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A Note from the Editor

Several years ago, a group of graduate students in Mathematics Education at The University of Georgia fashioned an informal discussion group in response to the missing dialogue evident in our array of coursework and research projects. As we studied mathematics, research, and the teaching and learning of mathematics, we found an overwhelming silence on issues related to equity and social justice in the context of mathematics education. Or, as we may prefer to have seen it, the silence was on the teaching of mathematics in the context of education for equity and social justice.

Of course we learned much from each other—the resources we shared, the papers we wrote, the research we conducted, the seminars we developed, the courses we ran. The group grew and evolved, both in members and in ideas. But more important than these knowledge artifacts were the energy of collaboration, the fraternity of togetherness, and the community of shared commitment. The bonds that developed among these graduate students are what will be remembered from our schooling. This monograph, graciously published by our student organization—Mathematics Education Student Association (MESA)—is one more opportunity for our maturing discussion group to share this work with our peers.

This monograph is published amid the tragedies of Hurricane Katrina, forever disrupting lives of the people of the Gulf Coast—and hopefully forever disrupting the souls of the American public. A black man selling recordings of famous African-Americans on the streets of New York made a damning observation on September 1, 2005: “Blacks ain’t worth it, New Orleans is a hopeless case” (NY Times, September 2, 2005). Although this comment was about inadequacies of the planning and the reaction in New Orleans, his message speaks to the state of the American conscience. Paulo Freire observed a decade ago in *Letters to Cristina*, “At no time previously have we been so bold as to express our racism”. His observation, repeatedly manifesting itself in discussions of the hurricane response, was apparent in the voice of the Federal government: “...we're seeing people that we didn't know exist...” (Mike Brown, head of FEMA, on Newshour with Jim Lehrer, September 1, 2005). As a nation, our current state—in whatever sort of civil rights movement we are a part of—is to not see race, to blind ourselves to it, to ignore it (cf. the work of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva). Uglier yet is that we attempt to wash our hands of our racism, classism, sexism, by paying it away with our monetary contributions to these ‘poor souls’. The blood of our colorblind racism will not wash off our hands; throwing the dog a bone may make us feel better and brighten that dog’s day, but that dog remains a dog in our perceptions and in our relations.

I suspect the observations of the New York salesman may be pertinent to our educational system. For many of our students, families, and fellow citizens, we act, uncritically, as though they just ‘ain’t worth it’. Maybe the current noise in the system, such as *No Child Left Behind*’s unapologetic spotlight on differential attainment by race and the emerging mantra of *Mathematics for All*, will have lasting effects. But for as long as we continue to throw bones in order to subdue the barking dog of educational inequity, the structures of mathematics education will perpetuate the persistent iniquities we have known to exist for decades (and in fact throughout the history of American education).

As you read these papers considering these persistent iniquities, papers that are essentially reflections on our experiences in Mathematics Education, please keep in mind that none are solely the work of individuals. So many people influenced the ideas and opportunities for experiences that shaped these products, an appropriate distribution of thank you’s or references would forever be inadequate. In this Editor’s note, I have been somewhat liberal in speaking for each of the authors presented here—I hope they don’t take offense. Please know my words are my own, and while my colleagues have influenced them, they bear no responsibility for what I have written. Enjoy these three articles. We hope they challenge you to think anew, and possibly to think differently, about a mathematics education challenged by a goal for equity.

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