

Publisher's Note

We know “Spirit” in many modes—in this volume, Spirit is leading us to liberative teaching. Paulo Freire, bell hooks, and Audre Lorde, as well as many other liberationist pedagogues, have taught that there is no such thing as neutral education. Education functions to bring either conformity or freedom—never both. Education toward conformity denies or ignores the power and presence of spirit in learning and defends the status quo. Education that embraces spirit nurtures the humanity of both teacher and learner. This dynamic issue is about the many kinds of liberation that occur when the soul is acknowledged, when practices of spirituality are considered as pedagogical practices, and when many interpretations of spirituality are experienced by many kinds of people.

The challenge of creating classroom experiences based upon knowing, unknowing, and revelation is the crux of this issue. Teaching mystery, teaching spirit, then, is the ultimate pursuit of the scholarship of religion, as it challenges us with the possibility of vastness while offering us intimacy and the experience of community.

This 2026 volume is bold in form, function, and expression. Under Donald Quist’s leadership, we continue to expand the boundaries of scholarly writing to include creative genres and innovative authors. The scholars in this 2025–26 cohort have embraced our forward-thinking and imaginative approach to reflecting on teaching and the teaching life by considering the self, embodiment, and other forms of selfhood—all pointing toward the new and the needed for liberation. Markedly striking in this collection is the incorporation of the scholarship of fine artists. I am grateful to Najee Dorsey, fine artist and owner of *Black Art in America*, for contributing the four original art pieces featured in this volume available. The many kinds of collaborations and partnerships that created this brave scholarship are a testament to what is possible when brilliant people are unafraid. These written reflections and works of art point toward new horizons, new engagements, and needed perspectives. We hope you will be inspired by this evocative volume.



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Editor's Note

In this seventh volume of the *Wabash Center's Journal on Teaching*, we gather around the theme “Spirit,” attending to the often-invisible forces that move beneath our pedagogies, shaping how we teach, how we learn, and how we live together. Spirit—ruach, breath, wind, energy, intention—remains elusive in definition yet unmistakable in its presence. It stirs in the arts that hold us, in rituals that heal, in the flicker of imagination between teacher and student. To speak of spirit in teaching is to acknowledge that education is never merely transactional. It is relational. It is transformative. It is, oftentimes, sacred.

The works collected here each reach toward that sacredness. Christine J. Hong invites us to understand teaching as mutual veneration, an altar built through reciprocity. Ella Johnson’s meditation on those who walked before her honors the ancestral and communal energies that steady our steps. Through the striking visual testimonies of Najee Dorsey, Jamaal Barber, James Taylor, and Traci Mims, we encounter spirit as resistance, remembrance, and radiant self-affirmation. Several contributors contemplate spirit as movement—carried on wings, flowing like rivers, whispered in poems, or expressed through the body’s own witness. Others explore how the divine glimmers in unexpected places: in humor, in the messiness of “this and that,” in the ethical puzzles of artificial intelligence, in the zeitgeist that AI both mirrors and distorts. Everywhere, we are reminded that spirit does not retreat in the face of complexity; it expands.

As educators navigating shifting political, technological, and institutional landscapes, we may find ourselves searching for grounding. These essays, artworks, and reflections offer not answers but orientations, toward wonder, courage and the unseen currents that sustain our lives. May this volume invite you to breathe deeply, to listen closely, and to consider how the spirit moving through your own teaching might open new paths for renewal, connection, and collective flourishing.



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