

**Call for Chapters for an Edited Collection:**  
**Grassroots Activisms: Public Rhetorics in Localized Contexts**  
**Editors Lisa L. Phillips, Sarah Warren-Riley, and Julie Collins Bates**

**Title:** *Grassroots Activisms: Public Rhetorics in Localized Contexts*

**Timeline:**

- September 1, 2020 – Chapter proposals due
  - October 1, 2020 – Notifications/acceptances sent out
  - January 15, 2021 – Complete chapters due
  - May 1, 2021 – Revised chapters due
  - August 1, 2021 - Manuscript sent to publisher for external review
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From large-scale national/international marches, boycotts, protests, and social media hashtag movements to smaller localized demonstrations, petition drives, sewing/knitting/making or “die-in” sessions, people employ a wide range of activist methods to raise awareness and attempt to bring change in the face of injustice or oppression. We often witness how such activism unfolds in powerful ways in mass settings as they are covered by global media (such as #BlackLivesMatter, the Arab Spring, the Occupy Movement, #MeToo, Women’s Marches, and climate strikes). It’s less common to recognize, much less celebrate, how such activism unfolds in smaller scales in local contexts (for example, activism that takes place in city halls, homeless shelters, church basements, border camps, and schools) in response to global and/or local exigencies. Local grassroots activist efforts are, despite their powerful and innovative measures, often overlooked as sites of/for critical analysis. This overshadowing of smaller-scale, localized activist labors may unintentionally obscure the important rhetorical tactics enacted by people who attempt to make change in their own communities. As a result, this collection specifically focuses on what might be learned and shared by examining instances of local grassroots activism.

*Grassroots activism*, as defined in the context of this edited collection, are diverse localized responses to emergent or ongoing social injustices that result in collective action both online and on the ground in a specific community. Grassroots activism originates in numerous ways. In some instances, people take up global issues in localized contexts to foster change in their own communities and beyond. For example, local activists who wish to address racial injustices (e.g., #BlackLivesMatter), sexual harassment (e.g., #MeToo), or climate change (e.g., #FridaysForFuture) may adopt a “globalized” activist phenomenon, placing emphasis on localized experiences, knowledges, policies, and more. In other cases, people respond to specific local injustices, divorced from global contexts, that compel them to act. For example, the urgency of responding to contaminated water within their community compelled many Flint, Michigan, residents to assemble and intervene. Other instances of grassroots activism intermingle the global with the local, as in the case of the current COVID-19 crisis, in which interdependent groups are mobilizing to provide mutual aid and support on both a local and global scale.

Importantly, local grassroots activism emerges in response to specific exigencies and are shaped by individual, particular, and localized constraints. Certainly, understanding the complexities of activism on any level can be a confounding rhetorical problem. Learning how people take up activism at the local level allows us to present examples that parse that complexity into

manageable sites of analysis, which may yield insights that might not be recognized in examinations of larger-scale movements. It also allows us to highlight how activism is carried out and composed in localized public and private spheres so that others can engage in such efforts or undertake coalitional work to meaningfully support others when the need arises. Coalitional work, as Walton, Moore, and Jones (2019) assert, “must be done to reach inclusion and pursue justice” and to support practices that include and strengthen marginalized perspectives (pp. 8–10).

In this edited collection, we hope to contribute to understandings of how social change is enacted by focusing on the ways these efforts take shape on the local level. To do so, the collection will include chapters that illustrate how global and local exigencies are engaged within specific communities. We also are interested in studies that offer not only discussions of “successful” activist efforts but also analyses of what readers can learn from those instances where “success” is indeterminate, incremental, or perhaps not readily apparent at all. Beyond this, we believe it is crucial to amplify the work of community activists and learn from their savvy, locally and culturally-situated rhetorical tactics. Furthermore, although the larger field of rhetoric and writing studies widely has been complicit in injustice and marginalization, particularly in its citation practices and perpetuation of patriarchy (as discussed by many technical and professional communication scholars such as Haas, 2012; Walton, Moore, & Jones, 2019; Williams & Pimentel, 2014) this collection recognizes that scholars *can* and *should* do more to engage with social justice and expand what we value and whose work we deem worthy of study.

As such, this collection builds upon the work of many who have sought to highlight the rhetorics of activism in a variety of spaces and places (Alexander, Jarratt, & Welch, 2018; Blair & Nickoson, 2018; Foust, Pason & Zittlow Rogness, 2017; Hesford & Kozol, 2005; Kahn & Lee, 2010, 2019; Walton, Moore, & Jones, 2019), by focusing on how localized contexts both shape and constrain activist responses, with a particular emphasis on how those constraints are navigated by and/or affect marginalized communities. Although several collections have included chapters that highlight localized activist efforts (e.g., Ackerman & Coogan, 2013; Hesford, Licona, & Teston, 2005; Williams & Pimentel, 2014), there has not yet been a collection in rhetoric and writing studies that focuses entirely on analysis of grassroots activism, let alone one that pays attention to efforts that are historically marginalized and/or disregarded.

Specifically, we seek chapters that highlight localized responses to social, economic, racial, environmental, climate, or other injustices and how different groups identify local concerns and organize, collaborate, and assemble to address such situations. This collection asks contributors to highlight the complexities of such activism through examinations of localized activist efforts in ways that can prove useful to others who wish to take up this kind of work in their own communities as well as to scholars who study activist rhetorics. We also wish to introduce upper-level undergraduate and graduate students to these topics and their intricacies. This collection will provide examples of what such social justice work entails and exposes by focusing on small-scale, grassroots activism as valuable sites of inquiry/resistance. Across the globe, oppressed people have resisted power differentials, advocated for themselves and their communities, and engaged in activism with varying degrees of success. In this current political moment, we feel the urgency to home in on and amplify tactics to redress hegemonic oppression, particularly those undertaken by activists marginalized by race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, disability, and more. Ultimately, our goal is to support social justice-oriented activists, scholars, and students who do important work within their communities, making that work more visible and viable within and beyond academia.

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## Chapter Formats

Just as activists have myriad ways to address local exigencies, we hope this edited collection will illustrate diverse approaches to scholarship focused on local grassroots activisms. To that end, this edited collection will include shorter profiles of community activists, activist organizations, and/or coalitional efforts intermixed with longer, researched chapters. In addition to success stories of grassroots activisms, we encourage contributions that grapple with “failure” and those that emphasize incremental change that results from ongoing activist efforts. Furthermore, we seek contributions that explicitly recognize, value, and amplify the efforts of underrepresented and/or often marginalized communities.

### *Researched Chapters*

Longer, researched chapters (from 6,000 to 8,000 words) may include a variety of approaches including:

- Theoretical examinations
- Case studies
- Pedagogical applications
- A combination of any of these

Longer, researched chapters should engage in specific, localized contexts and exigencies as well as relevant scholarship, preferably across a variety of fields that may include but are not limited to rhetoric and writing studies, technical and professional communication, community literacies, intersectional feminisms, disability studies, environmental studies, and critical race studies.

### *Activist/Organization/Coalition Profiles*

Shorter (no longer than 3,000-word) profiles of activist(s), community organizations, or coalitions focused on specific, localized efforts may take the form of:

- First-person narrative essays
- Journalistic-style profiles that include quotes directly from the community activist(s), organizations, or coalition members involved
- Interview-based articles with the person who proposes the chapter asking questions and the community activist(s) or representative of the local organization or coalition members offering answers

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## Questions to Consider

Submissions might consider, but are not limited to, the following questions in relation to engaging grassroots activisms and localized activist efforts:

### *Recognizing and amplifying grassroots activist tactics*

- How, when, and why do grassroots activisms take place?
- What emergent, unique, or divergent forms of activisms are at work in localized contexts?
- What “counts” as activisms? What types of activisms are sanctioned? What types of activisms are erased? What types are labeled as hostile, uncivil, disruptive, deviant, criminal, etc.?

- What stories inspire and/or shape grassroots activists?
- What tactics do local activist movements use to sustain momentum and/or keep volunteers energized?
- Why do some grassroots activisms grow while others fizzle out?

#### *Affordances, limitations, and effects of local activisms*

- Who is able to participate in local activisms? Who isn't?
- How do positionality and embodied experience affect who participates, leads, and/or benefits from grassroots activisms?
- Whose knowledges are valued in local activist efforts? Which activist practices (by which bodies) are valued and/or ignored?
- How do local activists contribute to larger conversations about social, economic, racial, environmental, climate, or other injustices, and how and when do the perspectives of marginalized community members inform those conversations?
- How do issues of access—to tools, resources, audience, etc.—affect grassroots activist efforts?
- How do factors such as cultural or cross-cultural contexts, existing authority structures, and systemic oppression affect local activist efforts?
- What role do outside influencers have on local activist efforts?

#### *Pedagogical applications*

- How might students better understand how to “do” activisms in a socially just manner?
- How can the work of local activists be brought into and ethically engaged with in our classrooms?
- How do local activists operating outside of school contexts learn about and take up activist tactics?

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## **Audience**

This collection is designed to reach a fairly broad audience of scholars and teachers, upper-level undergraduate and graduate students, and community activists and concerned citizens. We expect these chapters will be relevant to scholars, teachers, and students in a variety of areas, including but not limited to rhetoric and writing studies, technical and professional communication, community literacies, intersectional feminisms, disability studies, environmental studies, and critical race studies. We ask that prospective authors write for both upper-level undergraduate and community member audiences such that discussions of key terms, theoretical and/or methodological framing, and so forth are made plain to ensure readability and comprehension.

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## **Submission Guidelines for Chapters**

### *Researched Chapters*

Individuals should submit a 500-word proposal (not including citations) with the following:

- Name and contact email
- Title of the proposed piece
- Overall topic/focus of the proposed chapter
- Approach or method the proposed article will take to examine the overall topic

- Connection of the focus and approach/method to the theme of the edited collection
- If the proposed piece uses images in addition to written text, include a description of the copyright concerns and how the chapter author will address that concern

#### *Activist/Organization/Coalition Profiles*

Individuals should submit a 350-word proposal with the following:

- Name and contact email
- Title of the proposed piece
- Type of profile (first-person narrative, journalistic article, or Q&A)
- Activist(s), organization, or coalitional effort being profiled and where they are located
- Overview of the local issue the activist(s), organization, or coalition addresses and why
- Brief rationale for why this activist(s)/organization/coalition should be profiled
- Whether photographs are available of the activist(s)/organizational/coalitional efforts, including a description of copyright concerns and how the chapter author will address those concerns

**Deadline: September 1, 2020, for proposals, email as an attachment to Julie Collins Bates (jcbates@millikin.edu), Lisa L. Phillips (Lisa.Phillips@ttu.edu), and Sarah Warren-Riley (sarah.warrenriley@utrgv.edu)**

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#### **References**

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