

EDITOR'S NOTE

Of all the skills we hope students will cultivate during their time at Boston University, writing is among the most important and most difficult to master. It therefore follows that teaching writing is one of the most crucial of the activities undertaken by faculty in all disciplines, departments, and colleges. Consequentially, it is quite gratifying when students excel and achieve that magical balance of knowledge, insight, and the ability to express complex ideas in words, as the authors of the essays in this fourth issue of *WR* do.

The selection of student work published here reflects a standard of quality for first-year writing in which the CAS Writing Program faculty take pride. Each of these essays was developed in a WR course (at either the 098, 100, or 150 level) under the mentorship of an instructor and then refined with the guidance of an editor. After being submitted to the journal, the essays underwent a rigorous selection process, during which the editors, associate editors, editorial board members, and journal committee members read, evaluated, reread, and reevaluated approximately four hundred exemplary papers. At the culmination of the selection process, the editors elected a mere two percent of all submissions for publication in *WR*. Due to the volume of superb work produced in WR seminars in 2011–2012, it often proved difficult to choose one essay over another, and thus we compiled a list of “honorable mentions,” fine essays that would have merited publication had space allowed.

When making their selections, the editors do not prioritize any particular theme, subject matter, discipline, or methodology. Nevertheless, fortunate coincidences sometimes do occur, such as in this year's issue of the journal, which features a series of compelling essays that can all be seen as different introspective inquiries into the nature of American culture. In

her prize-winning essay, for example, Ying Zhang contemplates the nature of identity for someone who goes by different first names and experiences different senses of self in America versus in China. We also have some fine pieces on monumental American thinkers, such as Sophie Spiers' prize-winning essay on Frederick Douglas, and George Danis' prize-winning work on T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land." This issue also includes work on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D. C., the first amendment to the U. S. Constitution, illegal immigrants in the food industry, and clinical trials conducted in Africa in light of the Tuskegee scandal.

All of these essays should be considered great accomplishments. In order to write them, the authors had to acquire a significant amount of new knowledge, exercise a greater hermeneutic capacity than ever before, work in a new genre (the college essay), and express themselves with a level of sophistication and eloquence not previously required of them. They have all done so marvelously, and so I hope they are as proud of themselves, and that their teachers are as proud of them, as the editorial board is to present them as the authors of this issue of *WR*.

— Ivan Eubanks, Ph.D.
Editor