

SPECIAL ISSUE OF NEW POLITICAL SCIENCE: ART AFTER EMPIRE: CREATING THE
POLITICAL ECONOMY OF A NEW DEMOCRACY (DECEMBER 2010)

Along with the oath, parade, and speeches, the historic inauguration of Barack Obama as the first African American president of the United States featured music, poetry, and prayer. These alternative and aesthetic modes of public discourse prefigured a democratic future – the peace with justice -- that could hasten the demise of American Empire and move us toward a post-imperial world order. Yet one month later, Congress and the President struggled over the appropriate amount of spending on arts and culture, if any, to include in the economic stimulus package. The rationale for funding emphasized job creation and stimulative consumer spending on arts and culture. The rationale against funding depicted the arts as elitist, frivolous, or both.

This special issue of *New Political Science* explores the power of the arts and culture to bring forth the political economy of a new democracy. The articles in the issue consider the reality and promise of the arts and culture as the partial basis for a new political economy; the political activism to move us there; and, the new democracy both arguably prefigure. Questions addressed by the contributors include: In what concrete ways are contemporary art forms used to increase the capacities of individuals and groups to act effectively in the world? In particular, how do historically marginalized groups employ aesthetics to advance their political claims and exemplify democratic practices? What realistic basis exists today for using the arts and culture for economic stimulus and democratic development? Do the arts and culture generate economic expansion or are they always parasitic on value created elsewhere? What is the political and economic value of art? How might the arts and culture support the economics and politics of a future democracy?