

## Editors' Note

Boyd Cothran and Rosanne Currarino

This issue came together during a period of historic change and uncertainty. When we began developing this issue last year, we were absorbed by the upcoming centennial celebration of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. As the issue began coming together and entered into production this spring, we were abruptly confronted by the shifting realities of life in the age of COVID-19. And as we wrapped up production this summer, our hearts were broken by the news of George Floyd's murder at the hands of the Minneapolis police even as our spirits were then lifted by the peaceful protests that are shaking the nation to its core. George Floyd's death was not an isolated incident. It is a tragic reminder to all Americans of the deep-seeded inequalities in our nation and of the very real need for systemic change if we are ever to live in a truly just world where Black Lives Matter.

As historians and scholars of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, we are deeply aware of the long history of anti-Black racism and racial violence in America. Countless essays in the pages of this journal have documented that history and traced its origins, debated its meanings, and mapped out its trajectories. In June, the Officers of the Society for Historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era endorsed the American Historical Association's Statement on the History of Racial Violence in the United States.<sup>1</sup> It is a cogent, compelling statement that situates the nation's sordid tradition of anti-Black racial violence within a historical context that stretches back centuries. It is a lengthy statement and we urge you all to read it in full. But we wanted to include the following excerpt as a particularly powerful call to action and acknowledgment of the role of historians in creating a more just society:

*As a nation, we've shown a reluctance not only to learn our own history but to learn from it, which helps to explain why we continue to witness—and set aside as exceptional—egregious forms of human-rights abuses in case after case. Throughout our history, those trusted to enforce the law have too often acted lawlessly, while too many civilians have acted with the tacit approval of law enforcement in targeting African Americans just going about their daily lives. We are killing our own people. Even as we mourn the death of George Floyd, we must confront this nation's past; history must inform our actions as we work to create a more just society.<sup>2</sup>*

We must confront this nation's past. In the next year, we have planned a number of special issues and fora designed to highlight the history of racial violence during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. In our January 2021 issue, we will publish a lengthy retrospective on the historiography of lynching. We also have in the works a special forum revisiting C. Vann Woodward's *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. Throughout the fall of 2020, we will also publish a series of microsyllabi pulling together articles from JGAPE

and other journals that can help us think about and teach the history of racial violence in the United States. These microsyllabi, each accompanied by a brief introduction, will first appear on the SHGAPE website and then as a collection in the Journal. We also invite you, the readers, to send us your ideas for how we might continue to produce historical scholarship that illuminates our past even as it informs our future.

This important work will continue for the remainder of our terms as editors of the Journal and beyond. But today, we are proud to introduce a wonderful collection of scholarship.

This volume centers on the centennial of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, affirming women's right to vote. The scholars here present us with a broad picture of the fight for suffrage, moving far afield from white-clad (and white) women in vast parades. In their introduction to the special issue, Cathleen D. Cahill, Crystal Feimster, and Kimberly Hamlin remind us that the road to women's suffrage was hewn by a wide range of women. Lucretia del Valle, the subject of our Spotlight, and the Chinese and Chinese American women in our Photo Essay were as much a part of ensuring the amendment's ratification as was the National Women's Suffrage Association. Thomas Dublin used crowdsourcing to find documents highlighting the wide range of African American women's roles in the suffrage movement. Those documents are now digitally available. The issue also shows us that the fight for women's formal equality took place in unexpected locations, such as the patent office; had unintended consequences, including the redefinition of citizens' rights broadly; and could also serve to limit the parameters of citizenship and belonging, as happened in the birth control movement. Finally, the issue also remembers women who did not want suffrage and fought against the amendment.

In April, as COVID-19 ground the world to a halt, we quickly gathered together six scholars of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era to talk about "our" influenza pandemic of 1918–1919. The pandemic is often a mere aside in lectures and textbooks. This roundtable argues for the centrality of the pandemic to our understanding of the broader era. Expertly assembled and guided by Christopher McKnight Nichols, this diverse panel of scholars discusses how they each study the pandemic, how they see the pandemic shaping the history of the Progressive Era and after, and how they have taught and will teach the pandemic in the age of COVID-19. Their free-flowing exchange points to the many fruitful ways we can think about, write about, and teach the 1918–1919 pandemic.

A final note: We are introducing a new feature: Letters to the Editor. We look forward to hearing from you.

Happy reading, but please, only in a socially distanced way. And wear your darn masks!

## Notes

1 AHA Statement on the History of Racist Violence in the United States (June 2020), [https://www.historians.org/news-and-advocacy/aha-advocacy/aha-statement-on-the-history-of-racist-violence-in-the-united-states-\(june-2020\)](https://www.historians.org/news-and-advocacy/aha-advocacy/aha-statement-on-the-history-of-racist-violence-in-the-united-states-(june-2020)) (accessed July 3, 2020).

2 AHA Statement on the History of Racist Violence in the United States (June 2020).