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## A Welcoming Statement to the Editorial Advisory Board

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## ***Editor's Note:***

### **A Welcoming Statement to the Editorial Advisory Board**

The present issue of *Human Architecture* includes a collection of excellent undergraduate student essays written in various courses offered at UMass Boston during the 2003-4 academic year. The diversity of issues explored by students in these essays, and the richness of the applied ways in which they critically incorporate theoretical concepts and insights into the fabric of their everyday lives in social context, can hardly be summarized in a short editorial note. So I invite the readers to read these essays forthwith. In many ways, principally because of the courage of these students in exploring the interlinkages of their personal troubles with public issues, but also because of their decisions to share them with others through the public medium of this journal, the present issue of *Human Architecture* marks another important step towards establishing this journal as a useful academic forum.

The encouragement for the continued publication of this journal has come from other quarters as well. The sources of these encouragements have ranged from the warm and supportive sociology faculty at UMass Boston whose ranks I joined in Fall 2003, to the wonderful community of scholars, students, and staff across the disciplines on this campus whom I met at numerous meetings and conferences during the past year, and finally to the kind ac-

ceptance by several faculty, staff, and students both on this and other campuses to join the forum provided by this journal as members of its new Editorial Advisory Board. Spearheading such encouragements was that kindly offered by Professor Jorge Capetillo-Ponce, of the Sociology Department, who participated together with me in organizing a CIT (Center for the Improvement of Teaching) workshop on "Classroom Publishing as a Liberating Pedagogical Strategy" in January 2004 at UMass Boston. Capetillo later encouraged several of his students to submit their papers to the present issue and contributed a short piece himself, hopefully as a beginning for many more to come. I thank him for his kind and friendly support.

I would like to take the opportunity of this space to appreciate and welcome the joining of the members of the Editorial Advisory Board to this forum. For this purpose, it may be helpful to take a step back and provide a brief overview of the purpose and goals of this journal, and the ways in which it can be made useful to the academic community across rank, disciplinary, university, and on/off-campus boundaries.

I began this journal when I was still a doctoral graduate student at SUNY-Binghamton, while teaching undergraduate sociology as a full-time faculty at SUNY-Oneonta for two years. Being a hybrid student/faculty journal with a welcoming emphasis on undergraduate learning, teaching, and research, therefore, goes to the heart and the very origins of this journal. I would like to maintain this diversity in terms of both paper submissions as well as composition of the Editorial Advisory Board, as I believe such a diversity can only help enrich this forum and fill in a gap in existing journals which often limit their constituencies to one or another set of academic ranks.

One need that gradually arose upon the publication of the previous three issues of the journal was that of finding ways to

keep more continuous contact among those the journal linked with one another. Perhaps the most important need the Editorial Advisory Board will meet will be its networking function—helping those contributing to and interested in the mission of the journal to keep in touch across its multiple issues. The establishment of the Board has already served this good purpose of renewing contacts, the number of which will hopefully grow and deepen in the future. Creatively building new spatiotemporal contacts among those sharing an interest in the mission of the journal is one of the important practical goals of *Human Architecture*.

Substantively, the journal aims to publish works in what may be called *liberating (or critical) autobiographical research and practice* genre, inspired by C. Wright Mills's "sociological imagination"—seeking to explore (and perhaps help transform) the interplay between private troubles and public issues through critical personal self-explorations in an increasingly global and world-historical contexts. As may be noted, the "sociology of self-knowledge" subtling this journal seeks to extend the sociological imagination on both ends of the dialectic, emphasizing on one hand the need for personal self-reflexivity (in contrast to the study only of *others'* personal troubles), and, on the other hand, the increasingly global and world-historical scopes of the "public" landscape which constitutes, and is constituted by, our everyday personal lives. Substantively, "human architecture" is meant to also convey the creative spatiotemporal work involved in understanding and transforming the dialectics of micro/macro social forces shaping our everyday lives.

I understand that such a lofty goal as restated above is not realized overnight in each essay published, or in each issue of the journal as a whole. This may give an added meaning to the term "journal" as it aims to chronicle ongoing personal journeys of self

discovery and change, welcoming papers that demonstrate commitments along that path even though each piece may constitute only a small (but important) step in that direction. I feel the student papers published in the four (including the present) issues of the journal provide good examples of works done in this genre. Borrowing from the words of the Persian poet Hafez who was humbly speaking of the scale of his own travels compared to the mystical journeys of his spiritual mentor Attar in the *Conference of the Birds*, we know it will take the visiting of all the seven cities of love to make the final journey, but first we can only hope to begin with making the first turn of the first alley. The journey of a thousand miles begins with a first step—says a similar Chinese proverb.

The "sociological imagination," or its sister concept, "the sociology of self-knowledge," does not have to—nor should it—be interpreted as a property of sociology. Aside from sociology itself as a "discipline" being an interdisciplinary mode of social inquiry, I strongly believe, and I think the academia-eschewing C. Wright Mills also believed, that such an imagination can best be nourished in a cross-disciplinary framework that cuts across the sciences (both natural and social) and the humanities. If anything, I think the other social sciences and the humanities can only help balance the dialecticity of the imagination in terms of emphases on not only how society shapes personal selves, but also how personal selves shape inner and broader social realities. For this reason, I certainly hope that the joining of members of the Editorial Advisory Board to this forum, coming from diverse disciplinary backgrounds and affiliations, will contribute to enriching the imaginations pursued and chronicled through this journal with an ever broadening and deepening interdisciplinary spirit.

The Editorial Advisory Board members and readers will hopefully find in this journal a useful forum to direct their own or

others' papers which more or less echo the mission of the journal. The journal articles are currently used as required or recommended readings in several courses taught at UMass Boston, acquainting students' works with one another while providing some excellent examples of how various theoretical perspectives can be used in critical and applied autobiographical research. In fact, references made across student essays and voices previously published in this journal are apparent in the essays of this volume. The journal provides a wonderful opportunity for the meeting of various undergraduate, graduate, faculty, and hopefully off-campus activist voices committed to liberating social theory and praxis. The journal, which is committed to at least one issue per academic year, is meant to serve primarily the use-value of a communication medium that brings people of same interests together to share and enrich one another's learning, teaching, research, and practical endeavors.

In short, this journal:

- provides a publishing channel for chronicling critical and scholarly growth in self-knowledge in increasingly global and world-historical frameworks;
- is a cross-rank, cross-disciplinary, and cross-campus reading resource which may be used as required/recommended text available through library, e/reserve/Prometheus, and bookstore;
- as a publishing option in instructional pedagogy, encourages students' communication and writing proficiency as potential authors;
- empowers students as published authors, enriching their professional portfolios in further pursuit of their academic, career, and other pursuits;
- builds networks and encourages communications within and across academic ranks, disciplines, and campuses—locally and globally;
- builds networks and communications

across on/off-campus learning, teaching, research, and activism—locally and globally.

*Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* has been framed since its beginnings as a utopistic publishing outlet of an imagined research center that seeks to establish a critical dialogue across the world-historical utopian, mystical, and academic discourses on the good society and whether and how it can be achieved despite all past failures. For those familiar with my work, and the issues raised in my perspective of the journal and the research agenda of its imagined research center, it should suffice to point out here briefly that the dialogue is meant to be one concerned with critical and liberating theory and practice beyond all ideological frameworks impeding creative efforts made in the past towards better selves and worlds. The use of Omar Khayyam as a motif for the imagined research project and for the journal—given the critical stance Khayyam seemed to have had taken with respect to all philosophical, religious, and scientific knowledges and circles of his time while still entertaining a deep thirst for the true, the good, and the beautiful—is meant to convey a similar attitude adopted by this journal to all knowledges of past and present with regards to whether and how human liberation may be sought.

The liberation itself, and the necessity of endeavors along its path, however, seems to me to be the one and only agenda we can claim as what gives meaning and a mission to this journal. I sincerely hope that the Liberal Arts missions of various campuses represented by the submissions and Advisory Board members of this and future journals will only help reinforce and enrich the spatiotemporal—self and global, here-and-now and world-historical—liberal arts mission of *Human Architecture* as well.

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