

ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019



Exploring ethics at the center
of science and technology

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



Massachusetts Institute of 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.

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 HackYour Mind series.

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**.

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."



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 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 birth of this mobilization



and how we can help it grow. In October, journalist Ben Tarnoff spoke on **The Internet We Want: How Do We Turn the "Techlash" into a Political Movement?** In December, Kristen Sheets of the TWC and Vicki Tardiff of Google presented a case study in activism, **#MeToo and Worker Power: Building Solidarity at Google and Beyond**. In March, we held a workshop for tech workers on **Labor Law for the Rank and File**. The **MIT-Harvard Conference on the Uyghur Human Rights Crisis**, a student-organized program in April led by undergraduate Zulkayda Mamat, also called on tech developers to consider how repressive governments could misuse their inventions.

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.



ETHICS SEMINAR

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.



Students enjoy a photo booth at the 13th Annual Youth Summit on Climate and Sustainability

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.



Spring 2019 Ethics Seminar participants

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.





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

