Community Is the Way: Engaged Writing and Designing for Transformative Change, by Aimée Knight, The WAC Clearinghouse and University Press of Colorado, 2022. 125 pp.

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The inevitable gap between theory and practice has prevailed for years between academia and community. Practitioners, after graduating from educational programs, often fail to integrate knowledge they learned in academic environments with real-life situations, as described by Professor Carol L. Glasser and anthropologist Arpan Roy in "The Ivory Trap: Bridging the Gap between Activism and the Academy." As they state, "scholars may struggle to successfully share their work outside of the academy or may be hesitant to push intellectual and institutional barriers" (90). They further comment that the "academics should use their privileged position to better society" (90). However, the lack of hands-on activities, praxis, and implementation of empirical research findings have contributed to retaining the theory and practice gap, because, as bell hooks mentions in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, there is a "tug-of-war" between the activists (hooks 113) and the intellectuals who "create knowledge without a clear practical focus" (Glasser and Roy 91). Scholars, researchers, and writers see students as the intended readers of the books they write and publish to educate them on the methods of community-building for a better, safer, and more just society. A vital question remains: How can we design for equity and justice in our community partnerships? Aimée Knight's recent book addresses the question and promotes transformative changes by enacting social justice through writing projects with community partners.

Knight's *Community Is the Way: Engaged Writing and Designing for Transformative Change* explores a broad range of practices in writing studies. It is a part of the series of *Practice and Pedagogy* published by the WAC Clearinghouse. This book investigates universities' engagement in building community in an unequal and racialized world. Dividing the book into five chapters, Knight explains how community-building approaches can empower "grassroots activism, decolonization efforts, co-resistance movements, and social change initiatives" (11). *Community is the Way* is a crucial read for anyone who wishes to get involved in researching and teaching community-based scholarship and grow a deep and just sense of building a better and more constructive community.

The book starts with a foreword in which Paula Mathieu casts a white supremacist and deeply unequal community and its writing project as "the mix of utopian ambition and pragmatic project orientation" that causes an inevitable mismatch between the theories and collaboration (xi). In a racialized,

capitalistic, and mixed cultural community, power and privileges are afforded mostly to the white folks (xii). According to Mathieu, no matter how much academics think of doing good in the community, "our intentions do not always mirror our impact" (xiii). Knight's book offers intellectual and internal "equity-based approaches" in community writing to bridge the gap between community and university (xiv). Knight recommends, in Asao Inoue's words, "sitting with our discomfort" to get rid of the obstructing feature of racism; Knight then comes up with reconstructed designs and written discursive formations for more positive and better transformative change (xiv).

Knight begins with an introduction that showcases her purpose for the book and sketches out the chapter overviews. She includes a personal anecdote to connect her story purposefully and appropriately to the relevance of a new and redesigned community-based writing engagement. Since most people characteristically accept information that matches with their interest and reject information that contradicts it, Knight focuses more on "equity-based approaches to writing and designing with community" to make universities and communities more tolerant and participatory (4). In her chapter outline, Knight finally suggests that by "centering equity and solidarity in our work, designs can be an ethical praxis of world making" (11). By redesigned community-building approaches, Knight pursues social justice for the grassroots, subalterns, and minorities.

By defining the terms of community-engaged scholarship, chapter one explores both mutual and reciprocal community-university partnerships which are "lauded as a joint win/win by both parties" because they both bring multifaceted benefits to each other and cause multidimensional growth through multimodal means (14). By prioritizing "the strengths and assets of the community partners," valuing "the co-creation of new knowledge," and remaining committed to a process of transformative change" (16), writing students can build "not only mutually beneficial partnerships but also mutually transformative ones" (24). Instead of sustaining a hierarchical, white-dominated power structure, Knight suggests that power and privilege must be examined in "an intentional and reciprocal process" (24). This chapter effectively establishes the idea of mutuality and reciprocity in community and university collaboration and introduces the concept of mutually beneficial and transformative partnerships.

In chapter two, Knight shares methods to conduct design research in collaboration with community-engaged partnerships. Based on the three guiding principles from chapter one, this chapter focuses on four methods—design thinking, co-design, design justice, and equity-based approaches—that help to develop more just and equitable partnerships. Design thinking offers tools in community-engaged projects, but solely relying on this method alone may not dismantle the social dilemma caused by historic disparity and stratification.

In that case, co-design, which is more than a research process, "works to shift the power relationship between designers and participants from hierarchical to collaborative" (29). After designing together, the design justice method is to be adapted to "grow a community of practice" (33). However, none of the first three methods work on "writing partnership[s]" (34). Only the equity-based approach is especially designed for writing partnerships, which require building empathy, framing inquiry, co-creating knowledge, researching, composing, and recomposing, testing, revising, and evaluating capacity. All these methods gradually build trust between community and university. These methods, slowly but surely, ensure equity and justice in collaboration.

After thoroughly discussing design methods, in chapter three, Knight shows ways to engage community-building approaches in a writing classroom. Social justice research that comes by implementing designs in a technical communication context, as Freyet al. claim, "can amplify the agency of oppressed people—those who are materially, socially, politically, and/or economically under-resourced" (quoted in Knight 41). In addition, practicing decolonial methods helps both universities and communities work on "dismantling oppression while at the same time working toward a more just and equitable future" (43). Moreover, community-engaged partnership works with different production-oriented, training-oriented, and research-oriented projects in emerging media that connect writing students with the "networks of publics and counterpublics" (43). The chapter ends with a case study in which Knight shows how the practical implication of equity-based approaches to writing and designing with communities works towards "more found, more sustainable long-term commitments" (57).

In chapter four, Knight outlines a series of media analysis projects in the classroom for building capacity because, as the author declares, "media analysis creates opportunities to relate to, participate in, and apply course material to real-world needs" (59). The collaborative analysis stems from research questions like "what is," "what works," and "what if" and leads to different kinds of analysis (61). In writing the social media analysis, students focus on three areas: strategy, effectiveness, and summary, whereas golden circle analysis requires students to answer the why, the how, and the what "from the perspective of their community partner" (68). Knight addresses other effective analyses followed by the String Theory Experiment Activity, which puts the abstract theory of object into more concrete practice. The chapter ends with an in-depth and meticulous description of media analysis, which prepares students to become active participants in creating a sustainable and equitable culture of community-building.

Up to this point, Knight clearly mentions students' roles in community-building by creating a mutual and reciprocal design which puts both universities

and communities together to grow effectively and contribute to the making of a more just world. The final chapter opens the vital question of student-learning that has challenged the author herself. Since 2010, Knight has been formally and informally doing her qualitative research on program-level learning which, as she observes, has gradually changed how students thought about design and its outcome, power, and decision-making. She shares her students' experiences of working with the community partners, which "prepare[s] them for the real world" and "for changing the world" (91). The last chapter calls for the attention of writing teachers and facilitators who will eventually guide the students to learn to work with community partners. Knight concludes her book by suggesting pedagogues include equity-based approaches, infrastructural approaches, and decolonial approaches for "engaging the students in a process that intentionally builds community through writing programs" (91).

Knight's way of bridging the gap between communities and universities is reliable and constructive. This book offers effective and exciting measures to create a community where the power relation is collaborative, and the participation is mutual and reciprocal. It not only imparts theoretical knowledge but also directs teachers to a path that shows them practical ways of engaging students in community-building. Knight's book can be a good addition to rhetorical and composition studies as it offers different pedagogical hands-on activities for teachers to try. This book will reshape and reconstruct the thought process of readers from all teaching levels and help them move forward by aiming at transforming an unjust, oppressive, discriminatory, racialized, gendered, and capitalistic system into a more just, more sustainable, and more equitable community.

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Work Cited

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