CONTENTS

Introduction

JUSTICE AND PEACE ARE EVERYONE'S INTEREST
Or, the Case for a New Paradigm

During a recent school break, I found myself in a conversation with another mother at an indoor hotel swimming pool. Our young sons had befriended each other in the water and were entertaining themselves with a competition for the best jump into the deep end. Between judging the biggest splash or the wildest midair dance move, we discovered our different careers were leading us to grapple with strikingly similar questions about justice, writing, and free speech. This kindred spirit turned out to be Joy Peskin, the editorial director of Ferrar, Straus and Giroux for Young Readers, an imprint of Macmillan Children's Publishing Group. Joy published an essay in *Publishers Weekly* titled "Why the Milo Yiannopoulos Book Deal Tarnishes the Publishing Industry" (2017). Her essay offers a radical contemporary commentary on the politics of publishing and hate speech—a piece that gives voice to an important perspective shared by many in the publishing world. It also got her in hot water.

If you weren't otherwise familiar with Milo Yiannopoulos, consider yourself lucky. He is an editor at Breitbart who takes pleasure in being the "supervillain of the internet" in his explicit and outrageous promotion of racism, misogyny, and other forms of violence. His dangerous rhetoric has earned him a popular following primarily among disillusioned young white American men who are quick to scapegoat society's most vulnerable and marginalized as the reason for their own hardships. When Simon & Schuster offered him a deal to publish his book *Dangerous,* the publishing house found itself the center of significant controversy as people disgusted by his message came out to protest. At the same time, many liberals found themselves torn: should they protest the publishing of this book in rejection of its vile content, or should they support his right to free speech?

While many concluded that Yiannopoulis has a right to publish his views, no matter how unpopular, Peskin argues that "when a major publisher legitimizes old-fashioned hate and lies rebranded as alternative,

our authors lose, our books lose, and our country loses" (2017). Indeed, as Joy and I discussed, everyone has a right to free speech, but not everyone has a right to a book contract. Publishers have not only a right but also an ethical obligation to determine which ideas to promote through publication and which to reject. Antifascists take this view a step further and argue that there should be no platform for hate, the ultimate ends of which are exclusion, violence, and genocide. No one should have the right to incite genocide. When one voice is calling for the death of the other, there is no common ground for democratic speech or debate (Bray 2017).

Scholar-activists Christopher M. Tinson and Javiera Benavente make an important case for the need to "distinguish between free speech claims that promote justice and those that protect the right to any kind of speech at all, especially speech of the willfully uninformed or intentionally harmful variety" (2017). Citing a willingness to engage, a commitment to getting and staying informed, a commitment to developing a shared understanding of shared history, and a commitment to "collective courage"—which requires listening as much as it does speaking—as characteristics of democratic speech, Tinson and Benevente make it is easy to see that Yiannopoulis' speech does not fit the bill. Hate speech by definition is antithetical to democratic speech. Indeed, Peskin argues convincingly that Yiannopoulis is "more than a provocateur. He is a terrorist, shouting 'fire' in a crowded theater. The fire is otherness—that which is not white, Christian, and male; the crowded theater is America" (2017).

If being tasked with editing a book for publication that contains hate speech, Joy and I discussed, an editor would face an ethical dilemma: if their job is to make the text better, wouldn't it be unethical to help an author be more effective in communicating their racism or misogyny, for example? You can see how our conversation quickly turned to writing centers. This dilemma is precisely at the center of many debates among writing center tutors: how should they respond when a student writer is working on a text containing violent views? Just as the publishing industry does not have a universal standard in response to such a question (thankfully, public pressure compelled Simon & Schuster eventually to withdraw the book deal from Yiannopoulis, although a copy of the manuscript with the editor's notes has been leaked), the writing center field does not have a universal answer to this question either. Indeed, just as Peskin experienced significant pushback from others in her field for advocating against the publishing of Yiannopoulis's book, folks who argue on behalf of a values-based, rather than a writer-based, approach to writing centers are not universally well received either.

The current paradigm of writing centers, I argue, leaves us in a bind. Our privileging of writers over righteousness risks in both small and large ways our field's complicity in enabling or even promoting systems of injustice many of us personally reject. In her critical history of writing centers, "'Our Little Secret': A History of Writing Centers, Pre- to Post-Open Admissions," Elizabeth H. Boquet juxtaposes the ways many writing center people "find it difficult to believe that the writing center may be a site of regulation rather than liberation, though it is often that" yet at the same time fail to "envision it as a source of radical or liberatory pedagogy, though it is often that" (1999, 479). Reading Kenneth Bruffee's foundational work as "foreshadowing the radical thrust of later writing center theorists" (475), she equates the unanticipated oppressive or liberatory outcomes of everyday writing center work with Foucauldian accidents and asks what we are failing to envision for writing centers. A reading of history since Boquet's penning of "Our Little Secret" reveals that this unwitting ambivalence has continued. And although our radical thrust also continues, I argue, to build momentum, it remains, to draw on the language offered by Jackie Grutsch McKinney (2013), "peripheral" to the stories that dominate the field about what writing center work is, or better yet, what it *could* be.

We do have radical stories to tell. Nancy Maloney Grimm (1999) has offered us a powerful postmodern critique of the cultures of individualism that shape our institutions and our writing centers—a critique that continues to inspire many in our field. Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pelkowski (1999) have cautioned us against the colonialist assumptions underlying Stephen North's (1984) prevailing idea of a writing center and many of our individual centers' stated missions. Anne DiPardo (1992) has shared stories that compel us to recognize the importance of conscious engagement across racial differences in writing sessions. Harry Denny (2010) has provided a broad examination of identity politics, including race and ethnicity, class, sex and gender, and nationality as it relates to one-to-one mentoring. Jay Sloan and Andrew Rihn (2013) have called on us to critically examine heteronormativity and homophobia in writing center work. Neil Simpkins has extended this work to focus our attention in particular on the needs of trans students in the writing center (blog post to *Another Word: From the Writing Center at the University of Wisconsin–Madison*, November 18, 2013). Rebecca Day Babcock (2015) has provided a comprehensive analysis of the field's scholarship on disabilities in the writing center, identifying the need for more significant empirical studies, particularly about tutors and directors with disabilities. Frankie Condon (2007) has given us the imperative

to question white privilege and to see antiracism work in all its forms as central to writing centers. Karen Rowan and I, along with contributors to our edited collection, have called on the field to examine and sustain dialogues about institutionalized racism in writing centers (Greenfield and Rowan 2011b). Vershawn Ashanti Young (2011), specifically, has compelled us to resist dominant racist assumptions about language practices and to explore code meshing as a just alternative. Beth Godbee and Moira Ozias (2011) have offered frameworks for engaging in writing center activism. Boquet (2014) has challenged the writing center community to see our work as a potential intervention against deadly violence, while Rasha Diab (2008) has invited us to be proactive in creating conditions for peace. Indeed, when we flip through the pages of our journals and conference programs, we can see with excitement an increasing number of scholars and practitioners engaging questions of difference, oppression, and justice.

Implicit in this body of scholarship, be it through the lens of racism, sexism, homophobia, or other forms of violence, is an increasing recognition that the work of writing centers is implicated in these various systems of oppression and that we have an ethical responsibility to intervene purposefully. And yet, despite the growing number of these revolutionary arguments—arguments that call on us to be critically conscious of our identities, to examine unjust systems, and to seek opportunities for transformative action—the dominant discourse and practices of the field remain largely unchanged. Indeed, despite assertions by scholars such as Frankie Condon, for example, that we must consider antiracism work not to be "strange and tangential" but rather "central and pressing" (2007, 19) in writing centers, the work of antiracism and anti-oppression broadly remains, for the most part, in the margins as many struggle with how to put these ideas into practice. Though more prevalent and visible than even a decade ago, scholarship related to resisting oppression or building towards justice and peace in and through writing centers has not fundamentally unsettled the dominant stories of practice in the field.

We can see this tension between justice work and the field's status quo when the arguments made by people who direct what Denny has referred to broadly as "critical/activist" writing centers (2005, 40) about their values and visions are juxtaposed with the commonplace beliefs that circulate unquestioned in our everyday discourses. For example, despite Brian Fallon's (2011) powerful and well-received consideration of the fundamental value of tutor empathy and Grimm's (1999; 2011) enduring arguments about the need for the field to take collective

responsibility for changing unjust institutions rather than merely acculturating individual students, respected scholars such as Les Perlman can still count on being able to make, without any controversy, comments like the one he made in a 2016 interview posted on the *WLN: Journal of Writing Center Scholarship* blog:

> *What students need* is to internalize the hidden conversations that are always present in any piece of writing. Writing tutors, by asking questions, making objections, requesting clarification—that is, being a reader that is present—help student[s] define and then internalize the reader who is almost always absent. *That is the writing tutor's most important and extremely vital role.* (emphasis added)

Indeed, it is safe to assume that many if not most writing center folks agree with this characterization. It conforms to what Grutsch McKinney, borrowing from Jean-Francois Lyotard, calls a "grand narrative" of writing center work (2013, 11). We recognize its familiar allusions to Kenneth Bruffee's (1984) celebrated theories of conversation, its implicit privileging of the experience of the reader, and its focus on the writing processes of individual students, and we are quick to agree with its praise for the valuable work of tutors. But critical/activist scholars have been asking us to do the radical work of questioning what we assume students most need, challenging implicit biases of readers, rethinking our beliefs about the work tutors do in relationship to the writer, and indeed imagining more ambitious possibilities—such as resisting injustice or promoting peace—for what a writing center as a community of people can achieve.

So how is it that our radical stories and our foundational assumptions remain in tension? Why are the critical/activist arguments embraced as important topics of interest without fundamentally disrupting business as usual? I argue that while the growing body of anti-oppression scholarship suggests a positive and hopeful direction for writing centers, such work does not merely represent an activist adaptation of existing writing center theories and pedagogies but rather emerges out of a *fundamentally different paradigm,* one predicated on a radical reading of the world. While the work of critical/activist scholars is implicitly rooted in this new paradigm, we have not yet explicitly named it and its influence on our vision. Instead, critical/activist scholars continue to assert new ideas and methodologies without accounting comprehensively for the change in world-view upon which such assertions depend. And would-be supporters across the field fail to fully hear these critical arguments because they are understandably interpreting them through their own different worldviews. We are trying to fit a square peg into a round hole, as it were.

We can see this substantial internal miscommunication play out in the field in any number of ways. For example, we see two paradigms clash when student presenters at a recent Northeast Writing Centers Association conference attempt earnestly to draw on the radical possibilities in the work of Grutsch McKinney (2013) to describe a "peripheral" story of their work with ESL writers yet end up articulating a list of familiar assumptions and practices about their sessions that reinforce a grand narrative about such writers as inherently Other. Without access to a different paradigm, it is hard to tell a different story. We see two paradigms clash when writing center directors, working hard to invite their new tutors to engage critically with writing center scholarship on social justice and develop their own philosophies and pedagogies, are frustrated when at the end of the term tutors have by and large consumed common writing center practices, such as playing the devil's advocate, as the only means of engaging with ideological conflict in sessions rather than reinventing these practices. Without knowledge of a different paradigm, it is hard to imagine different practices. We see two paradigms clash when writing center scholars express genuine disgust at racism or homophobia but continue unintentionally to engage in and even celebrate practices that critical/activist scholars have explicitly denounced as perpetuating violence, such as privileging commonplace interpretations of code switching. Without the possibilities of a new paradigm, it is hard to imagine possibilities for sustainable change in action. We see two paradigms clash when anti-oppression efforts are relegated to "special-interest" groups rather than engaged throughout the field. Without a new paradigm, I argue, it is impossible for the field to take hold of transformative justice work.

For radical theories and methodologies to effectively take hold in writing centers, our task requires nothing less than to initiate an entire deconstruction and reinvention of the field. To do so is certainly a difficult task because the complete overhaul of a discipline is a massive and controversial undertaking to say the least but also because we lack the language necessary to describe this process. We need explicit language to comprehensively describe the political assumptions that dominate our field, assumptions that, despite our intentions to the contrary, provide a logic that leads us to continue business as usual. And we need explicit language to comprehensively describe the political assumptions that underlay the arguments by critical/activist writing center people who are deeply troubled by business as usual. Without a common language to fully articulate both our diversity of perspectives and our shared vision of change, we will never bridge the gap. We will

continue to tell contradictory stories about writing centers. And we will never, collectively, make good on the radical promise of writing centers. That promise, I argue, is our ethical imperative.

Unapologetically ambitious in scope, *Radical Writing Center Praxis* is an argument for and an explication of a new paradigm for the writing center field. Critical of the ways the field has failed to recognize consciously and name explicitly the necessarily political underpinnings of its theories and practices, I challenge both the conservative values that have rendered writing centers complicit actors in numerous systems of oppression but also the failure of dominant liberal writing center practices to engage in transformative change making. Indeed, I argue that when relativism and neutrality are held up as virtues, the liberal practices that emerge serve to facilitate the very injustices many writing center people in theory despise. Accordingly, despite our many successes, the collective influence writing centers are having on the world is simultaneously violent. None of us, certainly, wants to facilitate violence. The question is, How do we come to recognize when we are facilitating violence, and how do we stop? How do we confidently create peace instead?

This book provides a comprehensive vocabulary for describing the contemporary state of the field in political terms and builds an argument using that vocabulary for what I present as a radical alternative for what our field can become. I use the term *politics* not to refer to specific social issues or contemporary elections but rather ideologies and practices rooted in beliefs about the nature and value of *power*. Drawing on the work of radical theorists and educators including Judith Butler, Henry Giroux, Paulo Freire, Ira Shor, Donaldo Macedo, Patricia Bizzell, bell hooks, Lucien Demaris, Cedar Landsman, and others, the theory of radicalism I put forth is rooted in ecological, humanizing, and liberatory values. Arguing that all "truths" are human constructions (all things consist in ideology), that power and authority are neither inherently good or bad (but rather terrains of struggle and potentialities to be exercised), and that ethical engagement transpires through human agency and reflective action, I propose love, justice, peace, compassion, community, and other similar values as an ethics to be engaged explicitly and actively. In doing so, I build a case for radical praxis compelling writing center folks—directors, scholars, tutors, students, and others—to recognize our daily activities as directly tied up in the stakes of ensuring the future of life on the planet. Necessarily, I examine the ways our beliefs and practices fail to align and propose ways to close that gap.

A radical praxis itself to be sure, this book encompasses the theoretical and the practical, a rigorous analysis of the larger ethical questions

and an accessible offering of tangible everyday applications. Emphatic about the ethical imperative for a radical paradigm, this book is not prescriptive in its final answers about what a radical writing center field must look like or in its arguments about how individual centers, directors, and tutors might interpret its meanings. Indeed, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Our experiences and strategies are necessarily and substantially contextual; the particularities of our navigations and negotiations will be different. Rather, the version of radicalism I propose requires a conscious, collective, ongoing, participatory dialogue within and beyond the field, the outcomes of which I cannot surely predict. Instead, I offer a common language for such dialogue, build a case for this radical engagement, and suggest possibilities for practices meant to inspire and spark the imagination of the field's scholars and practitioners.

Necessarily, what I envision is a long and perhaps never-ending process—one full of struggle, reflection, experimentation, messiness, and joy. This process entails looking back at our history—our scholarship, our practices, and our politics—in order to come to terms with our complicated origins and to more fully understand our present. This process requires that we look beyond our field to grapple with the important work and questions created by those engaged in various social movements, transformative projects, and varied disciplinary research that can provide new insights into our own experiences and inspire new possibilities for developing our work in writing centers. This process also requires that we take a courageous look inward—at the state of the field's scholarship and practices and at our own individual assumptions and behaviors—in order to gather a full and true picture of the strengths we must hone and the failings we must remedy. Finally, this process entails setting a new agenda—individually and collectively—a common language and vision for the field with countless local translations given our varied and diverse institutional contexts.

Our various institutional contexts are significant and will inform how each of us comes to engage with and enact radical praxes. During the two decades I have been involved in writing centers, I have been a tutor, teacher, consultant, or writing and speaking center director in small, medium, and large colleges and universities; in liberal arts and vocational schools; in urban and rural settings; in deeply conservative-leaning and liberal-leaning schools and schools with explicitly radical ambitions; in community-based nonprofit centers, struggling public high schools, and wealthy private international boarding schools; in coed and single-sex (women's) institutions; in secular and religious

schools; in primarily white institutions and institutions serving primarily students of color; and in centers in four states and nearly a dozen countries spanning four continents.

In these varied contexts, I have experienced everything from curiosity and enthusiastic support for my radical politics and ambitions to resistance and downright abusive and illegal retaliation. Accordingly, I have learned many lessons along the way about the nature of political struggle, the complexity of negotiation, and the inequities of risk involved and have come to define radicalism in increasingly more nuanced terms. The challenges I have experienced have not weakened my fidelity to radicalism but have rather strengthened my resolve and affirmed my convictions as to the righteousness of such work. I have also learned that radicalism looks very different for different people in different times and places. For those with exceptional privilege, radicalism is often visible and bold and direct. For those targeted by the violence of the oppressive systems radicalism aims to destroy, survival and self-love are themselves radical acts. I emphasize this point to invite all readers to recognize their own radical potential and to assure you radicalism does not depend on finding yourself in the "right" context but rather offers a way to understand and negotiate, on your own terms, whatever context you may be in.

Given the chapter themes, the organization of the book might seem at a glance to move broadly from theoretical to increasingly more pragmatic questions. Seeking to model a radical praxis in the presentation of the text itself, however, the book in fact holds theory and practice in a purposeful tension throughout. The theoretical arguments motivating the earlier chapters are derived from specific, concrete observations about writing center practice; the explorations of pedagogy in the later chapters necessarily prompt new theoretical questions. Indeed, the structure of the book could best be understood as an iterative process bringing the reader closer and closer to the heart of radical praxis. The logic behind the organization itself is a progression of guiding the reader through an examination and dismantling of the dominant paradigm and the rebuilding of a new one.

To those ends, the first chapter, "The Politics of Contemporary Writing Centers," defines and offers politics as a framework through which to understand the history and status of the field, critiquing both the conservative and liberal values and practices that dominate it. Ultimately, this chapter makes a case for dismantling the old paradigm. The second chapter, "A Radical Politics for Writing Centers," offers a new paradigm in its place. I define and build an argument in favor of a

radical politics and in so doing call on the field to boldly engage questions of ethics in its theories and practices. The remaining chapters walk the reader through a process of rebuilding the field from this new radical paradigm, exploring in turn the questions of *why*, *what*, and *how*? The third chapter, "Making a Better World," asks *why* we should do writing center work and offers, through an examination of theory and practice, a process of creating a radical vision and mission for writing centers. The fourth chapter, "Love-Inspired Praxis," asks *what* a radical writing center is. By considering a range of common disciplinary frameworks for locating meaning and practice, I offer a process of defining writing center work anew while simultaneously problematizing the activity of definition itself through a radical lens. Finally, the fifth chapter, "Radical Writing Center Practices," asks *how* we do radical writing center work. By examining radical principles and stories of practice, this chapter offers a starting point for the field in engaging new language and conceptions of writing center pedagogy.

Given the book's movement from past to present to future in deconstructing and rebuilding the field, the primary intended audience for this book is curious yet seasoned scholars, researchers, directors, teachers, and tutors currently engaged in writing studies broadly or writing center work specifically, as well as folks who collaborate regularly with writing centers or who do similar work in related programs including speaking centers, reading centers, multimedia centers, teaching and learning centers, English language resource centers, and other tutoring spaces. These seasoned readers will find challenging arguments to unsettle assumptions we often take for granted and new opportunities to imagine the potential of our work. Many in this audience are our leaders who play a substantial role in guiding the direction of the discipline—from regional to international representatives in our professional organizations, to hosts of our conferences, to journal editors and manuscript referees, to other people who control the agenda, the priorities, the discourse, and the grand narratives of the field. Many in this audience are also the field's everyday practitioners, people coordinating centers and programs or offering professional- or peer-tutoring resources at their institutions.

The values many in the writing center field hold dear, such as love, peace, and empathy, align with the same values at the foundation of radicalism. Often a primary obstacle keeping us from making the leap into radicalism is a desire for greater resources, support, and ideas for how to turn our values into tangible action. If compassionate scholars can have access to information about the ways systems of oppression are

deeply embedded structures that shape our everyday lives, and tools for how to resist and recreate the world in practice, our potential for positive intervention will increase exponentially. The writing center field, because of its size and will, I argue, holds mighty potential to change the world.

Most of us committed to personal growth generally and justice work specifically recognize the rich learning potential that comes from embracing the discomfort we might feel when having our assumptions or behaviors called into question. Anne Ellen Geller, Frankie Condon, and Meg Carroll (2011) draw on Roland Barthes's notion of the *punctum*—a prick of shame—that "breaks through our notion of the normal and the civil" (Geller et al 2011, 108) to explore a painful but necessary experience for engaging in justice work (they write about anti-racism specifically). Significantly, they note that the "stories we learn the most from are the stories most difficult to narrate, precisely because they exceed the bounds of civility, of polite interest, because they prick both conscience and consciousness, because they make visible that which has been hidden from us or that which we have attempted to hide from ourselves and others" (107). Their description resonates with my own experience as a learner. I know I am risking further vulnerability by putting my thoughts onto paper, and I know my readers are also taking a similar risk by engaging and reflecting. So if you feel a prick, seize the moment for what it promises: the opportunity to "name, interrogate, and intervene" (108) in the injustice otherwise at work. This is hard but necessary labor, and it is my intention therefore that the criticisms and challenges I offer throughout be received not as antagonistic but as committed and hopeful invitations. This book is meant to be both clarifying and inspirational, a model to encourage people to take risks to examine what is in their hearts and to take the leap together into radical praxis.

In addition to the courage it takes to look inward and grapple with opportunities to change our own thinking and behaviors, radicalism on the whole takes courage because by definition it speaks truth to power and will always be met with resistance. It is easy to internalize that resistance and to question whether we are doing the right thing or whether our vision of change is possible. For readers inclined towards this work but fearful of stepping into it wholeheartedly, this book is meant to provide enthusiastic support for you to unapologetically engage the ethics of writing center work and to take steps to build the better world you envision. If it is permission to be bold you are looking for, you'll find it here!

For readers who already have a background in social justice work, peace building, or other radical frameworks, be you new or seasoned

directors, scholars, researchers, teachers, tutors, or collaborators, this book provides us with a language for extending the conversation beyond the closed spaces of our special-interest groups and out into the field for more meaningful dialogue with people across our political differences to increase our opportunities for real, transformative engagement. It can be tempting, particularly in the hostile contemporary climate of partisan politics in the United States, to dismiss those who disagree with us or whose practices seem ignorant or hopeless. Certainly, some may treat us this way. More often, however, we all have more complicated stories under the surface. Many folks are yearning for something different but are stuck. This book offers a new framework for engaging our colleagues rather than feeling isolated, ineffective, or even at odds. Together, with this language, we can better translate theory into practice as a larger community.

Included in this language is a conceptual framework for bridging the gaps between and among the various oppression-related "topics" (racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, language prejudice, etc.) around which our current scholarship tends to be structured. In addition to enabling our work to be intersectional, this paradigm will allow relationships among like-minded scholars and practitioners to form more readily and for conversations across the field to be more productive. This book offers a language from which we can connect our work and speak with a collective voice in the field. For radical newcomers, the book describes commitments and desires already swirling in your hearts, enabling you to move forward with your work in writing centers with greater reassurance, confidence, and ambition. And for seasoned readers, this book provides new ways of engaging our critical questions with greater nuance and bold ideas for pushing the boundaries of our work in practice. Ultimately, this book is a call to action to bring our work together so we can take it all further.

While some readers will likely disagree with the very premise of the book, that is okay. I do not imagine I will unsettle anyone's deeply held beliefs or convert every reader to radicalism (however much I might wish to!), but I do intend for this book to provide an articulation of why certain pedagogies often clash and a vocabulary for engaging in meaningful dialogue or discussion across our differences. When we have a shared language to more clearly identify those differences rather than speak across one another (and, as is often the case, dehumanize one another), the possibility for stronger communication, meaningful shared learning, and even points of agreement and positive change can more readily emerge.

Directors and other folks of any political persuasion who teach tutor-education courses or lead new-tutor orientations of various kinds may choose to use this text to initiate newcomers to the field. Although many

sections of the book speak implicitly in purposeful ways to first-time tutors, if presented only as theory without a desire to experiment with its practical implications, the grand narratives this book critiques will likely prevail. In other words, my arguments are meant to be taken holistically. This book would best be used for tutor education in contexts in which the leadership is committed to radical praxis.

OPPRESSION 101

The purpose of the book, as explained above, is to walk the reader through a process of reinventing the writing center field in radical terms. Radicalism, as future chapters explore in detail, is rooted in hopeful action in resistance to systems of oppression and in service of creating a just and peaceful world. While resistance and radical hope are invoked frequently throughout the book, such invocations rely on a certain degree of familiarity with concepts related to oppression that I take for granted readers will understand. In other words, while the text only occasionally makes explicit reference to terms like *prejudice, discrimination*, or *institutionalized oppression*, a critical understanding of these concepts is an implicit and necessary premise underlying the claims I make. Accordingly, readers who are less familiar with these concepts, or who are working with disparate definitions than those I take for granted, may easily find themselves lost or misread my arguments.

I am using this introduction, therefore, not only to explain the larger aims of the book but in fact to articulate the unspoken readings of injustice upon which much of it rests. What follows here, therefore, is a cursory explanation of foundational concepts related to oppression, illustrated by manifestations in academic or local writing center contexts. The vocabulary offered below is not the explicit language of the book. Indeed, the shared vocabulary I promise is presented in subsequent chapters, not here. Instead, I offer here the conceptual knowledge one needs in order to move forward with the arguments I make. In describing these concepts, I implicitly defend the book's premise that creating a just and peaceful world is not a "special interest" limited to only a few of us but rather an ethical necessity for us all.

Prejudice and Discrimination

To understand the nature of oppression is to understand the differences between individual people's beliefs and behaviors and systems of power. Many readers will be familiar with the concept of *prejudice*, or a

preconceived opinion about a person stemming from biases or prevalent stereotypes (generalizations) about the groups to which that person is perceived to belong. For example, a white monolingual English-speaking teacher, Professor Johnson, assumes on the first day of class that his student Emi will not be a very good writer based on her name, what she looks like, and his perception that most international students at his university struggle with English. Professor Johnson, however, has never met Emi, does not in fact know whether she is an international student, does not know what languages she speaks and writes or how well, and has not seen her work. This professor is exhibiting prejudice.

Important to our understanding of prejudice is that it is experienced at the level of the individual. *Anyone* can exhibit prejudice. Just as Professor Johnson makes assumptions about Emi, so too can Emi make assumptions about her professor. Based on her biases about white men, perhaps stemming from poor experiences with past teachers or pervasive beliefs in her peer group, she might assume on the first day of class that this particular teacher will be arrogant or perhaps scatterbrained. Without yet meeting Professor Johnson and experiencing his teaching, her assumptions are also prejudiced.

Also important to our understanding of prejudice is that these personal biases can be both conscious and unconscious. In other words, we might be very aware that we hold certain prejudicial views and are able to communicate them overtly (e.g., "You must be an idiot because all Republicans are idiots!" or "By talking to me you must be hitting on me because gay people want to turn everyone gay!"). With this awareness we may feel guilty and wish to abandon our beliefs yet find it difficult to do so (e.g., "I know not every single Republican could possibly be an idiot, but they just make me so mad . . . I can't imagine how a smart person could argue those positions!"). Or, with this awareness we may feel quite confident in our prejudicial beliefs and desire to cling to them tightly (e.g., "I am against the gay agenda and have no interest in getting to know a gay person!").

The above examples demonstrate individuals' awarenesses of their prejudices. Many of our biases, however, are in fact unconscious. For example, we might sincerely believe all people are equal and think overt expression of racial prejudice is terrible or even a thing of the past. At the same time, because we are bombarded with both subtle and direct messages throughout our lives (on the television, in our social circles, in school, in books, and so on) about who people are and who matters most, we cannot help but take in some of this messaging and incorporate it unwittingly into our beliefs. It is hard for many people to

come to grips with the fact that *everyone* holds unconscious biases, even the most kind-hearted and well-intentioned people, because we are all conditioned to some degree by our environments. A Black writing tutor, Alia, might consciously believe Mexican students are no different from anyone else but still harbor unchecked negative assumptions based on stereotypes about Mexicans' cultural values towards education, leading Alia to believe her student Sara's challenge with her history paper has more to do with Sara's effort than the poorly crafted assignment sheet. A phenomenon known as *confirmation bias* leads people in fact to search for and interpret information that confirms their preconceived ideas while disproportionately ignoring information that might contradict it. Alia may not realize her unconscious racial prejudice is the reason she is jumping to conclusions about Sara and may instead believe she is approaching Sara with an open mind.

This unconscious prejudice, just like conscious prejudice, cuts in all directions. Sara in the example above might just as easily feel doubtful about Alia's ability to help her with her writing because Alia is Black. She might consciously think anti-Black racism is wrong. She might even be an outspoken activist against it but nevertheless feel a twinge of discomfort when she is assigned to meet with Alia when a group of white male tutors, who fit the stereotypical image in her mind of academic high achievers, are sitting nearby in the writing center waiting for their students to arrive. She might not realize her own racial prejudice is at play in her desire to meet with one of them instead.

Because our choices in behavior are necessarily motivated by our conscious and unconscious beliefs, *discrimination* refers to the tangible types of treatment we exhibit towards another person based on our prejudice. If Professor Johnson in the first example gives Emi a low grade on her writing based on his prejudicial assumptions about her abilities rather than fairly assessing the quality of her work in its own right, his actions are discriminatory. If Sara, in the other example, asks to cancel her appointment with Alia and meet instead with a white tutor, her actions are discriminatory. Again, because we are talking about individual beliefs and behaviors, anyone can discriminate, and anyone can be discriminated against.

Oppression

Although the above discussion reveals any person—no matter their gender, race, class, age, religion, nationality, sexuality, ability, education, or any other social identity marker—can hold prejudicial views and can

choose harmful behavior against another motivated by those views, the *impact* of those views and behaviors is decidedly *not* the same for everyone. When we move from a discussion of prejudice and discrimination to a discussion of *oppression*, we introduce the function of structural *power*. Power, in this case, refers to the ability (often due to financial resources, institutional authority, physical might, or networks of supporters, for example) of one's prejudice and discrimination against another to have a substantial material effect on a person's life.

In the earlier example of Emi and her teacher, given the context of the classroom, Professor Johnson has greater power than Emi because he has the authority to create the assignments, facilitate the class meetings, assess students' writing, and assign grades. By holding the power to assign grades, he implicitly also has the power to influence Emi's other needs outside class, such as maintaining a certain GPA in order to retain her financial-aid package, be eligible to apply for a TA position, or be competitive for graduate school. When the teacher discriminates against Emi by lowering her grade based on his false assumptions about her Japanese American identity, he negatively affects her life in substantial, material ways. Now, Emi might still hold prejudicial views about her teacher. She might even decide to act upon those views, speaking rudely to him or purposefully disengaging from class discussion, but because of her relative lack of power in that space, her choices will not harm him nearly to the same degree. Professor Johnson can oppress Emi whereas Emi can only inconvenience him, if that.

The function of structural power is critical. It is the failure to make this distinction that leads many people to refer inaccurately to prejudice, discrimination, and oppression synonymously. When we fail to consider how discrimination in the absence of power and discrimination in the presence of power are materially different in consequence, we end up talking across one another without resolution. This failed distinction is what leads some people to cry reverse racism or to advocate for men's-rights organizations. It is certainly true that people of color can harbor racial *prejudice* towards white people just as white people can harbor racial *prejudice* towards people of color. It is also true that women can hate men just as men can be misogynists. It is not true, however, that people of color can *oppress* white people, as white people collectively maintain greater structural power (access to financial resources, control of institutions, larger networks of people in some areas, and so on) than people of color. Likewise, women cannot *oppress* men, as men collectively maintain greater structural power. Individual people of color can hurt individual white people's feelings. Individual women can hurt individual

men's feelings. Indeed, individual women of color can inflict certain kinds of serious interpersonal harm. But white men can, as a collective, by virtue of their positioning, destroy entire communities/populations.

Institutionalized Oppression

To make the above assertion relies on an understanding, you recall, that oppression is not about individual biases and behaviors but rather systems. In that way, oppression cannot be understood out of context or discerned with absolute certainty when considering any one-on-one interaction in a vacuum. Indeed, it is the context in space and time that creates the conditions of asymmetrical power. It is the context that gives the experience meaning. If oppression were understood as simply individual, isolated expressions of bigotry, we could look at all discrimination in a vacuum and conclude it is really no big deal. The person targeted could simply brush themselves off, leave the space, and go about their life. Indeed, it is this lack of attention to context that allows some people to be dismissive of people's experiences of *microaggressions*—pervasive insults and dismissals. A single insult tossed about on an otherwise equal playing field might be something to ignore, to shrug off. That same insult leveled against someone with less power, someone who has been the target of that same insult again and again and again, becomes a more painful, even traumatic, verbal assault.

Lest we be inclined to think overcoming oppression is simply a matter of growing a thick skin, we must understand oppression is not simply about hurt feelings. It is about material consequences, from lack of access to necessary resources (education, housing, food) to psychological trauma. It is about lacking freedom from intimidation and physical violence. It is about people's lack of ability to live life itself. As Ta-Nehisi Coates reminds us, in reference to racism, oppression is a visceral experience: it "dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscles, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth" (2015, 10). We must always remember, he goes on to stress, "that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body" (10). When we look at oppression we must look at the context making the outcomes of the powerful expression of prejudice so devastatingly violent against people's bodies.

One such context is the *institution*. Institutions are organizations, establishments, or societies of people who have come together with a common purpose. They are also laws, practices, customs, structures, or mechanisms of order. Institutions include individual programs or

spaces, such as a writing center, a school's biology department, or a university itself. Institutions also include hospitals, schools, television stations, police stations, churches, grocery stores, or banks. From the local to global, we can also understand institutions in their collective forms, such as the US system of higher education, the media, the healthcare system, the job market, the criminal-justice system, the government, Wall Street, and so on.

Institutional oppression, therefore, refers to the discrimination perpetuated by those who hold power within an institution and in fact by all people who participate in the institution's activities. This power is enforced through laws, rules, protocols, practices, and social norms that serve to maintain the existing order. Academic institutions, for example, are structured around certain practices for hiring, compensating, reviewing, promoting, dismissing, or providing resources for faculty and staff. They are structured around practices for admitting, funding, advising, supporting, teaching, retaining, expelling, assessing, and graduating students. They are structured around rules for teaching, conducting research, engaging with the community, and participating in service. They are also structured around cultural practices, extracurricular and social activities, residential life, commuting practices, food service, buildings and grounds maintenance, and rituals and traditions that shape the climate of the institution. All these practices are rooted in specific beliefs about who is valuable and who isn't, what kinds of activities are acceptable and what aren't, what ideas are welcome and what aren't, and how different people should therefore be treated. Sometimes these beliefs are explicitly written and followed as established rules, and sometimes these beliefs are unspoken but nevertheless communicated through cultural norms.

Institutional oppression comes into play when discrimination is inscribed into the very rules and norms of the institution itself. Such oppression might come in the form of sexist hiring practices, racist grading practices, or transphobic bathroom-use policies. It might come in the form of inaccessible buildings, inequitably distributed financial-aid packages, or the use of racist course evaluations by students in considering faculty promotion. Oppression can be perpetrated through the dominant language and discourse practices of the institution sympathetic to rape culture or unsympathetic to mental-health needs. It can also be found in the relative silence of the institution in responding to concerns about sexual assault or racist policing. Oppression can be inherent in the very construction of the institution on land stolen from the indigenous people who once inhabited it and in its continuation of

colonizing practices that perpetuate violence against indigenous people who work or study in the institution, as well as against those who cannot or do not enter it. Independent of the personal feelings or values of individual people, the discrepancies in power among different populations are maintained through everyone's participation in the normalized activities of the institution.

For example, the chair of the physics department might himself be a very kind person but nevertheless contribute to oppression by teaching the same introductory course syllabus the department has taught for ages, which only features writings by white men; by unknowingly creating an exclusive climate in his classes by only calling on the people who raise their hands first, even though research shows women are less likely to do so despite having ideas of equal value to contribute; by holding his class in a beautiful but inaccessible old classroom in the library because past (nondisabled) students have enjoyed the charm of the space; by including policies on his syllabus that forbid eating in class, using a laptop, or wearing headphones even though such activities are vital to the health and learning needs of some disabled students; by voting against tenure for the one Latinx woman in the department because he is persuaded by his white male peers that her research on women of color in STEM is too subjective and not a sufficiently rigorous topic for the "hard sciences"; and through his failure to intervene when a group of physics students flyer the campus to advertise an upcoming student event with a poster featuring a homophobic joke—he doesn't want to discourage committed students from majoring in physics, an already small department, and then risk losing funding or faculty lines. This lack of action in response to hate is exactly the kind of institutionalized cultural value that cultivates the hostile conditions that lead bullies to target people like Tyler Clementi, a gay student at Rutgers University, to the point of suicide; or to brutally murder people like Matthew Shepard, a gay student at the University of Wyoming; or to massacre forty-nine young people at a gay nightclub in Orlando on Latinx Night. Oppression rips muscles, remember, and cracks bones.

If we consider the case of Emi and Professor Johnson in a vacuum, we might be tempted to argue that the low grade isn't really a big deal and that Emi actually has more power than I first attributed to her. Maybe she could confront her teacher and ask for a better grade. Or maybe she could rally her classmates to collectively put pressure on the teacher to change his views. Or maybe she could file a complaint against her teacher with the department head. Surely, she could work hard in her other classes and trust that her good grades across the

semester would outweigh the one low grade. Or perhaps in her applica-
tion to graduate school she could simply explain why that one grade was
so low and trust that the strengths of her portfolio would shine. Indeed,
she could choose to do any of these things. And maybe one or even sev-
eral of them would work. But more often than not, when considered in
a larger context of the power of the institution, to escape the effects of
oppression is impossible.

Emi's professor's prejudice is not an anomaly. Rather, because she
belongs to a targeted population—Japanese Americans—she is likely
to encounter professors in many of her classes who perceive her just as
unfairly. Japanese Americans historically have endured brutal injustices.
Most notoriously, during World War II, more than one hundred thou-
sand Americans of Japanese ancestry were forced into concentration
camps when the United States government, utterly convinced by its
own xenophobia, justified stripping its own citizens of their freedom to
protect the state. Even before WWII, anti-Japanese sentiments led to the
creation of laws that prohibited Japanese people from becoming citi-
zens, owning land, attending schools with whites, or enjoying civil rights.
In more recent history, the animosity towards Japanese Americans, often
fueled during periods of contentious US foreign relations with Japan
(and China), has continued in the form of physical violence, stereotypes
in popular culture, and the myth of the model minority (a rhetorical
move whereby Asian Americans are strategically pitted against other
racial groups even though they are all harmed by white supremacy). In
the education system, teachers who reject overt discrimination against
Japanese Americans might still harbor unconscious biases. They might
hold unfair expectations about the assumed innate intelligence of their
Japanese American students and fail to provide supports to students
who are genuinely struggling; simultaneously, teachers may neverthe-
less imagine such students as inherently foreign, their English-language
abilities therefore somehow unnatural, and fail to recognize their actual
achievements and help develop their strengths.

Professor Johnson's own prejudices towards Emi may very well be
shaped unconsciously by this climate. Emi's grades in other courses
might suffer for the same reason. She is likely to be a racial minority
in most of her classes, and in an institution whose curriculum does not
comprehensively integrate examinations of history, racism, and lan-
guage diversity for all its students (like most predominantly white insti-
tutions), she is likely to find herself among students who harbor similar
biases, who lack empathy, or who simply lack the interest or will to
support her in resisting the injustice she experiences. The department

chair, who may have even hired her teacher and is presumably responsible for overseeing the curriculum and ensuring the quality of teaching, is unlikely to be her champion in a department dominated by white faculty and largely ignorant of the experiences of students of color. Indeed, when an entire institution is structured around white supremacy, she is unlikely to find access to the supports she needs, except from a minority of sympathetic white teachers or teachers of color who, by serving without additional compensation as de facto advisors for many such students of color, are themselves exploited and oppressed by this same system. Perhaps she will find refuge in a multicultural center or a Japanese American student group on campus. But she is likely to find such programs poorly resourced and to suffer the additional abuse of ignorant white students who call *her* racist in her attempt to find support through such affinity groups. In other words, because of the unequal power dynamics, Emi does not have the luxury of leaving this particular class and having the discrimination she experiences disappear. Rather, it has the potential to appear at every turn. It is that collective power of many people positioned to act upon their biases that creates institutionalized oppression. It is that pervasiveness, that insidiousness, that inescapability, that makes it so devastating.

Because institutionalized oppression depends upon networks of people and norms of behavior, not individual attitudes, even people targeted by the institution's oppression can participate in oppressive activities. Sometimes this participation is conscious and strategic, such as faculty choosing certain research agendas or students adopting particular language practices to get the funding or grade that depends on those agendas or practices. Sometimes this participation is unconscious or uncritical, such as people subjected to oppressive norms believing the messages they receive about their own or their group's inferiority and idolizing the people in power. This phenomenon is known as *internalized oppression.* Indeed, sometimes people oppressed by an institution can be among its most outspoken supporters and the most vitriolic critics of their own community (hooks 2003). This self-hatred and lack of critical consciousness is a significant contributing factor to allowing institutionalized oppression to thrive.

Another way institutionalized oppression thrives, of particular significance to the audience of this book, is through our rhetoric. Indeed, institutionalized oppression works very hard to fly under the radar, to present itself as normal, natural, unremarkable ways of life. Institutions use language, therefore, that works to ignore, minimize, or obscure recognition of its unjust practices. Often leveled at women, rhetorical

practices such as gaslighting, a form of mental abuse in which information is twisted around to take the blame off the abuser and make the victim question her own culpability or even sanity, is one such example of oppressive rhetoric. "Colorblind racism" and the "new racism," described by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2014), are other examples, strategies in which a person pretends they don't personally see race in order to avoid engaging with substantive issues around racial inequities and convince the listener racism no longer exists. Dog-whistle politics, similarly, is a way of employing coded messaging that appears abstract and benign but in fact signals a strong, often racist, message to a target group. More recently, terms such as *mansplaining* or *whitesplaining* or *whitemansplaining* have emerged to describe the patterned ways men speak, without regard to their own incomplete understanding, condescendingly towards women; or the ways white people speak, without regard to their own incomplete understanding, condescendingly towards people of color; or how white men speak towards women of color, often about matters of gender and race. In these ways, Emi's teacher might argue that he doesn't see color and that instead Emi's expression of concern about her treatment or grade is just Emi being paranoid, overly sensitive, or entitled. As a result, talking about oppression can be very, very difficult, not only because people in power have a lot to lose by acknowledging it but also because our discourses are rigged by the same oppressive values.

Systemic Oppression

If we continue our examination of the contexts that make the manifestations of discrimination so oppressive, we are compelled to look beyond local institutions or institutions writ large to consider the external environments that in fact shape the institutions themselves. Indeed, our communities, our nations, our global networks are structured by the purposeful interplay of many institutions, none of which could stand alone without the support of and for each other. When one institution is able to operate unjustly, it is because it has the support of many other institutions that allow it to operate unchecked. More often, institutions in fact encourage each other's oppressive practices because to do so is in the interests of those who control the entire network itself. Put differently, the practices of one institution necessarily influence the practices of other institutions. People's experiences of oppression or privilege in one institution necessarily influence their experiences of oppression or privilege in another. It is this interconnectedness, this massive web of institutions, that renders oppression *systemic*.

Consider, for example, the school-to-prison pipeline in which children of color are disproportionately suspended and expelled from school and arrested at significantly higher rates for infractions identical to those committed by their white counterparts, who receive much less severe punishments, if any. This early and disproportionate introduction into the juvenile justice system (whether directly via arrest by an in-school officer or indirectly as a result of criminal activity born of hopelessness after an expulsion) serves to make the reentrance into school difficult (as the student has fallen behind) and the likelihood of finding stable employment with a livable wage (as the student lacks a diploma and now has a criminal record) even more so. A self-perpetuating system, the lack of employment and resources can increase the chances of engaging in illegal activities, which increases the chances of reentrance into the criminal-justice system. This says nothing of the disproportionate policing and sentencing of people of color outside schools. Indeed, 68 percent of all men in state and federal prisons do not have a high-school diploma (Amurao 2016), and nearly that same percentage are people of color (NAACP 2016). Rather than facing each institution (the school system, the criminal-justice system, and the workforce) separately and on equal footing with their peers, children of color are subjected to systemic oppression when the injustices of one institution feed strategically into the injustices of the next. Attorney and civil-rights activist Michelle Alexander has written persuasively about the ways the contemporary criminal-justice system is strategically organized to determine a racial caste system in the United States, no less effective than slavery or Jim Crow at maintaining a legal basis for racial discrimination.

> Today it is perfectly legal to discriminate against criminals in nearly all the ways that it was once legal to discriminate against African Americans. Once you're labeled a felon, the old forms of discrimination—employment discrimination, housing discrimination, denial of the right to vote, denial of educational opportunity, denial of food stamps and other public benefits, and exclusion from jury service—are suddenly legal. (2012, 2)

Identifying mass incarceration as the definitive civil-rights crisis of our time (indeed, the United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world, has the highest rate of incarcerating its racial or ethnic minorities, and currently imprisons more Black people than did South Africa during the height of apartheid [6]), Alexander exposes the systemic nature of contemporary race-based oppression.

Writer and activist Kevin Powell also paints a picture of how white supremacy and anti-Black racism is a devastating and totalizing system,

helping us understand racism as inextricably bound with inequities in power, sustained across multiple institutions.

> Black folks do not control nor own the majority of politics and the government, education, the mass media culture, social media and technology, Hollywood, corporate America, sports teams, music and other entertainment, the arts, the book industry, police departments, anything that shapes the thinking of every single American citizen and resident during our waking hours. Not even close. We do not set the standards for what is considered beautiful or attractive, what is considered courageous or intelligent, nor do we dictate what becomes popular, visible, viable. And we certainly do not say what matters in history, what does not, what stories should be told, and which ones are irrelevant, not for the multitudes—not even close. Our stories, our versions of America, of our history, are marginalized, put to the side, specialized, ghettoized. (2016)

Although Powell is writing explicitly here about racism, our world is structured around many other systems of oppression, each of them intersecting with each other in significant and consequential ways. Powell and others have convincingly demonstrated the mutually constituted functions of imperialism, genocide, chattel slavery, racism, and economic exploitation. We could continue this list to include sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and many others.

For these reasons, when we return to a consideration of experience at the individual level, we see that real people embody many identities and therefore experience the connectedness of different systems in different ways. A wealthy white able-bodied transwoman, for example, experiences the world differently than a poor disabled transman of color, even though their shared trans identity creates a certain kind of affinity. There is no entirely universal experience, though some experiences are more salient to folks than others. Known as *intersectionality*, a term made famous by scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), the study of interconnected systems of oppression requires us to recognize, for example, that people do not exist as embodiments of singular identities (such as gender) but rather that our various identities intersect in dynamic ways that render our experience of any one identity (such as gender) different from someone else who might share that same identity. Put simply, as radical activist Alicia Garza has explained, intersectionality is a fancy word "just to say 'three-dimensional people'" (Hammond, *Windy City Times*, May 4, 2016).

Beyond simply a theory of difference, however, Crenshaw reminds us, intersectionality is a theory of oppression that compels us to "account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed" (1991, 1245). For example, when feminist or antiracist

practices "expound identity as woman or person of color as an either/ or proposition, they relegate the identity of woman of color to a location that resists telling" (1242). Failing to tell that location creates further marginalization. It is this observation that leads radical activists, for example, to reject feminist movements that implicitly privilege the experiences of heterosexual cisgender white women and that fail to account for the unique needs of queer women of color (see, for example, McKenzie 2014). Through a different lens, it is this same observation that leads radical activists to reject racial-justice movements that are not explicitly attentive to gender, sexuality, ability, and other forms of diversity (see, for example, Garza 2014) rather than explicitly centered on those most otherwise marginalized, such as disabled trans women. To interpret oppression through an intersectional framework is not to ignore or minimize the ways systems of oppression structure our world in powerful and dehumanizing ways but rather to examine those systems with a sensitivity to the complexity of human experience and, in fact, to build coalitions to resist oppression.

Finally, in coming to understand what systemic oppression is, we must necessarily circle back to the beginning where we first examined individual prejudice. Where does our prejudice come from? Surely, it is the context of systemic oppression, the unavoidable images, messages, practices, and experiences we encounter at every turn in our lives, that teaches us to dehumanize others and indeed to become disconnected from our own humanity, from the earth itself. When the very air we breathe is clouded by oppression, to engage in anti-oppression work is not merely a special interest but rather a vital interest of us all.

Building on this introductory set of concepts, I invite all readers—seasoned social justice scholars, curious beginners, and skeptics—to encounter the chapters that follow with the intention of examining the various ways not only our social identities but also our world-views lead us to interpret oppression differently and to choose different courses of action in response to what we understand, especially as it relates to our work with writing centers. Lest we get overwhelmed and feel defeated by the outline of concepts I've just presented, the vision offered by this book is one that assumes that because systems of oppression are created by people, people also have the capacity to dismantle these systems and build something better in their place. I offer tools to put hope into practice.

The current paradigm of writing centers, however, as the first chapter argues, is at best ambivalent and at worst indifferent to systems of oppression, relying on the premise that the work of writing centers is separate

from or powerless in the face of these systems. In the current paradigm, a writing center scholar, director, or tutor could ignore questions of oppression, or address them as a side project, and still be understood as contributing valuable work to the field. Not so in the radical paradigm. The radical paradigm demands that we understand the task of creating a just and peaceful world as central and inextricable from our everyday work in writing centers and that we always attempt to engage that work consciously and purposefully towards such a vision. It is my hope that my particular reading of the world and all its possibilities will persuade many, but if it does not, that we will at the very least be equipped with language to engage across our differences. I offer this book with love.