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## Introduction to Dialogues

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## **Introduction to Dialogues**

Wagma Mommandi, *University of Colorado Boulder*

The Editorial Board of *The Assembly: A Journal for Public Scholarship on Education*  
*The University of Colorado Boulder*

About a year ago, during early brainstorming sessions, the founding members of the editorial board agreed that our aim was to create a new journal for two primary reasons: to challenge the idea of what counts as scholarship in education, and to create a structured space that allowed multiple, diverse voices about pressing contemporary issues to be heard. *Dialogues* was born out of this latter objective.

*Dialogues* is a collection of critical, reflective essays on a single theme from individuals with different expertise and experiences. We were deliberate in choosing the word *dialogue* to name what we are doing. A dialogue is exploratory and allows participants to examine the complexity of an issue in a deeper, more subtle way. Importantly, a dialogue is not an excuse to give space to illegitimate perspectives that dehumanize; rather, a dialogue is a space to put multiple voices rooted in justice on equal footing.

*Dialogues* authors make their voices clear to the reader. They consider the topic in relation to themselves, and they write about why issues are important from their perspectives. These perspectives might stem from professional expertise or from lived experiences; often they will stem from both. Although each piece can stand on its own, it functions best as part of a whole. We intend for these essays to be read together so that you finish with a more nuanced and fuller picture. In other words, we hope you experience a *dialogue*.

As you read this collection of essays you will notice the authors write in a broadly accessible and distinctly personal way. This is, in part, due to our specific request that authors write from their experiences, define specialized terms, limit the use of academic citations, minimize references behind a paywall, and hyperlink references to help contextualize issues for readers. We came to these decisions by discussing who our favorite public intellectuals were, those people who we learn the most from, and who we feel are present in their words.

### **Citizenship and Migration**

For the inaugural *Dialogues* section, we invited authors to share their experiences and knowledges about issues of citizenship and migration as related to schools and schooling in the United States. While issues of citizenship and migration have always been relevant topics in United States schools, the racist, anti-immigrant rhetoric and actions of late have increased danger, fear, and insecurity for many people and their families.

This first collection of critical essays brings together the voices of academics, graduate students and teachers. Here we present three critical essays written by professors,

graduate students and a teacher who all work closely with youth in schools. Referencing Mohsin Hamid's [Exit West](#), in *EXIT East. The fight against US anti-Muslim racism*, Ameena Ghaffar-Kucher and Thea Abu El-Haj share how the stories of Muslim youth and their sense of citizenship and belonging are entangled with United States imperialism. Ameena Ghaffar-Kucher and Thea Abu El-Haj explore issues of citizenship particularly as it relates to Muslims in the United States and they offer examples of how educators and activists are responding to Islamophobia. In *Mi Todo Para Los Estudiantes Inmigrantes*, Alethea Maldonado, a third-year teacher who teaches English as a Second Language (ESL) at the high school level, writes about her students, their experiences coming to and in the United States, and their impacts on her as an early career teacher. Alethea shares her own immigrant history and her journey as a teacher of immigrant children. Finally, in *Climate Change, Unnatural Disasters, and the Second-Class Citizen*, Astrid N. Sambolín Morales and Molly Hamm-Rodríguez discuss their work with children and youth from Puerto Rico who have enrolled in United States schools in Central Florida in the wake of Hurricane Maria. They argue formal citizenship does not lead to rights nor a sense of belonging for Puerto Ricans who moved to the mainland as a cause of the hurricane.

For our Spring collection of Dialogues, we are accepting submissions on two topics: *Educator Advocacy for Queer Students* and *Being Bilingual in Colorado Schools*. We encourage submissions from students, teachers, community activists, and other members of the public whose voices are underrepresented in educational research.