Dear friends,

“We need to think carefully before we undertake any intentional, large-scale intervention into our climate,” explained Marion Hourdequin, an ethicist from Colorado College. Seated next to Dr. Hourdequin at this year’s Hollomon Symposium, Harvard physicist David Keith listened attentively, and then turned to her with a rueful smile. “Yes,” he said, “and what are we doing now, when we know all that we know but we still choose to burn fossil fuels?”

The symposium focused on the specific question of solar geoengineering—slowing global warming by releasing certain substances into the atmosphere to reflect a small portion of sunlight away from the earth. Our panelists used this topic to ask fundamental ethical questions: Who gets to decide what happens to our planet? Do human beings have the capacity to reach any agreement about the future we want? How can we fairly share the costs of change? And when does doing nothing become its own choice?

An ethical life is not built only out of those rare moments when we choose whether or not to perform a new experiment or build a new technology. Our ethics are formed in the countless small decisions we make every day. Most of the time, we are not even conscious of making a choice as we float along with everyone else, just doing our jobs and trying to get our families what they need.

As a friend of Radius, you know it is not enough to go with the flow. You help people push against the current and set out towards a better world. You support an undergraduate ethics seminar which opens up new horizons for MIT students, encouraging them to ask bigger and better questions about their lives. You stand behind the people who ask where the money comes from and whose values it represents. You help create spaces where members of the community can deepen their understanding of key issues and make their voices heard.

Every day, you make the powerful choice to connect and to challenge, to learn and to change. We are grateful and honored to be your partners in this journey towards justice, compassion, and a brighter future for us all.

With gratitude,

The Rev. Thea Keith-Lucas
RADIUS PROGRAMS 2018-2019

In October, we invited Derek Black to campus to talk about the role of open dialogue in his own transformation away from white nationalism. Catherine Steiner-Adair spoke in November about The Big Disconnect: Protecting Childhood and Family Relationships in the Digital Age. In January, we joined The Commons and the PKG Public Service Center to offer Bridging the Bi-Partisan Divide: A Hands-On Workshop Towards Depolarization. Many thanks to Danny Becker and Kate Mytty for creating this excellent workshop.

the power of TECH WORKERS

In July 2018, we began a new partnership with the Tech Workers Coalition (TWC) by co-hosting the event #TechWontBuildIt: The New Tech Resistance where a panel of activists (Sasha Constanza-Chock, Kade Crockford, and Valeria Do Vale) explored the science of Mindfulness for Pain Relief as part of our Hack Your Mind series.

In October, we hosted a panel featuring MIT professor Daron Acemoglu on Trade Wars: More Than Just Tariffs. In November, we co-sponsored the Communications Forum’s conversation with Eric Lander and Maria Zuber about the opportunities lost when federal funding is cut for basic research. In April, Jonathan King and Mass Peace Action led a comprehensive look at the military budget, The Social and Economic Cost of Endless Wars, and we hosted Dangerous Developments in Modern Weaponry, a look at the escalation of military technology.

the power of VOTERS

This fall, we hosted a series of conversations to help prepare voters to make informed choices in the 2018 elections. Political analyst Mary Anne Marsh spoke about the role of women in the 2018 elections, Tufts professor Moon Duchin explained the mathematical challenges of fair redistricting, and Suzanne Mello-Stark (Rhode Island College) outlined the vulnerabilities of new voting technologies.

For more information about all of our programs, check out the program archive and blog at our website: radius.mit.edu

the power of MONEY

In October, we hosted a panel featuring MIT professor Daron Acemoglu on Trade Wars: More Than Just Tariffs. In November, we co-sponsored the Communications Forum’s conversation with Eric Lander and Maria Zuber about the opportunities lost when federal funding is cut for basic research. In April, Jonathan King and Mass Peace Action led a comprehensive look at the military budget, The Social and Economic Cost of Endless Wars, and we hosted Dangerous Developments in Modern Weaponry, a look at the escalation of military technology.

the power of CONVERSATION

In October, we invited Derek Black to campus to talk about the role of open dialogue in his own transformation away from white nationalism. Catherine Steiner-Adair spoke in November about The Big Disconnect: Protecting Childhood and Family Relationships in the Digital Age. In January, we joined The Commons and the PKG Public Service Center to offer Bridging the Bi-Partisan Divide: A Hands-On Workshop Towards Depolarization. Many thanks to Danny Becker and Kate Mytty for creating this excellent workshop.

We celebrated our neurodiversity with Synaptic Stories, an evening of stories about brains with emcee Kirsty Bennett at the MIT Museum in September. In October, Zan Barry explored the science of Mindfulness for Pain Relief as part of our Hack Your Mind series.

the power of the MIND

We celebrated our neurodiversity with Synaptic Stories, an evening of stories about brains with emcee Kirsty Bennett at the MIT Museum in September. In October, Zan Barry explored the science of Mindfulness for Pain Relief as part of our Hack Your Mind series.

the power of the MIND

We celebrated our neurodiversity with Synaptic Stories, an evening of stories about brains with emcee Kirsty Bennett at the MIT Museum in September. In October, Zan Barry explored the science of Mindfulness for Pain Relief as part of our Hack Your Mind series.

This fall, we hosted a series of conversations to help prepare voters to make informed choices in the 2018 elections. Political analyst Mary Anne Marsh spoke about the role of women in the 2018 elections, Tufts professor Moon Duchin explained the mathematical challenges of fair redistricting, and Suzanne Mello-Stark (Rhode Island College) outlined the vulnerabilities of new voting technologies.

the power of CONVERSATION

In October, we invited Derek Black to campus to talk about the role of open dialogue in his own transformation away from white nationalism. Catherine Steiner-Adair spoke in November about The Big Disconnect: Protecting Childhood and Family Relationships in the Digital Age. In January, we joined The Commons and the PKG Public Service Center to offer Bridging the Bi-Partisan Divide: A Hands-On Workshop Towards Depolarization. Many thanks to Danny Becker and Kate Mytty for creating this excellent workshop.

Spotlight on...Patricia-Maria Weinmann

Radius Assistant Coordinator Patricia-Maria Weinmann was honored with the MIT Women’s League Laya Wiesner Community Award. Established in 1999 after her death, the award celebrates “a member or friend of the MIT community for conspicuously effective service that reflects the former MIT First Lady’s concerns for enhancing life at the Institute and in the world at large.” This award is presented annually during the MIT Awards Convocation.

As one of her many nominators wrote, “Trish lifts up every team she is a part of.”

Spotlight on...Shannon Schmidt

As our intern this year, Harvard Divinity School student Shannon Schmidt contributed a great deal to the ethics seminar and the Radius team. This summer Shannon was selected for the Arthur Vining Davis Scholarship, which will fund her work through MIT on the development of a summer-long project. Shannon has been happy to connect with MIT Radius and the MIT Prison Initiative in support of this work, which will involve in-person and audio storytelling by formerly incarcerated folks living across the city of Boston. Shannon’s passion for restorative justice is a great catalyst to this work, and she is excited to see it all fall into place.
BEING, THINKING, DOING (OR NOT!): ETHICS AND YOUR LIFE

One of the cornerstones of our spring semester is our undergraduate ethics seminar. We had more than twenty students in the class this semester who were deeply engaged and curious. As we took part in substantive and enlivening discussions with our guests, all of us increased our awareness and thought more deeply about urgent issues of our day.

Guest David Howse inspired with his conversation about navigating racism with truth and dignity; Kieran Setiya explored the ethics of climate change; and Ben Tarnoff helped students understand the power of tech workers in creating positive change in the world. At the start of the semester, Dr. Abby Everett Jaques, our fearless leader from MIT Philosophy, gave an "ethics boot camp" session and followed up with a substantive discussion on the ethics of AI. Philosophy PhD candidate and housing activist, Rose Lenehan, shared her experience working as a housing activist and brought to light for us the crisis of the lack of affordable housing in the Boston area and beyond. Media Lab's Edmond Awad, the creator of the Moral Machine, talked about his own development as a young person creating an ethical framework. Assistant Dean Alison Hynd of the PKG Public Service Center helped the students explore their sense of purpose—in both their academic and personal lives—with an engaging and fascinating workshop that helped all of us focus in on what truly matters.

The students wrote papers, reflecting on events that they attended throughout the semester: a panel discussion, a challenging play or film, or a talk that explored an ethical dilemma. These reflections were a joy to read—observant and insightful. The final presentations were, as always, incredibly moving, sometimes funny and surprising, and always thoughtful.

We are grateful to these students. They are taking time out of their busy lives to consider the larger world and their place in it and learning to create an ethical framework for living here at MIT and beyond.

the power of PROTEST

In December, we worked with a team of MIT faculty, staff and graduate students to present a substantive program Evaluating the Relationship Between MIT and the Saudi Monarchy. We followed up with an extended campaign encouraging MIT community members to make their voices heard on this issue, as well as two informative programs in March: Saudi/US Complicity in the Humanitarian Crises in Yemen and Yemen: What’s Happening and What Can We Do? Also in March, we joined with the Faculty Newsletter and the Day of Action Committee to host The Power of Protest, which put contemporary activism in the context of the student protests at MIT fifty years ago.

the power of MAKING A PLAN

For this year’s J. Herbert Hollomon Memorial Symposium, we brought together journalist Suzanne Jacobs, ethicist Marion Hourdequin, and physicists David Keith and Shuchi Talati to discuss Time for a Technical Fix? The Science and Ethics of Solar Geoengineering, a program that challenged listeners to dream big both about interventions to reduce global warming and the social and governmental changes we need to do them well. The 180 high-school students who gathered in May for the 13th annual Youth Summit on Climate Change came away with energy, hope, and next steps for building the climate movement.
STEERING COMMITTEE & STAFF

STEERING COMMITTEE 2018-19
Samuel M. Allen, Materials Science and Engineering
Nazli Choucri, Political Science
Leo deCastro, '18
Sally Haslanger, Linguistics and Philosophy
Alison Hynd, Public Service Center
Henry Jacoby, Sloan School of Management
Jay Keyser, Emeritus, Linguistics and Philosophy
Jonathan King, Biology
William R. Leitch, '56
Ruth Perry, Literature
Robert Plotkin, '93
Balakrishnan Rajagopal, Urban Studies and Planning
Bishwapriya Sanyal, Urban Studies and Planning

STAFF
The Rev. Thea Keith-Lucas, Coordinator
Patricia-Maria Weinmann, Assistant Coordinator
Christina English, Communications Coordinator

RADIUS SUPPORTERS

Endowment Leadership
William R. Leitch
Albert O. Wilson

Visionaries
William R. Leitch
Kevin Powell
John Suhrbier

Leadership Circle
Samuel Allen
Alan Davidson
Henry Jacoby
Jeremy Johnson
Tracy Lively
Jeanne Paradise
Robert Plotkin

Sustainers
Aron Bernstein
Nazli Choucri
Diane Davis
Jane Gould
Jonathan King
Sandra Morgan
Ruth Perry
Bishwapriya Sanyal
Merritt Roe Smith
Brigette and Stephen Steadman
Kristen and Christopher Wendell