

A Note From the Editors

In early 2026, U.S. economic indicators show growth, violent crime, and inflation declined, and life expectancy is at a record high. At the same time, people's faith in these statistics is at a low point. Disconcerting events have dominated the news and often our own lives over the past year. Immigration Enforcement raids in many major American cities have triggered outrage, fear, and protests, some with tragically fatal outcomes. International and domestic economic uncertainty, driven by tariff fluctuations, rising long-term unemployment rates, and global and domestic concerns about artificial intelligence, has left many Americans anxious about the future. There seems to be a disconnect between official numbers and people's lived experiences. This dual reality might seem tumultuous to us. Yet as historians, we are aware that uncertainty is the human story. We are part of the present and actors in our own futures just as the people, times, and places we study.

Then on Saturday, February 28, we woke up to the news that the U.S. and Israel are now at war with Iran, that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and at least thirty of his advisors and cabinet members have been killed, and President Trump called on the Iranian people to rise up. Ship traffic through the Strait of Hormuz and passenger air traffic in the entire Middle East have been halted. Once again, events are accelerating faster than we can comprehend. Yet if history teaches us anything, it is that moments of rupture can not only bring about destruction but also reckoning and positive change. During conflict and anxiety, historians can also find evidence of human agency, resilience, new beginnings, courage, and hope.

The historical research in this fifty-third volume of *Perspectives* highlights dramatic changes and the actions people take in response. Our first two articles shift to the ancient world. Kieran Black begins with an analysis of an Ancient Greek tragedy, the *Oresteia*. Then we turn to the Western Mediterranean as Kareem Ali examines the evolving relationship between the Romans and their Gallic neighbors. Finally, we focus on the Early Modern Atlantic World, where Menno Verbaten compares the ideas behind colonial Dutch and Anglo-American revolutionary documents.

The next three articles address a more recent time period. Starting in the early twentieth century, Penelope Neder-Muro unearths the development of modern seismology by Charles Richter in Southern California, who raised earthquake awareness not only for his neighbors but among people around the world. Hector Avina explores how modern American wrestling was consolidated from a regional business to a national phenomenon under Vince McMahon. Finally, Trenten Hart examines the relationship between former President Bill Clinton and the Queer community, specifically his failed campaign promises and the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy of the United States military. Volume 53 showcases a wide array of interests in modern thought, new perspectives on ancient ideas, and the evolution of twentieth-century entertainment from a local phenomenon to a global market.

Supplementing the printed version of this journal, our team of editors have compiled five Special Features ranging both in concept and intent. They can be found in the *Perspectives* online edition. The first Special Feature explores the “Monuments” exhibit at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art. Special Feature two maps Cal State LA history alumni who pursued PhDs and showcases each participant’s scholarly journey and includes their advice for current students. Our next Special Feature maps Southern California volunteer and internship opportunities for history students with active links to available positions at local museums, historical societies, libraries, and archives.

Our fourth Special Feature consists of two *Festschriften* for our History department’s recently retired faculty members, Dr. Choi Chatterjee and Dr. Scott Wells. Dr. Chatterjee is a premier specialist on Russian history and continues to research and publish. She has inspired many of her students to pursue doctoral degrees. Dr. Wells, a specialist in German medieval and religious history, served as Chair of the History Department for many years and held other College administrative roles. During his time as a Professor, he taught a wide range of courses ranging from first-year world history survey classes to graduate seminars in Medieval European History. We continue to feel the presence of both scholars in our program and miss them deeply.

Our final Special Feature follows up on the victims of the Los Angeles wildfires of 2025, which left large parts of Altadena and Pacific Palisades in ruins. Thousands of Angelenos lost their homes, including Cal State LA students and faculty. As we write this, many of those displaced by the fires are still unable to return home. Signs of construction are gradually appearing, but bureaucracy, insurance red tape, barriers created by financial institutions, and the limited availability of construction companies are preventing many of those affected from starting to rebuild their homes and businesses. Please visit our updated LA Fires Community Archive.

Perspectives Vol. 53 concludes with a wide array of book, film, and television reviews ranging from the American Revolution and colonialism in French Congo to a fictionalized account of the post-World War II *Treni della Felicità* program in Italy, and the cultural origins of the modern economy, to local histories of Boyle Heights and Echo Park. Our film and television reviews cover Academy Award winners *Hamnet* and *Sinners*, as well as the Polish Netflix drama series *Lead Children*.

Throughout working on this year's volume, many of us have learned new skills, forged relationships, and flourished under the guidance of our collective mentor, Professor Birte Pfleger. The dedication and hard work of each team member made this journal possible. *Perspectives* Vol. 53 is once again crafted during a time when the outside world appears chaotic and the future uncertain. We hope that our articles inspire our readers to persevere and create a sense of stability in this evolving world.

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