for their own profession especially during this particular time.

Finally, Irena S. Okhremtchouk and Adam T. Clark offer a rant about Trump's campaign rhetoric and proposals regarding immigration policy in the United States. They frame their work around dysconscious xenophobiaism and content that teachers and teacher educators need to recognize their own racism in order to foster a diverse society. Schools need to represent the democratic ideals of diversity and inclusion and although Trump's immigration policies threaten a vulnerable population, it is incumbent upon all of us involved in schools to advocate for democratic ideals.

The articles in this special issue reflect a deep and intense affect and emotion about the election of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States. The authors in this special issue emotionally struggle with the changing terrain of both their local and national situations. Some rely on theories of power and context to make sense of Radical Normal while others search for answers in their students and seek distance in order understand the current political ecology. The courage displayed in this issue reveals an academy that wants to remind us of our democratic roots and ideals as well as challenges us to remember that our very beginnings were soiled with racism and colonial settler ideologies embodied yet again in the election of Donald Trump. Recognition, positionality, perspective, affect, emotion,

and poetry serve as possible actions necessary to respond to the Trump presidency. We need each other, connection, contestation, agitation, and collective action to battle against the neo-fascist tendencies in the U.S. body politic. The editors of this special issue want to thank all of the authors for their thoughtful articles and the anonymous reviewers for their detailed responses and suggestions to the articles in this special issue. Finally, we would like to give a special thank you to graduate assistant Timothy Wells for his indefatigable efforts throughout the review and editing processes. Timothy, you were an invaluable support and we hope that the amount you learned matched by half as much as you assisted us. Thank you!!

In solidarity, as awlays,
David Lee Carlson & Kenny Varner