

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020



Exploring ethics at the center
of science and technology

Dear friends,

For many folks in the Boston area, this Spring's stay-at-home order brought back memories of that strange day in April 2013 when we sheltered in place to aid police in their search for the Marathon bombers. I had only been at MIT for a short time then, and it felt like a heavy task to be a chaplain to people I had just met in the wake of the violence in Boston and on our own campus.

For me, the bright spot in that confusing time was a call I got from our Steering Committee member Bill Leitch, asking if I wanted to join him at a benefit performance of the Brahms Requiem in Kresge Auditorium. For Bill – a dedicated alum from the class of '56, a lover of choral music, and the father of a police officer – the Requiem was a perfect opportunity to show solidarity with his MIT community. I was so grateful for his companionship, which helped me feel more at home.

Bill has a way of being there for us exactly when we need him. He contributes in countless ways, from sending us an article on inequality that inspired our theme for this year's Hollomon Symposium (now postponed to the Fall), to raising his hand via Zoom and asking a great question at our webinar on poverty and COVID-19 this May. When we checked in with Bill in the midst of the widespread protests in June, we were inspired by his desire to keep learning about racism and its effect on the communities he loves. In the 1990s, Bill supported Radius in crucial ways, leading the effort to fund our programs and creating the endowment which sustains us today. His annual gifts remain essential to the variety and quality of the programs we offer.

Bill has greatly enjoyed talking with the students who have participated in our Steering Committee over the years. He has been a good friend to our undergraduate ethics seminar, which we have offered in partnership with MIT Philosophy for over a decade. And this year, he made it possible for us to hire Shannon Schmidt, a teaching fellow with a background in prison education and restorative justice, to lead a new ethics seminar that brought together MIT students and incarcerated students in Boston's School of Re-entry.

It is a great honor for us that Bill has agreed to a new name for Radius's course offerings, which will now be known as the William R. and Betsy Leitch Ethics Seminars. Future students will receive a clear message that this MIT alum is watching out for them and championing their ethical growth. We know Bill will be as much of an inspiration to them as he has been to all of us.

With gratitude,



Massachusetts Institute of Technology

NEW TECHNOLOGIES

In September, we co-sponsored *Technology for Social Good*, a networking event organized by the PKG Public Service Center for students to learn about local organizations that **are using data science, machine learning, and artificial intelligence for the social good.**

In October, Radius hosted *Facial Recognition as Surveillance: The Need for Public Oversight*, a program organized by the Tech Workers Coalition. Panelists Kade Crockford (ACLU of Massachusetts), Gretchen Greene (Partnership on AI), Evan Greer (Deputy Director, Fight for the Future), and Kristen Sheets (Tech Workers' Coalition), led a substantive discussion of **monitoring technologies that pose unprecedented risks to personal autonomy, privacy and democracy.**

PUBLIC SPENDING

In September, Radius kicked off a series of programs centered on the **ethics of government spending.**

Dr. Jonathan King led a conversation about *Developing a Moral Budget* for Massachusetts, discussing the local impact of shifting the federal budget away from military expansion and nuclear weapons upgrades and **towards human and environmental needs.**



In December, we hosted Shailly Gupta Barnes, Policy Director for the National Poor People's Campaign, who presented *A Moral Budget for America* and participated in a discussion with MIT Urban Studies and Planning Professor Caesar McDowell.

Radius co-sponsored a January series on *The Politics of Defense Spending* with Subrata Ghoshroy (MIT Program in Science, Technology and Society) and Yarden Katz (Harvard Medical School).

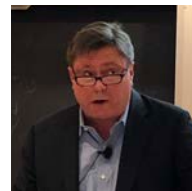
In May, we invited Ms. Barnes back for a webinar on *Poverty Amidst Pandemic: Ethical Responses to COVID-19*, where she and Charon Hribar and Savina Martin of the Poor People's Campaign examined **who benefits and who is left out of legislative responses to the pandemic.**



*Poverty Amidst Pandemic speakers (left to right)
Thea Keith-Lucas, Savina Martin and Shailly Gupta Barnes*

PROTEST MOVEMENTS

The protest movements of the past inspire us to keep standing up today.



In October, Dr. Jim Walsh (MIT Security Studies Program) offered a dramatic look back at the expansion of nuclear weaponry, **the effectiveness of anti-nuclear activism** at banning tests and cutting stockpiles, and the cultural amnesia that encourages us to forget about the lingering threat of the remaining nuclear arsenal.

On November 5th, Radius and the MIT Museum co-hosted the 50th anniversary screening of *November Actions*, Richard Leacock's 1969 documentary of **MIT's most significant campus protests.** This event included a post-screening panel discussion with faculty emeritus Michael Piore and alumni Karen Arenson and Steve Carhart, who all appear in the film. Very special thanks to Deborah Douglas, Director of Collections for the MIT Museum, for working alongside us to present this important event.



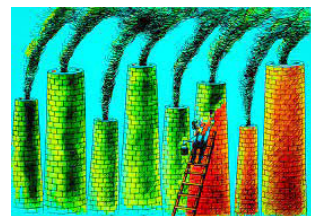
RESPONDING TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS

In November, we supported three programs in response to the climate crisis.



With MIT's Community Wellness and Sustainability offices, we hosted a screening and discussion of *The Way Out*, a documentary that explores the **role of mindfulness in climate activism.**

With the MIT Communications Forum, we co-sponsored *Can Journalists Save the Earth?*, a **conversation with science journalists** Kendra Pierre-Louis of the New York Times and Lisa Song of ProPublica.



Radius helped students in Earth, Atmospheric, and Planetary Sciences develop a **teach-in on climate denial and corporate greenwashing.** This program, which was in part a response to the proposed naming of 54-100 to Shell Auditorium, featured presentations by Patrick Brown (FossilFree MIT), Ortal Ullman (Campaign Coordinator in Climate and Energy, Union of Concerned Scientists), and Geoffrey Supran, an expert in the history of global warming politics and the **delay tactics of fossil fuel interests.**

ETHICS SEMINAR

What do we owe each other?

This February, Thea Keith-Lucas and Radius teaching fellow Shannon Schmidt embarked on a new adventure. Together with eight MIT students, we met at the Kendall Square T stop and took the train out to the **Boston Pre-Release Center** in Roslindale. This prison facility focuses on preparing people to leave prison and rejoin society. Along with work-release programs, the center houses the School of Re-entry, an **intensive educational program for incarcerated students who want to complete their high school equivalency tests and start earning college credits.**

The MIT students and eight School of Re-entry students examined the ethics of being a community in a course focused around the question: **What do we owe each other?** This new seminar was sponsored by The Educational Justice Initiative and made possible by a grant from the Institute Community and Equity Office. In the six meetings we were able to hold before MIT and the School of Re-entry suspended in-person classes in March, students established friendly, respectful relationships, discussed philosophical arguments about collective responsibility and the social contract, and wrote proposals for changes they would like to see in society.

The Boston Pre-Release Center was not able to provide a virtual option in response to COVID-19, so for the second half of the semester we offered the MIT students a **guided study about criminal justice reform.** Even in its shortened form, the course was a powerful opportunity to create a unique community and raise many intriguing questions that we hope to keep exploring in future seminars.

Commencement 2020



On May 29, 2020, Thea delivered the Invocation for MIT's virtual **Commencement** celebration, addressing the far-flung MIT community with words of strength, comfort, and encouragement:

"Throughout your time at MIT, you discovered your own resourcefulness. You took risks, learned from failures, and conquered many challenges. This pandemic has shown us your ability...to adapt to a new reality; to stay connected with your friends and your communities; to ask for help from all the people at home and here at MIT who gave their best to support you; and to hold fast to your own sense of purpose...Let us acknowledge what might have been, the hopes and plans that got upended by this global crisis. Let us celebrate what is, the learning and growth from your years at MIT that nothing can ever take from you. And let us look forward to what may be, as you transform your dreams into a better world for us all."

Although our semester didn't turn out the way any of us could have imagined, the students in our undergraduate ethics seminar, **Being, Doing, Thinking (Or Not!): Ethics in Your Life,** showed a remarkable level of engagement in both the classroom and our virtual meeting space. Our teaching partner from MIT Department of Philosophy and Linguistics was Dr. Quinn White, a post-doctoral fellow at MIT Philosophy and a gifted teacher. Not only did Dr. White teach a terrific "ethics boot camp" class at the beginning of the semester, he also shared his research with the class for lively discussions about two of his research areas: **love and relationships** and **the nature of lying.**

Starting off the semester, Ford Professor of Philosophy and Women's & Gender Studies **Sally Haslanger** led a spirited examination on **academic funding,** focusing on the complexities of gifts and grants. Our sincere gratitude to Professor Haslanger for sponsoring this seminar for over a decade; her assistance is invaluable. **David Howse** inspired us with his talk on **Navigating Race with Truth and Dignity.** Doctoral candidate **Mara Freilich** (Earth, Atmospheric, and Planetary Sciences) gave an imaginative and fascinating presentation on **corporate and governmental greenwashing.** Journalist and tech worker **Ben Tarnoff** spoke about the **ethical responsibility of tech engineers** and encouraged students to contemplate how they would like to use their education and gifts to make the world a better place. **Jim Margarian,** of the MIT's Gordon Engineering Leadership Program, presented compellingly about **ethics in the workplace** and how to spot "ethical trouble on the horizon" as a working engineer. Philosophy Professor **Tamar Schapiro** shared the essence of her upcoming book, *Feeling Like It: A Theory of Inclination and Will,* encouraging a wonderful exchange of ideas about **choice and human agency.**



As always, the students' written reflections and final presentations were thoughtful, insightful, and moving. These students are our hope for a brighter future as they reflect on their place in the world and commit to creating a more just and equitable world.



STEERING COMMITTEE & STAFF

STEERING COMMITTEE 2019-20

Samuel M. Allen, *Materials Science and Engineering*

Nazli Choucri, *Political Science*

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*

RADIUS SUPPORTERS

Endowment Leadership

William R. Leitch

Albert O. Wilson

Visionaries

William R. Leitch

Kevin Powell

Amy Rugel and Peter Norris

John Suhrbier

Leadership Circle

Samuel Allen

Alan Davidson

Henry Jacoby

Jeremy Johnson

Tracy Lively

Jeanne Paradise

Robert Plotkin

Sustainers

Karen and Greg Arenson

Nazli Choucri

Diane Davis

Subrata Ghoshroy

Jane Gould

Jonathan King

Sandra Morgan

Ruth Perry

Bishwapriya Sanyal

Merritt Roe Smith

Brigette and Stephen Steadman

Kristen and Christopher Wendell



IN MEMORIAM: ARON BERNSTEIN In December, we lost a dear friend: Professor Emeritus of Physics, Aron Bernstein. A brilliant physicist and teacher, Aron was a loyal supporter of T&C/Radius. He was a mentor and a constant source of inspiration. One of Aron's most beautiful traits was his ability to be completely open with people of all backgrounds. He readily and non-judgmentally accepted people for who they were.

Over the decades, I had the honor of working with Aron as he tirelessly advocated for a safer world. His unwavering commitment to reducing the threat of nuclear weapons was a constant reminder that activism is powerful and personal and can, indeed, change the world for the better. During our years of working together, I delighted in Aron's engagement with MIT students, as he guided them to become leaders in the non-proliferation movement and beyond. Aron may no longer be among us, but his brilliance, dedication, humor and passion live on. Thank you, Aron. ~ Patricia-Maria Weinmann

