

N&C EDITORIAL – NATURE & CULTURES NUMBER 4, FALL 2020

Since we wrapped up our Spring issue, we were preparing for the presidential elections in Belarus expecting a crisis that we knew as inevitable. Would the Belarussians succeed in ousting their dictator? Would this lead to an international conflict as bad as when the Ukrainians took to the streets? N&C - Nature & Cultures answers this in this Summer-Fall 2020 issue in "Understanding the Situation in Belarus". Other events caught up with us. The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan prompted us to ask the brilliant young scholar and writer David Vauclair to contribute his surgically precise "Briefing: War in Nagorno-Karabakh". But meanwhile, other dramatic events began to unfold, this time in the United States. Nothing of the sort has been seen in North American cities since the 1960s. We spent much time in soul searching, not only here at Nature & Cultures, but at The American University of Paris, where young people demanded that we address the grievances of millions of Black people. But how does a campus publication such as ours decently address something as big and tragic as the chronic suffering from systemic racism, and its inherent acts of discrimination, violence and even murder? How do you quickly summarize thousands of thoughts on something so enormous? How to say something significant and compassionate without sounding naïve after thousands of highly intelligent analytical pieces and editorials have appeared in hundreds of leading news outlets, in hundreds of lesser known publications and on thousands of pages of the social networks? How to present our

feature "Black Voices"? How to stay humble without remaining silent?

And then it struck us. While diving into research during this summer to see how to produce the most scholarly, readable, yet concise feature for our Nature & Cultures No. 4 Fall 2020 issue, we discovered a treasure. We discovered the thousands of transcribed words of elderly people in their 80s and 90s -- former slaves interviewed in the mid 1930s many of whom (almost exclusively those visited in Alabama by the Roosevelt administration) were photographed. And then we revisited the life and writings of Frederick Douglass. As we continued to descend deeper and deeper into this treasure of history, we realized how powerful are these texts and (especially when you read Douglass), and how intensely relevant they are for our times. We were so fascinated that we began to forget our major assignment: write an article to tell how Black lives matter to Nature & Culture. And then it dawned on us: what more powerful statement about Black lives than to let THESE Black voices speak for themselves. So for our feature "Black Voices" we have selected, among thousands of pages, twelve short excerpts of interviews chosen for the photographic portraits that accompany them and for the power, the dignity, the resilience and the historic significance of the words recorded. These excerpts are interspersed among the paragraphs of the full text of "Oration delivered in Corinthian Hall, on the 5th of July" by Frederick Douglass.

"Profile: Wildlife Photographer Michel Rawicki" will bring joyful inspiration and color to this issue. We are grateful to Michel, one of Europe's leading travel and wildlife photographers in this field for being a subscriber and contributor to our N&C - Nature and Cultures Facebook group, for accepting to share his amazing photographs and be grilled by our N&C interviewer. It is a true honor.

"Disconnecting from Bangkok to reconnect with Nature: the Adventure of Happy Grocers, an Organic and Youth-led Food Startup" by by Sofia Cavalleri and Moh Suthasiny is the story about the birth of a youth-led food start-up based in Bangkok -- a small but inspiring initiative that appeared to us as a brilliant example of what could be done concretely and very practically to improve agricultural methods, food distribution and food consumption in a way that could improve both the lives of owners of independent family farms and the natural environment around those farms.

And do not forget to visit our permanent features: our ongoing project **The Comparative Government Project** , a country-by-country alphabetically listed collection of tables succinctly describing in detail the government systems of states from different continents, and our **The N&C - Nature& Cultures e-library**.