

Volume 9 Issue 1: Editorial

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Each time we write an editorial we comment on the state of the world and always reach for reasons to be hopeful. We must stay hopeful, because hope is what keeps us fighting for what we know is important.

Maintaining hope doesn't mean ignoring or avoiding the terrible events that are happening, but it does give us reason to keep going! There is strong relationship between hope, activism, and action of course. It is with spirit towards action, backed by the power of research, reflection and advocacy, that we continue.

People who are demanding their freedoms from oppressors (in any context) need to know that there are others out there in the world who are standing (and fighting) in solidarity. And solidarity is always the key – staying strong together and not being divided. We are always stronger together, and this is something that working-class people around the world understand very well.

So, where is the current hope? We could suggest that the trouncing of the Tories (Conservative government) in the UK general election this year, does spark some hope for the millions of people in Britain who have suffered due to the previous government's austerity measures. Hope needs action though, and the new Labour government needs to show that it is committed to undoing the damage and providing the means for working-class people in the UK to live with dignity.

More recently we saw some awful scenes coming from the UK as people reacted violently towards Muslims and immigrants [in the wake of a terrible crime](#). It was shocking to see groups of (mostly) white men attempting to attack mosques and spouting racist slurs. This was fuelled by an intentional [misinformation campaign](#), created to divide. But we also saw in the aftermath, the coming together of local people to [clean up](#) the damage, and the presence of thousands of [anti-racism demonstrators](#) sending a clear message to the racists that their views are not welcome.

Sarah was proud to see that the streets of her old neighbourhood of [Walthamstow](#) (in London) were filled with anti-racist locals who affirmed their pride in the multicultural neighbourhood. They refused to accept the racist rhetoric and people from all cultural backgrounds united. Walthamstow is a working-class area, and this showed that working-class people are culturally diverse and enjoy the sense of community among people who share their class interests.

Here in Australia cost of living pressures continue to rise sharply and present some of the biggest challenges many have seen in generations. As politicians scramble to point fingers the gaps between people continue to rise, with one report finding “[average rents rising by more than 50 per cent since 2020](#)”. How do people so sharply worried about housing look after themselves and those around them? While it can appear too hard to even think about, again, we look to each other for solidarity and support. There are pockets of kindness everywhere, even if they are not headline worthy.

With the US election around the corner, we should also acknowledge the organisers and activists who are pushing for the representation of working-class people and who work hard in communities and workplaces to ensure that people are ready to vote. In terms of hope, we've seen it in the workers organising their workplaces and winning improved wages and conditions, but when it comes to political hope, there is a lot riding on this election, with one candidate making it clear that he has no intention of helping working-class people. The world watches on...

This issue offers up a diverse array of pieces, that includes scholarly articles, commentary, a personal essay, poems and book reviews. We start with Miranda Mosier-Puentes article, "I would love to have these conversations with family": A Listening Guide exploration of the relational experiences of first-generation students in helping professions' which explores the ways that many first-generation students experience changes to their relationships with family due to their education. Mosier-Puentes' data shows that for many such students, it can be difficult to share what they have learnt with their families.

This is followed by two articles focused on working-class literature – in 'Sid Chaplin: A Writer with a Cause', Ronald Paul argues for a revisiting of the work of British working-class author Sid Chaplin, whose novels about working-class life in the 1950s and 1960s have not been appreciated for their radical working-class politics. And in 'British Working-Class Literature, Higher Education and Identity Politics: Elevating Working-Class Voices in New Literary Pedagogies', John D. Attridge examines the dearth of working-class literature courses in UK higher education institutes and presents some reasons for this absence.

Magnus Gustafson is next with "A small step forward can be as important as a big one" – Parliamentary debate about the first abortion law in Sweden in 1938'. In this article, Gustafson takes us to Sweden in the 1930s and outlines arguments made by politicians in relation to their support or opposition of abortion laws. Gustafson claims that only one politician at that time, positioned the issue of abortion rights as a working-class issue.

The issue then moves to a commentary piece from our friends at the Connors Institute at Shippensburg University – Lawrence M. Eppard, Annie Linker, Madison Laughman and Katie Bonomo, present some preliminary findings of a study into the choice of study major for women students and how this may influence the gender pay gap in the US. In 'College Major Selection, Social Class, and the Gender Pay Gap in the United States' the team finds that not all of what they expected to find was supported by the collected data.

Sara Appel's personal essay follows, 'Diary of a Sub On Strike: A Week on the Picket Line with the Portland Association of Teachers', which is an account (with photographs) of her experience on a picket line as a substitute school teacher. Appel demonstrates the affirming effects of solidarity actions.

Four poems are also included in this issue. Three are from Angela Costi - 'A Ship in Distress', 'A Christmas Carol for the Carers', 'The Service of my Baba's Windows' which explore the pain of watching parents as they age. And a poem from Ian C Smith follows, 'Mistake City' which presents a story of regret.

The issue ends with eight book reviews, edited by the Journal's excellent book reviews editor, Dr. Christie Launius. The range of books is impressive and includes scholarly works on topics

such as the history of Latinas/os in the US South, the role of luck in the ability for college students to find jobs; reasons for working-class disengagement with the US Democratic party; the wilful neglect of trailer park homes. There are also reviews of creative works such as a graphic novel set in Canadian oil sands, poetry focused on the experience of a poor Indigenous community in Canada; short stories about white working-class men in a deindustrialised setting and a memoir about a childhood spent in a Chinese restaurant in Detroit. The interest in writing about working-class life continues to flourish.

We end with thanks to all of our contributors, and to readers. Working-class studies is a truly interdisciplinary field, and the works in this Journal continue to demonstrate this!