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## Introduction

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## Introduction

Shirley R. Steinberg

It's been several years since *Taboo* has published a special issue. It is with pleasure that we bring you this issue on the character, the movie, and the messages of *Borat*. *The Ali G Show* was always a favorite of mine, and I was unhappy when I missed *Borat* at the theatre. A friend showed me how to stream movies, and one evening after class I sat at my desk and watched the show. I knew the film would extend the *Borat* character from *Ali G*, to that point I had always found the Kurdistan journalist mildly amusing. The film had rave reviews and I expected a funny movie—it took about fifteen minutes for me to clue in to the fact that *Borat* was not just another comedy. I had to start the film over a couple of times just to make sure I was correct in assuming that *this film was something*. My read of the film took me far from the hilarious romp promised by critics and audiences. This *something* smacked of classism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and was insidious in its production.

The decontextualized clips played on TV had not revealed the film in any way which would have prepared me for my reaction to *Borat*. After my desk film session that evening I knew I had to talk to everyone I knew who had seen it and query the film, and its auteur. We all had differing opinions, but were agreed in the notion that indeed, Sasha Cohen did nothing by chance, mistake, or accident. Cohen's *Borat* had multiple agendas. After placing a call for articles, reviewers for *Taboo* selected the following essays. Each author leaves a distinct narrative and research imprint and I invite you to enjoy this issue, and possibly disagree...I know you won't be bored.