Fostering Change and Doing 'Heavy Lifting': A Dialogue with *Technical Communication & Social Justice* Co-Founders, Co-Editors, and Editorial Board Members

Godwin Agboka, University of Houston-Downtown, agbokag@uhd.edu
Mike Duncan, University of Houston-Downtown, duncanm@uhd.edu
Lucía Durá, University of Texas at El Paso, ldura@utep.edu
Laura Gonzales, University of Florida, gonzalesl@ufl.edu
Gerald Savage, Illinois State University (emeritus), gjsavag@ilstu.edu
Erin Trauth, Suffolk University, erin.trauth@gmail.com

Author Bios: Godwin Agboka, co-founder of *Technical Communication and Social Justice*, is professor of technical communication (TC) at the University of Houston-Downtown, where he teaches courses in TC. His research interests include intercultural communication, social justice, human rights, medical and science communication, legal writing, and research methodologies as they relate to cross-cultural research.

Mike Duncan, co-founder of *Technical Communication and Social Justice*, is a professor of English at the University of Houston-Downtown and managing editor of the journal. He has published widely in rhetoric, composition, and technical communication, including the monograph *Rhetoric and the Synoptic Problem* (Fortress Press, 2022) and the co-edited *The Centrality of Style* (Parlor Press, 2013).

Lucía Durá is Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Writing Studies in the English Department and Associate Dean of the Graduate School at The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). She co-edits *Technical Communication and Social Justice*. Her research focuses on understanding and leveraging community assets to solve complex problems.

Dr. Laura Gonzales is a community-engaged researcher and practitioner. Her work highlights the importance of language justice in community, academic, and technological contexts. She is the author of *Sites of Translation: What Multilinguals Can Teach Us About Digital Writing and*

Rhetoric (University of Michigan Press, 2018) and *Designing Multilingual Experiences in Technical Communication* (Utah State University Press, 2022).

Jerry Savage is Emeritus Professor of Technical Communication and Rhetoric at Illinois State University. He is co-editor with Lucia Dura of *Technical Communication & Social Justice*. He is a Fellow of ATTW, and recipient of the CPTSC Distinguished Service and the STC Excellence in Teaching awards.

Erin Trauth is Director of First-Year Writing at Suffolk University in Boston. She serves as the Assistant Editor for *Technical Communication & Social Justice.* Erin's work has appeared in *Community Literacy Journal*, the *American Medical Writers Association Journal*, *Rhetoric of Health and Medicine*, the *International Journal of Sociotechnology and Knowledge Development*, and *Technical Communication.*

Introduction

In a 2013 issue of *connexions*, Godwin Agboka wrote that "social justice research in TC has not kept pace with the work" (2013, p. 29) of technical communication (in this case, the context of international technical communication). Technical communication researchers have long recognized the deep connection between the role of technical communication and social realms, among others: in 2011, Savage and Mattson wrote: "Our field is deeply involved in the complex processes of globalization, processes that not only entail opportunities and benefits for businesses, professions, and human lives but that also often sweep through cultural, social, environmental, and economic domains in destructive ways" (2011, p. 5). In recent years, we have witnessed increased discussion about social justice and its role in our lives – from the everyday to workplace settings – and we have also, in technical communication, made progress in calls for enhanced dialogue about the ways in which technical communicators might serve as advocates for social justice efforts. Natasha Jones, in a 2016 article "The Technical Communicator as Advocate: Integrating a Social Justice Approach in Technical Communication," calls for focused attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion to promote "a more genuine and critical interrogation of how work in TPC [technical and professional communication] impacts the human experience" (2016, p. 342). Drawing on calls for such related efforts since at least the 1990s (Slack, Miller, & Doak, 1993; Johnson-Eilola, 1996; Savage, 2003; Blyer, 2004), and growing on some of the many efforts made in the early 2010s (Williams & Pimentel, 2014; Sapp, Savage, & Mattson, 2013), Jones elucidates:

> Similar to the manner in which scholars pushed for the integration of ethics into technical communication research and pedagogy that resulted in ethics becoming commonplace in TPC studies and instruction, scholars must now encourage a reconceptualization of the field to incorporate contexts of social justice and human rights. Acknowledging the social impacts of communication legitimizes TPC as a field that fully understands, appreciates, and addresses the social contexts in which it operates. TPC scholars entering conversations about diversity and social justice issues that are important on national and global levels can help to further legitimize our field by providing a basis for scholars to begin to critically examine how texts and technologies have an impact on the human experience (2016, p. 344).

In 2020, work began to form a new journal that would be dedicated to such efforts. *Technical Communication and Social Justice* (*TCSJ*) is an interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed, online open-source journal that seeks to "advocate for and seek to foster recognition of previously silenced voices, ideas, and practices in technical communication and invite scholars and readers to join an activist community" (2022). In this, our first full regular issue (Vol. 1, issue 2) after the initial special issue, we hope to expand on a vision to "advance themes (1) exploring the systems and structures that legitimize and sustain injustice and/or (2) redressing injustice and/or enacting social justice in spheres of technical communication work" (2022). Through this vision, *TCSJ* co-founders and editors hope to do more than "merely report research." Instead, we aim to "equip readers to foster change" (2022). As Godwin Agboka, one of TCSJ's two co-founders, shares in the dialogue below, this is a group of people joining others already writing and working on social justice and technical communication efforts who may "just not be satisfied with just

one or two special issues or articles here and there" – the entire focus of TCSJ aims to centralize on these themes.

In this dialogue, to help commemorate our first regular issue of *TCSJ*, Assistant Editor Erin Trauth speaks with the *TCSJ* co-founders, co-editors, and some editorial board members involved with co-editing our first special issue to understand perspectives, motivations, and hopes for this new journal.

A Conversation with TCSJ Co-Founders, Co-Editors, and Editorial Board Members

In the following sections, we summarize our dialogues about *TCSJ,* expanding on perspectives, motivations, and goals from several *TCSJ* stakeholders.

Erin Trauth (Trauth): What prompted you to start or become involved with TCSJ?

Mike Duncan (Duncan): In early December 2020, I approached Godwin with a vague idea of starting a peer-reviewed journal. The pitch was TC with a social justice focus. My supporting argument was something along the lines of, well, one more publication here and there is not the same as it was when we were junior faculty, and it might be time to step up to another level of contribution. He responded enthusiastically, which was great, as it wasn't an idea I could pull off myself.

The pandemic was at its height then, I was isolated at home, and I was just coming off a long stint in Faculty Senate leadership at UHD that had left me deeply frustrated about getting any positive institutional change done, as even what I'd thought was a measured anti-racism statement from the faculty had received considerable resistance. Something in me clicked, though, when watching the Black Technical Communication talk online the previous week. Institutional and corporate and cultural inertia is powerful, but scholarship is diffuse and nimble and can pivot more easily, especially with quick peer review. Maybe we could help push that along.

Laura Gonzales (Gonzales): I was invited to join the *TCSJ* editorial board by Godwin and Mike, and when I heard about who else was going to be on the board, I couldn't say no! The *TCSJ* board is filled with scholars who consistently demonstrate their commitment to social justice, not only in their scholarship, but also in how they treat others in the field. I'm excited to be part of this team and very grateful to Jerry Savage and Lucía Durá for serving as editors.

Lucía Durá (Durá): For years I've been involved with social justice-focused research, and when Godwin and Mike approached me about the journal, it seemed like a natural fit. I was compelled by the idea that social justice should have its own scholarly forum within tech. comm. I was honored by their invitation, and then when I saw the company I was in during the first meeting, it was even more so a no brainer. The group was diverse and immensely talented, so I was excited to get to work with each one of them more closely and with them as a collective. From our initial conversations we were building something meaningful, and we were having fun doing it. When we had an informal conversation about possibilities for the role of editor, I was quick to assert that I could not take on such a responsibility. I didn't have editorial experience and was

not in a place where I could assume the role. However, when Jerry approached me about the possibility of being a co-editor, I was much more open to the idea. I felt much more confident about doing something as part of a team, and I was excited about the prospect of learning "the business." So I said yes! And I am happy that I did. This has been extremely gratifying work so far. I am very proud of the effort and of being part of such a well-intentioned, passionate group of people.

Gerald Savage (Savage): Godwin Agboka invited me in early 2021 to join the editorial board of what was to become *TCSJ* and a few months later, the board asked me to serve as the first editor. Because I've been retired for 11 years now, I felt it would be better for the journal and for me—a fairly advanced senior citizen—to have a co-editor. The board agreed to that so I had no further excuses for dodging the draft. But I have primarily focused on social justice issues in my research, teaching, and service in TC, so as long as I felt able to take such an active role in *TCSJ*, I saw it as an opportunity to continue working in an area I have been committed to for over 20 years.

Godwin Agboka (Agboka): Whenever I have the opportunity to talk about the genesis of *TCSJ*, I have mentioned Mike Duncan. As he recounts, he floated the idea of the journal and shared it with me. Not only was I excited because of my own interests in social justice research, but I thought the idea of establishing a journal dedicated solely to social justice was timely and necessary. Of course, a lot of work still needed to be done to get the journal up and running, but I thought that paled in comparison with the value and potential contributions of the journal to technical communication and allied fields. I took on the initial responsibility of contacting many of the members of the editorial board and shared the vision with them. The initial responses to my email suggested that the journal was a real possibility. I am glad we are here today, and I look forward to contributing and reading cutting-edge and smart work!

Trauth: What space do you believe TCSJ fills that other journals in the field may yet not?

Duncan: The host of special issues on social justice appearing in journals in TC and in related fields in recent years is a very visible symptom of a movement that we can assist. Offhand, I can't think of many relevant journals that haven't had a special issue on SJ, and just as we were recruiting the editorial board in the spring of 2021, one of my favorite (and incredibly dry) tangentially-related journals to rhetoric, *Informal Logic,* put out a special issue on Argumentation and Social Justice.

One of the concerns discussed in the initial editorial board meetings was whether *TCSJ* might gobble up too much scholarship on social justice in TC, removing the need for the more established journals to address the concept's central concerns. But I think if you look at what's been appearing in *TCQ, TC, JTWC, IEEE*, etc., there is plenty of interesting work to go around. *TCSJ* can act more like a booster and a resource for new scholars getting established.

Gonzales: When the editorial board was first having conversations about our bylaws, social justice was baked into every decision–what genres should we invite and accept to reflect our social justice mission? How should we work with authors to enact the social justice principles we want to stand by? What should our submission and revision process be so that it aligns with our

social justice values? At *TCSJ*, social justice isn't a special issue or an add-on – it's the whole purpose of the journal from its inception. I don't think other venues can say that, and I think this model is an exciting opportunity both for the journal and the field.

Durá: One of the things that really motivates me about *TCSJ* is that social justice is not a static concept. It is constantly evolving, and like everything else, it too needs to be assessed critically. This evolution and assessment needs to be ongoing for the good of social justice work and scholarship, it needs to be cutting edge, and it needs to be grounded in a recorded history. In this sense, *TCSJ* gives roots to other journal special issues and edited collections to be perceived together as a rhizome. One of my goals for this project is for it to contribute a forum that ensures ongoing conversations about social justice - what it is, what is good, and what is possible. And those conversations, as Laura noted in her response, are not just pieces of traditional scholarship. We are hoping to involve fewer usual suspects in the world of publishing and are giving thought through a social justice lens (and working hard to live up to our conceptual aspirations) not only to the products of the journal but to all of its offerings and processes.

Agboka: I am encouraged by scholarship on social justice in our field's journals. As Mike points out, almost all the journals have put out some special issue on social justice, some of which were edited by members of *TCSJ*'s editorial board. But I am not satisfied with just one or two special issues or articles here and there. That's where *TCSJ* becomes central. *TCSJ* can become the platform for coherent and consistent social justice work with significant focus on the promotion of the work of BIPOC, MMU, and emerging scholars. This journal should become the central resource for social justice work that scholars, teachers, and practitioners can point to and find resources to support their own work. In the immediate aftermath of the 2020 global protests, there was an encouraging movement in action targeted at confronting injustice, as Corporate America, for example, promised much. The energy that inspired the promises and calls for reforms waned so quickly. Obviously, much work remains to be done, and *TCSJ* can be instrumental in this work.

Trauth: What do you hope TCSJ's biggest contributions to educational and practitioner spaces will be?

Duncan: One way to look at creating a journal and its contents is that it signals "this is important right now, and so important that it deserves special attention, not just now but 50 years out." A journal like *Philosophy & Rhetoric* is a good example of how that thinking can play out; the arrival of *The New Rhetoric's* English translation in the U.S. and the accompanying epistemological concerns in rhetorical theory in the 60s-70s have aged extremely well. I think TC might be in a similar watershed moment. In other words, we're trying to secure social justice as a perennial issue that will not fade away.

Gonzales: I hope *TCSJ* demonstrates that we don't need to maintain the same procedures, protocols, and processes we've always had in technical communication in order to remain "rigorous" and groundbreaking. I hope we can show that embracing a social justice mission can push scholarship to the next level, where we consider the implications of our work from multiple perspectives.

Savage: At this point, still in the first year of the journal and not having published a first issue yet, the obvious difference is that *TCSJ* is the only journal in the technical and professional communication field exclusively focused on issues of social justice. The murders of Black people, with particular attention to George Floyd, have galvanized just about all of the technical and professional communication journals. Moreover, STC's *Technical Communication* and ATTW's *TCQ* have recruited two of the leading social justice scholars in our field as editors - Miriam Williams and Rebecca Walton. These organizational decisions have unquestionably been effective in maintaining more than a momentary focus on social justice perspectives in technical and professional communication. Most of the other technical and professional communication journals have social justice scholars on their editorial boards, although I think *TCSJ* probably stands out in that regard with our entire board made up of social justice scholars and activists.

I suspect, however, that there may be a fair amount of pressure from various sources - industry, university programs emphasizing STEM curricula, and old-guard scholars - to "move on" and "get back to core concerns of TPC," meaning that TPC (technical and professional communication) is still commonly considered to be an objective, value-neutral practice for which "fleeting" social issues are of little relevance or none at all. This is evident, to me anyway, when I still see articles in all of the mainstream journals that could well have been written twenty or more years ago in terms of socio-political consciousness. If *TCSJ* has just one basic goal, it would be, in my opinion, to continually support and explore the idea that there is no aspect of technical communication teaching, research, or practice that is inherently free of social justice implications. I'm encouraged by the fact that social justice is an increasingly strong emphasis in programmatic hiring and curricular policies. A direct consequence of these institutional commitments is that an abundance of scholarship being published now is authored or co-authored by BIPOC graduate students or faculty only a year or two out of grad school.

Durá: I'm with Jerry here. I think that we can't let up on things that are important because we are too quick to revert back to old, unhealthy patterns. I believe this is true of the feminist movement and of civil rights work. This is work that doesn't stop because a milestone is reached. We have proven that beyond reaching important milestones we need to continue to hold up ideals, build critical awareness, promote just actions, and keep each other accountable. With *TCSJ* we aim to build infrastructure for continuity and for change. Laura mentions that we don't need to keep doing things in the same way. Jerry mentions that we often want to emphasize the "neutrality" of technical and professional communication. As someone with an administrative role, I recognize that there are moments when language needs to be prudent, but there are always ethical implications. There are always people being served, included, excluded, noticed, and unnoticed. I'm in favor of erring on the side of inclusion and noticing. I hope this journal can contribute that sense of accountability to educational and practitioner spaces.

I've noticed that because of the groundbreaking, socially just work that I have been exposed to in technical and professional communication, I have been able to contribute innovative ideas about diversity, equity, and inclusion in interdisciplinary projects. For example, I've been in meetings where I bring up the "Anti-Racist Scholarly Reviewing Practices" heuristic document developed by Cagle et al. as an example of ways to consider not only scholarship but academic expectations in general. My interdisciplinary counterparts are intrigued by the level of detail in these

guidelines. The thoughtfulness of technical and professional communication is unique, and other fields are open to learning from what we have done.

Agboka: I support all the many important points raised here. I believe in small, but meaningful contributions to the field. Honestly, just being the only journal dedicated solely to social justice work is significant. The expectation from scholars, teachers, and practitioners is that *TCSJ* should be the go-to platform for everything social justice: scholarly, pedagogical, and practice. If I were a program director looking for ideas to incorporate social justice ideas into my program, I'd turn to *TCSJ*. Similarly, if I were a researcher and looking for socially just ways to engage participants, I would be looking for practical ideas within *TCSJ* circles to do so. Essentially, *TCSJ* should be the platform for the promotion and discussion of sound theoretical and practical social justice work. I don't think the journal would be taking on too much if it set itself these important goals. It is for this reason that I am proud to be associated with *TCSJ* and looking forward to, what I believe, will be an exciting future.

Trauth: How can university TC programs help students grow in their awareness and action related to social justice?

Duncan: Well, here at UHD, the TC faculty have been talking about little else. We're placing SJ-related assignments in the service courses, we added a graduate course in SJ that Godwin designed, and it's in the mission statement. We've even been reading articles together, like we're scholars or something. It has become a foundational, directing idea, on top of our other big idea of being a rhetoric-based field.

We all approach the implementation differently. I'm about interrogating corporate structure and labor issues with discussion around socioeconomic concerns and the real-world consequences for TC work. I don't force students to hew to my positions, but they need to know the decisions they are making, and that they have options other than what their employer and society offer them explicitly. I got frustrated a few years ago with teaching neutral, genre-based assignments in our TC service course, which gets majors from all over the university, so I redesigned it with a roleplaying structure that emphasizes giving students interesting choices about how to respond to ethically problematic workplace scenarios, as well as dealing with the fallout from their decisions in the next assignment. It's a lot more work organizationally, but I think it gets to the point of how TC work can foster positive change (or not) far better than a straight march through the genres.

Gonzales: I think TC programs can help students by not just talking about social justice but by practicing social justice at every level–from hiring decisions, to the students we admit, to tenure and promotion guidelines, to the support we provide students, to how we handle pandemics. At every turn, programs are demonstrating what they think about social justice, and it's often in these instances that we see where programs' values really are. To me, it's less about what readings you are assigning and more about how you treat people from marginalized communities in your programs.

Savage: As an open-source, online journal, *TCSJ* is accessible to anyone with internet access. This is important for students and practitioners who may have little access to most of the other

professional journals in technical and professional communication, which require membership in professional organizations. Most of these organizations now have greatly reduced fees for students, but even so, two student memberships will typically cost over a hundred dollars. And these privileges don't apply to practitioners, nor are professional dues necessarily subsidized by all employers. I don't think this should be the biggest contribution of *TCSJ* but it's significant because such costs are likely to exceed the resources of many professional scholars.

We are still formulating aspects of the journal and so there may be additional features that could provide entirely new ways to advance social justice in technical and professional communication. Could we, for example, foster periodic, virtual forums or roundtable gatherings to explore dialogically the kind of issues and challenges that are addressed in presentations and informal gatherings at annual conferences, perhaps in a somewhat more structured way than occurs in listserv discussions from time to time?

Durá: For me it's very important, as I noted earlier, that we give continuous thought to what social justice is and how it plays out. I think students need to know that social justice is dynamic and that we are all on an ongoing journey in our relationship to social justice. I think programs can help students grow in their awareness by creating spaces for critical thought and for responsibility. We want critical thinkers who can take responsibility for their words and actions in the world.

Agboka: Mike Duncan lays out what the TC program at UHD has begun working on to prepare students to critique unjust systems, as well as to take action. Some of the recent scholarly work I have read gives me hope that other TC programs have begun doing a lot already. A colleague and I have been studying social justice efforts in introductory technical communication courses across institutions, and some of the materials participants shared with us point to what is already happening. The trends we are observing, however, do not suggest much institutional support or work. Much of the work being done is at the individual instructor level. To facilitate an effective and efficient support system for students institutional support is necessary. More so, TC programs must set a clearer programmatic vision reflected at the macro, mezzo, and micro levels to provide students opportunities for critique and action. For accountability purposes, social justice goals must reflect in mission and vision statements, course learning outcomes, teaching strategies and choices, etc.

Trauth: What would you like to see for the future of *TCSJ*?

Duncan: My main concern with *TCSJ* is that it becomes a self-sustaining phenomenon that continues to reflect something of its title and the rigorous intentions of its original board as it moves forward. I don't want to prescribe or predict a specific future, as it may evolve into something more interesting than I can imagine. But if it's still around in 50 years, I'd like to think it will resemble its earlier self to some degree.

Gonzales: I'd love to see *TCSJ* uplift the work of junior scholars of color doing social justice work. I'd love for us to build out our community of authors and readers so that we have supportive infrastructures that can then support scholars as they go through tenure and promotion

and other processes. We have the foundation for such a strong coalition, and I hope we continue to expand this foundation with other scholars.

Savage: Well, at this point, my vision is pragmatically on the near future and Lucia's and my immediate concerns. We want to see many more submissions coming in, and of course we would like them all to be publishable. And yet, among the most rewarding/interesting/exciting things that have happened since we began to receive submissions in early July have been the opportunity to work with new scholars, probably graduate students, who are developing projects that have the potential to move the field into new areas of social justice. These were not projects that were ready for publication or even for review; they were queries and tentative proposals, but we tried to encourage them and give them some suggestions for developing potentially publishable work.

So here's where I get idealistic. I'm not sure the editorial staffs of journals that receive far more submissions than they can publish have time to work extensively with such tentative inquiries. But it seems to me that if we can build such efforts into our editorial staff culture it could help *TCSJ* to be seen as a forum that welcomes, encourages, and continually goes in search of edgy, innovative thinking and research in social justice that has potential for making technical communication research and teaching transformative wherever TC is practiced. This isn't a new idea, I'm sure. I know a lot of the people on the editorial staff of our field's journals and I'm confident that this is what they all want and try to do. I'm just hoping that as we get going with *TCSJ*, we're in a better position to make this approach a core editorial value that will be constant in all of our work.

Durá: Can I just say ditto here? Mike, Laura, and Jerry have really captured the essence of what I'd like to see. We've all had unnecessarily negative academic experiences at some point, and I don't think that to be competitive or have high standards we need to have others endure poor treatment. We can make spaces where people with high standards are also compassionate and kind. I'd like to see us work together to achieve these things. I don't think we can let up, and I don't think we can underemphasize the power of working together to make sure the journal contributes to expanding inclusion efforts in a robust, valuable way.

Agboka: What more can I say? I support everything that Mike, Laura, Jerry, and Lucia have said. However, if there's anything I can add it is to support Mike's point hoping that this journal will 'survive' and achieve many of the important goals it has set for itself. Too many great journals begin with so much promise, but go missing too quickly. Once the journal crosses this bridge, I envision a future where the journal becomes a platform for supporting BIPOC, MMU, emerging scholars, and important research.

Trauth: As we think about the future of the *TCSJ* journal, and the future of our impact as technical communication practitioners, educators, and stakeholders: what is the most pressing problem in social justice right now? What obstacles need to be tackled first?

Duncan: The applied rhetoric, the mechanism of moving from ideas to action.

First, academia needs to be able to advocate strongly for itself. Not a new idea, but it's still there. It won't go away until we deal with it. There's a hard limit on how much professors can push for social justice while working in departments organized by financial caste, with most instructors without decent pay, health insurance, or tenure protections, and the process of getting to senior positions requiring a long grind of exploitation starting with graduate school. The pipeline for minority professors isn't good enough. If we can't pry the log out of our own eye first, we will remain, by definition, another group of hypocritical elites, unable to maintain ethos without anyone outside our silos, much less inside them.

Academia is not an ideological monolith, some last bastion of rationality. It has no shortage of bad actors. For every campus community that makes the call to action and delivers, like UC with 48,000 striking, there are more that don't even know what's going on and if they did, they'd only follow the wind.

I feel strongly that tenure's not just self-protection; it's armor for battle. But when I look around my university and those of others, I see resigned retreats and calls for caution and defense of the status quo. Only the easiest potential victory stirs action. You can't empower others much if you're powerless yourself, and that's where many tenured faculty remain; convinced that they can't change anything and that trying will backfire, and well, it's not their job anyway. Even when an opportunity to improve conditions for their fellow faculty, staff, and students to change the system for the better, etc., it is handed to them, most shrug, and the ones that don't, burn out.

For fields like TC where persuasion and critical thinking are valorized, the pain is especially acute. We are always up against far more conservative disciplines, administrators, and entire universities and state legislatures that want the world to remain the way it is and was. It is almost enough to stop thinking of ourselves as agents, which is the most deadly of poisons.

I understand the shrug. I'm an English professor in a four-year public school in Texas. It's frustrating and maddening, and I've come close to burning out several times. But none of that is an excuse to give up. Lethargy, learned helplessness, and low morale are fatal to useful collective action. We must teach people how to be agents of change, and that necessarily starts with ourselves.

Gonzales: There are so many! But if I had to choose one, which is connected to all others, it is the need to redress anti-Blackness in our field, in our communities, in our professional spaces, and more. We need to stop ignoring race when we talk about any other social justice issue–inclusion, disability justice, immigrant rights, gender equality, multilingualism, class issues, community activism, internationalization–all of these issues should centralize race and consider how Black people are affected, and also highlight how Black activists are already engaging in this work.

Savage: This is a tough question. New problems seem to arise constantly. The best answer I can offer is that we need to better understand what problems intersect most inextricably with other major issues. For me, for several reasons, climate justice appears to be the most dire concern we face at present. We have pretty convincing, data-informed deadlines for getting this problem at least mitigated. Its causes and consequences obviously intersect with racism, economic injustice,

nationalism, and xenophobia, just to mention a few. It's certainly an issue that could be the focus of several special issues of *TCSJ* over the next few years. But it's also increasingly evident that the climate justice issues we face are unlikely to be solved by the elite White male majority most responsible for causing them in the first place (see, for example, Ehren Plugfelder's introduction to his new book. *Geoengineering, Persuasion, and the Climate Crisis: A Geologic Rhetoric*).

Durá: When I have to prioritize social justice issues, my mind usually goes to children. They are inheriting what we leave behind, so, I think we need to think of safety –psychological and physical safety. I've always been heartbroken about school shootings, but the shooting in Uvalde really hit close to home. I take my seven year old to school in Texas every day, and I hate that she and her classmates have to worry about their safety. We need to make changes in ourselves, communities, places of work, cities, and states that support equity. And we need to recognize ourselves as interconnected–as people, but also in relation to the environment. We need to take care of our connections to each other and to the natural world. We need to be advocates and support advocates–this work is too much for one person or for one season. I know my response is more conceptual, but this question is so big. I hope we can leave the world in better shape for future generations to thrive.

Agboka: I agree with Mike regarding the issue of (lack of) action. I have become increasingly frustrated by the constant treatment of social justice as an aesthetic. Social justice, much like when intercultural communication was a thing, has become the feel-good term for many in academia and the corporate world. The seeming excitement about social justice is, however, not reflected in the type of action that should take place. I make the point elsewhere that in the immediate aftermath of the 2020 global protests, there was an encouraging movement in action targeted at confronting injustice. Many in academia and Corporate America promised changes and pledged financial support. Per estimates, America's largest public companies and their foundations committed at least $49.5 billion towards justice efforts, although 90% of the amount is reported to have been allocated to loans and investments that the corporations themselves could profit from. Two (or so) years after these promises were made, not much seems to be happening. Perhaps I am too impatient, but the pace is too slow. But, as my colleagues here have shared, we need to keep pushing and never tire of doing the heavy lifting that will get us there.

References

Agboka, G. Y. (2013). Interrogating the international in international technical communication discourse. *Connexions*, *1*(1), 29-38.

Blyler, N. R. (2004) Critical interpretive research in technical communication: Issues of power and legitimacy. In: Kynell-Hunt T., Savage G. (Eds.) *Power and Legitimacy in Technical Communication: Strategies for Professional Status*, *Vol. 2* (pp. 143-66). Baywood.

Johnson-Eilola, J. (1996). Relocating the value of work: Technical communication in a post-industrial age. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *5*(3), 245-70.

Jones, N. N. (2016). The Technical Communicator as Advocate: Integrating a Social Justice Approach in Technical Communication. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, *46*(3), 342-61. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047281616639472

Sapp, D., Savage, G., & Mattson, K. (2013). After the International Bill of Human Rights (IBHR): Introduction to special issue on human rights and professional communication.

Journal of Rhetoric, Professional Communication and Globalization, 4(1), 1-12.

Savage, G. J. (2003). Introduction: Toward professional status in technical communication. In T. Kynell-Hunt & G. Savage (Eds.), *Power and legitimacy in technical communication: Vol. I* (pp. 1-12). Baywood.

Savage, G., & Mattson, K. (2011). Perceptions of racial and ethnic diversity in technical communication programs. *Programmatic Perspectives*, *3*, 5-57.

Slack, J. D., Miller, D. J., & Doak, J. (1993). The technical communicator as author meaning, power, authority. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, *7*(1), 12-36.

Williams, M. F., & Pimentel, O. (Eds.). (2014). *Communicating race, ethnicity, and identity in technical communication.* Baywood.