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Editor's Introduction

Jesse Benjamin
Kennesaw State University

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Introducing *ATL*, an Intersectional Journal for Alternative Knowledge Production

by Jesse Benjamin

It is a pleasure to introduce our new journal, *ATL*. We are committed to providing an interdisciplinary space for the intersectional exploration of a broad range of contemporary social issues. We chose *ATL* because the project is based in Atlanta, at a time when Atlanta stands at the nexus of important regional, national and international change, and burgeoning new movements for social justice. We are committed to providing a peer-reviewed space for intellectual work across an unusually broad range of researcher levels, from advanced students to advanced professional scholars, and including intellectuals working outside the academy, in the arts, the community and beyond. We are particularly attuned to underrepresented voices and perspectives, and seek to embrace innovation and experimentation.

Atlanta is emblematic of many of our core themes as a space of historic injustices, contestations, social movements and transformations. It is a capital of the US South, and has become a capital of the African American world, as well as within the Pan-African world, at a moment when global centers are shifting seismically. It is now also a major world city, with a completely global population. Our unusual Editorial Board structure is reflective of our location, and our boundary-crossing agenda. Aajay Murphy and I are the editors, and then we have concentric circles of Editorial Board members around us, emanating from our work in Atlanta, and at Kennesaw State University. This starts with a Student Editorial Collective, which includes our copyediting team, photographers, writers, scholars, and student leaders. This is followed by a Student Alumni Collective comprised of talented former students from our area who continue in their commitment to this work. This is followed by a large KSU-based Editorial Board across numerous departments; a community Advisory Board comprised of top regional scholars and community leaders; and a broader regional Editorial Board reaching across the geographic South, from Florida to Washington DC. This allows us to engage scholars from the advanced reaches of undergraduate study, to leaders in the international fields they represent, and to bring them into dialogue. While based in greater Atlanta, and grounded in engagement with this particular community, we are also connected to scholars throughout the regional South. We even include scholars originally from, or currently working on the South, so that we have the broadest possible interpretation of our mandate. We thus reflect and cultivate work by, for, of, and/or about the US South, and the infinite range of social issues occurring in the South. *ATL* is where we are, but as this issue reflects, we are of the world, engaging it from here.

In the broadest and most ambitious sense, a project such as ours is about epistemology and the construction and politics of knowledge. How and where is knowledge produced, how is it verified and recognized, and what epistemic and historical political-economic parameters circumscribe its representation? Questions of power, social responsibility, decolonization and social justice therefore guide us and are reflected in our boundary-crossing structures. We consciously seek to link Western and Non-Western perspectives, undergraduate and graduate students, theory and practice, the local and the global, students and advanced scholars, scholars and members of the community, activists and intellectuals, artists and writers and community leaders.

This first issue of *ATL* reflects these intended values well. From the first meeting with Nmadili Okwumabua, and upon hearing about her ambitious project promoting alternative and culturally relevant architecture in Africa, we knew this was the kind of project we wanted to support and work with. Coalescence was thus easy and immediate, and continues to grow. Architecture has its own Eurocentric tendencies, as do

most of our current disciplines and practices, and the assertion of culturally appropriate African architecture remains an intervention in the world of things as they currently are. Nmadili is not waiting for the world to catch up, and for discourse to shift; she is creating what needs to be, bringing her vision into being. In this case, it's not just a theoretical vision either, as the winner of the design contest reflected in this volume will actually have their design built, on the Continent. That this project was considered off the radar of some at first, and rejected by others as too new, or too untested, was not a deterrent for either Nmadili or her CPDI team, nor for us at *ATL*. This is precisely the kind of engaged research we intend to foster in our new space. This is a space for new ideas, in which new terrain will be broken, and new or underrepresented ideas promoted.

We hope you will enjoy this exciting collection of design proposals, part of the *Community Planning and Design Initiative (CPDI) Africa – Design Competition*. We felt that the best global contributions received in this process were worthy of publication and propagation to a wider audience, because they were constitutive of vital alternative knowledge production of great potential significance. While our journal will normally function via a traditional double blind peer review process, we will make occasional stated exceptions when circumstances dictate. In this case, the detailed review process of the contest itself, and in which we participated, was considered sufficient for our purposes. Special thanks need to given to our dedicated Student Editorial Collective members, constituting a sub-team of dedicated copy-editors without whom this work would have been impossible: Shelby Cole, Stormy Kage, and Alisen Redmond. Similarly, Ajay Murphy made this project possible, both with his graphic design talents, and his ability to sometimes push the bounds of time and space. None of this would have come together without the unique qualities of Nmadili Okwumabua, who cultivates teams powerfully, and is a dynamic and driving force behind this vision. Beyond this journal launch, she is also orchestrating a traveling exhibition that will course through the US, and then on to Africa. Together with the building of the winning project, featured here, and the resumption of the next round of this project in 2017, this is clearly just the beginning. We look forward to the ongoing partnership.