

Special Collection for *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*: Revolutionary Love and Radical Possibilities: Advancing the Legacy of Dr. Ernest Morrell in Adolescent Critical Literacy Research

"Words are power and freedom. Words are life and love. Words are seeds and the vista. Words, at least revolutionary ones, are the source of revolutions. I live for words. Writing is my service. My very words are love."

"It doesn't get old, what literacy can do, why it's important, the potential of kids, the power of them interacting with stories, the beauty of being able to hear their own voice to contribute to the conversation, like what Walt Whitman says, 'The powerful play goes on and you may contribute a verse.'"

—Ernest Morrell (1971–2026)

Intent of the Special Collection

In February 2026, the field of education lost a giant, a visionary scholar, and a deeply beloved mentor. Dr. Ernest Morrell's groundbreaking work revolutionized how we understand youth popular culture, English education, youth participatory action research (YPAR), critical pedagogy, and literacy education. As past president of National Council of Teachers of English, an elected member of the National Academy of Education and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a prolific author, Dr. Morrell dedicated his life to reframing literacy as a tool for resistance, liberation, equity, and social justice.

This special collection seeks to honor Dr. Morrell's legacy not as a static archive but as a living, historically situated call to action. Dr. Morrell consistently highlighted and reminded us of the work of past luminaries in our field, while also looking to the present and future through the lens of hope. This special collection is similarly a bridge, connecting Dr. Morrell's deep commitment to the "genealogy of ideas" with new, expansive ways of thinking, being, and doing in the academy.

We invite scholars, practitioners, and activists to submit work that braids theory, practice, and empirical cases in alignment with Dr. Morrell's vision and teachings. We seek manuscripts that challenge neoliberal calls to "fix" students and instead move toward restorative, historically situated research that understands young people as agents of social change. This is a call to (re)position youth and communities as intellectual partners and to explore language and literacy as tools for individual and collective liberation. We especially invite critical literacies researchers who work in multilingual and multidialectal communities and with youth of color. We also encourage critical literacy submissions a) coauthored with an intergenerational approach (often modeled by Dr. Morrell himself), b) that incorporate critical translanguaging approaches and/or the greater arts and/or popular culture (three areas of scholarship that Dr. Morrell championed), and c) that engage with Dr. Morrell's concept of Revolutionary Love, a love manifested in a sincere concern for the symbiotic relationship between language pedagogy, sociopolitical consciousness, and liberation.

Rationale and Contribution to the Field

Throughout his distinguished career, Dr. Morrell frequently contributed to the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* (JAAL), bridging the gap between rigorous academic theory and the daily realities of urban classrooms. Morrell (2005) saw literacy as practice of both individual and societal transformation in pursuit of agency, dignity and justice. Critical literacy, according to Morrell (2008), "is necessary not only for the critical navigation of hegemonic discourses . . . [but] is also essential to the redefining of the self and the transformation of oppressive social structures and relations of production" (p. 5). To honor his profound legacy, we invite submissions for a special collection of JAAL dedicated to both celebrating and extending his life's work and legacy.

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We welcome the following [types of submissions](#) for this special collection:

- **Empirical Research Article:** Qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods studies that center minoritized voices, youth-centered critical literacy research, youth media, arts-based approaches, critical translanguaging literacies and pedagogies, and YPAR.
- **Review:** Theoretical/conceptual reviews that explore the historical dimensions and archival threads of critical literacies research in multilingual communities and/or communities of color, and which include Dr. Morrell's contributions.
- **Commentary:** Shorter essays or reflective pieces on the ethical and personal nature of Dr. Morrell's mentoring, his critical literacy teaching and research, and/or how Dr. Morrell's work has influenced the scholarship of others.
- **Media Review:** Book review or media review of one of Dr. Morrell's recent books or other media.
- **Discussion:** Invite a critical discussion and application of Dr. Morrell's work for wider reach and connection.

Submissions for this collection might address the following topics:

- Adolescent, adult, and/or family critical literacies
- Critical pedagogies in and out of school
- Critical youth popular cultural practices
- Critical translanguaging practices/pedagogies in and out of school
- The learning and praxis of YPAR collectives
- Critical English education
- Youth digital literacies and participatory media
- The building of creative and liberatory possibilities in literacy classrooms
- The (re)positioning of youth and communities as intellectual partners
- Literature reviews of Dr. Morrell's work and contributions to literacy studies

Abstract Submission

Submit the abstract via this Google Form: <https://forms.gle/yPcKM5zq3GKB5PR58>.

To propose an article, please use the Google Form link above to submit the following: (1) a title (max. 15 words), (2) an abstract proposal (~200–400 words + references) (2) a brief explanation (~100 words) of how your submission relates to/advances Dr. Ernest Morrell's work; and (3) a bio (50–75 words) for each author.

The submission deadline is **October 15, 2026**. If you have any questions, please contact the special collection editors, Cati de los Ríos (cdelosrios@berkeley.edu), Kate Seltzer (seltzerk@rowan.edu), or Danielle Filipiak (filipia2@msu.edu).

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****We ask that anyone who submits for this special collection also serve as a peer reviewer for 1–2 other manuscripts submitted****

Timeline

- **Call for Proposals Open:** August 15, 2026
- **Abstract Proposal Deadline:** October 15, 2026
- **Abstract Notifications for Advanced Proposals:** November 15, 2026
- **Full Manuscript Deadline:** April 15, 2027
- **Peer Review & Revision Window:** April–September, 2027
- **Target Publication Date:** November/December 2027

REFERENCES

- Morrell, E. (2005). Critical English education. *English Education*, 37(4), 312–321.
- Morrell, E. (2008). *Critical literacy and urban youth: Pedagogies of access, dissent, and liberation*. Routledge.