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Introduction

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Introduction

Each year, Santa Clara University's Phi Alpha Theta chapter publishes a group of thoughtful and outstanding essays in the History Department's journal, *Historical Perspectives*. Written by students who have completed original research projects in advanced seminars, these essays represent the highest levels of achievement in the department, and this year, students submitted a number of accomplished research papers for review. We would like to express our gratitude to all of the students who presented their work for consideration, as well as to the devoted faculty members who guided these burgeoning writers with their projects. We are delighted to present to you the 2020 edition of *Historical Perspectives*.

It is our firm belief that researching and writing history serves not only to unlock understandings of the past, but to shine light on the present and future. Although every year unearths its own challenges, we must acknowledge the unique impact of 2020 on the minds of the writers whose works appear in this edition of *Historical Perspectives*. In 2020, the United States witnessed one of the largest protest movements in its history in the Black Lives Matters protests, and globally, the devastating coronavirus pandemic continues to threaten organized human life everywhere. These life-changing events add to the stresses of protecting human rights and the environment. The essays in this journal undoubtedly emerged from this turbulent world, and through them we hope to gain insights to help us as we work for tomorrow.

As a result, this year's edition includes essays united in a yearning for a better world. Exploring a wide variety of topics spanning both cultures and time periods, some essays center on the activism of key historical figures, while others focus on ongoing demands for equity, acceptance, and social justice. The papers in this journal go beyond analyzing past events by bringing them into conversation with the tribulations and triumphs of today. Whether the writers are calling for more inclusive genocide

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memorials or prompting readers to join ongoing movements for ecological justice, their work reflects a discerning curiosity that seeks nuanced understandings of the past so that we may envision a better future. Many of these essays explore similar topics as they are shaped by the courses offered at Santa Clara University, including classes on protest and reform movements, genocide in the twentieth century, and the history of sexuality. This year's submissions testify to the intersections between Women's and Gender Studies, Ethnic Studies, and History, and they demonstrate that our student writers utilize critical interpretation, insight, and creativity in order to analyze the events of the past and recognize their lasting presence in the world today. In their research, the authors contribute to a fuller picture of the past that confronts traditional narratives that have been flattened or sanitized in popular historiography.

We are also thrilled to announce the addition of a reviews section to this year's journal. These shorter pieces focus on the Theatre and Dance Department's spring production of Lauren Gunderson's *The Revolutionists*, as well as a review of an episode from the PBS series "The Future of America's Past." By expanding our scholarly scope beyond research papers, we aim to demonstrate the educational value and political importance of plays, films, and other media. History can be presented via many mediums, and as the number of media platforms increases, we hope to see a commensurate increase in the dissemination of historical knowledge and political awareness.

To illustrate the idea of a better world, we chose a 2013 photograph from Helmut Grill to cover this year's journal. Titled "A Birds World Nr. 5," this piece captures the dichotomy between the lush hope for life and the uncertainty of the future represented in the ominous storm clouds hovering above the landscape. When confronted with the unknown, we have a duty to respond in a way that minimizes suffering and promotes life. If we choose to pursue paths based on social justice and living with earthly integrity, we

can work toward fulfilling the promise of a better world, and we view history as the key to unlocking this path forward.

As Luis Valdez said at this year's first Santa Clara University Listens & Learns: Race, Reflection, Renewal event, "the end and hope are always upon us," and we should keep both at the forefront of our minds as we try to find ways to think and live in more just, equitable, and ecologically sound ways. Taking suffering and injustice seriously reminds us that there is always more work to be done in our co-creation of a better world. Taking joy and love seriously minimizes feelings of burnout and reminds us what a better world can feel and look like. There is always more to learn, always more to appreciate, and always more to critique. We hope this year's edition of *Historical Perspectives* invites you to participate in this process of creating meaningful change for a better future.