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Reflective Essay for Alfred Hornung's Eightieth Birthday

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Alfred has dedicated his professional life to intercultural communication and transnational studies, and his commitment to understanding the world by crossing and challenging various boundaries has been fundamental to the spirit of what we all strive for at *JTAS*. Alfred has been a core part of the journal as long as I've served on the team as senior associate managing editor (for almost a decade now), but I have come to know him and work with him more closely since he assumed the role of editor in chief.

Alfred gives thoughtful attention to each and every submission we receive and publish. But what I particularly appreciate is the respect and care he extends to each member of the managing editorial team. Over the past few years, he has organized editorial meetings/lightning talks where we share our own work in transnational American studies (TAS), as well as our visions for the journal and the future of the field. Our editorial team itself reflects the nature of TAS—we transcend national, disciplinary, and other boundaries, and are literally spread across the globe. (Sabine and Vanessa would always use convenient and effective scheduling tools that have helped us coordinate across time zones!) A couple of years ago, while I was teaching at Koç University in Istanbul, Alfred started a thought-provoking conversation about what it means to research, teach, and promote American studies from outside the United States and as a non-US national. The influence of the United States at every level of society and the diverse reactions it provokes worldwide extend far beyond what people living inside the US might imagine. Understanding these complex dynamics is crucial to anticipating the future role of the US in the world.

Alfred's work on "life stories" has also inspired me to incorporate personal narratives into both my research and teaching. As a historian, one of my primary goals is to recover the hidden narratives and buried voices of the past. This is easier said than done—not only due to the scarcity of sources (as the adage "History is written by the

victors" suggests)—but because even when we recover overlooked stories, we still face many difficult questions: How do we make sense of them? Why do they matter? What impact, if any, do they have on the widely accepted, "official" accounts of history? The proliferation of information and narratives today makes it even harder for both researchers and students to access meaning and significance. What sources are "acceptable" or "reliable"? Who gets to decide? These questions frequently emerge as I guide my students through their own research projects. But I have also witnessed their flexibility and creativity—qualities that make the production of knowledge not only challenging, but more dynamic and deeply rewarding.

Alfred has played a pioneering role in "decentering" American studies, making the field not just transnational, but also transcultural, transracial, and transdisciplinary. His work—and the kind of scholarship we showcase in *JTAS* under his leadership—will continue to inspire the next generation of scholars and students across the world.