Editors' Note

The work of historians is focused on the past, but is also always situated within the authors and publishers' present. In developing this volume, the editors of *Perspectives* Volume 48 grappled with the contemporary realities of the COVID-19 pandemic, the tumultuous 2020 U.S. presidential election, and the continued activism for racial and economic justice. Therefore, this volume has prioritized the inclusion of topics relating to social justice as we highlight the work of students researching and writing about the past.

Perspectives is an award-winning journal produced by undergraduate and graduate students in Cal State LA's History program. Under our faculty mentor Dr. Birte Pfleger's guidance the editors chose six articles that exemplify our students' rigorous research, despite the adversities we all faced under distance learning. Ranging from the Roman Empire to the early twenty-first century, the work included in this year's journal utilizes a range of historical and interdisciplinary approaches to reframe how we think and write about history.

In our first article, Jewelyn Mims explores how environmental history, epidemiology, and studies of climate change help modern historians rethink the collapse of the Roman civilization. Next, Dylan Williams reveals how the Ku-Klux Klan's birth became a political and cultural wedge issue in Reconstruction. By examining the first incarnation of the KKK, he cautions how misinformation, speculation, and exaggeration have undermined the nation's integrity.

Ivan Lorenzana examines early twentieth-century texts and letters to demonstrate how the United Fruit Company exploited Central and South America for profit. Lorenzana's analysis of social, economic, and political structures illustrates how multinational corporations continue to colonize foreign territories.

Our next two articles discuss local history in Southern California. Dana Lynn Gibson explores how Los Angeles has appropriated,

"whitewashed," and exploited Mexican people and heritage through aspects of food culture in the first half of the twentieth century. Ruben Hernandez focuses on Cal State LA's mascot transition from the Diablos to the Golden Eagles, examining the correlation between athletic team identities and the symbols representing them.

Finally, Miguel Arriola analyzes how video games produced at the turn of the twenty-first century support concepts of American empire. His cultural analysis highlights the ways American military actions since World War II have been represented in the world's most lucrative entertainment medium.

We also feature a section dedicated to book and film reviews centered around the theme of social justice. In juxtaposing historical studies with films and tv shows, we seek to understand how social inequalities have been experienced by the marginalized, segregated, and oppressed. The dramatization of historical events and subjects provides the opportunity to develop our historical imagination, to envision the experiences, feelings, and reactions of those living in different time periods. When partnered with deeply researched scholarly works, such historical imagination can pave the way for greater empathy and new historical questions.

This year's Special Features illuminate the frustration, loss, and resilience of the department's students and faculty during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our first Special Feature is the *Quarantine Collection: Covid-19 and Cal State LA*, a digital archive about how the pandemic has affected our community. Acknowledging the economic turmoil the pandemic has wrought, our second Special Feature highlights the Career Workshops hosted by the department during the Spring 2021 semester. With support from Phi Alpha Theta, Eta Xi and Cal State LA's Associated Students, Inc., these events featured alumni sharing advice on their experiences in the fields of education, museums, archives and others. We invite our readers to visit these digital features at http://bit.ly/Perspectives48SF.

This school year is the first where Fall and Spring semesters took place entirely online. While taking virtual classes we have all experienced hardships, including health concerns, economic uncertainties, Zoom fatigue, and unequal internet accessibility. Despite our team never meeting in person, we continued to uphold the yearly tradition of publishing *Perspectives*. We wish to thank Cal State LA's History Department faculty for their expertise, mentorship, and support. We express our utmost gratitude to Dr. Pfleger for her guidance in this journal's development. We are honored to present the innovative research completed by our featured authors. We hope you will find this volume thought-provoking and compelling.

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