

***Peitho Cluster Conversation CFP for Fall 23 Issue: Addressing The Barriers Between Us and that Future: Feminist Activist Coalition Building in Writing Studies***

This Cluster Conversation, *Addressing The Barriers Between Us and that Future: (Feminist) Activist Coalition Building in Writing Studies*, will bring together experienced activists and social justice workers who show up to do antiracist and social justice work in our writing and academic spaces: our writing centers, programs, and classrooms through a feminist space: *Peitho*. We are interested in submissions that will share lived experiences of writing practitioners to provide grounded examples of the tensions and obstacles they have experienced and/or the subversive tactics they have implemented in their writing spaces since states like Oklahoma, Texas and Florida (and the list of states are currently growing) have passed laws banning critical race theory, and scholarship and discussion on gender and identity in higher education. This conversation will serve as a resource, a connective tissue of some sort, for how we build and maintain authentic coalitions within/and outside academia, in *all* writing spaces. Audre Lorde reminds us that the feminist activist movement will be successful when, “We are anchored in our own place and time, looking out and beyond to the future we are creating, and we are part of communities that interact. While we fortify ourselves with visions of the future, we must arm ourselves with accurate perceptions of the barriers between us and that future” (57). Therefore, this Cluster Conversation with *Peitho* aims to benefit a broad range of practitioners and instructors in writing studies, but particularly those at the margins, as well as community and social justice activists. Along with those who entered their writing spaces ready to comfort/encourage/and/or empower their writers/students who were impacted by the ways violence has manifested as a backlash to progress during the Charleston Church shooting, or murder of George Floyd, the hate crime massacre in Buffalo, which killed 10 people and wounded three more in a predominantly Black neighborhood by a white supremacist.

Acknowledging history is *difficult* work, which means that many of us need to acknowledge not only our own privileges but our own participation in exclusionary and violent practices, and how many of us resisting these current state laws have benefitted from the very institutional systems that enable them to be created and recreated. And yet, this type of work, which we see as feminist work, is necessary in coalition-building. Sara Ahmed’s work on feminist activism asserts, “If we start close to home, we open ourselves out. I will show in making sense of things that happen, we also draw on histories of thought and activism that precede us. Throughout I thus reflect on how feminism itself can be understood as an affective inheritance; how are struggles to make sense of realities that are difficult to grasp become part of a wider struggle, a struggle to be, to make sense of being” (*Living A Feminist Life*). This Cluster Conversation takes up this idea of an affective inheritance in order to learn from the struggles feminist rhetoricians, WPAs, WC directors, WAC directors, administrators, instructors, and graduate students are facing in order to better understand the wider struggles of being, to create coalitions of solidarity that bell hooks imagines in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to the Center*, “Solidarity is not the same as support. To experience solidarity, we must have a community of interests, shared beliefs and goals to unite...Support can be occasional, it can be given and just as easily withdrawn. Solidarity requires sustained, outgoing commitment” (67). We ask prospective contributors to reflect on their struggles currently--how they’re doing this work regardless, and the rhetorical strategies and tactics they are using--with a focus on the histories we have inherited, and an eye toward feminist methodologies and practices to move forward, in the hopes of real activist work in academia, of

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coalition-building, of true solidarity, rather than mutable support, highlighting our differences and celebrating what we learn when we work with difference.

Building on the activist work done by WPAs (see Branson and Sanchez; Corfman; Carter-Tod and Sano-Franchini; de Mueller and Ruiz; Green and Bachelor Robinson; Jones et al; Kynard; O'Brien and Pengilly); feminist archival work (see Enoch and Jack; Daugherty; Bessette; Stuckey), the work on rhetorical resilience during periods of what we're calling political "backlash" (see Dwyer; Lisabeth; Martinez; Mutnick et al; Ore; Orbe and Batten; Shorten; Mutnick et al); the call for rethinking our feminist research methodologies and practices (see Gonzales and Kells; Martinez; Patterson), this call acknowledges that most writing practitioners and instructors in writing studies consider the history of backlash that often follows social and political progress. In fact, it is a continual pattern of silencing groups fighting against oppression. While many in our profession, particularly those with activist backgrounds, have entered higher education as a way to liberate ourselves and others through fostering agency, we, too, must reckon with the history of our institutions, and the history of our writing spaces (our programs, our centers, our classrooms). Antiracist, social justice and feminist pedagogies work to support writing practitioners in developing their response to racist agendas that impact our communities in and outside of academia, and to continue coalition building in spite of divisive laws. In this CFP, we call for pedagogical examples that serve writing practitioners that counter structures of racial and gender domination and cultivate coalition building that fully acknowledges and a history of exclusion within the feminist movement. With the limit of our writing spaces in mind, we call for examples exhibiting practices that help instructors and/or students build an awareness to communicate, improve their writing, while critically analyzing their place in society. Submissions might explore but are not limited to:

- How are your writing classrooms/programs/classrooms doing the *work* of antiracist pedagogy, social justice education, LGBTQ activism, during this current wave of backlash? What does the work look like?
- What struggles and challenges have you experienced with coalition-building, institutionally, within community work, local and/or national, or in the field? How might we learn from these struggles, particularly if we are to examine them through a historical approach?
- How have we reckoned with violent and exclusionary state and federal laws and policies in our own activist work? How might "affective inheritance" reshape our activist approaches? How have we actively engaged in creating movements of solidarity, as opposed to support? What new theories and/or research methodologies are needed to do this type of ongoing commitment to justice work?
- How do organizers in writing spaces do justice work in reactionary climates as reflected by regressive laws and policies that directly impact educational practices? How can we build trust, listen, be subversive, and build solidarity across different agendas within these climates? How can we prepare for or respond to the polarizing shifts in attitudes and support that occur within short time frames? What needs will this special issue meet--in research, teaching, service, and/or community work?

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The importance of this special issue can be summed up into one word: reminder. A simple word that holds layers of meaning and significance for many aspects of our professional and personal lives. The cliché “one must learn from the past so as not to repeat it” holds deep significance when doing social justice work. Dea-Jong Kim and Bobbi Olson remind us that “whiteness is not necessarily a product of being white,... [but] rather, an articulation of epistemologies that have been racialized; whiteness as rhetoric” (123). It’s important to understand how these systems developed in order to properly understand the backlash that has been created to keep these systems in place. By identifying and processing how whiteness has been racialized from examining the past, we can begin to see the patterns of backlash and the impact they have had on improvement and forward motion. Through this knowledge, we could potentially begin to predict when these movements of resistance could arise and possibly prepare for their interference. As such, we are not only building on the good works of others, but we could also be creating strategies and techniques that those after us can use to ensure those good works continue.

For this Cluster, contributors are invited to submit 500-word proposals expressing how their piece will contribute to this conversation. The recommended article length is 2000-5000; the editors will also consider reflective shorter pieces, as well as multimodal work. We would also be happy to publish responses to the Summer ’23 special issue, “Coalition as Commonplace: Centering Feminist Scholarship, Pedagogies, and Leadership Practices.” All articles should conform to MLA style and all authors should adhere to [reviewer guidelines for Peitho](#). We are especially interested in featuring contributions and work from BIPOC scholars, those at HBCUs, HSIs, MSIs, and two-year colleges, as well as graduate students. We are also interested in collaborative work, especially if such work is with undergraduate students. If you have questions or would like to brainstorm potential ideas, do not hesitate to contact one of the editors.

Please send 500-word proposals, plus a bibliography and a 150-word biography, to [AddressingtheBarriers@gmail.com](mailto:AddressingtheBarriers@gmail.com) by February 12, 2023.

### **Timeline for Cluster Conversation in Fall 23 *Peitho* issue:**

CFP out and distributed: Week of Dec 12, 2022

Proposals due: February 12, 2023

Decisions to Authors: March 1, 2023

Cluster Conversations Piece Due: June 1, 2023

Feedback & Request for Revision to Authors: July 1, 2023

Revisions Due: August 15, 2023

Any Additional Requests for Revision to Authors: August 30, 2023

Final Revisions Due: September 30, 2023

Publication in Fall Issue: October 30, 2023

### **Criteria:**

- Engagement with the CFP and timeliness and relevance of the manuscript
- Commitment to activist work and research within the field of Writing Studies
- Extending the conversation of feminist rhetoric, theory, and research, as it pertains to activism

Sincerely,

Hillary Coenen, Anna Sicari, Natasha Tinsley, and Lisa Wright

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