

Letter from Randal Jelks

I began my journey with *AMSJ* with a conversation with the former co-editor David Katzman in the late fall of 2008. He asked me if I would be interested in joining the editorial team since he would be retiring. I was taken by surprise. I had to think about the conversation at some length. My only editorial experience had been being the editor of my high school annual. Frankly, I had never seen editing an academic journal in my future, just as I had never seen being a professional academic in my future either. After consulting with my PhD mentor and other colleagues I decided it was an opportunity that I should not pass up. Here was an opportunity to intellectually shape a field of study. Editors in the academy are often minimized as service workers, but I viewed editing as being far more engaging than its traditional relegation. As an editor, I viewed myself as an intellectual midwife assisting humanities scholars to give birth to ideas regarding aesthetics, culture, disabilities, politics—past, present and future. As an intellectual midwife it has been such a joy to help guide so many scholarly births that have become books and ongoing discussions in the field of American Studies.

More significantly, I was fortunate to join a journal that had been in operation since 1960 with support by the Mid-America American Studies Associations (MAASA), KU American Studies Department and in-kind by the University of Kansas Libraries and the University's college of Liberal, Arts, and Science. And even more fortunately, I got to work with my distinguish colleague Sherrie Tucker as my senior co-editor. Since 2009 Sherrie has taught me what it means to be truly democratic and respectful of all ideas that come through submissions, even

8 Randal Jelks

when we knew they did not fit our journal. She has been a model scholar, colleague and friend. Working with her and learning from her genius has been worth the "price of the ticket."

Finally, the journal has given the opportunity to work with outstanding graduate and undergraduate students who have served as our assistant editors, managing editors, and media production assistants. All the students kept me fresh and attuned to forthcoming trends in every way.

My thirteen years of co-editing *AMSJ* has been blissful. It is time to move on and accomplish other goals—writing more books, documentary film producing, and enjoying the fruits of my labor. I thank everyone for the successes we have achieved together at *AMSJ*. For me, it has been an lifetime opportunity and I am eternally grateful.

Randal Maurice Jelks