For teachers concerned about respecting the home language of their students, the Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL) resolution has always served as an eloquent statement on the power of language diversity. Unfortunately, the resolution itself has not always been able to serve as a guide as to how teachers can put such beliefs into practice. When I was finishing my book on SRTOL, I used the metaphor of Ozymandias to describe the current status of the resolution. The resolution was, I felt, too calcified by the inability of the political and cultural forces that produced it to regain the national political terrain. In his recent article in *JAC*, Richard Marback asks us to examine another political terrain, the Republic of South Africa, as a way to understand some of the difficulties facing teachers who want to revitalize the resolution's power in the United States. He concludes with some suggestions of the work that must be part of a larger project to inject a democratic language politics into the public debate. In what follows, I would like to examine Marback's article and tentatively suggest how the SRTOL might gain traction as an institutional and political tool.

**Language Rights in South Africa**

Marback points to the Republic of South Africa (RSA) and its constitutional requirement that language diversity not only be recognized as part of the nation's identity but actively supported and extended by the federal government. He uses the RSA constitution to demonstrate that effective language rights need support on two levels: individual and social. That is, a person's language has an intrinsic value in that it represents a person's home culture; any official recognition of that language also implicitly values the culture from which it originates. He recognizes, however, that for a language to gain true acceptance, it must also take on an extrinsic value. It must become a language in which social transactions (both cultural and economic) throughout the larger society are made possible. It is on this second level that the constitution and/or federal government can create a terrain for language diversity.

Marback points out, however, that the hegemonic force of Standard American English pushes against the expansion of these languages
throughout the culture. In addition, he argues, RSA citizens are hesitant to value a home language that was used by the apartheid government as a tool to exclude their economic and political participation. Nor is it clear the extent to which a citizen's home culture itself might have been distorted through apartheid policies. For this reason, Marback argues, the RSA constitution's goal of linguistic diversity will only occur if the intrinsic value of these languages gains wider social acceptance, a result that will also require a reassessment and rearticulation of the home community's identity in a post-apartheid world. The success of the constitution, then, depends upon the ability of activists, teachers, and government agencies to convince the public of the value and worth of such languages. That is, despite a constitutional guarantee, grass-roots organizing and local policy formation remain vital; the development of a collective identity and of collective support for alternative communities must occur through grass-roots political organizing. And it is only as this grass-roots work gains traction and success, Marback suggests, that the "robust democratic culture" imagined by the RSA constitution will occur.

Moving to the situation in the United States, Marback acknowledges that there is no constitutional protection of language diversity. Citing the Ann Arbor Black English case, he argues that this lack of legal protection forces those engaged in language rights struggles to build a collective effort in support of linguistic diversity as well as work to expand the domains in which any given language has currency. In effect, he is arguing that South Africa will ultimately need to do the slow coalition work and alliance building that those in support of language rights must do here. That is, the development of a collective identity and collective support of diversity must occur through grass-roots political organizing. It is at this moment, with the recognition of similarity and difficulty between the two nations, that Marback's argument ends.

For the teacher committed to supporting language diversity, Marback's article poses a serious challenge. Clearly, it is an important part of any classroom to educate students in the ways in which a language represents and organizes the interactions of a particular community; it is also important to allow students to recognize the ways in which that language can open up new social and linguistic horizons for them. Marback's article points out, however, that this alone will not guarantee any more than a sympathetic pedagogical space. It will not change the actual status of the language or the acceptance of language diversity outside of the classroom—the space in which our students exist as full citizens.
An analogy to the work of cultural studies might be useful at this point. In “Putting Policy into Cultural Studies,” Tony Bennett argues that the history of cultural studies is marked by an attempt to change the technology between the reader and the cultural artifact. Readings that demonstrate the ideological assumptions of a Hollywood movie, for instance, are designed to change the ways in which viewers understand the images flashing before their eyes. Such readings do not, except in the most schematic of ways, attempt to work out how such critical insights could be turned into a set of policies or pragmatic actions that would actually change Hollywood films. To return to Marback’s terminology, such scholarship might change the ways in which an individual values the intrinsic aspect of a work, but not change its extrinsic value—that is, it does not alter the networks in which that film exists. As a solution to this situation, Bennett suggests the formation of cultural policy institutes—organizations designed to influence local and national policy through developing research agendas and forming alliances with other policy organizations. To work through Marback’s insight about the need for extrinsic political work, not just the intrinsic work of our classroom, it might be worth considering how a composition program might begin to participate in such a broad policy perspective.

Language Policy and Disciplining Myopia
For a local composition program attempting to engage in language rights “policy,” the first issue to confront is our own disciplinary myopia. While we make our living by valuing and working with a variety of language patterns and dialects, it is not clear how our general concern for language rights plays out in the specific example of working with a community around policy issues. Any particular language pattern cuts across a variety of different visions of a community. A person might well speak a particular working class English, but a homogenous vision of the student’s home community should not be drawn from that singular example. Language patterns don’t imply a community policy. In addition, language rights are only one aspect of the community’s internal workings. As scholars, we need to participate with community boards to educate ourselves in the variety of issues and ideas about a community that seem far from our classrooms—economic trends, housing conditions, minimum wage campaigns, racial divisions, public schools, and more. Through such participation, we might begin to see in very pragmatic terms what type of community we intend through our rhetoric of language rights. We would also begin to imagine how such rights should work in practice for
a particular community. Only at that point could we begin to have an idea what it might mean to use language rights as a tool to ensure that a community can rearticulate its relationship with society at large—rearticulate its extrinsic worth.

And here I would argue that we need to be aware of how community is currently being defined in the public sphere and to consider seriously the extent to which such definitions support our vision of a “robust democracy,” to echo Marback’s phrase. When the SRTOL was originally drafted and then expanded on through the special issue of *College Composition and Communication* dedicated to it, the SRTOL was portrayed as further enabling the economic and political functioning of the United States. In fact, the central metaphors of the *CCC* issue highlight linguistic cooperation in the name of economic and national purpose: a banker and farmer are portrayed as being able to work together despite dialect difference; Americans are praised for learning how to speak terminology related to the Cold War (4, 9). While such a positioning might seem conservative, this vision was also created when the federal government was seen as active in securing voting, civil, and economic rights for groups who had faced discrimination. (Or at least this was seen as the case when the SRTOL was first articulated in the late 1960s; with Nixon’s election in 1968, to some extent the pendulum began to swing the other way.) It seems clear that similar to the RSA situation, at its origin the SRTOL was originally positioned as part of a network of federal and popular initiatives that were designed to support alternative communities and voices gaining power within the larger national culture.

Such is not the case today where the public sphere is being reorganized and imbricated in the current notions of a neoliberal state. As Susan Brin Hyatt writes,

> As the certainties of the post-war, Keynesian welfare state have gradually given way to a new set of assumptions about the role of government, [the culture has begun the task of producing neoliberal citizens]; that is, citizens who accept a state that is now ostensibly much less interventionist and regulatory than was previously the case and who are given to understand that part of their obligation as “good” citizens is to participate vigorously in the voluntary organisations and activities that constitute the domain generally known as “civil society.” (6)

That is, it is not only language rights that are lacking in federal protection and support. Welfare, social security, and Medicare programs among others are being redefined away from entitlement programs; similar to
language rights, they are no longer an expected part of a person's intrinsic worth or extrinsic network of support. In addition, new education benchmarks and standardized tests are working against expanding the type of personal writing and wordplay that can take up class time; standards are also rewriting the value of language in terms of efficiency and economic viability. Today, appeals to U.S. nationalism or to an interventionist state are an ineffective vehicle around which to organize (unless, of course, those appeals are framed in terms of a negation of individual rights to fight a war on terror).

In more general terms, it is also unclear whether appeals to an interventionist state or nationalist identity provide sufficient theoretical ground to expand community rights. As Bill Readings writes, “The notion of the state is the abstract ground that assumes the community is disinterested and autonomous. Modern community is founded upon the autonomous decision of individuals to communicate with each other as subjects of a state” (181). Given the ability of the state to act as moderator among individual citizens, Readings argues, “all problems of communication, any differences in idiom, must be presumed to be merely secondary to, or parasitical upon, a fundamental clarity of communication—an ideal speech situation” guaranteed by the state (182). This was the logic used to justify the SRTOL. It is also the basis for a neoliberal state that is not interested in community rights. An appeal to language rights within such a paradigm will not, I believe, serve as an adequate model of community organizing. It will not allow the creation of a collective identity capable of arguing for changes in a community’s extrinsic identity. To a great extent, a new model of community organization that confronts neoliberalism must be created—hence, the difficulty of securing language rights.

I want to suggest that instead of organizing within the paradigms of the nationalist state or within its framework of pure communication, it might be more useful to take seriously the insights of postmodern theorists about the necessary incompleteness of any linguistic transaction. According to Readings, beginning from such a paradigm will make clear that “the social bond is not the property of an autonomous subject, since it exceeds subjective consciousness and even individual histories of action. The nature of my obligations to the history of the place in which I live, and my exact positioning in relation that history, are not things I can decide upon or things that can be calculated exhaustively.” In fact, he continues, “The sheer fact of obligation to others is something that exceeds subjective consciousness, which is why we never get free of our
obligations to others, which is why nobody is a *model* citizen (the citizen who would not have any bond to anyone else in the community because he or she would stand for the community as a whole)” (186).

Free from having to imagine the goals of a community within such frameworks, it becomes possible to see goals and alliances that might not otherwise occur. Previously, within the traditional version of the SRTOL, it might have made sense to recognize the value of a Haitian-English dialect within a classroom and argue for its right to be used within existing economic structures. The postmodern paradigm of obligation would move beyond the individual to raise issues of how recent immigrants are supported in terms of housing, healthcare, and educational rights. More importantly, by not insisting on a neoliberal version of nationalism, it also becomes possible to see a set of obligations beyond individual freedom emerging from communities that are marked not just by Haitian immigrants, but by Latino, gay-lesbian, and working-class dialects. Under the vision of the SRTOL as nationalist paradigm, these differences would be incorporated into existing economic structures. When we recognize this new set of obligations, new visions of organization and policies can emerge. To echo a classic title, such alliances are “revolutions for which there are yet no models.” That is, the paramount concern is no longer the protection of the autonomous citizen, but the construction of the nonsubjective extrinsic networks of power necessary to ensure full participation by each collective within the broader social community. If the historical original SRTOL’s call to respect a variety of dialects and the community from which they emerge was a vehicle to articulate individual language rights in a nationalist context, it today should be seen as an opportunity to foster new collective organizations across linguistic differences.

**Strategies for Reform**

To return to Bennett’s insights about cultural studies’ limitations, we might now ask how such a vision informs the formation of local language policy institutes. Or to phrase it slightly differently, how does this change our work in composition? How do we as language scholars participate in this work outside of our classrooms? I want to end by suggesting some possible areas of work.

First, if the SRTOL was based on a nationalist foundation, we need to begin to investigate other ways in which different dialects and languages could be said to share a certain common foundation. Here, I don’t want to suggest a new essential category—such as nationalism—but to
suggest that research in composition begin to discover new categories through which dialects emerging from the same community might be said to be related and then to consider what policy considerations that relationship entails—what obligations does it speak to at that location? To some extent, I am thinking about Glynda Hull's work on the taxonomy of error. Race, class, sexuality, and gender are the static categories that limit the new horizon of community—communities based on collective obligation not autonomous rights. We need to imagine a process that will produce explanatory terms for these new communities, terms that articulate visions of community obligations that recognize how language rights represent obligations that transcend individual and identity politics.

I would also add that this definition of community is much less stable and permanent. One of the ways in which political organizing seems to be occurring is that groups form out of a particular moment—or join in alliance over a common issue. Strategies are formed, battles fought, results studied. The recent attempts to organize against the World Trade Organization mark this new form of organization. It is a swarm of groups coming together to paint an oppositional moment, then dissipating, only to reemerge in a different pattern around a different issue. A central opposition party/organization (such as the dreams of a communist/proletariat party) is no longer an adequate organizing model. We need to imagine community as a shifting term, constantly in flux and revision by those involved.

The central way in which this should occur is in dialogue with the community that surrounds our educational institutions. In particular, it strikes me that we have to move beyond the professional visions of research and publication that limit our language and our venues to academic journals. Instead, we should actively foster writing groups that cut across existing community divisions, fostering ethnographic and personal writings that reflect the languages that make up our area. In doing so, the residents (of which we are certainly one) should be asked to use that writing to think through how they want to define their community against such divisions and exclusions—what blend of linguistic interplay will mark the ways in which the community chooses to interact with extrinsic networks of power. I would even argue that the act of collecting writing from across the community and publishing it in formats that allow a wide readership begins to reframe and alter existing networks of communication. It begins, at a very basic level, to offer alternative definitions to how a community should interact and plan its future.

Such work, however, is clearly not sufficient. Reinventing commu-
nity through the contrasting and combining of ways of speaking only begins to lay out a means to link language diversity to rearticulating a community's larger relationship to the networks of power. I would argue that if a composition program wants to recognize how its obligations transcend individual transformation, it also needs to see how it is placed within a network of obligations within a community. It needs to imagine its workings in terms of policies that can interact with this emergent self-definition. To take a rather straightforward connection, a consistent part of most composition programs has been a focus on public schools, either through considering how public schools prepare students for college or through direct professional development work with teachers. In the current environment, such work is often mandated by state and federal achievement standards.

While it is always necessary to work with schools to enable them to articulate required standards in the best interest of their students, it is also important to work with students and parents to establish new forms of educational institutions that can serve more local needs. That is, we need to see our work not as simply college/public schools, but as college/community vision of education. As a community begins to form, articulating a way of speaking that promises new opportunities for collective organizing, it will indirectly begin to build an implicit curriculum of study and action. Put simply, there will be more facts that need to be known, more steps along the way of formation. Here, a composition program can use its university location to bring these resources to the organizing members. That is, the university—and its composition program—has an obligation to use its research as a means to serve the interests of the communities that surround it. This will necessarily imply a different set of research goals and agendas.

To make some of these suggestions concrete, I would like to conclude with a failed example of such work. Recently, I was approached about my research institute, New City Writing, taking part in a service-learning course. The goal of the course was to have students produce an ethnographic study of a Philadelphia neighborhood that was struggling to find a political identity. It had already organized to the point of founding a neighborhood organization and taking on the name, "The Forgotten Bottom." As a traditional service-learning course, funded by a grant, the goal was to produce a book of interviews featuring community members that would then be supplemented by photographs, maps, and other neighborhood documentation. The completed book is a wonderful testimonial to the ability of students to do such work, it is being used in a
variety of classes, and it is "selling" quite well. It many respects, it represents how the "university" can respect the intrinsic right of citizens to their own language and bring their voices into larger extrinsic networks of power.

I wonder, however, if a book or even a service-learning course is the best model through which composition programs can help communities find their voice. A book fits too nicely into our vision of how rational debate and progress occurs; it fits too nicely into our own disciplinary structure. For that reason, even as the book was nearing completion, we began to talk about other ways that writing could more powerfully aid in the development of a neighborhood political identity. Since many of the interviews spoke of a lack intergenerational understanding, groups are being formed to bring individuals together to see how a common definition of community must occur. Another consistent theme is the failure of corporations in the neighborhood to fulfill hiring promises; a campaign is underway to highlight that failure throughout the corporation's different offices. Since racial harmony was a hallmark of the neighborhood that is now changing, histories that articulate how race has worked—and can work—within that community are being written. Linked to all of this is the consistent input and support of faculty, researchers, and students who provide data to turn an emergent sense of community into a set of policies. That is, publishing a community's voice should only be one aspect of a general public education project linked to community organization. The students' right to their own language should be seen within a larger web of obligations and responsibilities.

Such policy and organizational work might seem far from the classroom in which we teach or the career we imagined in composition. We are rarely trained to do such work. Yet, it should be remembered that it is only because of such policy activism and political commitment during the 1960s that the students often marked "basic writers" are able to enter our classrooms. It is only through the continuance and reinvigoration of such networks that we are able to teach and, if we are lucky, to research today. To a great extent, our professional lives owe an obligation to the activists who came before; it is our obligation to continue this work today. Moving beyond the parameters of our own profession is the hard work that Marback suggests. It is this work that will reinvigorate the meaning and importance of the Students' Right to Their Own Language.

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Unquiet Gestures:
 Thoughts on a Productive Rhetoric(s) of Silence

Cynthia Ryan

In “Silence: A Rhetorical Art for Resisting Discipline(s),” Cheryl Glenn tells us that “to imagine a rhetoric of silence might seem peculiar, given the western tendency to overvalue speech and speaking” (263). Yet, she argues, silences often hold great value in communicating ideas that can further conversation as well as shift the flow of conversation around issues of individual and societal importance. Rather than identifying silences as “lone” rhetorical acts, Glenn considers how tactical uses of silence affect the very ways in which we listen to speech and construct meaning. Silences, both broken and unbroken, carry different—and sometimes more empowering—messages to an audience than speech acts that overlook the significance of silence or that ignore silence altogether.