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Introduction: Locating New Fields for Transnational American Studies

ALFRED HORNUNG
Editor in Chief

This spring issue of the *Journal of Transnational American Studies* features four exciting articles and two equally fascinating excerpts of the *Forward* section that demonstrate once again the need for and the vitality of the Transnational American Studies approach in locating new fields. In the recent symposium on “Transnational American Studies Revisited,” organized by Yuan Shu at Texas Tech University in Lubbock in April, keynote speaker Shelley Fisher Fishkin reviewed the twenty-year history of the innovative concept which she launched at the American Studies Association convention in Atlanta in 2003. While she expressed her own fascination about the astonishing productivity of her research project, she also stated that it had only passed its teens and was yet young. Reviewing the contributions to this issue we can call it—without exaggeration but with pride—forever young. In view of their geographical locations, the articles focus on areas in Southeast Asia, East and Central Europe, and on the sites of Japanese American wartime incarceration in Arizona, on land and sea related to American politics, history, culture, and/or the environment. They deal with film, animation films, documentaries, life writing, newspapers, performances in the theater and new funeral practices onboard of ships. Their authors are affiliated with American Studies institutions on the islands of Hawai‘i, Taiwan, and Nova Scotia, in the Netherlands and Germany, and in the United States. All of them have a transnational career and background.

Yana Chang, who just completed her PhD degree at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, offers a very comprehensive and insightful reading of Bong Joon-ho’s *Parasite* (2019), in which she links the film’s reception in Asia and the United States to show how the postwar Korean history and that of the American presence in South Korea are intertwined. Over and above the obvious display of social class divisions in South Korea, Chang’s analysis reveals the film’s underlying message of coping with the haunting legacy of the Korean war as resonance not only of military engagements but more importantly of the nefarious influences of settler colonial capitalism. The political and cultural ramifications of Polish and Slovak immigrants to the US and their acculturation as reflected in their print media before and after the Second World War is the topic of

Robert Zecker's contribution. The crucial point of overcoming initial reservations of mainstream American society, Zecker's meticulous analysis shows, is met by consistent efforts to emulate the political attitudes of their new country and to become "white." Embracing conservative US politics, they reject anticolonial activities in Africa and the Caribbean. The new political affiliations after the World War bring about different positions, separating conservative from left liberal print outlets. For Zecker, new evaluations of Polish and Slovak political attitudes as expressed in their newspapers must account for a broader and more diversified situation of immigrants with regard to "class allegiances, interracial solidarity, and white Americanism." Karen M. Inouye explores the memory work in film and print of two Japanese Americans who recollect their precarious wartime incarceration in prisons on Indigenous lands. The initial feelings of wanting to belong to the white society and embracing its settler colonial ideology give way in the afterlife of the injustice suffered to recognition of the entanglement of their historical subjugation and repression with that of Indigenous Peoples. Return visits to the Poston prison site in Arizona on lands of the Colorado River Indian Tribes involves contacts with local Native Americans, infrequent during their prison terms, which eventually lead to the common struggle against the continued repercussions of settler colonialism in the form of racial capitalism. Recovery efforts in Germany after the war, particularly the implementation and acceptance of the Marshall Plan in 1949, are the subject of Frank Mehring's contribution. To gain the support of Germans for this economic aid, the US employs a Dutch company to produce short animation films for children to be used for screening in German settings. It is fascinating to follow Mehring's display of his theoretical apparatus for the deployment of the familiar Disney animation film genre for a political message via children's perception. His German background as a professor in Nijmegen certainly provides the crucial transnational platform for his original American Studies research.

In this issue of *JTAS*, we also introduce a new policy of showcasing new publications in Transnational American Studies by including excerpts of innovative research in both the spring and the fall issue. Thanks to our *Forward* editor, Jennifer Reimer, we are able to include chapters from two recent publications released from Columbia University Press and Peter Lang Publishers. In her introduction, she contextualizes both engagements in transnational research. Dario Fazzi's Italian education and his affiliation with the Dutch university of Leiden as professor of Transatlantic Environmental History are parameters of his Transnational American Studies expertise directed at new burial practices at sea. Vanessa Vollmann, in turn, applies her American Studies race and gender expertise to an analysis of the controversial production of the musical *Hamilton* in a Hamburg theater. Vollmann extends her research and insights from academic scholarship to concrete reality by including her transcript of a conversation with a male friend about the interracial aspects and attitudes as the performance of Transnational American Studies.

The members of the editorial board of *JTAS* would like to thank all authors for their innovative contributions to this issue along with Columbia University Press and

Peter Lang Publishers for granting permission to include excerpts. We are also very grateful to all members of the managing editorial team who have contributed importantly to the editing process (Mahshid Mayar, Ahngeli Shivam, Aiko Takeuchi-Demirci, Mai Wang, and Helen Yang). We welcome Şebnem Altunkaya (University of Mainz) and Holger Droessler (Worcester Polytechnic Institute) as new members who recently joined the editorial team. We would also like to communicate that Vanessa Evans (Appalachian State University) has agreed to share the task of managing editor with Sabine Kim, who has held this demanding position over the years. We are very grateful to her for having invested her time and expertise to guarantee the scholarly quality of the *Journal of Transnational American Studies*.