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EDITORIAL: A YEAR OF RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE

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As we wrote last year's editorial, we thought this would be the year, after 43 male presidents, that the United States would elect its first woman president. Beyond our comprehension, a man, who spews hate speech against women, Mexicans, Muslims, and anyone who does not support and vow allegiance to him, is marginally elected by the electoral college. Where is the outrage about the outdated electoral college? Collective angst, felt by millions of people led to marches, letter writing campaigns, phone calls, texts, and tweets to Senators and Representatives of Congress, donated money, and continued protest against this election, which was likely influenced by Russian and/or another hacker interference. Thus, 2017 has become a year of resistance to transphobia, homophobia, racism, misogyny, climate change denial, religious persecution, deportation, among other human rights violations. For example:

Los Angeles has been the host to gay pride parades since 1970, but this year, organizers canceled their annual parade. Organizers are instead marching down Hollywood Boulevard in what they're calling the #ResistMarch. ... The #ResistMarch has partnered with over 100 organizations, including other groups who have been targeted by the new administration's policies. Partner organizations include Asian Americans Advancing Justice, Muslims for Progressive Values, Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, Planned Parenthood, Black Women for Wellness, and the ANSWER Coalition, which has organized several anti-war and police brutality protests in Los Angeles. (Rivas, 2017, para. 1, 12, 13)

"We" refers to the two authors of this editorial, as well as to our sisters and brothers around the globe who value human rights for ALL people.

In volume 12 of *Visual Culture & Gender* (VCG), six authors expose systems of oppression and investigate actions of resistance. Adetty Pérez de Miles (2017) in her VCG article, *Nasty Women: The Right to Appear Together*, discusses the resistance and resilience of women who stand together to deflate the wheels of sexism. Spinning the derogatory references to women as *nasty* and *pussy* into a web of resistance, women and their supporters have rallied to stop the currency of sexism. Kristina Davis (2017), in her VCG article, *Neon Light Fetish: Neon Art and Signification of Sex Work*, follows a neon path that illuminates disparity between consumers and the workers in the sex industry. Women are not patiently waiting for patriarchal signals to change, but rather through social media, they are organizing on a global scale to weave a resilient fabric of diversity as resistance to violence, hate, and greed. Nouf Alhamdan's (2017) VCG visual essay, *Waiting for a GPS Signal*, takes readers into Alhamdan's experiences of identity conflicts stemming from her upbringing in Saudi Arabia and education in the United States. Her art, discussed in the essay, is double-coded to resist persecution from expressing views of dissent. The derogatory stereotype of women as nothing more than *pussy*, as a man nominated by the Republican party and elected president of the United States asserted, is an example of how sexual harassment and rape culture is perpetuated (Bassett, 2016). Michelle Stokely (2017), in her VCG article in volume 12, *Sacajawea, Pocahontas, and Crayons: Representations of Native American Women in Children's Coloring Books*, exposes how even coloring books can teach children to be sexist and racist. She brings to light coloring books produced by patriarchal publishing houses that maintain patriarchal ideologies in which White men are represented and positioned as superior.

Floods in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Texas have resulted in toxic black mold, polluted wells, multiple diseases, loss of home, loss of life-sustaining crops, chemical plant explosions gassing communities of vulnerable populations, and death for those who could not or would not evacuate in Texas from floods due to the fear of deportation. Climate change impacts, such as epic floods, are predicted to be worse in coming years. As we write this, a hurricane Irma has just

devastated Florida and the Caribbean. Discrimination in public planning has led to chemical poisoning and other environmental harm, which has disproportionately impacted Black lives in the United States and elsewhere. Robert Bullard, a scholar and prominent environmental justice activist, in an interview on *DemocracyNow* discusses how to resist environmental racism in becoming resilient after the flooding from the storm surges, named Harvey, in Texas. He states:

When we look at the color of vulnerability and we look at which communities are actually at greatest risk from disasters and floods like this, historically, it's been low-income communities and communities of color, communities that live in low-lying areas that are areas that are very prone to flooding. And it's very difficult to get insurance, not just flood insurance, but regular insurance, because of redlining.¹ So, what Harvey has done is to expose those inequalities that existed before the storm. ...

Houston is very segregated along racial and economic lines. And this flood has really shown that. If you look at ZIP codes, you can map where that vulnerability is. You can also map how resources have been allocated and distributed over the last 50 years. And so, what we have to do is we have to map the resources that come to this region ...

Black and brown community populations have borne the burden, even when the population was majority white. So, we have to really talk about environmental justice. We have to talk about environmental racism and call it out when it exists.

When we talk about this whole idea of building healthy, sustainable, just communities, that whole idea is to address the historic nature of, as communities become greener, more sustainable, and oftentimes when they start developing their resilience plans, oftentimes those communities, if they are in urban core areas, neighborhoods, etc., they oftentimes push out low-income communities, people, and push out people of color. And what we're saying is that our communities, communities of color, want to be sustainable, want to be resilient. They want to be healthy and livable. And it should not somehow be something that's relegated to white middle-class suburban or urban core. (democracynow.org, 2017, para. 8, 17, 28, & 47)

Resistance can be in the act of becoming an *upstander*, such as Bullard advocates

1. *Redlining* is a practice in the United States of banks and insurance companies denying services or making inaccessible loans, mortgages, protections, and insurance policies available elsewhere in the U.S. based on discrimination toward areas that have high concentrations of Black and Brown residents.

in identifying the need to map vulnerable populations in relation to resource allocations following Harvey's devastation. Doing so, would be an upstander action by calling out environmental racism in a way that would make the data of systemic racism visible.

Upstander for Social Justice through Art Education is the focus of Wanda B. Knight's article in volume 12 of VCG. Her research identifies traits of *upstanders* in order to teach toward developing such dispositions as empathy and social responsibility through art education. She presents curricular encounters with art by Linda Stein, a feminist artist and activist, as example of how to develop upstanders, who reveal and resist racism and sexism, among other oppressive social systems. In an effort to build support networks and regenerate the Black Feminist Art Movement of the 1970s within the context of the Black Lives Matter Movement, Indira Bailey's article, *The (In)Visibility of Four Black Women Artists: Establishing a Support Network, Defining Obstacles, and Locating the Meaning of Art*, shows ways to become resilient.

Resistance is the pragmatic response, but resilience is a critical necessity, not only politically but also personally. Life brings challenges that unbalance us. While both of us have had multiple significant blows to our emotional equilibrium this year, our choice is to face them through our visual and textual art practices. Karen's poignant memory of her brother's last days is for her, a way toward healing.

Karen's Resilience

For Karen, the 25 days in 2017 at her brother's side in critical care was emotionally intense. She went through the panic state at times when told he had less than 1% chance of survival, and in witnessing his slow death many times following a car crash, in which his long-time friend, the driver, died on impact of the crash. There were moments of hope, we thought he would survive. He raised four fingers asking if he had his limbs. The nurse and Karen responded with affirmation but he instantly became paraplegic from the car crash and could not feel his lower body. We did not tell him of the crash or about his friend's death. The doctors said that with all the medication he would feel the weight of grief but then forget so it would every day be retelling. Therefore, Karen spoke of hope.

Her brother, her only sibling, could not speak with all the tubes in his mouth but there were eight days that he could see (with one eye, the other optic nerve was severed) and hear Karen speak of his resisting death and being resilient. Then his organs began to fail resulting in a “fork-in-the-road” decision to make about her brother’s life. Karen consulted with family, friends, and the doctors specialized in every body part, and with no time to linger or great suffering would ensue, she made the decision to turn off the life-sustaining machines. This decision meant that family and friends could say farewell through stories of her brother’s life, filling his last day with resilience to pass out of his body. A doctor said that even though unconscious there was brain activity as his pupils dilated with light, and his hearing was good. During his last moments of life on May 12, 2017, Karen’s brother lived another hour without machines listening to his favorite music with photos and drawings about his life spread across his body. He expired on the word “fireworks” in a song he loved. It was as peaceful a death as one can have with prolonged life after a fatal car crash. His friends created a tribute night with open mic stories. Karen’s brother lives within his family and friends’ memories shared with him as he passed from his body, among friends at the open mic event; and later in the summer in spreading his ashes in the planting of two Magnolia trees on his deceased parents beach, hillside to the beach, and at a Beech tree, in the lakefront yard, where he had carved his full name when he was young.

For Karen, moments such as swimming in the lake at sunset, a time that reassured and connects her with her mother who died in 2012, as a sailboat, reminding her of father’s last words he spoke to her before his death in 1998, is silhouetted as it moves in front of the sun. From within the body of water she has known since two-years old, she looks at the Magnolia tree encircled with her brother’s ashes and memorabilia from his life, with her mother the sunset and father the sailboat behind her, she feels her family’s presence. The lake is every changing yet as the sun sets there is a constant that brings a resiliency born of love and gratitude to being raised with a critical consciousness to use her strengths and positionality as artist and educator toward social justice.

Debbie’s Resilience

For Debbie, the sudden onset of Bell’s Palsy in August 2017, was dealt with in many ways including journaling, artwork, and learning about her condition. Debbie is a role model of resilience for coming out of hiding into the public sphere with one side of her face paralyzed. Six days after the diagnosis of Bell’s Palsy, a temporary condition caused by a trauma to the seventh cranial nerve in the back of the neck, Debbie traveled from the USA to S. Korea to receive a prestigious award at the International Society for Education through the Arts (InSEA) World Congress. She went on stage to receive the Ziegfeld Award and gave a presentation to a filled conference ballroom of her colleagues from throughout the world. She briefly described her new condition of Bell’s Palsy and asked for a light because it was difficult to see her notes due to the condition, and then she gave an outstanding presentation applauded by her colleagues. Nuances of her resilience is evident in her journal as well as the struggle and reflection on *what if* this was a condition from birth or permanent. Her journal (below) illustrates her thinking as she considers disability, ableism, a new awareness of her material body, and the impact of society’s reaction to her newly asymmetrical face.

Day 2: I know it wasn’t a stroke because I immediately tried to think hard thoughts (like new materialism) and my brain works really well. My mind immediately flipped to the words “Bell’s Palsy” (which shows the brain is active) and while waiting for Patti to take me to the emergency room, I learned from the internet what I needed -- so that by the time I engaged with doctors, I knew I needed high doses of steroids and antibiotics and I am praying for an immediate cure because I have to leave for Korea in 5 days. Or I need to hide in my bedroom til it goes away. It’s hard to see. And it’s hard to read. My left eye keeps dripping and blurring. They said 3 weeks or 3 months. 3 weeks or sooner works for me.

Day 6: It’s really weird to have a melting face. It’s not easy to have bizarre seriously disconcerting random nose bleeds that are stronger than any I’ve had before. Being here at InSEA was an attempt for me to come out with either what is a temporary disability or a more permanent new reality. It’s visual culture, material and embodied experience.

My face is melting. My friend lost a ton of weight since I’d see her last. I asked her what was going on and she said it was multiple sclerosis. This is not a temporary issue like Bell’s Palsy – goddess willing this Bell’s Palsy will go away in days, weeks, or months – and I’ll get back to whatever

“normal” was for me. The multiple sclerosis is in remission but it will not spontaneously go away. Cancer won’t either. Shit happens way worse than this – but this is my face. My face that faces the world, that I am judged by – that I am assessed as to my mood, my attitude, my response to their response to me, and on and on. . . it’s the face.

Visage.

Multiple metaphors for the face we show the world.

Disability.

There is a short in the communication channel.

Many disabilities are invisible. This one came on and is so fucking visible that it’s impossible to look away. I am really reluctant to have my picture taken during my award presentation – but hey, how in the world do people go through their life with visible disabilities and manage to stay centered? This is tough for me and it’s only been 6 days. What kinds of changes to my life would have happened if this was a condition from birth? What would my life have been? How would it have been different?

DAY 8 or 9 depending how you look at it.

Went to Korean acupuncturist yesterday and it was surreal. But I am confident that the herbal mixture that they sent over – one for ½ hour after each meal that I will eat while I’m here will surely do the trick. It tastes terrible but I can get it down. It’s got to be good for me since it tastes so awful.

Malady. That’s the word. Mal, evil. Look for the derivation of this word. Dan Barney gave me the word when we were talking yesterday.

August 11, day 11. Having some pain below my left ear for a couple days. Random tingling. Right this minute I’m feeling a tingling on the back-left side of my tongue which has been pretty paralyzed. Looking at myself in the mirror, I can see the droopy left side but I’m not sure it’s as bad as it has been . . . ??? last nite went to the banquet and folks said that the face looked as if it was relaxing. Originally it was very tight, but now it’s relaxing.

I’m not happy to get my picture taken, and it was taken a few times last night. But when looking at the pics I’m not too sure whether it’s the face or the fact I look pudgy...

Alice Arnold who is just days older than I am talked with me a lot yesterday about acceptance and kind of a zen approach to aging. I think that I am not good at this aging thing. Never have been. Frankly I hate it.

But I think I might have almost been into acceptance before this --

One of the craziest things is that when my mom got old, everyone said how cute she was – condescending. And I am now finding the same in peoples’ reactions to me. But I’m thinking that I should just go with it. Accept. Better a condescending cute than pity?

Home tomorrow. Today I’m going to try to get on a tour hope I can because laying here “resting” and feeling sorry for myself is not a good plan.

Told Karen K-B today that I’d write this for VCG.

August 14. 14 days and I seem as droopy as ever on the left side of my face, particularly my eye and my mouth. And there is nearly continual tightness and almost pain in my left ear and neck. I am home and sleeping on my pillow is so much better than it was on the hard pillows in Korea.

They said I was brave. I am the visual signifier of their fear of illness.

I don’t think I am very brave.

I was supposed to rest. I’ve rested. And I am not very good at it.

Monday, September 11 – exactly 6 weeks to the day the world shifted for me.

From Day 6 to Week 6, I have improved a little bit – I suspect that the “little bit” is relative. I’ve not gotten worse, and while I still can’t smile or eat without slobbering, my drippy eye seems to be improving.

Aside from the emergency room doctors and the acupuncturist in Korea, I have seen Dr. Duncun (Internist), Dr. Kim (facial paralysis), Dr. Wang (acupuncture), speech therapist, Shawna, and massage therapist, Juana. In each and every case, I’ve been told to be patient.

My patience is wearing thin. I am stressful and filled with fluttering anxiety. Yes, I know that this is not a life-threatening malady, but it does impact the richness of my life. Reading is difficult, talking exhausts me. I can’t enjoy a lovely dinner and glass of wine at an award-winning restaurant because I can’t chew or drink gracefully and without slobbering.

Yes, the sun is shining, the air is cool, and Winter is Coming – yes – my favorite time of the year is here. These tears are part of the disease and part of my distress.

Matters that Matter

Our personal stories of resilience are fraught with panic, fear, grief, yet we maintain hope. We educated ourselves, sought numerous perspectives, and believe things will get better. There are so many matters that matter today, and resilience is needed to overcome adversity and to enrich our interconnected lives. Each year, we take a photo together, a testimony to an enduring friendship, a matter that matters to us (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Deborah Smith-Shank and Karen Keifer-Boyd in Daegu, S. Korea, August 10, 2017. Photograph by Maria Lim.

names, title, or keywords, as well as a providing a platform for author submissions and to track the review process. I (Karen) give my heartfelt thanks to the scholarly critical work and mentoring of authors by the exceptional Review Board, and to Yen-Ju for renewing VCG's vibrant matter with the infrastructure necessary, and to Debbie for stepping in to help review and edit revised submissions in the spring while I was caring for my brother in the trauma center, even though this was her first year retired from VCG. I also invited Debbie to co-write the editorial with me. She agreed, as we both value our annual conversation in reflecting on the past year. This year our conversation developed into the outline for our editorial on matters that matter.

Visual Culture & Gender has a new look thanks to the clean navigational design work of Yen-Ju Lin, associate editor of VCG, beginning with volume 12. Yen-Ju has also moved VCG into the functionality possible with Open Journal Systems (OJS) with its features to search all volumes by entering an author's

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