

Tapestries: Interwoven voices of local and global identities

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A Note from the Tapestries Editors

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A Note from the Tapestries Editors

Sophie Mark-Ng, Sara Rukavina & Anna Turner

In writing about the difficulty of the current moment, it is difficult to frame it in ways that convey what it has truly felt like and in ways that have not already been said. After receiving yet another email about the “rapidly changing situation,” “navigating the current phase of the pandemic,” and “uncertainty about the future,” how can we express how we really feel? Words alone cannot express the grief, anxiety, and countless other emotions which each of us within this senior seminar may have felt during this time. Not to mention that the world has continued to endure political, economic, and social turmoil which cannot be captured in this short note.

With Fall 2021 marking a return to in person learning and a “new normal,” there have been countless challenges and transitions which each of us within this senior seminar have had to undergo. Adding to the challenge is the refusal of the college to recognize the difficulty in transitioning back on campus and to provide accommodations. Under the circumstances, it is an amazing accomplishment to have made it through. We are so proud to have made it as a collective to the end of this semester. We have concluded with a completed version of our year’s volume of Tapestries: as a collection of both abstracts and papers. However, our worth and success should not be determined by our productivity alone. More important than creating this journal which you are about to read, we have made space as a group to care for and recognize one another, support each other, and envision better futures. This is immeasurable! We are so proud to be able to share Tapestries with you and hope it shares a glimpse into the spirit of our senior seminar.

As the topics and themes of our capstone projects began to develop we realized that all of us, in some capacity, were writing for the future we want to live in. We were challenging the old way of life, reflecting on protest and solidarity, imagining a future of collective liberation. To this end, we came to understand the theme of our capstones: a controlled burn. In their most literal form, controlled burns are a critical part of Indigenous land stewardship practices, ignited intentionally and with great care to preserve the health of a forest, prevent destructive wildfires, and “rejuvenate” the earth by returning

“nutrients to the soil in the ashes of vegetation that could otherwise take years to decompose.”¹ In a sense, our scholarship in the American Studies capstone has mirrored this process of stewardship. Over the last several months we have, with care for and attention toward a rejuvenated future, engaged in a practice of controlled burning—of conditions and systems on campus and in the broader Twin Cities communities and other communities from which we come, of the isolating academic standards that often define capstone scholarship, and of a despair that suggests there is no alternative. We hope, in reading our collection of work, that this fire is visible, that the collective care and stewardship we practiced together feels central to the reader in much the same way it felt so central to us over the course of the semester. To quote the artist statement written for the American Studies bulletin board, “In order to usher in a new future that is liberatory for all forms of life on this planet, we need to control burn. Only in this way will we be able to reframe, reimagine, and construct a better world.”

We want to extend our gratitude for all who contributed to this journal. Thank you to our teachers within and outside of the institution, to the librarians, Louann, Dave, and Jacki, for putting together this journal and making it accessible to all, to Professor Claudette Webster for her heart-centered words of wisdom that guided our writing, to Karin for overseeing our process, and to each other, the American Studies majors of 2022, for creating the caring community we have shared together. Here’s to graduating from Macalester and getting the fuck out!

¹Society, National Geographic. “Controlled Burning.” National Geographic Society, July 16, 2019. <http://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/controlled-burning/>.

