

ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016



Exploring ethics at the center
of science and technology

Like many people, I've been captured by the magnetic pull of the Broadway hit *Hamilton*. I've had many – perhaps all – of the show's songs running through my head this year, including "I want to be in the room where it happens." That's exactly what I feel about our work at Radius. We aren't privy to any political deals, but we get to be in the room for something far more precious: real engagement in the ethical questions that shape our time.

When we invited the MIT community to the Central Square Theater's production of *Copenhagen* in November, we thought we might have a few unclaimed tickets. Instead, every person showed up and participated enthusiastically in the discussion we hosted after the performance.

After we sent out the invitation for neuroscientist Sat Bir Singh Khalsa's talk on his research into the long-term benefits of yoga, the RSVPs kept coming in. We had to request a larger room. When the doors opened, our Hack Your Mind crowd flowed into the room and filled it with a buzz of anticipation.

I have been told many times that today's students rarely engage in programs about nuclear weapons. This spring, Radius was instrumental in the planning of the Reducing the Dangers of Nuclear War conference, which gathered 250 people, many of them Boston-area students, for a substantive day-long program. Along with MIT professors Jonathan King and Max Tegmark and the other co-organizers, we came out of the weekend with a new sense of momentum.

I love to celebrate the strong attendance at our Radius programs. I am also grateful for the more personal successes, when our work makes a difference in one student's experience at MIT.

In February, several students from our undergraduate ethics seminar joined us to see the play *The Convert*. During our follow-up discussion over lunch with anthropology professor Erica James, a young woman tackled questions about colonialism, conversion, and representations of race that she had never considered before.

In March, we invited students to join us for the conversation over dinner after the Bustani Middle East Seminars. Both times, our student guests asked some of the most insightful questions of the night. A young filmmaker engaged the Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury in a lively conversation about the cultural complexity that may be lost when an Arabic story is translated into English. At the next dinner, our colleague from the Iranian Studies Group pushed the scholar Bernard Haykel to define more clearly Saudi Arabia's role in the Middle East.

It's been a year full of rich conversation about issues that matter. Thank you for all the ways you help create the room where it happens.

The Rev. Thea Keith-Lucas



Massachusetts Institute of Technology

RADIUS PROGRAMS 2015-2016

ENGAGING STUDENTS AND THE WIDER MIT COMMUNITY IN ETHICAL REFLECTION

Radius supports MIT's efforts towards a more just and compassionate community. Thea Keith-Lucas represented Radius this year on the Life Skills and Resiliency working group of the **MindHandHeart** mental health initiative.

In October and November, we teamed up with Alison Hynd and the Priscilla King Grey Public Service Center to offer three new modules of the engaging and interactive **Work on Purpose** curriculum for students seeking greater meaning and connection in their academic and professional lives.

In April, we took part in MIT's Sexual Assault Awareness Month by cosponsoring leading researcher Jim Hopper's talk on **The Neurobiology of Trauma**.

Our 2016 spring **undergraduate ethics seminar** hosted a wide range of guests who covered topics including MIT's role in gentrification and housing prices in Cambridge, climate change and activism, farming practices and capitalism, US military spending and its effect on research in academia, and human rights and conversion therapy. The students' final presentations made it clear that they had thought deeply about these issues, and others, and how to make changes in their own lives for the greater good.

Our thanks to Rachel McKinney, a post-doc in MIT Philosophy, for co-teaching this year's seminar with Patricia-Maria Weinmann. As always, a big thank you to Professor Sally Haslanger for her guidance and support!

Members of the MIT community flocked to our **Hack Your Mind** lunchtime programs, co-sponsored with Community Wellness at MIT, to learn about the science of mindfulness and to gain practical tools to reduce stress, break addictive patterns, and lead a more centered life. Topics included Dr. Jud Brewer's research on digital therapeutics to treat eating disorders and weight issues; the use of mindful technologies led by MIT alum and Radius Steering Committee member Robert Plotkin; and neuroscientist Sat Bir Singh Khalsa's talk on the practice, science and research of yoga.



Ethics Seminar participants gathered each week for conversation and reflection

A TRIBUTE TO THE REV. SCOTT I. PARADISE

The Rev. Scott I. Paradise, convener of the Technology and Culture Forum and the Episcopal Chaplain at MIT from 1978 through 1994, passed away on September 13, 2015. Scott's tireless commitment to issues of justice, environmental and economic sustainability, the poor, and the disenfranchised was inspirational to all who knew him. We are deeply saddened by Scott's passing, but we are also infused with a great sense of honor and a renewed commitment to continue the work of this extraordinary man.

Many thanks to the family and friends of Scott who sent gifts in his memory.



RESPONDING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Fossil Free MIT sit-in



This year MIT has grappled with its response to the pressing moral issue of climate change. Radius co-sponsored Fossil Free MIT's **Climate Countdown** of public events and a rally to raise awareness in late September, including Richard Levins' talk **One Foot In, One Foot Out: The Role of Scientists as Activists**. We also supported the 116-day sit-in to protest the administration's rejection of the recommendations of the Climate Change Conversation Committee.

In October, we hosted Michal Kravcik's talk on **Global Action for the Restoration of Water Cycles and Climate**. In February, along with the Center for International Studies, we co-sponsored a panel discussion of the **future implications of the Paris climate agreement**; and in April we joined MIT's chapter of Science for the People in a screening of **Merchants of Doubt**, a documentary film about the strategies of climate change denial.

In hosting the **10th annual Youth Summit on Climate Change**, we celebrated a decade-long partnership with the Boston Latin School's Youth Climate Action Network. This year's summit hosted over 225 teens from the metropolitan area and beyond. Our keynote speaker, scientist Caitlin Cleaver, Director of Science and Research at Hurricane Island, Maine, commented that witnessing the commitment and passion of these young people provided her with renewed hope and energy to continue her own work. The summit couldn't happen every year without the incredible leadership of Ms. Cate Arnold, teacher advisor for BLS YouthCAN, and her amazing students.

Looking forward, we are working with an interdisciplinary team of faculty, students, and staff to plan a series of events in the Fall on the **ethics of climate change**.

NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR GLOBAL HEALTH

Radius has found a new partner in the recently formed Global Health and Medical Humanities Initiative (GHMHI) at MIT. In November, we co-sponsored **Dorothy Roberts' incisive talk about the racist myths that undermine the health care of African Americans**. This Spring, MIT anthropology professor and GHMHI director Erica James led a discussion of colonialism and religion following our **Radius Goes to the Theater** evening at the Central Square Theater's production of **The Convert**.

BUSTANI MIDDLE EAST SEMINAR

We are proud to support the **Emile Bustani Middle East Seminar**, which fosters respectful and well-informed discussion of the culture, history, and politics of the Middle East. This year's topics included the place of Islam in Tunisia's constitution; sectarianism and social welfare in Lebanon; Lebanon's history of violence as seen through the work of novelist Elias Khoury; and the role of Saudi Arabia in Islamic militancy.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS MATTER

MIT GLOBAL ZERO

On June 3, Mareena Robinson, president of MIT Global Zero, graduated with her doctorate in nuclear science and engineering. We wish Mareena all the best and extend our deep thanks for her leadership. We also congratulate and thank Leyatt Betre '16 who worked alongside Mareena during the 2015-2016 semester. Included among our events was a panel discussion on the **Iran Nuclear Deal**, our attendance at Central Square Theater's production of **Copenhagen**, and our participation in the **nuclear conference in April**. We are thrilled to announce that Luisa Kenausis, a senior in Nuclear Science and Engineering, has taken over the reins of MITGZ. We look forward to working with Luisa in educating and encouraging discussion about nuclear issues with the MIT community and beyond.



Mareena Robinson introduces the Iran Nuclear Agreement Panel



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STEERING COMMITTEE 2015-2016

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Nazli Choucri, *Political Science*

Leo deCastro, '18

James Fay, Emeritus, *Mechanical Engineering*

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*

Mareena Robinson, *G*

Bishwapriya Sanyal, *Urban Studies and Planning*

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Richard Loring

Participants view an exhibit at the 10th Annual Youth Summit on Climate Change



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