

Welcome to Academizines!

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As we were wrapping up production of this special issue, a group of Texas anti-ICE activists were convicted of charges including providing support for terrorism, attempted murder of a police officer, and rioting. Prosecutors alleged the defendants were part of “an antifa cell,” the first time anti-fascist protestors were charged under U.S. anti-terrorism statutes. One member of the group was charged with “corruptly concealing a document or record” for the possession and transport of leftwing and anti-fascist zines and pamphlets. It should go without saying that we don’t condone shooting a police officer. But setting aside the absurdity of designating antifa a terrorist organization, which as Sam Levine rightly notes in *The Guardian*, is “not an organization but instead used to describe a constellation of leftwing beliefs,” we absolutely endorse the right to peaceably assemble to protest injustice and state violence, and support the clear 1st Amendment right to write, print, and distribute zines with any content.

It’s a little bit stunning, in this age of convulsive media shifts and the emergence of agentic AI, LLMs, and TikTok, to find zines front and center in a criminal case that will no doubt figure as a watershed in 1st Amendment and anti-terrorism law as it wends its way through appeals. It certainly wasn’t on our bingo card as we conceived of this special issue. But this incident reveals a truth that underlies the urgency of the work we and the international contributors are doing here: when oppressive regimes threaten the self-representation of socially and politically marginalized and stigmatized communities, zines emerge as a powerful implement of resistance and self-expression.

For this special issue, we invited proposals from contributors across the disciplines to share their scholarly and creative work in zine form. While academics may not seem to be a marginalized or stigmatized group, and we readily acknowledge the many ways in which we do dwell in privilege, there are a number of factors that threaten freedom of expression and scholarly independence both in the US and globally. Populist authoritarian movements around the world exercise control by encouraging their followers to be contemptuous of expertise and evidence, and foster anti-intellectualism as a means of undermining critique and resistance. This, along with the active campaign against diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in higher education, has created a political and cultural environment hostile to academics.

Economic forces are also at work to limit the impact of academic freedom. Corporate interests in academic publishing have a stranglehold on the pipeline to publication, supported by myths of prestige and meritocracy, and sustained by the free labor of scholars for authorship, peer review, and editorial work. And more insidiously, generative

AI is unreflectively supported by university administrators eager to cash in on the hype, and is trained by extracting the published work of academics, without their consent. These corporate interests are ultimately inimical to academic freedom and hostile to critical inquiry.

As we describe in the *Academizines!* Manifesto that opens this special issue, zines have the potential to create wider publics for academic scholarship. We follow Jentery Sayers, Natalie Loveless, Anastasia Salter, and Emilie Johnson in encouraging acts of research-creation and critical making. And we optimistically suggest that, by sharing our work outside the walled garden of Big Academic Publishing, we can also overcome some of the hostility for higher learning and scholarship – making our work more accessible can make it less threatening.

The zines assembled here range from meta-zines that reflect on the process and materiality of zines, to critical auto-ethnography in the form of personal or perzines, to straightforward scholarly essays in zine form. There are several zines created by librarians to highlight their services and collections, as well as zines that explore the nature of zine librarianship and the particular care such work requires. There are zines here that are purely visual, and zines that are carefully designed in software, and zines that are hand written and hand drawn. The material forms of the zines are as diverse as their creators and their subject matter, taking the form of single-sheet minizines and half-letter booklets, and there's even an accordion book. To be as inclusive as possible, we encouraged our contributors to make a good faith best effort at making the digital copies of their zines accessible, recognizing that there are limits to digital accessibility for both manuscript and purely visual forms. To level the field among contributors, we deliberately did not include credentials or institutional affiliations. If a work is vital and engaging, it shouldn't matter if it was created by an undergraduate, a professor, or a civilian. The work is the work.

The development of this issue has been slower than we had hoped. The world is on fire. We've experienced a range of personal traumas and losses while this work has been in gestation, and our brains and bodies have responded to that stress in various ways. While the behind the scenes work of metadata, document compression, and copy editing went on, a vibrant community formed among the creators on a Discord server and the conversations there have sustained us as we have toiled in the background. We're grateful to our contributors for their kind forbearance. We think what follows in this issue is worth the wait.

For us, this issue is a celebration of our combined over half a century of engagement with zines as a creative form. It is a convergence of our creative, scholarly, and personal lives. We hope both our contributors and our readers find something here that challenges them, uplifts them, and from which they can learn and grow as scholars and creatives. So please, read on, enjoy, and then go make your own *Academizines!*

References

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