

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

GARY KLINE

The spring 2017 issue of the *Journal of Global South Studies* commences a new chapter in the history of our journal and of the association from which it emerged. As with all historical phenomena, some things have changed substantially (for instance, our name, our look, our publisher, and our membership and leadership) while others have remained constant (many stalwarts from the early days of our association still constitute a bedrock and a fount of experience and wisdom for the association). We needed to grow and change so as to remain relevant and capable of making positive contributions in a world in flux and full of challenges. We believe that we have changed in ways that will maintain our health and help us to flourish well into the future.

Our new publisher is the University of Florida Press (UF Press). We are excited about this relationship, and we believe it is one that will be mutually beneficial. As editor of the journal, I would like to express my personal thanks to Lauren Phillips, Linda Bathgate, and the other fine people at UF Press for working with us to bring about this alliance. We look forward to many good years of collaboration.

I request that potential contributors please note the changes in our guidelines for manuscripts. We are calling for submissions to be approximately 10,000 words in length, including the notes. We now ask that authors include abstracts at the beginning of their papers. Further, documentation should conform to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th edition. Author guidelines are regularly published near the end of each issue of our journal and online at our website. Such changes have been implemented as part of a conscious effort to enhance the quality of our publication, the benefits of which will accrue to both our readers and to the authors in our pages.

In this issue, we focus on Africa, a continent of immense beauty, tremendous potential, industrious people, rich traditions, great diversity, and daunting

problems to address and overcome. Each of the authors in these pages explores some facet of the complex tapestry that comprises Africa. As with every issue of the journal that we publish, our hope is that readers will gain from these essays important new knowledge, understandings, perspectives, and insights that will help to move us forward toward a better world for all. Incidentally, our next issue will shift the focus to Asia.

Put succinctly, we want the *Journal of Global South Studies* to contribute positively to our understanding of global trends, other peoples and countries, and the best ways to promote social justice, human well-being, and peace. For many people today, it seems that the world has reached a critical moment in human history. In no small measure, the rise of populist and nationalist sentiments in many countries has prompted important questions about our goals and directions, particularly the rise of a new leadership in the United States. Whereas apocrypha appears to be gaining influence globally through a variety of sources, employing a wide range of media such as Twitter, we hope to offer a reliable source of information and serious ideas for thoughtful people, whether scholars or interested readers.

More than at any time in recent memory, the state of world affairs appears to be in flux. The advent of the Trump administration augured a great shift in the US position globally and in its relations with other countries. To the extent that this transition entails a withdrawal of the country from its longstanding role as a leader on the world stage, and toward a more inwardly focused or self-interested policy orientation, we can expect an upheaval in traditional alliances and international relations. Each country may have to sort out the implications for itself. Moreover, the early disarray and possible scandal associated with the Trump administration, which could preoccupy the administration for months or years to come, may further guarantee that the United States will be in no position to maintain its global position.

In this environment, some countries will undoubtedly fill any vacuum created by US withdrawal or inattention. Certainly, China is poised to step up and forge stronger relations with the countries of the Global South. Russia, under Vladimir Putin, clearly aspires to reclaim its former status in the world. So there will be ample occasions for scholars to study the jockeying for position of various countries and alliances. It is, moreover, an environment in which both opportunities, risks, and (unfortunately) turmoil will abound.

Pausing briefly to reflect upon a couple of the most salient issues currently afflicting many countries, first consider the growing inequality globally. As far back as 1999, an annual United Nations Human Development Report declared that “Global inequalities in income and living standards have reached grotesque proportions.” The inequality has only gotten worse since then. Today, according to Oxfam, the richest one percent of the world’s population possesses more wealth than the remaining ninety-nine percent. Eight incredibly wealthy men control more wealth than the bottom half of the world’s people, some 3.6 billion humans struggling to survive. Such extreme disparities have profound implications and raise questions about war and peace, justice and democracy, opportunities for our families and children, the environment, and much more.

Secondly, the flood of imperiled refugees occasioned by violent conflicts, environmental calamities, famines, political persecution, ethnic cleansing, and the struggle to make a living are overwhelming the available resources and capacities of international organizations and individual countries to address these crises. If the world’s richest country turns away from this sea of humanity, now in excess of sixty-five million desperate souls, the suffering will be magnified and the countries surrounding the most stressed areas of the world (like Syria) will be further destabilized. Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan have absorbed a very disproportionate number of these displaced people, working with rather scant resources. This development could lead to even more turmoil and refugees.

In both cases, social instability, fragmentation, and breakdown are fostered; economic and political crises multiply; and international order is eroded. The path forward, then, is clearly dependent on our ability to carefully and rationally analyze our conditions and to work collaboratively and fraternally to resolve these existential threats to millions of people across the globe.

In the journal issues ahead, therefore, we hope to publish authors who will address these monumental challenges in a constructive way and who can illuminate for us the nature of our times. All areas of study are relevant: history and politics; philosophy, justice, and human rights; society, race, ethnic relations, religions; culture and the arts; economics; human psychology; the environment; technological developments; and much more.

Accordingly, we invite authors to contribute their research findings and insights and to offer us fresh perspectives on old conundrums. We want the

pages of our journal to reflect serious and relevant thoughts grounded in facts, reason, and scientific truths, with the ultimate goal of generating a free and open dialogue that fosters greater understanding between peoples, more peace, justice, and human welfare globally. Going forward, we commit to offering our readers this constructive forum, and we encourage you to participate with us in a global dialogue carried out in a spirit of mutual respect.