

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021



Exploring ethics at the center  
of science and technology

Dear friends,

Who got you through this year? Personally, I know I have relied in new ways on my family, and on a few close friends—the people for whom I would gladly put on a mask and brave the cold for an outdoor visit in the dead of winter.

You can read the story of this year in our program themes: pandemic and poverty, a renewed awareness of racism, political anxiety at home and abroad. Ordinary days in 2020-21 could feel riskier than any adventure sport.

When I explore a cave or go white-water rafting, I want to go with an experienced guide. I want to be able to look at them and know that if the lights go out, they'll get me back above ground, or if the boat flips over, they'll pull me out of the water. In the same way, we need good guides to help us navigate the ethical challenges we face. At Radius, we are fortunate to be able to turn to such wise and grounded people to lead our programs: old friends and new colleagues who inspire us to live mindfully and stay engaged in the struggle for justice.

This year's programs particularly reflect my colleague Patricia-Maria Weinmann's talent for making connections and nurturing partnerships. I am deeply grateful to Trish for steering Radius through this year while I learned a new role as MIT's Interim Chaplain to the Institute.

There wasn't much room this year for the mildly interesting. If we were going to gather around our screens for a program, it had to matter. It had to offer some skill that would help us get through this time or perspective that would make sense of our increasingly complex world. We offered fewer one-time events, and more ongoing series and workshops that could create deeper connections. We were pleasantly surprised by the attendance; knowing the extraordinary demands on people's attention, it was an honor to greet every person who showed up.

Who got us through this year? You did. Even across the distance, we always felt your friendship and your support. As MIT and our communities begin to open up again, we hope to bring everything we learned into a new year. May we keep our focus on what really matters, and never forget to treasure our connections.

With gratitude,



Massachusetts Institute of Technology

## How We Show Up: Challenging Racism

In July and October 2020, we offered two editions of this five-week workshop series for white people who are committed to learning about racism, systems of oppression and our role in addressing injustice. These interactive sessions were hosted by two MIT alum, **Kate Mytty** and **Halley Reeves**, both Masters in City Planning, '15 from the MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning.



## #BlackInTheIvory: Academia's Role in Institutional Racism

In December, we co-sponsored the MIT Communications Forum's program on the systemic bias, micro-aggressions, and isolation experienced by Black scientists and researchers. This conversation featured **Dr. Shardé Davis** (University of Connecticut), **Dr. Mareena Robinson Snowden** (Johns Hopkins University), **Dr. James Mickens** (Harvard University), and moderator **Tanya Ballard Brown** (National Public Radio).



## Enough is Enough: Wealth and Poverty in a Pandemic

In May, **Shailly Gupta Barnes** (above; Kairos Center and Poor People's Campaign) and **Savina Martin** (Massachusetts Poor People Campaign) returned to Radius to discuss the ways that wealth inequality and income disparity ballooned to even higher levels during the pandemic, increasing the rates of poverty, unemployment, and homelessness.

## Bridging Divides Around US Politics: Creating Change in How We Engage with Each Other

We responded to tensions around the November elections by sponsoring this hands-on opportunity with **The Commons** to learn the skills for having constructive conversations, especially on social media. Special thanks to **Kate Mytty** and **Danny Becker** (MIT's PKG Public Service Center) who served as workshop leaders.

## Wait...What? How Much? US Military Spending and National Priorities

In May, **Dr. Heidi Peltier** (below; Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future) joined us to discuss national priorities and US military spending and offered possible solutions to unwind the complicated web of the military-industrial complex and create a more sustainable and equitable society.



## Global Peace and Insecurity

In this ambitious and informative weekly series that ran from late September to early December, **Subrata Ghoshroy** (Research Affiliate, MIT's Program in Science, Technology and Society) partnered with Radius to explore current threats to peace around the world in conversation with international experts that included issues of arms control, defense spending, nuclear power, biosafety, and climate change. This substantive series was co-sponsored with MIT's Program in Science, Technology and Society.



# ETHICS SEMINAR

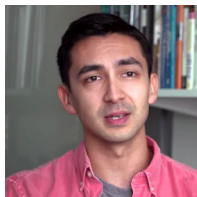
## Reducing the Threat of Nuclear War



We partnered with Mass Peace Action to host two important conferences about nuclear disarmament: a national gathering in January with a theme of “Invest in Minds Not Missiles” with a final keynote by Rev. Dr. William Barber (*left*). In May, Radius co-hosted a virtual conference focused on education and advocacy for a No First Use policy that drew more than 300 participants.

## Deep Time, the Earth and Climate Activism

In October, science writers **Maygen Keller** and **Emily Hoff** took us on a guided tour of the deep history of some of the most beautiful places in America. They were joined by **Geoffrey Supran** (*right*; MIT alum, activist, and Research Associate in the Department of the History of Science at Harvard University) and discussed how understanding the vast time scale of geologic processes can inspire us into activism on behalf of our natural world.



## Hope in the Dark



Hope is a powerful force when used well. Author Rebecca Solnit describes it as “an ax you break down doors with in an emergency.” In November, **Professor Sally Haslanger** (MIT Linguistics and Philosophy) hosted (and participated in) a conversation with guests Professors **Myisha Cherry** (*top*; University of California, Riverside) and **Jesse Prinz** (*bottom*; The City University of New York) about staying motivated in the midst of a long struggle for justice.

## Hack Your Mind

In our ongoing series on the science and practice of mindfulness, we offered a workshop with MIT alum **Robert Plotkin** (Technology for Mindfulness) on setting boundaries while working at home; and a reflection from **William Edelglass** (Barre Center for Buddhist Studies and Emerson College) on whether practicing mindfulness makes us more ethical.

## The William R. and Betsy P. Leitch Ethics Seminar

Navigating racism, the US justice system, economic inequality and the widening wealth gap, identifying green washing tactics, and exploring the nature of forgiveness. These are but a few of the topics that our intrepid group of nine undergrads tackled in 24.191: Being, Thinking, Doing (Or Not!): Ethics in Your Life. This year, our teaching partner was **Dr. Nathaniel Baron-Schmitt** a post-doctoral researcher from MIT Department of Philosophy and Linguistics. Nathaniel is an enthusiastic teacher and gifted philosopher. His warm and empathetic co-leadership with Trish Weinmann was greatly appreciated, especially through the challenges of another remote semester.

Guest speaker **David Howse** (*right*) inspired us, as always, with his talk on Navigating Race with Truth and Dignity. **Professor Judith Lichtenberg** of Georgetown University discussed the US justice system and helped us explore the striking discrepancies in incarceration rates based on race.



**Daniel Muñoz** (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) sparked a wonderful conversation on the ethics of wearing a mask during the pandemic. **Professor Myisha Cherry** (University of California, Riverside) also returned this year to lead a spirited discussion on forgiveness

and how race shapes our attitudes towards asking for forgiveness or being forgiven. **Mara Freilich** (*left*), a doctoral candidate in EAPS, also returned this year with her fascinating presentation on corporate and governmental green washing.

Each week, the students inspired us with their engagement, resilience, and willing spirits. They delved into complex topics with humor and nuance.

The students' written reflections and final presentations were thoughtful, insightful and moving. These students are a beacon of light in imagining a brighter future, as they reflect on their place in the world and find ways to create a more just and equitable society.

Again, our sincere gratitude to Professor Sally Haslanger for her loyal commitment to this seminar.



## 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*  
Keili Tucker, '23

### 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  
John Suhrbier  
Campbell Searle Trust

### Leadership Circle

Samuel Allen  
Alan Davidson  
Henry Jacoby  
Jeremy Johnson  
Tracy Lively  
Jeanne Paradise  
Robert Plotkin  
Martin Sirbu, Jr.

### Sustainers

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

