

Chair's Message

This small book you hold in your hand is a tiny miracle. Admittedly, not on the scale of turning loaves into fish—but miraculous nonetheless, because it embodies an ideal rarely achieved: a space where people work hard, strive for excellence, and give of their time generously, all for the love of learning, developing their own skills, and sharing knowledge.

The fact that many graduate students in our department have occupied this space this year—defending it against the many academic, economic, and social pressures that work to push them off this mountain top, is a remarkable testament to the editors, peer reviewers and contributors. To have all the pieces necessary to create such a journal all come together is as rare and powerful as a lightning strike; that this is the eighth edition is like having lightning strike the same place eight times. A miracle.

Because the essays in each volume represent some of the best graduate work in North America, they are both a snapshot of the cutting edge of the profession and harbingers of promising scholarly or professional careers. Not surprisingly the approaches, regions and topics of the essays in this volume are almost as varied as the profession. Yet, they point to the fact that race, ethnicity, and religion are the tectonic plates which carry human history and often cause cataclysmic eruptions of violence. From the dispossession of Indigenous peoples in New Zealand, to the maintenance of racial caste systems in the United States, to the overthrow of Apartheid in South Africa, three of the essays take on the issues of race privilege which continue to structure our lives. Two of the essays focus on religion: Protestants versus Catholics in Northern Ireland and the Jewish community in Philadelphia. These latter essays examine the Irish peace process and the importance of interfaith cooperative public history and remind us that there are alternatives to conflict and violence. All five call to mind Marx's observation that we do not get to choose the past we inherit, but that we can change the old pathways and make our own history.

Congratulations and thanks to the team that created this little miracle!

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