

## Editor's Introduction

This number of *The Japanese Journal of American Studies* concentrates on some of the critical issues of modern America. Its main feature is the special paper contributed by Professor Alice Kessler-Harris, "Gendered Interventions: Exploring the Historical Roots of U.S. Social Policy." This article is based on the presentation "Breaking Ground: Gender in the Construction of National Identity," which Professor Kessler-Harris gave, as the past president of the American Studies Association, at the 1993 Annual Conference of the Japanese Association for American Studies in Kyoto. This paper therefore also symbolizes the achievements of the exchange program between the Japanese and American associations, which has for the last three years been made possible by the generous support of the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission.

Another of the topics chosen for the Kyoto conference was "The Formation and Transformation of the American Middle Class." The focus of the discussion on this topic was the recent political prominence of the middle class. The discussion also attempted to find ways to break through the traditional interpretation of America as a homogeneously middle-class society, as Professor Ryo Yokoyama, the chair of the session, pointed out. Part of this conference session on the American middle class is given here in this issue in revised form.

The Japanese Association for American Studies is planning to publish the English-language *Japanese Journal for American Studies* annually from this issue. The topic for the next issue will be "Thomas

Jefferson and His Age.” The editorial committee will expand to deal with the increasing amount of editorial work by inviting new editors from the Kansai, or western region of Japan, to support the present editors, who are mainly based in the Kanto, or eastern region.

Since the last issue, a large portion of this journal has been linked with some of the major discussions held at the annual convention of the Association. The journal’s main topic has been selected from the convention’s four regular sessions. For the coming issues, not only will papers read at the conference be published in a revised form, but general contributions will be invited from all members of the Association.

Shinichi Shigihara  
Editor