

## EDITORIAL

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# Public Stories of Mathematics Educators: An Invitation to Tell

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The work of urban mathematics education is not exclusively an academic exercise; it belongs equally to mathematics education researchers, teachers, students, administrators, parents, and community members. Unfortunately, there are three significant gaps that characterize discussions of urban mathematics education. First, there exists a divide between scholarly journals and non-academic audiences, which is an ongoing challenge in education research to demonstrate a bidirectional relationship between the practitioner and scholarly communities (Langrall, 2014). The second gap separates the realities of education practice from the processes that govern decision-making about education practice. Mathematics holds a central position in education policy discussions (Steiner, 1987), but policy decisions remain prescriptive for teaching and learning (Lortie, 2002) and do not take into account the lived realities of mathematics classrooms and the teachers and students that inhabit them. Finally, there is a gap between generalized conceptualizations of mathematics education and the nuances of mathematics education in urban spaces. At *JUME*, we see these gaps as opportunities for mathematics educators<sup>1</sup> to participate in public discourse related to mathematics teaching and learning.

In Volume 2 Issue 1, Dr. Lou E. Matthews (2009), founding editor-in-chief of *JUME*, issued a call to urban mathematics educators to construct and share public narratives. This call inaugurated the Public Stories of Mathematics Educators section in Volume 2 Issue 2. This section is a forum for mathematics educators of all stations to move outside of traditional academic discourse in an effort “to define a more people-centric mathematics education” (Matthews, 2009, p. 3). Matthews argued that challenging times in urban education require transformative mathematics education leaders to frame our individual stories into public narratives that deliberately work to connect us with ourselves (stories of self), with

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<sup>1</sup> The term *mathematics educators* refers to those who study mathematics teaching and learning. This group includes, but is not limited to, mathematics education researchers, mathematics teacher educators, and mathematics teachers at all levels (pre-K–graduate).

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others (stories of us), and with our work (stories of now). Contributions to this section have ranged from teachers interrogating policy and practice (e.g., Hennings, 2010), to teachers using poetry to examine the complexities of teacher-student relationships in mathematics classrooms (e.g., Ball, 2012), to teacher educators reflecting upon successful pedagogies (e.g., Truxaw & Rojas, 2014). The Public Stories section is a space for all of us to share our good work, our lingering questions, and our responses to enduring challenges. These stories address a critical question raised in the formation of *JUME* as a scholarly space: “How should we give ‘voice’ to the complex dynamics of change within the urban domain?” (Matthews, 2008, p. 2).

I am writing this editorial as an invitation to our readers to join with *JUME* in an effort to shape the discourse about urban mathematics education through public stories. Our students, the teachers with whom we work, and we ourselves have stories that can contribute to larger understandings of urban mathematics education. Through these stories, we reveal who we are and how our identities shape and complicate our engagement with mathematics teaching and learning. However, it is important to note that public stories are not simply reflexive exercises; in order for these stories to connect, “we will have to be deliberate about (a) our intentions to do so, (b) what we choose—or choice points—to share, (c) what the moral will be, and (d) our audience” (Matthews, 2009, p. 3). Deliberately-constructed public narratives both problematize and enrich our understandings of urban mathematics education.

*JUME* was founded in response to marginalization of urban mathematics education research in mainstream scholarly outlets (Matthews, 2008). Keeping with a mission to resist such marginalization within mathematics education research, the Public Stories of Mathematics Educators section stands in the gaps between research and public narrative, policy and practice, and generalized and experiential scholarship. We invite you to tell your public stories and to encourage your students and other mathematics educators to do the same. Together, we can use this space to challenge dominant discourses through the transformative power of stories that support “a discourse agenda that addresses urban complexities, challenges, and excellence” (Matthews, 2009, p. 1).

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