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Letter from the Editor: Spring 2021

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Letter from the Editor: Spring 2021

Amanda Pullum, Faculty Advisor

For over a year, our social interactions have taken place behind masks, through closed windows, or via computer screens. Others' bodies have become potential hazards, possible carriers of an airborne, invisible, and sometimes deadly virus. Staying at least six feet apart—alternatively called “social distancing” or “physical distancing”—has become part of personal safety routines for those with the ability to do so. Spending time with others indoors, once a cornerstone of everyday life, is now fraught with risk and benefit calculations.

This season, however, we find ourselves in transition. The pandemic continues to devastate communities around the world, but here in California, widespread vaccination has led to a dramatic decline in covid infections. Although many are anxious for a return to in-person activities, we also still experience the fear and anxiety of the ongoing pandemic. We are cautiously re-entering shared spaces and re-learning how to be near others—both physically and emotionally.

This issue of *Culture, Society, and Praxis* presents three unique approaches to the relationship between our physical spaces, bodies, and social contexts. First, Claire Guittard examines the UC Santa Cruz graduate student workers' strike of Spring 2020. The physical picket line is a powerful tool for strikers, yet due to the pandemic, UCSC graduate students had to shift to online tactics. Guittard investigates the strategic choices and frame alignment processes that made this shift possible.

For many people, competitive sports were dearly missed during the pandemic; moreover, [the pandemic worsened inequality between men and women athletes](#). In our second article, Alyssa Burt asks how female college athletes perceive gender inequality in professional sports. Drawing upon interviews with women's softball players, Burt finds that female collegiate athletes link lack of representation and visibility of women's sports with gendered pay inequality among professional athletes.

For others, however, outdoor endurance sports were among the few safe activities available. Emma Holmes demonstrates how anthropologists and archaeologists can use human remains to determine whether a society played high-impact sports. Holmes presents evidence that high-impact sports cause distinctive changes to one's bones, which may be seen in skeletal remains. Studies of human bones, therefore, can illustrate the patterns of our ancestors' daily routines—including their leisure activities.

Many of us are learning that the pandemic has caused trauma not only to our bodies, but also to our mental health and social relationships. As we negotiate new routines and new ways of being with others, we hope that this issue's articles add nuance to our continually shifting understandings of physical bodies and spaces, and help heal the impacts of the pandemic on our society.