

Introduction to Volume 4

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Woody Guthrie scholarship is often unpredictable. Some years it flows, and some years it ebbs. We have been fortunate at the *Woody Guthrie Annual* to have received a steady enough stream of high-quality contributions to have made it to this, our fourth issue in as many years. Our thanks go out to all of the scholars who have provided us with the fruits of their efforts—always a labor of love—as well as to those funding bodies and institutions that have enabled the Guthrie scholarship to continue.

Of course, the scholarship can be unpredictable in other ways, too. Primarily, this has to do with the great expansiveness of Woody Guthrie's interests and output—a vastness made truly apparent with the opening of the Woody Guthrie Archives, which (in its Tulsa incarnation) will enjoy its sixth anniversary in 2019. The archival holdings—the treasures of the archive—have enabled scholars to uncover, analyze, interrogate, and debate aspects of Guthrie's life and work that could not have been imagined even a decade ago. Some of these aspects, it turns out, can be quite surprising in their relevance to today's world of affairs. Guthrie's ode, "Deportees," for instance, was written in 1948; but it speaks urgently to the contemporary struggles over immigration, racial justice, and the reaffirmation of humanity. "All You Fascists Bound to Lose" remains a vital rallying cry, even today.

Many will recall the flurry of interest during the presidential election of 2016, when Guthrie's excoriation of his landlord Fred Trump's racist housing practices led to heightened scrutiny of the Republican candidate's own part in his father's legacy. ("My legacy is my father's legacy," as the candidate declared more than once.) Indeed, that legacy attracted renewed scrutiny in November 2018, when *The New Yorker's* Amanda Petrusich offered "A Story about Fred Trump and Woody Guthrie for the Midterm Elections." Following her visit to the Woody Guthrie Center in Tulsa, Petrusich wrote:

In his best songs, Guthrie is equally seized by feelings of outrage and hope. Listening to his records is still my favorite way to remember that those feelings can productively and even beneficially co-exist—that the former doesn't necessarily have to eradicate the latter. Guthrie clung to an optimistic belief in the generosity and decency of all human beings. In the end, he believed, we would surely do right by one another.

At the Woody Guthrie Center, Petrusich recalled, she had encountered the manuscript lyrics of "All You Fascists Bound to Lose" and listened to Guthrie's own delivery of the song. "Guthrie sounds giddy singing it—as if he were certain that the benevolence of humankind would inevitably prevail.

Gazing at his lyrics, in Tulsa, the morning before Election Day, I felt a brief and welcome punch of faith.”¹

The contributors to this volume of the *Woody Guthrie Annual* manage variously to capture and relate Guthrie’s “feelings of outrage and hope,” as well as his “optimistic belief in the generosity and decency of all human beings.” This is all part of their recovery work; and may that work long continue.

¹ Amanda Petrusich, “A Story About Fred Trump and Woody Guthrie for the Midterm Elections,” *The New Yorker*, November 6, 2018: <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/a-story-about-fred-trump-and-woody-guthrie-for-the-midterm-elections>.