

# Letter from the Editors

Michael A. Dover, Editor, and Steven Leopold, Issue Production Manager

Readers of this journal know that many narratives published here contain the voices of two writers. The same is the case for the present Letter from the Editors. This Letter from the Editors reflects the voices of two members of the *Reflections* editorial team: Michael Dover, editor of *Reflections*, and Steven “Leo” Leopold, 2013-2014 Graduate Assistant. Since working together during the last academic year, both of us have re-enlisted, and we will tell you how.

## Michael's Voice:

With his M.S.W. in hand, Leo agreed to serve as the *Reflections* Issue Production Manager. In that capacity he has mastered the use of our open source Scribus desktop publishing software, a robust and free alternative to the proprietary products of Adobe and other firms. In addition, Leo signed on as a Social Worker for the Veterans Administration hospital here in Cleveland.

To that role he brings life experience and experience in the military, about which he shares in his very *Reflections* contribution at the core of this Letter. *Reflections* is not a typo! A *Reflections* piece is one in which we bare much of ourselves, as we seek to write articles that are true to the narrative method described by Josh Kanary in his piece “Show and Tell in *Reflections* Narratives,” the inaugural entry in our Many Ways of Narrative series (Volume 18, Number 4).

I think that *Reflections* describes much of what we publish. But if you disagree and object to this journal using such an outlandish word, please let Johanna Slivinske, our Associate Editor for Issue Quality, know! Johanna has been quietly working to improve the quality of our issues since Fall 2013. She also contributed a narrative of her own to the Special Issue on Mentoring in the Helping Professions, Volume 18, Number 3. Johanna is empowered to stop the presses if she feels there is an issue that is not yet ready to be published. If you have any concerns about issue quality or suggestions for how to improve the quality of this

journal overall, please feel free to write Johanna at [jddetwiler@ysu.edu](mailto:jddetwiler@ysu.edu).

Please also feel free to contact our most important recent source of reinforcements: Cathleen A. Lewandowski, who since July 1 serves as Director and Professor of the Cleveland State University School of Social Work, publisher of this journal. She can be reached at [c.lewandowski@csuohio.edu](mailto:c.lewandowski@csuohio.edu).

I am very pleased that the special issue which Cathleen originally proposed to former editor Eileen Pasztor at California State University Long Beach has now been published. This issue includes a wonderful narrative which Cathleen wrote. I would encourage you to read it carefully. I think you will agree that the person directing our School and overseeing the publication of this journal truly gets it about *Reflections*.

My own version of re-enlistment has been to volunteer to extend my term as editor beyond the initial three-year term to which I was appointed in May 2012. Cathleen has appointed me to serve as editor for two additional years, through May 2017. Further reinforcements have recently arrived in the person of our new editorial assistant Kailie A. Johnson, B.S.W. Candidate, and our 2014-2015 Graduate Assistant, M.S.W. Candidate Alison Murphy, L.S.W. I am fully confident in the future of this wonderful journal.

## Leo's Voice:

I hope the knowledge, practice experiences, and personal accounts in this issue will contribute to helping veterans embrace their proud service and release any ghosts that may linger. Having been privileged to be privy to these accounts, I suppose I should provide one of my own.

My existence of late has been the most challenging, albeit rewarding, experience I've faced since my young, closeted, and terribly anxious self joined the U.S. Air Force to get the “H” out of Ohio, 25 years ago. Eight years growing up in the Air Force was

followed by five years of soul-searching, and soon I found myself back home in Cleveland circa November 2001. I was right where I was supposed to be. And now, here I sit at this computer, working with a wonderful batch of articles for this special issue.

Lately, I've been listening to my Thomas Newman station on Pandora quite a bit. It's been soothing and relaxing, during a period of angst and transition. I've been working these past few years on learning to trust the process. As I started writing this, I'll be damned if a song from the U.S. Army Band and Chorus didn't start playing, with a score from *Saving Private Ryan*. Ahh, sweet serendipity!

I recently graduated from Cleveland State University with my MSW. After getting into the accelerated 11-month MSW program, I received a graduate assistantship. This gave me the opportunity to be involved with this journal. I feel fortunate to have been able to stay on past graduation, and also to see this special issue to fruition. I've always been proud of my veteran status, but I was reinvigorated with the unique culture of the military and veterans a few years back, when I attempted to rejoin after "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

I walked into the recruiter's office, observed him talking and interacting with his co-workers, and was flooded with an environment, culture, and camaraderie that I had largely forgotten about, and sorely missed. I learned they had a program to earn your MSW through the U.S. Army, receive a direct commission, and then go forward as an active-duty social worker. After previously serving eight years, I could finish what I had started 20 years prior. I had just barely made the cut-off for the age limit. I completed the paperwork, and I was on track. My medical records were being reviewed and the next step would be to go to Texas to check out the program, as if I needed selling. And then... roadblock: The fact that I've taken an anti-depressant for the last 10 years disqualified me for a commission.

Old resentments against "the system" rushed towards the surface. Luckily I've since learned tools from sobriety, age, and wisdom that helped me quickly release those to the wind. You see... I

believe resentments are like personal poison; they only hurt the person holding onto them. After my army plans came to an abrupt end, I soon realized that the next best thing would be to work with veterans. So I got into CSU and scored an internship at the VA (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs).

I had the perfect field instructor and environment. She blended professionalism, example, and empathy, while holding me accountable, and making sure I was learning from it all. After graduation, I got a temporary position with the VA, which led to a permanent one. I'm now working with homeless and at-risk vets at the VA, along with community partners. Working with veterans has been a great way for me to reconcile my military past with my new civilian career and existence. It's these two worlds that are so wonderfully woven together in these articles. Several perspectives are given, with explanations on how they can benefit practice.

The military provides experiences that can be hard to comprehend for civilians (with due respect to civilians). But with all of the greatness comes a price for some. I spent six months in Saudi Arabia during the mid-1990s, but lucky for me, it was between major conflicts. I have no idea the depth of what many veterans have been through, but I have a small, respectful taste of it. I know the outfit and can picture the setting. If I can, in the slightest way, help veterans struggling with the price they paid, and release their resentments to the wind, I will have been successful.

As I wrap this up, what is playing on my Pandora? The score from *Band of Brothers*. May all the brothers (and sisters), who gave a piece of themselves, whether peacetime, wartime, years ago, or at present, take the good, leave the rest, and push forward, so their experiences can benefit their comrades. You are not alone.

#### **Michael's Voice:**

Reading Leo's narrative style helped me to realize how lucky those of us who are associated with this journal really are. Each of us who is now involved in the *Reflections* team is engaged in a great deal of emotional labor, although that may not always be obvious.

From the editorial staff to the dozens of active reviewers, we agree not just to edit and review articles, but to open up our hearts and minds to the voices of not only the authors but of the people and communities to whom the authors give voice.

The same is true of you, dear reader. Each time you open up this journal, whether to read the present issue or to peruse the complete and precious collection of articles on our website (now going back to Volume One, Number One), you expose yourself to the possibility of being deeply affected by what you read. Nearly every issue has articles which move readers to laughter or to tears, as well as articles which make us ponder our practice and our profession or to re-think how we work for social justice.

Certainly this was the case for the issues edited by Sonia Leib Abels, and those later edited by Jillian Jimenez and Eileen Pasztor, when this journal was published at California State University Long Beach until Winter 2012.

And certainly this is the case with the present issue, which is one of the most *Reflections* issues I've ever read. It has been a privilege to have worked with Cathleen as she spearheaded this excellent issue, and with Leo as he worked doggedly to get the issue ready for the C.S.W.E. Annual Program Meeting and for publication by this Fall's Veteran's Day, on Tuesday, November 11, 2014.

In Tampa at the conference, I was pleased to once again be offered the opportunity to stand at *Reflections* corner within the the University of Michigan booth in the display area. On one of the days I was there, I counted five times in one day that someone took one look at the art work by Robin Richesson on the cover of this special issue, saw the name of the journal in its familiar block letters, and exclaimed: "Reflections! I love that journal!"

It isn't often that you hear that about an academic journal. The fact that this fine issue was edited by the person, Cathleen A. Lewandowski, who now directs our School of Social Work and oversees the publication of this journal, bodes well for the long-term future of this beloved journal.