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From the Editors

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From the Editors

We are truly delighted to introduce the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, or *JTAS*, a peer-reviewed, open-access online journal. *JTAS* is a new critical conduit that seeks to bring together innovative transnational work from diverse, but often disconnected, sites in the U.S. and abroad.

JTAS seeks to broaden the interdisciplinary study of American cultures in a transnational context. In her 2004 presidential address to the American Studies Association, Shelley Fisher Fishkin noted the growing recognition that understanding the United States requires looking beyond and across national borders. This “transnational turn” has emphasized the multidirectional flows of peoples, ideas, and goods, and in the process has thrown into question the “naturalness” of political, geographical, and epistemological boundaries. *JTAS* functions as an open forum for Americanists in the global academic community, where scholars are increasingly interrogating borders both within and outside the nation and focusing on the multiple intersections and exchanges that flow across those borders. Sponsored by the University of California at Santa Barbara’s American Cultures and Global Contexts Center (ACGCC) and Stanford University’s Program in American Studies, *JTAS* is hosted on the eScholarship Repository, which is part of the eScholarship initiative of the California Digital Library.

The idea for *JTAS* was born in the spring of 2007 when Fishkin gave a talk in the American Cultures and Global Contexts Center at UC Santa Barbara at the invitation of Shirley Geok-Lin Lim. While applauding the important work in transnational American studies produced over the past few years, she also spoke about some of the obstacles faced by Americanists working on transnational topics. Articles on transnational topics were often rejected by journals that found them too different from their usual fare, or too unconventional, making it hard for new and worthwhile work in this area to see publication. And scholars working in transnational American studies around the world were often at institutions that could not afford increasingly costly journal subscriptions in the disciplines related to their interests; as a result, it was harder than ever for them to stay abreast of the latest work in the field. Both of these factors effectively shut many scholars out of a cultural conversation to which they had much to contribute. A free, open-access online journal, devoted specifically to transnational American studies was clearly what was needed. The talk ended, rather wistfully, with the hope that someday

someone with dedication to the field, technical know-how, and sufficient funds to make it all come together would manage to create such a journal.

In less than a month, this utopian fantasy came closer to becoming a reality. Eric Martinsen, a UC Santa Barbara graduate student who had been at the talk, found that the California Digital Library's eScholarship Repository had the infrastructure in place for peer-reviewed online publications. The platform was available for any campus in the University of California system to use free of charge. Since UC Santa Barbara's ACGCC was willing to serve as the journal's home, all of the technology needed to make the journal work would be subsidized by the California Digital Library. At that point in time, most of the journals that had taken advantage of this opportunity were in the sciences—but Martinsen figured out that there was nothing to stop us from using this platform for the journal we envisioned. Martinsen was interested in serving as the journal's chief managing editor, and UCSB graduate student Caroline Hong also expressed interest in serving as co-managing editor.

The proposed journal would be cosponsored by UCSB's American Cultures & Global Contexts Center, with which Lim, Martinsen, and Hong were affiliated, and Stanford University's Program in American Studies, which Fishkin directed. Two Stanford graduate students in Modern Thought and Literature, both of whom had recently organized a workshop on transnational American studies at the Stanford Humanities Center, signed on as associate managing editors: Nigel Hatton and Steven Sunwoo Lee. (Lee has since accepted a job at UC Berkeley.) Alfred Hornung of Johannes Gutenberg University, James K. Lee of UC Santa Barbara, and Takayuki Tatsumi of Keio University agreed to join Fishkin and Lim on the editorial board.

Colleagues at UCSB, Carl Gutiérrez-Jones and Giles Gunn, who would join the advisory board themselves, helped Fishkin and Lim develop a list of highly respected scholars to invite to join the advisory board. Over the next six months, a stellar advisory board from around the globe was assembled, and two members of that board—Greg Robinson of the Université du Québec à Montréal and Nina Morgan of Kennesaw State University—agreed to edit, respectively, the Forward section and the Reprise section of the journal.

Members of *JTAS*'s editorial and advisory boards come from Australia, Canada, China, the Czech Republic, Germany, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Singapore, Spain, Taiwan, the UK, and the U.S. They teach at universities in Leiden and Luoyang, in Norwich and Navarra, in Tokyo, Tehran, and Taipei, in Berkeley and Berlin, in Riverside and Ramat Aviv, in Sydney, Singapore, and Seoul, in Stanford, St. Petersburg, Shanghai, and Santa Barbara, in Hartford and Hsin-chu, in Kennesaw and Kaohsiung, in Montreal and Mainz, in Cambridge, MA, and Cambridge, UK, and in Charlottesville, Dublin, East Lansing, Eugene, Olomouc, Providence, and Wrocław. They focus on areas that include American studies, fiction, drama, poetry, history, law, cultural studies, Latin American studies, music, art history, African American studies, Asian American studies, media

studies, women's studies, translation studies, ethnic studies, comparative literature, and international relations.

We are pleased that our first issue reflects the geographic and topical breadth that we had hoped *JTAS* would embrace. It features contributions from scholars and writers based in Germany, Ireland, Japan, Poland, Taiwan, the UK, the U.S., and Vietnam. It includes selections from forthcoming or recently published books on Asian American art, Thurgood Marshall in Kenya, and constructions of race in the U.S. and Brazil, along with meditations by some of the leading figures in the field theorizing transnationalism and analyzing the current moment in American studies scholarship. It includes articles exploring subjects such as appropriations of African American culture in Poland, contrasting political imaginings of the internet in the U.S. and Europe, links between the language of 1890s urban reform and the language of 1890s imperial expansion, chop suey as an invented Chinese food, and new perspectives on the transnational dimensions of work by writers including Mark Twain, John Berryman, and Maxine Hong Kingston.

One of the special benefits of being an online journal is that it is possible to reproduce stunningly colorful works of art at no additional cost. It is a pleasure to be able to share with a global audience a painting like Chang Dai-chien's *Autumn Mountains in Twilight*, a startling reinterpretation of the landscape of Yosemite that appears in Gordon Chang's preface to *Asian American Art: A History, 1850–1970*, published in the Forward section of this issue.

Being an online publication also allows our Reprise section to magnify material that was less readable when it initially appeared in hard copy. Thus, although a facsimile of the manuscript and the typescript of Mark Twain's "The War-Prayer" was originally published in the Japanese journal *Mark Twain Studies*, the blown-up images of these pages in our Reprise section make it easier to read Twain's corrections and changes, making it particularly useful for the classroom.

Launching *JTAS* required herculean work on the part of chief managing editor Eric Martinsen, who mastered the intricacies of the technology required to make the platform provided by the eScholarship Repository work for our journal, and who, with co-managing editor Caroline Hong and associate managing editors Nigel Hatton and Steven Lee, shepherded the many submissions we received through the blind peer-review process. We are enormously grateful to Martinsen, Hong, Hatton, and Lee for all their hard work, and also to editorial assistant Yanoula Athanassakis at UC Santa Barbara and student intern Fagan Eugene Nigel Harris at Stanford for their help. *JTAS* also depends on the good will and generosity of our advisory board members, who solicited contributions, recommended readers, wrote pieces, and reviewed submissions for the journal themselves. And we are indebted to the scores of scholars around the world who graciously agreed to participate in the peer-review process for us. Most of all, perhaps, we are grateful to all of the authors in this inaugural issue for having given us permission to make their work available to the broadest possible global audience.

We invite readers of this issue to think about *JTAS* as a home for your future scholarship. *JTAS* seeks new and innovative scholarship that mines and pushes the plural and global possibilities of American studies. We seek contributions from fields and disciplines including cultural studies, film and new media, literature, visual arts, performance studies, music, religion, history, politics, and law. We also welcome scholarship that engages in transnational American studies in a critical and self-reflexive manner—for instance, scholarship that explores such questions as, How does one distinguish transnationalism from past and present discourses of internationalism, cosmopolitanism, and globalization? Has American studies always been transnational, or has this “turn” been foisted upon it by such pressures as global capitalism? What are the implications of transnationalism for past American studies research on ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, and class? Can one speak of a set of reading practices and of concepts that compose a research methodology for transnational American studies?

Authors keep the copyright to everything they submit, and *JTAS* has no objections to authors subsequently publishing in print journals and books articles that receive their first online publications in *JTAS* (with the understanding that authors acknowledge *JTAS* as the site of initial publication).

The *Journal of Transnational American Studies* enters cyberspace at a moment of transformative change in American politics and massive tremors in the global economy. A few weeks prior to the publication of our first issue, the first man of color was sworn in as President of the United States, an individual who spent a portion of his childhood in Asia, and whose multiracial roots and global background figured prominently in his dramatic campaign for the highest office in the land. *JTAS*'s birth also coincides with unprecedented financial turmoil, which reveals with unusually stark clarity the interconnectedness of nations and peoples across the globe. At this juncture in time, we hope that *JTAS* will help a multitude of voices participate in the cultural conversation by disseminating scholarship that will help us understand the changes we are living and the factors that have shaped them.

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