We are glad to liven up your quarantine by bringing you a review of the third volume of the academic journal USAbroad. This is an Italian, peer-reviewed journal published annually in English by an editorial board of early-career scholar focused on the study of US history and politics.

USAbroad devotes its third volume to the analysis of the role of conflict throughout American history, under the title A Nation Divided: Conflict in US History and Politics. The four essays that make up this issue contradict the myth of America as a land free from wars and internal clashes that prevailed on the early years of the nation. As commented at the beginning of the issue, this narrative was deeply rooted into the “belief that the struggle between capital and labour would be avoided thanks to individualism, democracy and the frontier, thus, the proclaimed rejection of conflict was a pillar of American nation-building and its exceptionalism.” Yet, as the 19th century went on, the Americans would discover that conflict was not a “tragic accident, but rather a protagonist in American history.” The essays contained within this volume are meant to encourage us, the readers, to rethink the notion of conflict and its multifaceted nature in the course of American history. To do so, they cover different periods in US historiography, from Antebellum America to the Occupy Movement of 2011.

The first of these essays, Addressing Racial Conflict in Antebellum America, deals with the way racial tensions related to the Indian Question were conceived, or removed, by women writers during the first half of the 19th century. To do so, the author Serena Mocci chose the work of two of the main American thinkers of the time, Lydia Maria Child’s The First Settlers of New-England: or, Conquest of the Pequods, Narragansets and Pokanokets (1829) and Margaret Fuller’s Summer on the Lakes (1844). This essay manages to show the limited view these two authors had on the Indian Question from the humanitarian perspective, despite their importance within the abolitionists and feminist movements of the time.
Moving on to the 20th century, Reinhold Niebuhr and the Nuclear Dilemma: Conceptualising the Cold War brings us into the sphere of debates on foreign policy. This second essay by Hamish Stirling manages to expand on the influence of American theologian and public commentator Reinhold Niebuhr on the American society of the Cold War. In this sense, Niebuhr elaborated a specific ethic vision of the Cold War by combining anti-communism, national interest and a concern for the future of humanity as a whole. Continuing with the 20th century, Radical Motown, Radical Heritage by Oliver Maheo shows the historical relevance of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers on Detroit’s industry. The essay achieves to offer a solid perspective on the history of Detroit’s 1967 riots, combined with the tensions between white workers and Afro-American militants.

The last of these essays deals with the occupation of Zuccotti Park in the autumn of 2011. The Occupy Wall Street Movement in the American Radical Tradition by Ronald Mendel aims to compare the OWS movement with earlier protests movements, while it emphasises features inherited from the feminists and anti-nuke movements of the mid-20th century. Also, it comments on the main goal of the movement: the shift from participatory democracy to direct democracy.

The issue is closed by the column Bringing the History Back In reconstructing the contemporary history of the Family and Nation in America. This column by Maurizio Vaudagna focuses on the shifts that the concept of family has suffered from the mid-20th century. Its author addresses the changes not only in the connections between private and public spheres, but also in family and nation, and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion of the national narration that put the archetypical white, nuclear family at its core.

The third volume of USAbrAndy proves to be the perfect entertainment that everyone interested on American history needs to make quarantine more bearable. Covering different topics from the 19th century up to the 21st, this issue will change your perspective on conflicts and clashes, while offering a better insight on their influence in American history.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCE
