

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

**Hannah Barrett**

*Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what  
you can.*

- Arthur Ashe

In the Fall of 2019, the hustle and bustle of campus life at UCLA was in full swing. Students were reconnecting with professors and classmates, acclimating to their new courses, and exploring what our campus research community has to offer. Much as it does for our student community, Fall quarter means new beginnings for the *Aleph* Editorial Board. It is a time of anticipation and excitement as we build campuswide interest for student authors to showcase their work in our journal, which exhibits the best undergraduate research in the Humanities and Social Sciences. This year, the sixteenth edition of *Aleph* strove to raise the standard of this research as our editors repeatedly challenged authors to elevate both their critical analyses and turns of phrase.

However, a new, external challenge emerged as the outbreak of coronavirus forced the closure of our beloved campus. The circumstances of the global pandemic have affected our authors, editors, and staff in a variety of ways that are hard to measure. Many of us, myself included, struggled to come to terms with spending our final academic quarter in virtual isolation. During this trying time, I was reminded of a quote from UCLA alumnus Arthur Ashe, which has since become something of a personal mantra: “Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.” Although the thought seems simple at first, what Ashe proposes is incredibly difficult to internalize. It requires an acknowledgement of

one's present position, capabilities, and goals, as well as a sense of peace regardless of the outcome. It is a guideline for reflective growth that perfectly captures the way in which our staff grappled with the change and uncertainty of UCLA under quarantine. Indeed, it was only through acknowledging each other's strengths and capabilities that we managed to persevere through the added difficulties of distance learning and collaborating across multiple time zones.

The result is a unique representation of the *Aleph* Class of 2020; though we may differ in our perspectives, backgrounds, and academic interests, we all come together to tell the story of this particular moment in history. As our authors take you on a journey through the lived experiences of marginalized students, visual representations of an artist's struggle, the agency of revolutionary activists, and the uncertainty faced by female characters in liminal spaces, I invite you to reflect on your own positionality. Do you feel connected to or inspired by the conflicts and challenges highlighted in these stories? Further, what is the significance of this research in the wake of the challenges humanity is currently facing? At the core of *Aleph's* values is the belief that research is the key to understanding the problems that matter most to our community. We only ask that you make room for genuine self-reflection as you engage in this critical discussion and work together to seek solutions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hannah Barrett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'H' and 'B'.

**Hannah Barrett**  
*Editor-In-Chief, 2019-2020*