

1970s

Barbara and Jim Moroney, both American Studies majors, classes of '79 and '78 respectively, launched the 2016 inaugural vintage of their Sixmilebridge Vineyards winery in October 2019. Sixmilebridge is located on the west side of Paso Robles, in the Adelaida Viticultural Area. The tasting room will open in April of 2020. (Go to sixmilebridge.com for more.)

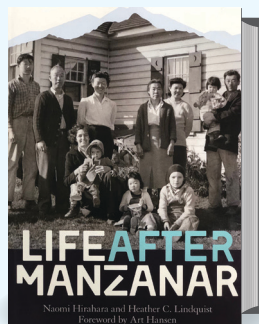
1980s

Living in Denver, Colorado, **Sarah Rockwell '80** is a lawyer at Kaplan Kirsch & Rockwell, a firm that she co-founded 16 years ago. With 31 lawyers, and offices in Denver, New York, DC, and Boston, the firm works on a variety of large projects, including transit and rail, airports, redevelopment projects, and public-private partnerships. They also have a significant environmental practice. Sarah's area of focus is in land use and real estate, representing both public and private entities primarily on urban redevelopment projects. She is also chair of one of the boards of the Downtown Denver Partnership (downtown's business organization), which is involved in everything from placemaking, to event planning, to addressing issues of affordable housing and homelessness. An ardent follower of Stanford football, Sarah enjoyed returning to campus for daughter Caroline's graduation from Stanford in 2018.

Having raised three (now grown) children, **Lori Eschelmann Hunter '81** is currently an edible garden designer for clients who are mostly based on the San Francisco Peninsula. Her most time-consuming professional endeavor of the past year, though, has been purchasing, with three other partners, Rossotti's Alpine Inn in Portola Valley, and renovating the tavern and beer garden—"an incredibly positive and rewarding experience."

Henry T. Windsor '81 works at The Brinton Museum in Big Horn, Wyoming. Recently named the #2 Western Art Museum in the US by *True West* magazine, the museum features a collection of Plains Indian Art that is one of the finest in the country, along with other Western Art appropriate to the history of northern Wyoming and the Bighorn Mountains. In December 2019, the museum hosted the premiere of the WyomingPBS documentary "State of Equality," which celebrated 150 years of women's suffrage in Wyoming. Henry is pleased to report that he has been "making good use of my American Studies education" these past four years in what he calls his "retirement" job working as the museum's Marketing Director.

Heather Lindquist '82 co-authored *Life After Manzanar* (Heyday 2017) with fellow Stanford graduate (and award-winning mystery writer) Naomi Hirahara,



with whom she had worked on exhibits at Manzanar National Historic Site from 2001-2004. The book focuses on what happened to people after they left Manzanar and had to start their lives all over again after World War II. Heather's latest project is writing the exhibit script for a new visitor center at the Eleanor and Edsel Ford House in Michigan. She writes, "I've had a fascinating career thanks to taking Professor Joe Corn's Am. Stud. class on material culture (1981-82) and discovering the world of exhibit development."

Ethan Orlinsky '86 graduated from NYU School of Law in 1989. After a nearly three-year stint at the Simpson Thacher & Bartlett law firm, working in its New York and London offices, he moved on to Major League Baseball, where he has been ever since, serving in a variety of capacities over his tenure. He started out as Associate Counsel at Major League Baseball Properties, becoming its Director of Legal Affairs and then its Senior Vice President and General Counsel. Later he became Senior Vice President of Legal, Business and Club Affairs of Major League Baseball, and most recently was promoted to Special Counsel to the Commissioner. He lives in New York City with his wife Dana and their two daughters Abigail (11th grade) and Alexandra (9th grade).

Currently, **Aimee Berzins Schmitt '89** is involved in sales and marketing for a large swimwear retailer by day, and by evening heads up a new swim team program she started in her small town. The former at this point supports the latter, but the latter is what gives her the most meaningful experience, as it allows her "to pour my past experience into young lives and provide positive encouragement and confidence as they grow through the sport of swimming."

In 2018-2019, **Mark Weiner '89** was the Fulbright Distinguished Chair in American Studies at Uppsala University in Sweden, where he taught American politics while also researching social and political aspects of the Swedish ambulance service. The year before, he co-curated an exhibit about the history of illustrated law books from the thirteenth century to the present for the Grolier Club in New York. The exhibit catalogue, *Law's Picture Books*, received the Joseph L. Andrews Legal Literature Award from the American Association of Law Libraries. Mark lives in Connecticut with his wife, Stephanie.

1990s

Sheryl Savage Tecker '90 followed her American Studies degree into a career in education. After teaching and being a site administrator, she is now the Assistant Superintendent for

Breaking news: Jonathan Holloway '89 to be Rutgers President



Historian and American Studies alumnus Jonathan Holloway '89 is making some history himself. On January 21, 2020, Rutgers University named Holloway to be its next president. He will be the first African American to hold that position.

From 1999-2017, Holloway was on the faculty at Yale University, where he served as Head of Yale's Hopper College, chair of the Council of Heads of Colleges, and chair of African

American Studies, before becoming in 2014 the first African American to be Dean of Yale College.

Holloway will be heading to Rutgers from Northwestern University, where he has been Provost since 2017.

Congratulations President Holloway!

La Habra City School District in southern California, and recently earned her doctorate in Education. She is also pleased to report that nephew Andrew Savage followed in her footsteps, receiving his degree in American Studies from Stanford in June 2019

After seven years in Cairo, Egypt, **Wayne Rutherford '90, STEP '91**, has moved with his wife to Milan, Italy, where he is now the Director of the American School of Milan (ASM), a pre-K through 12th-grade school of 900 students, serving the US Diplomatic Corp and others interested in an American-style education, and accredited by the American Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges.

Wayne is finding Milan "fascinating and wonderful, in many ways," noting not least that this "innovation, financial, design, and engineering hub of Italy" is also bustling with preparations to host the 2026 Winter Olympics. With previous positions in Sapporo, Japan and Dakar, Senegal, Wayne has now been Director/Head of School for four international schools, and has spent his entire career in education overseas. He is also proud dad to two children, who are at colleges in Oregon, having completed the International Baccalaureate Diploma program in Cairo.

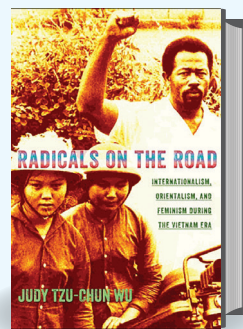
Judy Tzu-Chun Wu '91 is a professor of Asian American Studies at the University of California, Irvine, and just began a term as director of the Humanities Center there. She received a Ph.D. in U.S. History from Stanford University and previously taught at The Ohio State University. She authored *Dr. Mom Chung of the Fair-Haired Bastards: The Life of a Wartime Celebrity* (UC Press, 2005) and *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era* (Cornell University Press, 2013). Her current book project, a collaboration with political scientist Gwendolyn Mink, explores the political career of Patsy Takemoto Mink, the first woman of color U.S. congressional representative and the namesake for Title IX (in 2002 Congress renamed the Title IX Amendment of the Higher Education Act, which was coauthored by Mink, to the "Patsy T. Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act"). Wu also is working on a book that focuses on Asian American and Pacific Islander Women who attended the 1977 National Women's Conference. She co-edited *Women's America: Refocusing the Past, 8th*

Edition (Oxford, 2015), *Gendering the Trans-Pacific World* (Brill, 2017), and *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* (2012-2017). Currently, she is a co-editor of *Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600-2000* (an online resource and journal) and editor for *Amerasia Journal*.

Lisa Nellor Grove '92 recently left Savannah, GA, where she had served for six years as Director / CEO of Telfair Museums, to take an exciting new position in Chicago as Deputy Director of the future Obama Presidential Center Museum. In this role, she is hoping to create "a bold new vision of what a 21st century presidential library can be, and the role it can play as a campus for active citizenship."

Since graduating (as Michelle Cheng), **Michelle C. Kim '95** attended UCLA law school, worked as a Public Defender for 16 years, and is now a Judge with the Los Angeles Superior Court.

Currently in his 23rd year as a teacher, **Josh Walker '95** has spent the last 20 of those years teaching English and history at the middle school level. He also serves on his school leadership team, advises multiple clubs, and coaches tennis at the local high school. Co-director of his school district's gifted and talented program, Josh was recently awarded a Fulbright Teachers for Global Classrooms fellowship. Always looking to sharpen his skills as an educator, he spent



time last summer in professional development at Yellowstone National Park, Duke University, and UC Davis. “Becoming a teacher wasn’t part of the plan when I left Stanford” he writes, “but it’s been good to me!” He has been married for 22 years and has three children, ages 18, 16, and 13.

Anne Wicks ’95 is the Director of Education Reform at the George W. Bush Institute in Dallas. The Education Reform Initiative pursues research and policy work focused on advancing accountability and school leadership. It also manages the Laura Bush Foundation for America’s Libraries. Anne would be happy to speak with students and alums interested in education policy.

Eryn Brown ’96 is a partner and talent manager at Management 360, where she represents and helps build the careers of acclaimed writers, directors, and actors from around the world. She says, “The work is all-consuming but worth every bit of stress for the opportunity to help brilliant artists bring to life stories which make the world a better place.” In recent months her work has taken her to France, Denmark, England, Mexico, Italy, and Hungary. Although she enjoys the privilege of traveling the world for cinema, she was also happy to spend the last few months of 2019 in California, watching her nephew play football (albeit for Cal).

Ari Kurtz ’96 has been at Google in Atlanta for nearly a dozen years. Married with four- and six-year old daughters, he reports that he does his best to keep up with Stanford football, but between the kids and the often late broadcast time of games on the east coast, it’s challenging (“Thank goodness for DVR.”) Recent adventures include a family trip last summer to the UK, going from London to Edinburgh to the English countryside in Shropshire and, most importantly (if you ask his daughters), to Peppa Pig World near Southampton.

“Life is good,” says **Mike Robbins ’96**. He finished the manuscript for his fifth book, *WE’RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER: Creating a Team Culture of High Performance, Trust, and Belonging*, which is scheduled to come out May 5, 2020. In 2019 he was also a guest on NPR’s TED Radio Hour, where we was interviewed about one of his TED talks, on “The Power of Appreciation.” He lives in Novato, CA with wife Michelle and their two daughters, Samantha (13) and Rosie (11).

Casey Harmon ’97 is currently working in automotive lending as Senior Vice President of Corporate Development at Westlake Financial Services in Los Angeles. Last year, he spent two weeks in Mexico, chaperoning his ten-

year-old daughter’s educational exchange trip with a sister school in Guadalajara—“an amazing experience for our family!”

2000s

Annie Albertson ’00 is a trademark lawyer, working at the law firm of Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton LLP in their L.A. office. An attorney for 16 years, she loves working in the intellectual property area. Annie’s husband David (also Class of 2000, though not an AmStud major) is an associate professor at USC, and together with their three children (ages 10, 7, and 5), they have been living on the USC campus for five years as part of the resident faculty program: “We can’t get away from the collegiate experience, I guess!”

In 2018, **Kathryne Young ’01, JD’11, PhD ’14**, published a book called *How to Be Sort of Happy in Law School* with Stanford University Press, and also won the Distinguished Teaching Award at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where she is a currently Assistant Professor of Sociology, working at the intersection of law and the social sciences. “I’m proud to be an AmStud alum!” she writes.



Jessica Mendoza ’02 continued to cover Major League Baseball for ESPN as the only female national TV analyst through 2019, and in 2020 will become the first woman to serve as a *solo* analyst for MLB national telecasts and radio coverage. She also recently worked for the Mets front office as a special advisor to the General Manager, fellow Stanford alum Brodie Van Wageningen.

David Martin ’03 finished a professional tennis career of eight years on the ATP Tour in 2011. He attended Loyola Law School in Los Angeles (’15) and is now working as a land use attorney at Winstead PC in Dallas, Texas. On the board of the Mill City Community Association, whose goal is to promote a healthy neighborhood, he is also involved with ACT (Advocates for Community Transformation), a legal nonprofit focused on facilitating healthy neighborhoods in Dallas.

Since leaving the Farm, **Vinita Kailasanath** (minor ’04) has bounced between the coasts a few times (including time spent in scenic Central New Jersey!) but returned to Stanford for law



school (JD '10). She primarily works on tech deals, including licensing, development, and collaboration deals to create and bring new products to market. Lately, much of her work has been in digital health, so she spends a lot of time helping tech and life sciences companies talk to each other. She also gets to do a lot of exciting work with foundations and movements, like Time's Up.

Christine Olivas '04 is still running her own marketing and strategy consulting practices based out of Philadelphia (christineolivas.com). She also performs standup comedy and sings in a non-profit a cappella group.

Brian Goodman '06 is now in his third year as Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Arizona State University, and he is working hard on his first book, which includes a chapter that builds on thesis research he did as an undergraduate at Stanford. In fall 2018, he and his partner Alison welcomed their first child, Milo, into the world.

Ashlea Turner '06 is a 2019 recipient of the *Houston Business Journal's* Women Who Mean Business Award. The selection criteria include career achievement, contribution to company, community involvement and leadership. Each honoree is in a senior leadership position at their respective organization. At the time of the award, Ashlea was the Chief Governmental Relations and Strategy Officer for

the Houston Independent School District (HISD). Having secured over \$1 billion in state and federal funds for Houston schools, she left HISD and launched her own consulting firm, Gavel In, LLC, which she describes as “a premier legislative services firm specializing in lobbying, public affairs, and political strategy.” The firm advances the advocacy needs of public and private sector clients at all levels of government.

Jessica Diss '07 has been living in her hometown of Reno, NV since graduating from law school at UC Davis in 2012. After working more than a year at the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and four years at the Nevada Public Utilities Commission, as an administrative attorney and then an assistant general counsel, she joined the office of Nevada's new Governor, Steve Sisolak, in Carson City last February. She is working as a senior policy analyst, serving as a staff liaison to several agencies, including the Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development; the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation; the Office of Workforce Innovation; the Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs (which includes the Nevada Indian Commission); the Ethics Commission; and the Office of Science, Innovation and Technology. Her first five months in the office were dominated by Nevada's biennial legislative session, which goes from February

to June in odd-numbered years. “We have a small staff for a Governor's Office (fewer than 25 people), she writes, “and the work is challenging but very fulfilling.” She married Andrew Diss in July 2015. They had a son, Sterling, in 2017 and were expecting their second child when she wrote us. Jessica is active on the board of her local Stanford Alumni Club. She and fellow club-members enjoyed a visit last summer from Professor Emerita Wanda Corn, who traveled to Reno's Nevada Museum of Art for the opening of the exhibit on Georgia O'Keeffe she curated. Jessica travels back to Stanford as often as she can (usually for fall football games).

In November 2018, **Ari Neumann '07** was promoted to Director of Community and Environmental Services at RCAC, a non-profit serving low-income rural communities in thirteen western states. His team annually provides assistance to hundreds of rural, tribal, and farmworker communities to address community needs around drinking water, sanitation, and economic opportunity. One perk of the job, he tells us, is being able to travel all throughout the western US and visit dynamic communities in the region. He's been happily married to wife Candace for 8 years and enjoys spending time with his two young sons, Leo (age 6) and Toby (age 2).

Milton Heath Solórzano '07 is enrolled in a preparation program to teach at the postsecondary level and serves as a class correspondent for the *Stanford*

Magazine Class Notes. In that role he encourages radical inclusion and welcomes fellow Class of 2007 students to write in with any updates on their life, not just weddings, babies, and promotions (“although those are great too!”)

After bicycling through South America and working on a sailing research vessel in the Farallon Islands, **Katie Harrington '08** switched gears and received her Master's in Marine Science from Moss Landing Marine Laboratories (California State University, Monterey Bay). She is now a Research Associate with Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania and leads a long-term study of the rare and uniquely sociable birds of prey called Striated Caracaras (*Phalco boenus australis*) who inhabit the Falkland Islands and the extreme southern coasts of Chile and Argentina.

Since graduating from Stanford, **Rebecca Velasco '08** has been committed to a career reforming K-12 public education systems, “so that students in low-income communities have the same access to opportunities that I had in school,” she writes. She is currently the Senior Manager of Strategy & Growth at The Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, an in-district school transformation organization that partners with the Los Angeles Unified School District to manage 18 high-need schools (in Boyle Heights, South L.A., and Watts) and to scale best practices district-wide. Her role

focuses on increasing national awareness of the Partnership's model for school transformation and engaging with external partners (districts, funders, and non-profits) to support the implementation of the model in other cities. While at the Partnership, she is participating in the Broad Residency in Urban Education, a two-year leadership development program for individuals working in the central offices of urban school systems. Before joining the Partnership, she worked at the California Charter Schools Association; earned her Master of Public Policy degree at USC; and was a part of the founding Los Angeles and Oakland teams at Spark, a national non-profit that provides career exploration and self-discovery opportunities for middle school students in high-need schools. She has lived in South Pasadena since 2013. Outside of work, she has prioritized travel this year, including a lot of camping and backpacking trips and weekend trips around the state. 2019 destinations included Los Alamos, Los Olivos, Sonoma, San Diego, Point Reyes, Angeles National Forest, Palm Springs, Santa Barbara, and Big Bear, along with multiple visits to the San Francisco Bay Area.

Natalie Chladek '09 graduated from business school at UCLA Anderson in 2016 and followed her then boyfriend (now husband) to Boston, where she currently works as a product manager for Harvard Business School's online education group. Although she barely survives winters and stays

up too late watching Stanford sports on TV, she loves working with faculty at HBS to create and deliver online business education courses. Still, she says, "I miss Stanford dearly and make many trips back." These include a trip last May, when she got married at the former Stanford Barn, and a return visit in October for her 10th reunion.

Kelley Fong '09 will be finishing a Ph.D. in sociology and social policy at Harvard this spring. Her work focuses on children, youth, and families in America (not-so-coincidentally, the exact concentration she designed for herself as an AmStud major). Currently, she is researching and writing about child protective services and families' school and neighborhood choices. Tracing the origins of this research back to her senior thesis on homeless parents' involvement in their children's education, Kelley writes that she continues "to be grateful for all that I learned from the wonderfully supportive, generous, and brilliant American Studies faculty, students, and staff."

Andrea Fuller '09 is still living in New York and pursuing data-driven investigative stories for *The Wall Street Journal*. She recently played in a live-action game inspired by the TV show *Survivor* and went hiking in Glacier National Park. She surprisingly lived to tell about both.

For the past eight years, **Kerry Pigott '09, STEP '10**, has been working as an elementary teacher in the Northshore School District, which is in the Seattle metropolitan area. She has taught 1st through 3rd grades. "I love teaching," she writes, "and am also continually learning too." From January to June 2018 she lived in Finland as part of the Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching. Her research project centered on movement in the classroom and how active learning can support students with ADHD. She recently completed an endorsement in Special Education as well. "There's always a lot to learn!"

Bailey Richardson '09 published her first book, *Get Together: How to Build a Community with Your People*—a handbook based on research she and her partners did on thriving groups, from run clubs to Star Wars superfans. "Although these communities feel magical, they don't come together by magic," Bailey writes.



2010s

After five years connecting the world through music, **Dean Schaffer '10** left his job at Smule in December 2018 to reconnect with his passion for making music of his own. He spent much of the last year playing in a jazz ensemble and learning to play the piano, while also starting a new professional adventure as a product manager at YouTube Music in February 2019. Another year full of weddings brought him and his partner Natalie as near as San Luis Obispo and as far as London.

Samantha Buechner '11 is a Vice President on the Renewable Energy and Environmental Finance team at Wells Fargo. In this role she originates, negotiates, and performs due diligence on solar and wind project finance transactions. Before joining Wells Fargo in 2013, she helped Fortune 500 companies develop their sustainability strategies at boutique consulting firm GreenOrder. In her spare time, she volunteers at GRID Alternatives and WeCare Solar. She also enjoys skiing, rock climbing, kiteboarding, and squash.

After five years with *The Sacramento Bee*, **Alexei Koseff '12, MA '13**, joined the *San Francisco Chronicle* in January as their new Sacramento correspondent. He is still covering the state Capitol and California politics, with a focus on Governor Gavin Newsom "who has kept me busy during his first year in office." Some of Alexei's favorite recent stories include a profile he

wrote of a tattoo removal program for state prison inmates and a look at how prosecutors are fighting back against a new California law that limits when an accomplice to a homicide can be charged with murder. In his free time, he trains and performs with a hip-hop dance group, Boogie Monstarz.

Miles Bennett-Smith '13 spent several years in tech and venture capital, but decided to put his degree to real use and went back to school to pursue his MA in Policy, Organizations and Leadership from Stanford's School of Education. This year, he is thrilled to be starting in the classroom teaching AP US History at Summit Prep in Redwood City, while also coaching the cross country and basketball teams.

Sophi Scarnewman (Newman) '13 and husband Bobby welcomed a son, Donato, in October 2016, and are finding parenting just as rewarding and as challenging as everyone promised it would be. She writes “we are having so much fun seeing his imagination and abilities blossom.” Parenting aside, Sophi began on her current path toward becoming a physician assistant in 2017. Since then, she has been taking many science courses, from organic chemistry to immunology. (Sophi sees her AmStud background as a “huge advantage” even here, as “making interdisciplinary connections helps me build context for the new concepts I learn.”) She began working as a medical scribe at Marin General Hospital in 2018, and in 2019 took on a role at a community health clinic near home in Richmond, CA, where she splits her time

between clinic operations (fixing equipment, developing protocols, quality improvement (tracking performance and targeting areas to improve), and medical scribing (shadowing a provider and completing the notes for the day). Her job brings together so many elements she loves—people, public service, data, and science. She will be applying to physician assistant school in 2020.

Christina Walker '13 went on to teach elementary school students in Connecticut after graduation. After a few years teaching, she decided to leave the classroom and start her own company, Homeroom (www.homeroom.com) with fellow Stanford alum, Casandra Espinoza Stewart '11. Their platform helps elementary school PTAs manage onsite after-school enrichment programs. Since launching, they have scaled to schools in 26 districts and 11 states, and were recently featured in *Forbes*. “Each day,” Christina writes, “we show up at Homeroom with the goal to provide families with the ability to discover and manage high-quality after-school enrichment classes that are convenient, accessible and affordable.”

Miranda Mammen '14 graduated from Harvard Law School in 2019, and has since started a fellowship with the National Domestic Workers Alliance in Oakland, CA, focused on improving labor standards for nannies, housecleaners, and care attendants for seniors and people with disabilities.

Will Robins '14 has returned to Stanford as an MBA Candidate at the Graduate School of Business. “Great to be back on the farm!” he writes.

Having worked as the city/county/health/arts/crime reporter in Helena, Montana for two years **Thomas Plank '16** has started a new job in Boise, Idaho as a county reporter for the *Idaho Press*.

Benina Stern '16 is working in the Programs Department of the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles, and finding it “a great mix of things I enjoy doing—the analytical puzzle of putting on live events, thinking creatively about what events we should program and how audiences would respond to them, [and] taking in a lot of great films and performances.” She would be happy to talk to American Studies students about what it's like working in the non-profit arts world—or about life in L.A.

Jordan Huelskamp '17 graduated from Columbia Journalism School in 2018, and started working at Artsy, the leading online resource for learning about and buying art. She finds it highly engaging to be at “an interdisciplinary company, where art meets science — not unlike American Studies at Stanford.”

Emily Waltman '17 embarked on her first year as a teacher. She teaches English/Language Arts at Jere Baxter Middle School in Nashville. The work is challenging, but Emily is thrilled to discover

that she enjoys teaching just as much as she hoped she would.

Ali Stack '17 is in her first year at the UCLA School of Law.

Ronald Pritipaul '19 is back in the Bay Area, working at Levi Strauss & Co., where he started by managing the sample library and working with the Levi Strauss Archives to preserve the company history by preparing clothing samples to be archived. He also assisted the Merchandising team in preparing for the Fall 2020 collection, and helped with materials for the Contemporary Jewish Museum's current exhibit: Levi Strauss: A History of American Style. Recently promoted, Ron is now officially “Design Coordinator” for the Men's Bottoms Team at Levi's.

Kathryn Rydberg '19 spent the summer after graduation traveling, including scuba diving in the Cayman Islands and returning to Italy for the first time since studying abroad there while at Stanford in 2017. She began work as a Content Strategist at SevenDesign in Sausalito at the end of the summer. Her job involves writing content for marketing materials, as well as branding and social media strategy. Living in San Francisco with two other Stanford alums, she reports “life is good!”

Ella Bunnell '19 is currently pursuing a Master's degree at Queen's University Belfast as a 2020 George J. Mitchell Scholar. She studies Conflict Transformation and Social Justice, focusing on interfaith peace-building and transitional justice.



AN INTERVIEW WITH

Lynn Mahoney '86

San Francisco State University President

After graduating from Stanford with an American Studies degree in 1986, Lynn Mahoney received a Ph.D. in History from Rutgers. She is the author of *Elizabeth Stoddard and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Culture*, a study of the 19th-century novelist and poet. In addition to her scholarly accomplishments, Dr. Mahoney has also served as an administrator at several state universities, including the State University of New York, Cal State Long Beach, and Cal State L.A. She became president of San Francisco State University in July 2019. Newsletter editor Amir Abou-Jaoude '20 recently talked with Dr. Mahoney about her experience in American Studies, the value of an interdisciplinary approach to learning, and the challenge of preparing students for the turbulent twenty-first century.

Amir Abou-Jaoude (AA):
When you came to Stanford, what sparked your interest in American Studies?

Lynn Mahoney (LM): I think I was like many students that when I started at Stanford, I thought I'd be pre-med. I started thinking I'd be a biology major. I had some family encouragement to pursue medicine. I started with chemistry and calculus and did not enjoy either. I particularly struggled in chemistry. By the end of my freshman year, I realized I was not going to be pre-med and I needed to choose another major. Even then, I kept thinking I would be in the sciences. I switched from bio to human biology. I didn't like that. Then, I tried computer science. The whole time I was doing that I was taking history and literature courses. Finally, sometime my sophomore year, I thought, "wait, I love those courses. Why am I not doing a major in history and literature?" I started exploring the humanities and discovered this thing called American Studies that would allow me to take both literature and history. I didn't

have to choose. My junior year I was pursuing American Studies.

AA: Was there a class or professor in American Studies that had an indelible impact on you?

LM: I was blessed in all sorts of ways to have spectacular professors all through my American Studies experience. The professor that jumpstarted my academic career was Joe Corn, who was the program director at the time. He was a historian of science and technology. I took my senior seminars with him. He co-taught one of them with his wife who was a professor in art history, Wanda Corn. What they introduced me to were the beauties of interdisciplinary study. He was always very accessible, so he would spend a lot of time talking outside of class about what we were studying. He was the first who let me think that a doctorate was something I could potentially pursue.

AA: Did Stanford's American Studies program shape your interests as a scholar?

LM: It absolutely did. My love was history and literature, and

My love was history and literature, and I think I took just about the same number of courses in both. The notion that you could use literature to understand history absolutely was something that I learned as an undergraduate and learned to love.

I think I took just about the same number of courses in both. The notion that you could use literature to understand history absolutely was something that I learned as an undergraduate and learned to love. My work on Elizabeth Stoddard came out of my work with American Studies scholars, who tended to be more interdisciplinary.

AA: Could you talk a little more about how the American Studies program affected your subsequent research projects?

LM: One of the overriding questions when I was an undergraduate was why there's no socialism in the United States. That was one of those historical problems that came up in many, many classes—in history and even in literature. One of the things I graduated from Stanford with was a key interest in was how people create class identities and how they create them over

American Studies, which is really the construction of whiteness and the construction of racial identity. That came afterwards. My initial focus was on class, and that came out of my Stanford education.

AA: How did your American Studies major determine your career path after graduation?

LM: When I graduated, on the one hand I felt like my Stanford degree in American Studies had prepared me for everything. I had studied some of the most challenging policies in U.S. history from an interdisciplinary perspective. I felt prepared for everything, but at the same time, I vaguely felt prepared for

to graduate school to test the waters. I took education courses, I took geography courses, and I took history courses. That's when I made the decision that history was my love and I would go on for a doctorate.

AA: In addition to your work as a historian, you have also become an administrator at several state schools—SUNY, Cal State L.A., and now SFSU. How did you transition from professor to president?

LM: I never anticipated becoming an administrator. It wasn't something I thought about or imagined early in my career, but I became very interested in making sure students achieved their educational outcomes. Many state university students struggle to graduate. Having had a slightly bumpy history at Stanford where I kept changing majors, I have some sympathy for students who are finding college difficult to navigate. I just started getting involved in university projects that were designed to help students complete their degrees more successfully. One opportunity led to another. I directed an advising center for a little while. That led to an opportunity to be Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Studies at Cal State Long Beach, the Provost and VP for Academic Affairs at Cal State L.A., and now President at SFSU. What ties it all together is a commitment to helping students achieve their educational goals.

AA: How has American Studies affected your approach as an administrator?

LM: One of the first history courses I took at Stanford was taught by Clay Carson and it was called "The 1960s: The Tumultuous Decade." What I learned there I have carried with me for more than thirty years. I

carried it through my American Studies degree and my Ph.D. It's the power of ordinary people to change their lives, the power of ordinary people to transform their world. I carried that sense of empowerment. There are times in history often where the world is a difficult place. I think we're at one of those times right now, but the message of history is that ordinary people can work together to transform their world. That's the kind of empowerment I want to pass on to students who go to state universities like San Francisco State. My training as an American Studies student and as a historian really is fuel for my administrative career.

AA: Speaking more broadly, why do think American Studies as a discipline remains relevant today?

LM: I think my instinct when I was twenty-two that my American Studies major had prepared me for everything was in fact the right instinct. We're facing very pressing twenty-first century challenges—climate change, the resurgence in white supremacist ideologies and violent behaviors, geopolitical unrest all over the place. The thing about an American Studies degree is it doesn't give you all the answers, but what it does is it teaches you how to ask questions and understand issues in very complicated ways. The present is very complicated, and if you can't understand how to approach it or question it in complex, interdisciplinary ways, you're going to struggle. Having an undergraduate major that teaches you how to ask questions and understand problems in complex ways is going to prepare you for everything, and then you can learn the other stuff.

This transcript has been condensed and edited for clarity.



time. The work on [Elizabeth] Stoddard grew out of that. In particular, I became interested in how gender and culture are used to create class-based identity. That's where that book came from. After the Stoddard work, I became much more interested in what I think now is one of the overarching questions in

nothing because [my degree] didn't lead to a specific career objective. At that time, I wasn't leaping headlong into graduate school. In fact, it took me a little while to come to that. At first, I didn't know what I wanted to do. I did a couple of odd jobs for about a year, and then went back