



## **WORKING TO DISMANTLE SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION**

EDITORIAL BY KAREN KEIFER-BOYD

“Remember Love,” printed on shirts and hanging on clotheslines encircled a group of family and friends that I was part as we gathered in August 2018 to celebrate the life of a young man, who died of an accidental heroin overdose. I expect that many reading this editorial have lost loved ones to addiction and hang on to their remembrance of love and conviction to not give up on those who suffer from heroin addiction.<sup>1</sup> (Figure 1)



Figure 1: The family members printed these with a linoleum block that had been designed and carved by their deceased son, Ryan Bode Moriarty. They chose to reproduce this message to distribute to all who gathered in his memory. Photo permission: Patty Bode.

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<sup>1</sup> In the past decade, heroin addiction has increased each year with nearly one million people in the United States reporting using heroin in 2016, according to the Substance Abuse Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (2017). Coalitions are necessary to build support for those with heroin addictions. Each person needs different kinds of support to live a meaningful life, to feel valued, to have an income, and to live in a safe place free from harm to self and others. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) attempts to provide such support. SAMHSA’s National Helpline – 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

Each year, in publishing *Visual Culture & Gender*, the editorial reflects on the past year and its impact on our lives and connects the issues of the year to the essays selected for the volume. Amidst the tragedies in 2018, such as separation of children from parents by the current U.S. administration, there are many people, coalitions, and organizations working toward social justice. For example, *Torn Apart* gathered the *digital dust* (i.e., “any publicly available data—government immigration records, tax forms, job listings, Facebook pages”) to locate the detention centers that were holding more than 2000 children separated from their parents at the U.S.-Mexico border in May 2018 (Dreyfus, 2018). The gathering of the digital dust is the data for [an interactive web site](#)<sup>2</sup> (Dreyfus, 2018). *Torn Apart* maps the ripping of the social fabric of humanity. Masses of people must speak out to elected officials and elect those who will change this dire downward spiral into a despotic nation. See Figures 2 and 3.

<sup>2</sup> The *Torn Apart/Separados* interactive website shows locations of detention centers used to keep children separated from their parents in May 2018. There are now two volumes of the map at <http://xpmethod.plaintext.in/torn-apart/volume/2/index>. Volume 1 is described on the website as “a rapidly deployed critical data & visualization intervention in the USA’s 2018 ‘Zero Tolerance Policy’ for asylum seekers at the US Ports of Entry and the humanitarian crisis that has followed.” “Volume 2 of *Torn Apart* is a deep and radically new look at the territory and infrastructure of ICE’s financial regime in the USA. This data & visualization intervention peels back layers of culpability behind the humanitarian crisis of 2018.” “*Torn Apart* began with an intense 6-day collaboration between [xpMethod](#) (Manan Ahmed, Alex Gil, Moacir P. de Sá Pereira, Roopika Risam), [Borderlands Archives Cartography](#) (Maira E. Álvarez, Sylvia A. Fernández), Linda Rodriguez, and Merisa Martinez.” *Torn Apart* is part of *Mobilized Humanities* interventions. “*MH* brings together digital tools to equip broad social awareness and help in global critical situations. . . . *MH* sits away from state and non-governmental organizations and is scholarly activism in a global context.” (*Torn Apart/Separados*, 2018)



Figure 2. I am at the State College rally on June 30, 2018 with a young girl, who decided to stand by me, waving a US flag with hope for democracy. We stood together throughout the rally in Pennsylvania looking through the Allen Street gate. People came together to fight despair for children in cages, and to work up a productive rage to break the cage toward migrant justice. I found this photo of me on FaceBook posted by Jen Spencer on June 30, 2017 at “[Families Belong Together - Rally for Migrant Justice.](#)”





Figure 3. Rallies for Migrant Justice began in May 2018 in cities small and large throughout the United States when the people in the U.S. learned that children were separated from their parents at the US-Mexico border as the result of the U.S. Attorney General's new immigration policy. Speeches and chants filled the air we breathe together with strength gathered from call and response in unison such as ¡El pueblo, unido, jamás será vencido! (The people, united, will never be defeated!), "Abolish ICE" "Stop Family Separation," "No Trump Camps," "Say it loud! Say it clear! Immigrants are welcome here!" and "Families Belong Together."

Artists, educators, and researchers help us to understand how systems of oppression work and ways to counter the devastation to democracy and human rights. In volume 13 of *Visual Culture & Gender*, **Chiara L. Bernardi** writes about building a database, called the "Femicidios Reclassification Project," from the *digital dust* gathered online about murdered or missing women and girls in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, near the border of what is now the United States. Her project, in collaboration with local human rights activists, mothers of murdered or

missing women, and émigrés from Ciudad Juarez, locates photographs and articles dispersed on the Internet to make visible through statistical data visualization the number and frequency of murders of women in Ciudad Juarez, known as *femicidio*. Bernardi's efforts to provide statistical evidence of the disappearance of women and girls is necessary because women (in this case the mothers whose daughters disappeared) are not believed or taken seriously by governing bodies and law enforcement.

**Satyasikha Chakraborty's** essay concerns her critical research at the intersections of racism and sexism in postcards, and how their circulation supported and maintained an oppressive social system. In "Queer Vibrant Matters: Remarks on Nick Cave's Community Engagements," **James H. Sanders III** discusses his involvement in performance artist Nick Cave's 2017 community work, *Until*, and vision for the pedagogical implications of including Cave's work in critical race and queer studies art curricula.

**Camilla Mørk Røstvik** argues in her article, *Crimson Waves: Narratives about Menstruation, Water, and Cleanliness*, that menstrual product companies rely in their recent advertisements on feminist artists' and activists' approaches, which explicitly includes menstrual blood. Despite this change towards representing menstrual blood as part of women's everyday experiences, there are still traces in White patriarchal social histories of images of menstruation as dirty and monstrous. **The notion of blood in** being incompatible with water as exemplified by images of showering away the disguised menstruating body.

**Kevin Jenkins's** commentary, *Jumping the Gun: Uncritical Trans Ally Artivism Post-HB2* published in VCG's volume 13, provides advice on trans allyship in drawing upon examples and discussion on social media in which he engaged. His advice could apply to allies of other marginalized groups to listen without requesting explanation of how memes and other viral visual culture that circulates on the Internet makes the person feel. Instead use privilege to open spaces for diversity to not flatten any marginalized group to stereotypes, whether perceived as negative or positive. Awareness and reflectivity are necessary to recognize privilege for those who have privilege, as "privilege is invisible to those who have it" (Kimmel, 2015, 2:24 min.). Thus, feminist curriculum engages ways

to reveal and challenge hierarchical power and unrecognized privilege.

Patriarchal normative expectations of women and girls to adhere to notions of feminine gentleness and a clean and ‘proper’ body are challenged in both Camilla Mørk Røstvik’s article on the cultural history and tropes of menstruation as well as in **Michelle Bae-Dimitriadis** and **Olga Ivaskevich**’s article, *Barbie Play and the Public Pedagogy of Abjection*. In the case study of girls’ play with the iconic Barbie doll, the authors use Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection as an epistemological framework to interpret the violent rape play as disruption to hegemonic gender regimes. The Barbie play can also be interpreted as normalizing violence against women and girls as the girl in the study enjoys (giggles) when being hit by a boy with the Barbie doll. Stephanie’s behavior could be interpreted as assimilating to the *Law of the Father* (e.g., the law of patriarchy). Acts of domestic violence is a dominant narrative in films, literature, and advertising (Kilbourne, 2016). In the Barbie play described in Bae-Dimitriadis and Ivaskevich’s article, the doll enacts submissiveness and is easily controlled and battered to participating in make-up love-making with the doll’s master/owner. The play could be interpreted as aligning with the normative social order of violence against women. At nine years old can a girl avoid the masculine logic that surrounds and engulfs her?

#WhyIDidntReport, the hashtag that went viral in response to the U.S. President’s tweet about Christine Blasey Ford not reporting rape when she was a teenager (age 15) but rather decades later (36 years later) when the accused perpetrator was nominated to the Supreme Court, revealed two predominate themes. In the first two days after the U.S. president’s tweet there were 675,000 tweets (BBC News, 2018). First, women do not report rape because they are not believed and, second, they do not report because they are shamed (O’Donnell, 2018). Clearly, the efforts of many are needed to change the master narrative normalizing rape. *Visual Culture & Gender*, volume 13, contributes to challenging patriarchal visual culture narratives.

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## Editor Bio

[Karen Keifer-Boyd](#), Ph.D., is professor of art education and women's, gender, and sexuality studies at The Pennsylvania State University. She is past president of the National Art Education Association (NAEA) [Women's Caucus](#) (2012-2014), NAEA Distinguished Fellow Class of 2013, was the 2012 Fulbright Distinguished Chair in Gender Studies at Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt, Austria. Her first Fulbright Scholars' award was in Finland (2006). She is a recipient of a National Art Education Foundation grant (2017-2018) for social justice art education and a National Science Foundation grant (2010-2012) regarding gender barriers in technology. She received the NAEA's 2013 Edwin Ziegfeld Award, Women's Caucus 2014 McFee Award, NAEA's 2015 Technology Outstanding Research Award, and the 2018 Special Needs Lifetime Achievement Award. She serves on the NAEA Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Taskforce, the [Art Education Research Institute Steering Committee](#); the Council for Policy Studies; the NAEA Data Visualization committee, and served as coordinator of the Caucus on Social Theory & Art Education. She is co-founder and editor of the journal [Visual Culture & Gender](#). Her research on feminist pedagogy, visual culture, inclusion, disability justice, transdisciplinary creativity, cyberart activism, transcultural dialogue, and social justice arts-based research are in more than 60 publications and translated into several languages. She co-authored [Including Difference: A Communitarian Approach to Art Education in the Least Restrictive Environment](#) (NAEA, 2013); [InCITE, InSIGHT, InSITE](#) (NAEA, 2008); [Engaging Visual Culture](#) (Davis, 2007); co-edited [Real-World Readings in Art Education: Things Your Professors Never Told You](#) (Falmer, 2000); and served as editor of the *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education* and guest editor for *Visual Arts Research*. In her chapter *Creativity, Disability, Diversity and Inclusion* in the *Handbook of Arts Education and Special Education* (Routledge, 2018), she draws on *Disabilities Studies* theory and practices that change attitudes and environments to create an inclusive world of difference.