EDITOR’S INTRODUCTION

Critical Theory & Social Justice
Journal of Undergraduate Research

(CTSJ) offers a transformative space for undergraduate students to engage critical theory in the pursuit of social justice. Undergraduate students are uniquely positioned to propel new ideas: critiquing; engaging; and creating spaces of intellectual thought and activism while building upon a rich history of criticism and political action. Critical theory is an innovative, diverse body of responsive theories that are capable of advancing social justice as a commitment to exposing and ending social inequalities. By engaging multiple axes of identity and expanding innovative theory, such as Lacan’s “end-of-analysis” or qualifying the archetypes of queer disruption in hip-hop, CTSJ advances transdisciplinary essays and artwork that do not reproduce shallow solutions and terminal truths. Further, CTSJ extends this work in its recognition of the visual power of art—that space beyond the boundaries of language.

In the profound and everyday, we find novel opportunities for theory and political exploration. The journal, as a living and breathing entity, believes that undergraduate students should not be passive recipients of knowledge, but rather active producers of critical thought. The research and methods of undergraduate students are just as capable of producing original juxtapositions and transgressing boundaries as the acvisit-scholars they study. This volume of CTSJ is the first in which poetry is being published. We believe this to be an important step towards engaging with critical thought in ways not subject to the academic vivisections involved in formal article publication. It is our hope that the essays, art, and poetic interventions found within Volume 7 will not just foster an exchange of ideas across disciplines to deepen understandings of systems of injustice, but will activate occasions for radical Events.

Poetry, especially when written from a critical lens, turns its eye toward the manufacturing of spaces that are often considered unspeakable, impossible, and supra-natural. Occupying that liminal space, poetry acts as an extension of theory, by producing unthinkable in one of the most seemingly banal sites: Literature. Poet S.P.’s “Demon” navigates this space and recognizes that there is no line between the personal and political in its description of the struggles involved in the mediation of hegemonic masculinity’s inherent violences and the personal conditions of the act of loving. In this regard, Demon shares its intrigue with visual art, a medium that renders the intangible into imagery and sovereignly challenges observers. The artist in this volume, Sara Emsaki, an Iranian-born Oakland painter, blends her transnational identity with Islamic geometry to explore the systems of power associated with gender roles. The art functions as a remembrance of a stolen history and a re-appropriation of female empowerment. In addition to publishing poetry and artwork, this issue contains three essays that provide critical, vital perspectives that effectively synthesize notions proffered forth across decades of critical theory and generations of work for social consciousness and social justices.

The first article in this volume is Fatima Chakroun’s Cognitive Dissonance in the Self-Identifying Processes of Multiracial People. Chakroun’s essay represents an detailed consideration of the multiracial mind in a world that does not consider the navigations with representation that multiracial people must withstand, both at the hands of government enterprises and in social spheres. challenges the fracturing of identities with the possibility of the permanence in their definition. Residing at an interstice of critique and ambiguity, the essay offers forth the idea that this case study of the multiracial
being reflects larger narratives of racial binding and the problem of normativity and its resulting so-called normative subjects.

The second essay in this volume, Selbie Salonga’s *The Book Truly Stops Here: A Lacanian Reinterpretation of Reinaldo Arenas’ Freedom*, is an intensive piece demanding reconsideration of the terms of the written word for the sake of their cohesiveness and accuracy to the world by which they seek to so precisely articulate. *The Book Truly Stops Here* is a project in maintaining an acknowledgement of the innumerable nuances of identity and how they enrich the world of Western theory, and the author reminds us that this westernized literary canon often downplays, and risks the romancing of, subjects that must be met on their own terms and not those of their spectator. The essay contends that Reinaldo Arenas’ declaration of freedom in his suicide note is not the consumable symbol Western theory desires it to be, instead suggesting its radical and subversive possibility as a recapitulation of the impossible; a moment wherein the knowledge base of the West cannot properly comprehend the queered, non-white body in its declaration of its existence. Volume 7’s third essay, Bennett Brazelton’s *The Politics of Madvillainy: Queer Interventions in Hip-Hop*, seeks to turn rapper MF DOOM’s lyrical corpus into matters of disruption and redefinition. The piece suggests that the role of the binarism in fracturing the incredible possibilities of queer theory, and the author sets about the project of applying this notion to DOOM’s words, arriving at the important question of the ethical, political, and social possibilities of a subject beyond altruism, a subject that must be interrogated not only “here and now” but “then and there.”

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This year, the journal is saying goodbye to its editors from the Senior class: Sam Clendenning, Will Dean, Gabrielle Seiwert, Karim Sharif, James Wronoski, and Marcus Forbes. Special thanks to Sam and James for their time as Lead Student Editors, Will for his website design, and Gabrielle for her diligent planning of our inaugural conference, *CTSJ 2018: The Analysis of Power*. It is our intention to continue to strive toward excellence and to transgress current notions of justice in all of its forms with the publication of Volume 8 in the spring of 2019.