

Re: Invitation to Join Ed Board of LiCS

Pritchard, Eric

Thu 2/21/2019 4:31 PM

To: LiCS Journal <licsjournal@gmail.com>;

Cc: glascott@pdx.edu <glascott@pdx.edu>; taralock@sfsu.edu <taralock@sfsu.edu>; hmiddlet@highpoint.edu <hmiddlet@highpoint.edu>; juli.parrish@du.edu <juli.parrish@du.edu>; warnickc@cofc.edu <warnickc@cofc.edu>; moeggenberg.zarah@gmail.com <moeggenberg.zarah@gmail.com>;

Dear Brenda Glascott and the *LiCS* Editorial Team,

I hope that this email finds you all doing well and enjoying a productive spring semester/quarter. I am sincerely grateful for this invitation to join the editorial board of *LiCS*. It is a journal I read regularly. I appreciate your thinking of me as someone who could contribute productively to its work and future.

The timing of this invitation is highly coincidental. Recently, I received a CFP for your upcoming special issue of *LiCS* on "Queer and Trans Embodied Literacies" guest edited by Zarah Catherine Notter-Moeggenberg with editor Brenda Glascott. As a Black queer feminist scholar in literacy, composition, and rhetorical studies who has published on Queer and Trans of Color Literacies since I was a graduate student (including a 2014 essay published in *LiCS*), I began to read the CFP with great excitement about the potential of this volume for the future of queer literacies and rhetorics. However, as I read further into the CFP I was disappointed to see that the planned special issue had not referenced race, women of color feminisms, queer of color theory, or the lives of queer people of color in ways that were meaningful and vested with the criticality we have brought to queer theory and trans studies from their inception in composition and rhetoric and in the interdisciplines of Queer and Trans Studies writ large.

Sadly, your CFP was the second time in the span of just one week where a special issue of a journal in our field focused on queer theory was either published or proposed that evidenced this practice. As such, the cumulation of this epistemological violence all in the same week, a practice that I'd say has long been ubiquitous in much of the queer and trans studies work in rhetoric and composition despite numerous attempts by scholars to redress this practice, left me pondering if I should speak (yet again) what I and so many queer, trans, and feminists of color and allies in the field have already said and been saying. When I received your message I took it as a sign that something good could come of it, and so I want to share with you what concerns me about this CFP, but also, what concerns me about the publication practices of *LiCs*, as a way of responding to your invitation to join its Editorial Board.

The CFP discusses race twice. The first time is when you talk about the "undercurrent" of young trans people of color who get murdered and don't get our attention, and then sadly the very thing it rightly critiqued occurs in the CFP. The effect of this, regardless of the intention, is that Dana Martin's murder is treated as a spectacle, and not engaged for the totality of the loss of this human life. In fact, I would argue that the opening story of the CFP does nothing to inform, motivate, or energize anything written in the rest of the CFP. This amounts to rhetorical window dressing, and Martin, and the mentioning of race as you

do, appears ornamental and not fundamental to what you propose in your upcoming volume.

The second time race is mentioned is in the question: "How does/might feminist theory or critical race theory intersect with queer and trans* embodied literacies?" This is a question that has not only been engaged, but problematized in generative and complex ways by numerous scholars in literacy, composition, and rhetorical studies and beyond at least as far back as 1995, and yet none of that work is recognized in your CFP. It is therefore not surprising then that the CFP reads as it does because, indeed, even work in the last decade by scholars of color who do queer theory, trans studies, or queer of color and two-spirit critique is not mentioned in a substantive way or even at all. Again the only person of color mentioned is one that is killed, again owing to the fact that queer, trans, and two-spirit people of color are only for the spectacle of the violence against us, and not the intellectual labor that we perform and do to save our own lives and the lives of others.

In addition, the CFP shows a stunning lack of understanding of race and embodiment. As Omi and Winant articulate, the category of race is social conflict mapped onto particular bodies. Critical race theorists have raised issues of embodiment long before queer and trans studies. And importantly, women of color feminist theorists - many of them queer women of color - did so even earlier than the advent of critical race theory, and also before many of the white scholars credited with being the founders of sexuality and queer studies. Such gaping epistemological holes in the understandings of race and embodiment make it almost impossible for this special issue to contribute anything of substance or meaning to the conversation on queer and trans embodied literacies within composition and rhetoric, and certainly beyond.

Given these concerns, I would ask that you retract your original CFP and reissue a revised one that explains why it is being reissued. My reason is that there is a real opportunity for *LiCS* to be a thought leader here and not simply contribute yet another collection of queer studies work that makes queer, trans, non-binary, and two-spirit people of color, and analyses of race and ethnicity, a bolt in a wheel that turns only between erasure and tokenization. Rather, *LiCS* can move the conversation forward in ways that really should have happened 23 years ago. Let me be clear: my request is not and does not have to be punitive. Rather, this can be an example to the field of a future for the field, and for queer and trans theorists in particular, about how we can act ethically, with humility, and productively when mistakes are made.

As for the journal itself, my concerns about the CFP extend into the publication practices of the journal. Beginning with the inaugural issue, only 1 in 5 articles published in *LiCS* were authored by visible people of color (that is 13 articles of the 64 published in the journal since its beginning). Perhaps more problematically, there has only been one review of a book authored/edited by a scholar of color. In fact, to circle back to the matter of queer and trans theory in the field, the only books on queer theory that have been reviewed were only those by white authors, despite the fact that recent books by scholars of color who work on and engage queer and trans people of color and two-spirit literacies and rhetorics and women of color feminisms have been visible award-winning works and were not included, such as Qwo-Li Driskill's *Asegi Stories: Cherokee Queer and Two-Spirit Memory*, and Carmen Kynard's *Vernacular Insurrections: Race, Black Protest, and the New Century in Composition-Literacies Studies*. In addition, recent works by women of color feminists such as Tamika L. Carey's *Rhetorical Healing: The Reeducation of Contemporary Black Womanhood*, and Mira Shimabukuro's *Relocating Authority: Japanese Americans Writing to Redress Mass Incarceration*, to name only two, have also gone unreviewed in *LiCs* and many of the other major journals in the field. In addition, per your current list of Editorial Board members on the website, if I were to accept your invitation I would be the only Black scholar on the board and also be replacing previous scholars who were also the only Black person in their tenure on your board, it appears. Unfortunately, this means that unless

the plan for *LiCS* is to take concrete steps to rectify these exclusionary practices, I cannot accept this invitation at this time.

I can imagine that hearing or reading these words are difficult. I can only ask that they be received with the intent by which they are offered, which is with the sincerest hope that *LiCS* and the field does change, because we can change. All that is required is a desire and consistent effort to do so, and to go through the difficult but necessary growing pains to create the field and world we all deserve.

With good wishes, and always gratitude,
Eric

Eric Darnell Pritchard, PhD
Associate Professor of English
University at Buffalo

"The job of the writer is to make revolution irresistible." - Toni Cade Bambara

From: LiCS Journal <licsjournal@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 18, 2019 6:44 PM
To: Pritchard, Eric
Subject: Invitation to Join Ed Board of LiCS

Dear Dr. Pritchard:

I am writing on behalf of the editorial team for the open-access online scholarly journal *Literacy in Composition Studies*. LiCS provides a venue for scholarship that investigates the nexus of literacy studies and composition/rhetoric.

We are familiar with your work and would be honored if you would serve on our editorial board. Your scholarship represents the kind of intellectual commitments we would like to see in the pages of our journal, and we trust your judgment to take the journal in exciting directions in the future.

Editorial board members advise the journal's editorial team about the content and direction of the journal. With their input, we have updated the terms of service below. Board members are invited to:

- a. review up to one manuscript per year
- b. read and weigh in on the LiCS annual report
- c.

attend--virtually or in person--our yearly editorial board meeting about issues and directions for the journal (typically in April)

- d. choose to serve a one-, two-, or three-year term
- e. Make recommendations for nominations to the annual *Best of the Independent Journals in Rhetoric and Composition* collection
- f. Respond to occasional email queries for advice

I am happy to answer any questions and look forward to your response.

Yours,

Brenda Glascott, Portland State University
LiCS Managing Editor

On behalf of
Tara Lockhart, San Francisco State University
Holly Middleton, High Point University
Juli Parrish, University of Denver
Chris Warnick, College of Charleston