Introduction by the Journal Coeditors

EVE TUCK AND K. WAYNE YANG

To say that we begin with gratitude is to do it every time. To do this every time does not make it less meaningful; it is to make it a practice to pause to describe, as much as we can remember, the labors crisscrossing space and time to make this journal come to be.

When we were named the editors of this journal, sometime in the spring of 2015, or maybe it was the fall of 2014, we inherited a digital folder, an electric archive of all of the planning that went into the founding of the journal. The names of the authors of those documents are those whose scholarly works we read, scholars in and out of the university whom we greatly admire, writing the mundane work of proposing the creation of the journal to University of Minnesota Press, including establishing timelines, publishing agreements, and plans for the peer review process. In issue 1.1, John Márquez and Junaid Rana describe the founding of the journal, the collective organizing efforts and intracollective politics, the tensions between radical intellectual work and its appropriation, the piles and piles of planning notes and memos and contracts, so we won’t recount that history here. Instead, we point simply to the dimensional aspects of radical intellectual work for those working in, toward, or away from the university: sometimes our writing is soaring, sometimes our writing is boring.

In some academic departments, scholars write into their fields with opposing views on topics like the commitments of Black studies, the compositions of Indigenous feminist theory, and what makes critical ethnic studies indeed critical. Yet, though their writings may bring readers to the brink of understanding these imperative aspects of their fields, these same scholars may also participate together in the humdrum of university life: admissions committees, search committees, promotion and tenure reviews, academic planning, selecting art for the library.

Some of the most partisan disagreements about the very purpose, foundational theories, and politics of scholarship play out in these mundane labors.
Also occurring are some of the most unlikely acts of solidarity, in the everyday labors of people supporting others whom they vehemently disagree with and quite possibly dislike. Acts of subverting the typical processes of the academy (and their typical results) can also be quite mundane. Our theories—especially those against white supremacy, against settler colonialism, against antiblackness, against homophobic and trans-exclusionary practices, toward abolition, toward decolonization, toward queer futurities—show up as we make decisions about which students to admit, which colleagues to hire, promote, and award, which art to display in the library.

This is perhaps why service loads for some of us are so heavy, especially for women of color, and especially for Black women. This service, frequently described as “invisible labor,” is part and parcel of our very presence in the academy, at least for some of us. Universities make public commitments to effective sexual violence policies, to diversity, to “indigenizing,” to welcoming more Black faculty and students, to improved gender diversity policies and supports; yet, it is clear that they can’t possibly do this without the already overburdened presence of people of color, sexual violence survivors, Black people, queer people, nonbinary people, gender-nonconforming people, and Indigenous people (of course, these are not mutually exclusive peoples!). Universities that herald these needed changes as part of new and emerging definitions of excellence thus are legitimated by the presence of those who have historically been systematically and purposefully excluded; indeed, those upon whose backs entire disciplines have been forged. So the term “invisible labor” isn’t quite doing it, if it ever did. Instead we are talking about the laboring presences that make universities legitimate—without them, they can, and do, burn.

We say thank you to those who carried out the mundane task of reviewing for this themed issue on “the academy and what can be done,” often in ways that were extraordinary. Reviewers for *Critical Ethnic Studies* understand the stakes of this journal, and their responsibilities to authors, yes, but also to the communities from which and toward which authors write. Managing editor LeKeisha Hughes continues to facilitate the review process and much of the correspondence for the journal, all the while deftly demonstrating what we gesture toward in this brief essay as practicing theory/putting theory into practice. Boké Saisi, Nisha Toomey, and Jane Griffith provided caretaking expertise in copyediting and manuscript preparation after authors submitted final drafts. Authors—both those whose works appear in this issue and those whose works did not ultimately get published—took seriously the double question imbued in this issue’s theme: What can be done to change...
the academy? What can be done or finished about the academy? “Done” can mean acted upon, engaged, intervened upon, changed. “Done” can also be finished, completed, made to be over.

When we decided that this would be the theme, our very next thought was to reach out to the brilliant scholar and artist Ashon Crawley, to ask him to please partner with us as a coeditor for this issue. He said yes to doing all of the unremarkable work of making a journal issue happen, from cowriting the call for papers, advising the reviewer matching process, reading submission and reviewer reports, making decisions to request revisions or not, and ultimately accepting final manuscripts. His introduction, which immediately follows these words, is all but unremarkable—it is another example of Crawley’s exquisite approach to theorizing, in body, in time, in place, in deep inflection of the world of sound and feeling that his work has attended to so astoundingly. To have had the opportunity to make relationship with Crawley, through collaborating to make this issue, but also to have discussed our writing, our intentions, and to feel them in the cadence of pages that follow, has been a kind of making possible. Writing, both in this journal and outside, both the soaring and the workaday, can be what opens us up to one another for abounding connection, even for friendship; and this is surely what working with Crawley has reminded us.

EVE TUCK (Unanga)x is a member of the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island in Alaska. She engages in theories of decolonization in a series of collaborations, including with K. Wayne Yang, the Black/Land Project, the Super Futures Haunt Qollective, and the Land Relationships Super Collective.

K. WAYNE YANG writes about decolonization and everyday epic organizing, particularly from underneath ghetto colonialism, often with his frequent collaborator, Eve Tuck, and sometimes for an avatar called La Paperson. He is excited to collaborate with the Land Relationships Super Collective, the Black Teacher Project, and Roses in Concrete.