



Letter from the Editors

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**Author affiliations can be found in the back matter of this article*

INTRODUCTION



ABSTRACT

SPECTRA 8.2 “Unraveling Health, Risk, and Violence Across Social Difference” builds on the journal’s history of publishing pieces that take intellectual risks. This issue presents a combination of articles, a commentary, book reviews, and an interview with public historians. These works discuss biopolitics, the origins and implications of new vaccines, pandemic pedagogy, and Civil War Monuments in the public sphere, among other topics.

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KEYWORDS:

Interdisciplinary; pedagogy;
vaccines; COVID-19; biopolitics;
public history

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Plummer, Sarah and Shaun
Respass. “Letter from the
Editors.” *SPECTRA* 8, no. 2
(2021): pp. 4–6. DOI: [https://
doi.org/10.21061/spectra.
v8i2.176](https://doi.org/10.21061/spectra.v8i2.176)

SPECTRA 8.2 “Unraveling Health, Risk, and Violence Across Social Difference” emerges about 16 months into the COVID-19 global pandemic, which has heightened inequalities and disparities across intersections of race, gender, ability, and socioeconomic access. In an article for *Time* published on April 21, 2021, American philosopher Judith Butler argues that the pandemic confirms that ours is a “shared world,” but one that is “not equally shared.”¹ Therefore, Butler says, the response must embrace collectivism — “movement in a global direction, one based on a new sense of mortality and interdependency.” To that end, this Special Issue 8.2 considers the relationships between power, people, and environments in light of the pandemic as well as the antiracist movements following the police murder of George Floyd more than a year ago.

In light of these great inequalities and Butler’s call for interdependency, this *SPECTRA* Special Issue 8.2 contains articles that ponder such salient questions as: “What governmentalities are exposed by who lives and who dies during a pandemic?”; “How does new vaccine technology distance humankind from the environment?”; “Must these unprecedented times require drastic changes in our pedagogy?”; “How can interventions of history open the commons to more equitable use?”; “How is the Black Lives Matter movement both unique and a part of a rich history of Black Liberation and computing?”; and “Is there something better than allyship?”

The editorial team also recognizes that the pandemic has significantly impacted academic scholarship as we struggle to understand what these experiences and their ramifications mean to our research. Further, we concede that stay-at-home orders have had a much greater impact on the productivity and health of women scholars, scholars in the Global South, scholars with disabilities, and Black scholars and scholars of color. For that reason, our team has opened this issue to a variety of creative pieces including an academic article written by Ned Randolph, a scholarly commentary provided by Paul Smith, a first-person feminist article written by Emily Brier that also includes a pedagogical handout, an interview with *History is Illuminating*, a personal reflection from our cover artist Robby Moore, and book reviews penned by Damien Williams and Olivia Atkinson. These diverse genres seek to capture meaningful interventions in a shifting cultural landscape.

After the publication of 8.2, co-editors Sarah Plummer and Shaun Respass will have completed their work with *SPECTRA*, and Jordan Fallon and Maddie Tepper will assume co-editorship. We thank all authors, reviewers, advisory board members, ASPECT faculty, the Virginia Tech library, and VT Publishing for their contributions to this issue.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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REFERENCE

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1 Judith Butler. “Judith Butler: Creating an Inhabitable World for Humans Means Dismantling Rigid Forms of Individuality.” *Time*. April 21, 2021. <https://time.com/5953396/judith-butler-safe-world-individuality/>.

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Submitted: 09 July 2021
Accepted: 09 July 2021
Published: 26 July 2021

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open access journal published
by VT Publishing.