THE POLITICS OF CARE

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over the past six months, the COVID-19 pandemic has upended our individual and social lives. As we write, it has killed at least 160,000 Americans and more than 700,000 people globally. Apocalyptic in the original meaning of the term—a disclosure or revelation—the pandemic has exposed the political and economic arrangements that enabled its terrible human devastation.

Working from home, feeling the sense of urgency, and hoping to respond constructively to the crisis, we nearly tripled our normal volume of Boston Review online publishing. Essays came from a mix of longtime contributors and new voices—thinkers who could speak directly to the moment, and who share our commitment to the power of collective reasoning and imagination to create a more just world. We called the series Thinking in a Pandemic.

And then we watched—with horror and indignation—the killing of George Floyd. So our efforts to provide a forum for people to speak to the pandemic—including the racial disparities in its
impact—converged with our longstanding commitment to providing a forum for hard thinking about racial justice.

This volume includes some of the best of those separate but related efforts: clear-eyed looks at the pandemic and racism, along with ideas about the way toward a new kind of politics—what Gregg Gonsalves and Amy Kapczynski call “a politics of care”—that centers people’s basic needs and connections to fellow citizens, the global community, and the natural world. The contributions draw on their authors’ varied backgrounds—public health to philosophy, history to economics, literature to activism—but together they point to a future in which, as Simon Waxman writes, “no one is disposable.”

—*August 2020*
From the COVID-19 pandemic to uprisings over police brutality, we are living in the greatest social crisis of a generation. But the roots of these latest emergencies stretch back decades. At their core is a politics of death: a brutal neoliberal ideology that combines structural racism with a relentless assault on social welfare. Its results are the failing economic and public health systems we confront today—those that benefit the few and put the most vulnerable in harm’s way.

Contributors to this anthology insist there is only one way forward: a new kind of politics—a politics of care—that centers people’s basic needs and connections to fellow citizens, the global community, and the natural world. Imagining a world that promotes the health and well-being of all, they draw inspiration from public health, philosophy, economics, literature, and the examples of activists, from ACT UP to Black Power. Together they point to a future in which no one is disposable.

*Boston Review* is an independent, nonprofit public space for robust discussion of ideas and culture. Animated by hope and committed to equality, we believe in the power of collective reasoning and imagination to create a more just world. We invite you to join the conversation. Visit bostonreview.net.