

# INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE INSIDE OUT: REFLECTIONS ON PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL INTERSECTIONS

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## Inside, Outside

*Looking in, the dialogue begins,  
exposed to the light,  
bringing the new,  
but keeping what is held.  
Looking out, the dialogue begins,  
exposed to the others,  
bringing forth old and new,  
and emergence is now.*

(Kathy Lay, 4-09)

In the spirit of our call for papers, we wish to share some “inside-outs” of our editing process of this special issue. Outside, on this contemplative Sunday, a Spring rain nourishes the Earth and the dogwoods blossom. Inside, we reflect on how the tears in these narratives, indeed, watered the soil of these stories to bring forth resilience, reclamation, celebration, and contribution to others’ restorative growth: Inside-out wholeness.

The seed for this special issue came from our own experiences of reading *Reflections* and then having articles published in the journal. Having a place to share our “narratives of professional helping” impacted our personal and professional development in powerful ways. Then, as this seed germinated, Erlene experienced sitting with a student as he told his “inside-out” story, and saying to him, “You need to share your story...let’s work on finding a place...” Talking with long-time friend and colleague, Kathy, the idea blossomed: Let’s approach *Reflections* about doing a special issue on “Inside-Out: Reflections on Personal and Professional Intersections.” We did and...

We are grateful for the imagination and openness of Jillian Jimenez, Editor-in-Chief, who promptly embraced this idea. We are grateful for those who make *Reflections* possible; it provides a unique and crucial place for this type of narrative knowledge to be shared. As Muriel Rukeyser said, “The world is made up of stories, not atoms.” Stories are one of the oldest and most effective ways of meaning-making and community-building.

As we edited this special issue, we (Kathy and Erlene) felt community with the storytellers; most of whom we had never met and still have not talked with directly. We resonated with many narratives and were provoked by some. As editors, we collaborated and argued (e.g., “I don’t like this article. I don’t agree with the approach;” “Well, I like it. It’s not my experience or my voice, but I think it is a crucial perspective.”) What a gift to have a partner in this editing/story-gathering endeavor with whom we could constructively disagree and creatively agree.

Mostly, we were humbled by our role as gardeners who received the beautiful bounty of these narratives. And, we appreciate the grace of authors who received reviewers and editors’ feedback as fertilizer to enhance their final fruits. We thank the reviewers who expeditiously gave collegial, instructive, and sensitive feedback. The tone of their reviews respected the story-tellers, while giving critical input that strengthened the clarity and impact of the telling of the story. Also, we acknowledge Wendi McLendon-Covey’s direction and navigation throughout the publishing process.

All these narratives are different in expression of voice and specific incidents. Concomitantly, they are similar in demonstrating intersections of personal and professional; story and story-teller. They capture the common experiences of pain and alienation present in all isms, oppressions, and marginalization. At the same time, they celebrate the common themes present in coming out, claiming wholeness, and celebrating fullness in identity. These insights and illustrations about commonalities of our humanity are even more than what we hoped for in gathering the inside-out narratives. Singly, each narrative is powerful and inspiring; together, they offer an amazing life-labyrinth of hope and beauty.

Natalie Clark's interweaving of intersectional scholarship with her personal story is both a stand-alone narrative and a metaphor of this special issue on intersections. Similarly, Dana Grossman Lehman's narrative is emblematic of this issue, as she tells her story about collecting the stories of Holocaust survivors—and the impact of those stories on her own life-story. Dina Gamboni's "From Meatballs to Matzoh Balls," about finding intersections in her multiple ethnic identities, resonates with Natalie and Dana's narratives. (And, there is a cosmic message in the fact that West Coast Dina and East Coast Dana have such intersections in identities.)

Likewise, Shelly Werts and Colsaria M. Henderson evocatively share an every-woman story through their accounts of abuse, anger, action, empathy, and advocacy. On the surface, Andrea L. Bell's reflections on her experiences with the "Burning Man" subculture and Shamont Hussey's reflections on "Church Burns" have little in common, except for images the titles evoke. However, Andrea's experiences of alienation in her youth—and, then finding community resonate with Shamont's alienation from the church community of his childhood.

Then, Shamont's reflection on his coming out experience and the burns from religion intersects with Ann M. Callahan's theme of authenticity through resilient healing—both because of and despite religious experiences. Similarly, Mark Geisler's reflections on

coming-out as a search for authenticity links with Ann's narrative and Lori Messinger's reflections on her integrated identities as a lesbian, white person, and academic. Likewise, Lori's narrative intersects with Barbara McQueen and Melinda Pilkinton's articles about insider to outsider experiences as White women in predominantly Black educational settings and teaching-learning about race; dynamics of inclusion and exclusion.

Finally, Jay Miller's narrative includes how his birth-story was impacted by racism and intersected with his experience of being in foster care, which formed the possibilities for his current social work professional role. Jay's story intersects with Eileen Mayers Pasztor and Monica McCurdy's article on the intersections of their parenting roles, including as adoptive and foster parents, and professional child welfare roles. Eileen and Monica's stories intersect back again with Natalie's reflections on navigating her path as single mother, community worker, and academic. So, this special issue offers a garden labyrinth of storying and re-storying.

We, the editors and authors, invite you to meander with us through this narrative-garden-labyrinth, and find your own intersections. We hope that you will join this conversation-community that only stories can evoke. We hope you resonate, argue, and engage with these narratives. Finally, we hope that these reflections will inspire and empower you to claim and celebrate your own stories—inside-out and outside-in—as you help others claim and celebrate theirs, too. In this communal path, may we all arrive at a center of integrated re-storying wholeness.

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