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# Issue Introduction: Transpacific Connections and Transnational American Studies

ALFRED HORNUNG
Editor in Chief

This fall issue of JTAS represents a variety of contributions which directly or indirectly focus on areas outside of the familiar transatlantic and Euro-American relations of conventional American Studies. On purpose and in an effort to include the many locations in which American matters circulate, transnational American studies tries to amend this longtime neglect in discovering and recognizing new fields of research. The issue begins onboard the *Empress of Australia* that takes Canadian passengers on a world cruise through the Pacific in 1928–29. The visits to new Asian countries and the encounter with nonwhite populations needed—in **Felicia Bevel**'s analysis—a counterpoint onboard entertainment program represented by the performance of traditional American songs to reconfirm the Euro-American hierarchy of races. In "Transpacific Exceptionalism: The Making of Japan-US Militarist Interimperiality," **Kodai Abe** sees a collusion of the idea of exceptionalism between the original American one and its correspondent generation in postwar relations between Japan and the US, a combination of imperial agendas operating from both ends. **Ezekiel Stear** connects the rediscovery and usage of Nahuatl as a living Indigenous language during the COVID-19 pandemic, originating in China, in media broadcasts between Indigenous communities in Mexico City and Los Angeles. The common bond of Spanish colonial and migrational histories, he argues, is overcome by practicing their Indigenous language in digital communication.

The Special Forum "Thinking With and Beyond 'Vietnam': Fifty Years after the US Wars in Southeast Asia," edited by **Karín Aguilar-San Juan** and **Christina Hughes**,

constitutes a very special consideration of the repercussions of the war not on American soldiers and its relatives but on Vietnamese and Hmong exiled from their homelands and their treatment as aliens in the United States then and now. The often personal memories of the contributors from experiences back home and return visits on the occasion of the fifty-year anniversary in 2025 contrast the silence of the current official political powers in commemorating the end of the war. The repeatedly stressed delight that authors felt when hearing their native language spoken inspires them to engage in adding their Vietnamese memories to the official exclusively American memorials, performing their Asian cultures at the official sites in Washington, DC.

*Reprise* Editor Brian Russell Roberts starts out his section with a highly appreciated acclaim of **Werner Sollors**'s lifelong contributions to the field of transnational American studies which Sollors practiced before its actual constitution by Shelley Fisher Fishkin in 2004. His biography and career embody transnational American studies at its best. Sollors's awareness of the many non–English language authors in the United States represents an important redefinition of American literature as exemplified in his essay, which opens the *Reprise* section. Yet Brian's interest goes beyond Sollors's mainly transatlantic focus by complementing it with a transpacific one. Based on his own Indonesian experience, he selects articles and translations of American short stories which have circulated through different languages East and West, including Edgar Allan Poe's fiction. Thus, matters of translation and transference of cultural ideas between Asian and Western sources establish new areas of transnational American studies.

*JTAS* features in this issue, for the first time, a Review Section conceived and edited by Hsuan L. Hsu. Two of the three reviewed books have a transpacific connection, namely the Panama Canal and Hawai'i, reemphasizing the need for and insights of transnational American studies.

The editors of *JTAS* would like to thank all authors of this issue for their valuable and innovative contributions. Our special gratitude goes to our section editors. Special Forum Editor Pia Wiegmink collaborated closely with Karín Aguilar-San Juan and Christina Hughes to secure the publication of this section on the fifty-year anniversary of Vietnam. *Reprise* Editor Brian Russell Roberts presents again, in his selection of reprinted work, an original approach to and extension of transnational American studies into Asian areas. Hsuan L. Hsu's proposal and rendition of a first installment of the Review Section adds an important dimension to *JTAS* and he deserves high praise for this new addition.

Last but not least, our thanks go to managing editors, Sabine Kim and Vanessa Evans, supported by the editorial skills of Associate Managing Editors Ahngeli Shivam, Mai Wang, and Mahshid Mayar. We trust that all members of the worldwide *JTAS* community, editors, authors, and readers, share our gratitude to them and our common enthusiasm for promoting the field of transnational American studies.