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Stories To Be Told: A Qualitative Book Review of How Dare We! Write- A Multicultural Creative Writing Discourse

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Abstract

How Dare We! Write – A Multicultural Creative Writing Discourse (Lee, 2017) is an anthology of the stories that writers of color and LGBTQAI+ writers have experienced and still are experiencing in the mainstream publishing world, academia, and everyday life. The book is broken into five themes in which each writer describes experiences of publishing work in the White publishing world. They describe their cultures in an imperialistic language, English, and create stories that they as people of color can relate to such as being rejected by mentors and publishers and eventually letting themselves heal from the wounds caused by being silenced and confronted by the mainstream American culture.

Keywords

Writers of Color, LGBTQAI+ Writers, Minority Writers, Creative Writing, Mainstream American Culture

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Stories to Be Told: A Qualitative Book Review of *How Dare We! Write – A Multicultural Creative Writing Discourse*

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How Dare We! Write – A Multicultural Creative Writing Discourse (Lee, 2017) is an anthology of the stories that writers of color and LGBTQAI+ writers have experienced and still are experiencing in the mainstream publishing world, academia, and everyday life. The book is broken into five themes in which each writer describes experiences of publishing work in the White publishing world. They describe their cultures in an imperialistic language, English, and create stories that they as people of color can relate to such as being rejected by mentors and publishers and eventually letting themselves heal from the wounds caused by being silenced and confronted by the mainstream American culture. Keywords: Writers of Color, LGBTQAI+ Writers, Minority Writers, Creative Writing, Mainstream American Culture

This book is a collection of stories that writers of color and LGBTQAI+ writers have experienced and are still experiencing as writers in a literary world where their voices are silenced, and their experiences are not represented. The 24 stories written in the book are interconnected, and each story shows challenges and possibility that the writers have experienced and have seen as minority writers. The book was written not only to convey the stories of writers of color, to which emerging writers of color can relate, but also to provide a space for many people of color to feel less alone—whether they are writers or academicians in the United States' racialized society.

The book consists of five sections: Literary Keepers (and other myths), The Tyranny of Grammar, Identity(ies), Personal Narratives, Rejection Not an Option, and Healing the Heart. In each part, the authors rewrite and retell stories that have not been read or heard for a long time in White America. The writers share their experiences of being silenced by the White Standard of academia. The writers also write about the process of how they have managed to find who they are as writers of color in a world where their stories are often erased and miswritten by the mainstream American culture.

The authors suggest that the English language impacts the writers of color in so far as the writers may not be able to fully express their cultures through the Standard English sanctioned by the White culture. The writers have broken the rules of English to reach an audience who wants to be touched by their stories. Many writers of color endeavor to write stories with which people of color can resonate, regardless of what their racial backgrounds are.

In the book, the writers also share their personal narratives that show that everyone has a different story to tell, not just stereotyped ones. When the writers of color write the stories that represent their cultures and their races, many writers experience rejections from their publishers, who often ask them to change their stories to fit into the stereotypes created by the mainstream American culture. The book ends by telling the narratives of the writers of color who have used creating writing as a way to heal their experiences of rejection and silence.

What this book brings to diversity conversations is unique. This book does not give its readers a one-size-fits-all answer regarding the issues of diversity in creative writing. Rather, it conveys the message that every minority writer has a different story to tell. It is true that in the world of creative writing, minority characters have always been portrayed through the

stereotyped lens, and the writers of the book challenge the stories that have been erased and miswritten about minorities.

As intended by the editor of the book, this book will help writers of color and of the LGBTQI+ community feel less alone in the world where they constantly have to prove their existence to publishers, colleagues, and professors who see them through the White standards of excellence, creativity, and diversity. It may give writers who are struggling to tell their stories the motivation to write narratives which can represent them in a new light.

As a foreign-born woman of color who was raised in East Asia and has spent the entirety of adulthood in the United States, I have had difficulty finding stories to which I can relate. Before I opened the first page of this book, I hoped to read some stories with which I could resonate. To my surprise, the writers' stories hit close to home for me as a writer and an academician of color, as well as an Asian woman who has tried very hard to make her existence known to the world.

I hope that my experience with this book is also helpful for readers and writers of color who are waiting to tell their stories, whether it be through publishing a book or through writing a short blog. One of the writers shares her story in this way:

You no longer erase. You keep a separate file for random thoughts. One-liners orphaned, waiting for a home. Perhaps they will always remain islands in a sea of organized paragraphs or twist into new poems. But at least they exist. At least you have learned to allow them to be in all their imperfection. (Lee, 2017, p. 21)

As written by Lopez Lyman, one of the contributing authors to the book, writing as writers of color and as LGBTQAI+ writers does not mean that one's writing must be perfect; it is better to write imperfectly than to erase one's story.

Reference

Lee, S. Q. (Ed.). (2017). *How dare we! Write: A multicultural creative writing discourse*. Ann Arbor, MI: Modern History Press.

Author Note

Wonbin Jung, M.A., is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Family Therapy at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. She is passionate about social justice and multicultural issues not only in the field of Family Therapy, but also in many different areas: education, religion, and politics to name a few. Correspondence regarding this article can be addressed directly to: wj263@mynsu.nova.edu.

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