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**FROM THE DIRECTOR Shelley Fisher Fishkin**  
Joseph S. Atha Professor of Humanities  
Professor of English and Director of American Studies



When Molly Vorwerck '14 announced her plan to major in American Studies as soon as she arrived at Stanford as a freshman, we were pleasantly surprised: since the field doesn't exist in most high schools, most newly-minted freshmen have never heard of it. We are delighted that Molly not only graduated with distinction and honors, but also sustained her strong commitment to American Studies beyond graduation, becoming the first Stanford

American Studies alum to be the Editor of the *American Studies Newsletter*. While at Stanford, Molly honed her journalism skills as Managing Editor of the *Stanford Daily*, as News Director of KZSU, and through summer internships at *USA Today*, the *San Jose Mercury News*, and *Orange Coast Magazine*. Since graduation, she has worked in the communications field in San Francisco. She joined the global communications firm Hill + Knowlton in September. (See p.39 for more details.) We are very grateful for the energy and professionalism she has brought to this newsletter, providing an engaging snapshot of our vibrant and thriving program.

During the last two years, our majors have focused on such topics as race and social justice; the history of American journalism and photography; the roots of inequality in America; the politics of American health policy; the West in American memory, culture and identity; race and American visual culture; feminism



2015 Newsletter editor Molly Vorwerck with her parents and Richard Gillam at graduation in 2014

and sexuality in America; and food and class systems in the U.S. They have studied in Berlin, Paris, Madrid, Oxford, and Stanford-in-Washington. They have written outstanding honors theses on topics ranging from Caesar Chavez's farm worker movement to teen fantasies of Elvis Presley; from children's health care policy to white female hip hop performance. And they have collected an impressive array of honors and awards—not only for academic achievement, but also for accomplishments in the arts, for contributions to the Stanford community, and for community service. (See pp. 5-7.)

Our majors have added to the vitality of life at Stanford and the surrounding community through a dizzying array of extracurricular activities. They have founded and run theater societies and directed plays; produced videos and films that have reached international audiences; performed in dance department productions and in the Stanford Marching Band. They have led Stanford athletic teams to victory in basketball, football, soccer, track and field, squash, rugby, equestrian sports, and rowing. They have mounted art shows and have created community gardens. They have led pre-orientation wilderness backpacking trips and have taught student-initiated courses. Our majors include a founder of Stanford Students for Reproductive Justice; a Senior Class President; and editors at the *Stanford Daily*, *Herodotus* (the University's history journal), and KZSU. One of our majors served as director of East Palo Alto's Ronald McNair Academy, and another was an instructor in feminist studies at a Palo Alto high school. Our students have volunteered in East Palo Alto at a preschool, at middle school enrichment programs, at a middle school girls' mentoring program, and at a program that helps high school students apply to college. They have given their time as tutors and tennis coaches, as staff at a free medical clinic and at an aquatics program for special needs children. They have held leadership roles in fraternities, sororities, and residence halls, in ethnic communities and in religious and philanthropic organizations. They have worked for social justice at Stanford as members of the ASSU Sexual Assault Task Force and Stanford's chapter of the NAACP. They have served as valued research assistants for faculty in American Studies, History, Art, African American Studies, and Political Science; they have been student advisors to the Vice Provost for undergraduate and graduate education, and the Hume Writing Center. (See pp.8-11.)

Stanford American Studies alumni continue to leave their mark on the world in fields that include education, entertainment and the arts, business, health, journalism, law, nonprofits, professional sports, and public policy. Several are engaged in efforts to improve the education of children living in poverty or foster care—or are in the classroom themselves, teaching law, English, history, psychology, social studies, art, and nursing. A number of our alumni are attorneys—working with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a Hollywood management and production company, a philanthropic investment firm, or the

Attorney General of California. They are experts consulted on everything from international development programs and conflict assessments to challenges facing the environment. They have worked in veterinary practices and community health centers; as project managers at Google and a music tech company; at a nonprofit that has given away 100,000 hearing aids to children and adults around the world and at another that is working to grow a new generation of activists and organizers. They are newspaper journalists covering national politics and California politics. They are in graduate school and in law school. They play professional tennis and soccer. Their ranks include the author of a recent best-seller and the designer of a winter lantern festival in Barcelona. *Newsweek's* political correspondent in Washington, the President of Aol.com and Lifestyle Brands, and the new Dean of Yale College are all graduates of our American Studies program. (See pp. 37-43.)

Our productive faculty have published books in art, communication, economics, education, history, literature, religion, and sociology, on such intriguing topics as America's long preoccupation with China, the history of racial passing in American life, the material experience of reading comics, and early America's ideas of hell. They have won prestigious awards from the Organization of American Historians and the Association of American Publishers. They have given lectures in Guangzhou, Kaohsiung, Montpellier, Hong Kong, and Taipei, and have won grants from the American Council of Learned Societies and the National Endowment for the Humanities (see pp. 19-29).

The past two years have been a period of transitions, as well. We wished a bittersweet farewell to a truly beloved colleague on his retirement, and we welcomed a new academic services administrator, and a new lecturer and program coordinator.

Dick Gillam taught American Studies at Stanford for nearly three decades. His distinguished teaching has been recognized by the Gores Award and an ASSU Teaching Award. When we invited current students and alumni to send us messages to be assembled

into a scrapbook for him on his retirement, their responses were extraordinary. Whether they were students he taught last quarter or 25 years ago, their comments were remarkably of a piece. One wrote, "By introducing a generation of students to those 'visions' of the 1960s and those 'perspectives' of American identity," he

The cultural conversation on campus was also enlivened by a series of public book talks by American Studies faculty: Gavin Wright on *Sharing the Prize: The Economics of the Civil Rights Revolution in the American South*; Richard Meyer on *What Was Contemporary Art?*; Fred Turner on *The Democratic Surround: Multimedia and American Liberalism from World War II to the Psychedelic Sixties*; Allyson Hobbs on *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life*; Kathryn Gin Lum on *Damned Nation: Hell in America from the Revolution to Reconstruction*; and Gordon H. Chang on *Fateful Ties: A History of America's Preoccupation with China*.

helped inspire them “to connect critique and creativity, and to link intellect with imagination.” Another wrote that “your course on ‘American Thought Since 1865’ opened to me the promise of intellectual life in a way no other class ever did before or since. It made me want to become a scholar and teacher myself.” One student’s final paper for that class became the germ of his first novel. He has now published three. Another expressed his gratitude for the way Dick “productively and proactively” pushed his students “to delve deeper, to not sell themselves and their intellectual potential” short. Another wrote, “My academic experience felt grounded because of you. It’s rare to find a mentor who is both inspirational and kind.” “Thank you,” another wrote “for your commitment to a better world and to preparing generations of students to take on the heavy and honored work of bending the arc of justice towards now.” One student who started out planning to pursue a career in orthopedic medicine and then shifted his sights to a career in law before finding out he was really not interested in either, wrote that Dick Gillam’s intervention into his undergraduate experience changed his life. Dick encouraged him to pursue a doctorate, seeing in him something he did not see in himself. “Things seem to have worked out,” he wrote. The writer of that letter is now the Dean of Yale College. Dick left his mark on every student who had the good fortune to be in one of his classes or to enter his office to ask for advice. He has shaped all of his colleagues’ sense of the possibilities of genuine community at Stanford and modeled for all of us the highest standards of integrity and selfless devotion to the greater good. We will miss him enormously, but wish him a well-deserved restful and enjoyable retirement. (See pp. 12-13.)

Rachel Meisels joined American Studies in the fall of 2013 as Academic Services Administrator (we share her with Modern Thought and Literature, and with Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies). It is hard to imagine a more perfect person for the job. A Stanford graduate herself, Rachel got her B.A. in Drama (with honors and distinction, and election to *phi beta kappa*) in 2002. For her senior thesis she researched, wrote, directed and produced a play on the Holocaust. Before returning to Stanford, Rachel earned an M.A. in Education from Emerson College and taught Spanish and theater at high schools in Massachusetts and San Francisco. Before joining American Studies, she held temporary administrative positions at Stanford at the School of Medicine and the Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages. In addition to welcoming new students, tracking student academic progress, overseeing the honors program, helping to recruit research interns, holding regular advising meetings with students to discuss both academic and personal goals, and helping with

all aspects of program-sponsored events, Rachel created new monthly student “Java Jives,” where students can check in with peer advisors, or just chat with fellow majors, over coffee and treats that frequently include goodies Rachel herself has baked. We’re very fortunate to have her on board!

In the fall of 2015, Elizabeth Kessler joined American Studies as a lecturer and program coordinator. Beth earned a Ph.D. in the History of Culture at the University of Chicago, and has been a visiting lecturer for several years in Stanford’s Art and Art History Department. Before coming to Stanford she was an Assistant Professor of Liberal Studies and Art History at Ursinus College. Her research and teaching focus on twentieth and twenty-first century American visual culture. Her diverse interests include: the role of aesthetics, visual culture, and media in modern and contemporary science, especially astronomy; the interchange between technology and ways of seeing and representing; the history of photography; and the representation of fashion in different media. Her first book, *Picturing the Cosmos: Hubble Space Telescope Images and the Astronomical Sublime*, on the aesthetics of deep space images, was published in 2012. She’s currently writing a book on extraterrestrial time capsules, as well as developing a new project on fashion photography. Beth has lectured at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, UK, and the Smithsonian Institution’s National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC. In addition to offering her own version of the gateway course to the major, “Perspectives on American Identity,” she will be

teaching classes on “American Style and the Rhetoric of Fashion” and “Starstuff: Space in the American Imagination.” Beth, who will join Judy Richardson as a coordinator, is a very welcome addition to our faculty.

During the decade since my Presidential Address to the ASA in 2004, “Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies,” the field of American Studies has increasingly focused on transnational perspectives and approaches. Stanford’s program has been a leader on this front, encouraging our students to integrate their overseas-study experiences into their thematic concentrations; allowing them to use a course in translation studies to fulfill part of the major’s requirements in “literature, culture and the arts”; sponsoring a leading journal in this area; and giving students and faculty the chance to meet with scholars in the field working outside the U.S. Students and faculty were treated to a dialogue between Takayuki Tatsumi (Keio University), a Japanese scholar of American Studies who writes about American culture in English, and Levy Hideo, an American novelist who writes popular novels in Japan in Japanese. They



**Rachel Meisels, Academic Services Administrator (top)**



**Elizabeth Kessler, Program Coordinator (bottom)**



learned about the history of American Studies in Sweden from Dag Blanck (Uppsala University), and heard about the “cultural convergence” of Eastern and Western images in postmodern art and literature in both the U.S. and China from Alfred Hornung (Johannes Gutenberg University-Mainz). Pin-chia Feng, of National Chiao Tung University and Academic Sinica, Taiwan, spoke on East Asian approaches to Asian American literary studies, surveying work being done by scholars in Japan, Korea and Taiwan. All of these scholars have ties to the *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, a peer-reviewed, open-access journal co-founded and co-sponsored by our Program: Hornung and Tatsumi are members of Editorial Board, Feng is on the Advisory Board, and Blanck is currently co-editing a Special Forum on American Studies in Sweden for the journal.

The cultural conversation on campus was also enlivened by a series of public book talks by American Studies faculty: Gavin Wright on *Sharing the Prize: The Economics of the Civil Rights Revolution in the American South*; Richard Meyer on *What Was Contemporary Art?*; Fred Turner on *The Democratic Surround: Multimedia and American Liberalism from World War II to the Psychedelic Sixties*; Allyson Hobbs on *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life*; Kathryn Gin Lum on *Damned Nation: Hell in America from the Revolution to Reconstruction*; and Gordon H. Chang on *Fateful Ties: A History of America’s Preoccupation with China*. (See pp. 22-32.)

We co-sponsored events with English, History, Jewish Studies, Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Art and Art History, Theater and Performance Studies, Continuing Studies, the Cantor Art Gallery, the Anderson Collection, the American Religions Workshop, the Stanford Theater Laboratory, Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity, the Women’s Community Center, the Institute for Diversity in the Arts, and the Bill Lane Center for the American West. These included “Fifty Years of Fiddler: A Celebration and Symposium”; an intergenerational retrospective look at *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981); a series of programs about race in post-Obama America that focused on mass incarceration; and presentations by playwrights Tony Kushner and Lynn Nottage, actress Laverne Cox, artist Carrie Mae Weems, poet Elizabeth Alexander, and actor George Takei, as well as talks by scholars including Joel Dinerstein (Tulane) on “American Cool: An Outlaw Sensibility for Consumer Society” and Valerie Matsumoto (UCLA) on “City Girls: The Nisei Social World in Los Angeles, 1920-1950.” (See pp. 31-36.)

In an interdisciplinary program like ours, in which each student has an individualized program of study and where a sizeable number of majors at any one moment are off studying abroad or at Stanford in Washington, it can be hard to achieve a sense of community. But our peer advisors/student representatives—Allison Gold, Emma Joslyn, Miranda Mammen, Will Robins, and Sarah Sadlier—have managed to do just that. We are grateful to them for helping to organize “Mocktail Hours,” “Fireside Chats,” and “America Out Loud” (a spoken-word events for majors), along with other gatherings that help create that sense of community in American Studies.

Senior Lecturer and program coordinator Judy Richardson wears many hats, and we are grateful to her for donning all of them. Whether running Honors College and coordinating the honors program, advising students on their courses of study, teaching crucial core courses, or supervising the production of this *Newsletter*, Judy does everything with enormous grace and aplomb. She makes it look easy. It’s not! We owe her a tremendous debt.

Program Administrator Monica Moore deserves much of the credit for the health and vitality of American Studies at Stanford. She has been the heart and soul of the Program since it was first launched in 1976, and we are enormously grateful to her for her continued devotion to it. We are delighted that her exceptional dedication was recognized by Stanford President John Hennessy when she was named the winner of an Amy J. Blue Award, the most prestigious award a Stanford staff member can be given (see p. 18). With Monica Moore and Rachel Meisels at the helm, we now may well be the only Stanford Program or Department run by *two* Stanford alumni.

Alumni are always welcome at the events we organize on campus. Our current students relish the opportunity to meet living testaments to the fact that there is, indeed, life after Stanford, and our faculty love the chance to reconnect and learn how our former students are having an impact on the world. If you are in the Bay Area (or travel to it now and then) and would like to get emails about upcoming events, please write Rachel Meisels at rmeisels@stanford.edu. I hope the coming year will be a good one for you—and I look forward to seeing some of you back at the Farm. ■

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# Undergraduate Honors Theses

## 2013

**JULIA ISHIYAMA**, *Cowboys in the Voting Booth: American Political Identity as Told by Country Singers Toby Keith and Brad Paisley*

**ANNIE DEVON KRAMER**, *At the Dawn of the Atomic Age, 'Between Hell and Reason': 'New Extremes' and Transatlantic Countercurrents in French Existentialism after the Atomic Bombings of Japan*

**TIERNEY COLLEEN O'ROURKE**, *"Coolies," White Slaves, and Purity Crusades: Immigration and the Rise of Morality in U.S. Prostitution Legislation from Reconstruction to the Progressive Era*

**THOMAS SCIOLLA**, *Redeeming Farm Workers: Some Perspectives on Cesar Chavez's Farm Worker Movement of the Late Sixties*

## 2014

**TAYLOR DEWBERRY**, *Defining Black Beauty before "Black is Beautiful": The Establishment, Critique, and Reimagining of Colorist Beauty Standards from 1945 to 1954*

**MONICA MASIELLO**, *Dominican-American Immigrant Spaces: The Complications of Achieving a Decolonial Self in Junot Diaz's Short Fiction*

**WILLIAM ROBINS**, *Challenges of Illustrating Slavery in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*

**MOLLY VORWERCK**, *The Presley Paradox: Race, Sex and Commodified Teen Fantasies*

## 2015

**EMMA JOSLYN**, *Looking for the Realest Bitch: White Women, Hip Hop, and Authenticity*

**CARLY LAVE**, Honors in the Arts for her choreographed piece, *Duality*, and accompanying essay, *The Expansion of Ballet through the Choreography of American William Forsythe*

**IVAN MARQUEZ**, *CHIP, Public Morality, and the Struggle to Define Children's Health Policy in the United States, 1997-2015*

photo: Frank Chen

Allison Gold and Carly Lave



Allison Gold speaking at Graduation 2015

Graduation 2014



Graduation 2015



Makshya Tolbert speaking at Graduation 2015



Judy Richardson and Annie Kramer 2013



## Student Awards and Prizes

### 2013 American Studies Program Awards

*The George G. Dekker Award for Student Leadership:* **Annie Kramer.**

*The George M. Fredrickson Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Honors Research:* **Tierney O'Rourke**, for her analysis of how federal legislation regulating women's bodies and mobility was rooted in particular racial circumstances in California.

*The Jay W. Fliegelman Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Honors Research:* **Thomas Sciolla** for his immersive thesis exploring interpretations of Cesar Chavez, the United Farm Workers, and the Delano Grape Strike in the late 1960s.

*The Albert J. Gelpi Prize for Outstanding Service to the Program in American Studies:* **Sam Corrao Clanon**, for his excellent and beyond-the-call-of-duty service as editor of the American Studies Newsletter; and **Thuy Nguyen**, for her initiative, efficiency, and superb competence as the Program's student office assistant.

### Other Awards Received by American Studies Students in 2013

*Award of Excellence*, presented by the Stanford Alumni Association to graduating seniors who have demonstrated a sincere commitment to the university through involvement, leadership, and extraordinary Stanford spirit: **April Gregory, Thuy Nguyen, Tierney O'Rourke**, and **Christina Walker.**

*The Black Community Services Center's Community Service Award:* **Makshya Tolbert**, for founding the Ujamaa Community Garden.

*The Black Community Services Center's Crossfield, Black, Coley Academic Achievement Award:* **Megan McGraw.**

*El Centro Chicano y Latino Senior Award for Academic Achievement:* **Andrew Santana.**

*Collegiate Rowing Coaches Association Scholar Athlete Award:* **Claire Grover.**

*Greek Woman of the Year*, presented by the Order of Omega Greek honor society at Stanford: **Tierney O'Rourke.**

*The J.E. Wallace Sterling Award for Scholastic Achievement*, awarded to the top 25 seniors in the School of Humanities and Sciences: **Annie Kramer.**

*The Julius Jacobs Award*, awarded to a Stanford *Daily* staff member who demonstrates journalistic talent, contributions to the *Daily* and dedication to the *Daily*: **Molly Vorwerck.**

*Pac-12 All-Academic First Team (Rowing):* **Claire Grover.**

*The Robert M. Golden Medal for Excellence in the Humanities and Creative Arts:* **Annie Kramer**, for her intellectually powerful, thoughtfully analytical honors thesis on US-French interactions and responses to the 1945 US atomic bombings of Japan.

*2013 graduates elected to Phi Beta Kappa:* **Sam Corrao Clanon, April Gregory** (as junior), **Annie Kramer** (as junior), **Sophi Newman** (as junior), and **Tierney O'Rourke.**

*Distinction:* **Sam Corrao Clanon, April Gregory, Claire Grover, Annie Kramer, Megan McGraw, Sophi Newman, and Tierney O'Rourke.**



*Annie Kramer with Richard Gillam and high school teacher Ken Sklar at Sterling Award Ceremony (2013)*



*Claire Patterson and Judy Richardson at the Hoefer Prize ceremony (2015)*

### 2014 American Studies Program Awards

*The David Potter Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Honors Research:* **Molly Vorwerck**, for her insightful study of how musical, racial, and sexual transgressiveness, along with personality, timing, and cagey promotion, made Elvis Presley the prototype of the American teen idol.

*The George Dekker Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Honors Research:* **Monica Masiello**, for her impressively intensive and nuanced analysis of language in Juno Diaz's short fiction as it relates to contexts and problems of Dominican American identity in the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century and early 21<sup>st</sup>-century.

*The George M. Fredrickson Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Honors Research:* **Taylor Dewberry**, for her ambitious and inventively multidimensional study of how colorist ideas of beauty were disseminated, qualified, and challenged among African Americans in the 1940s and 1950s.

*The Jay W. Fliegelman Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Honors Research:* **William Robins**, for his astute exploration of the financial, social, cultural, and institutional reasons why scenes of slave resistance in 19<sup>th</sup>-century American books about slavery so rarely made it into illustrations in those books. The award recognizes, as well, his creation, as part of his honors thesis, of six original oil paintings that brought such scenes to life.

*The Albert J. Gelpi Prize for Outstanding Service to the American Studies Program:* **Miranda Mammen**, for all she did to develop a sense of vibrant community in the program.



## Other Awards Received by American Studies Students in 2014

*Award of Excellence*, presented by the Stanford Alumni Association: **Taylor Dewberry**, **Maya Humes** and **Will Toaspern**.

*The Black Community Services Center's Crossfield, Black, Coley Award for Superior Academic Achievement*: **Maya Humes**.

*The Black Community Services Center's Special Recognition Award*: **Taylor Dewberry**, for her honors thesis on colorist beauty standards in post-WWII America.

*El Centro Chicano y Latino Senior Award for Academic Achievement*: **Monica Masiello**.

*Hume Humanities Honors Fellowship* (Stanford Humanities Center): **Molly Vorwerck**.

*Samuel Eells Literary and Educational Foundation Awards* (national collegiate literary competition): **Cody Laux**, grand prize Daniel Pearl Award for Literary Excellence, as well as 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> prize for Photography, and 2<sup>nd</sup> prize for Fiction.

*2014 graduates elected to Phi Beta Kappa*: **Sasha Arijanto** and **Will Toaspern**.

*Distinction*: **Sasha Arijanto**, **Miranda Mammen**, **Monica Masiello**, **William Robins**, and **Molly Vorwerck**.

## 2015 American Studies Program Awards

*The David Potter Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Honors Research*: **Ivan Marquez**, for his shrewd, nuanced, historically-informed analysis of the successes and pitfalls of the Children's Health Insurance Program.

*The George M. Fredrickson Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Honors Research*: **Emma Joslyn**, for a pitch-perfect thesis that placed rigorously nuanced readings of performances by three white women in conversation with race, gender, and sexuality studies, as well as linguistics and music history.

*The Albert J. Gelpi Prize for Outstanding Service to the American Studies Program*: **Allison Gold**, for all she did to develop a vibrant sense of community in the program.

## Other Awards Received by American Studies Students in 2015

*Award of Excellence*, presented by the Stanford Alumni Association: **Kimberly Bacon** and **Kalani Nakashima** (minor).

*The Christopher Meyer Prize* (Art and Art History): **Luke Lorentzen** (minor).

*The Black Community Service Center's Crossfield, Black, Coley Award for Exceptional Academic Achievement*: **Makshya Tolbert**.

*The Dean's Award for Academic Achievement*, awarded by the university to between five and ten students in the entire Stanford undergraduate population each year: **Sarah Sadlier** and **Luke Lorentzen** (minor).

*The Francisco Lopes Prize in the Humanities*, awarded by Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies for the best papers on feminism, gender or sexuality: **Sarah Sadlier**, for her paper, "Libbie & LaSalle: Professional Widowhood and the Cult of Domesticity in Post-Civil War America."

*The Gilder Lehrman History Award*, awarded to approximately 15 outstanding college juniors and seniors nationwide who have demonstrated academic and extracurricular excellence in American history or American Studies as well as a commitment to public service and community involvement: **Sarah Sadlier**.

*The Hoefler Prize for Excellence in Undergraduate Writing*: **Claire Patterson**, for her essay "'The beginning is hers, the ending, mine': Cross-cultural and -generational communication in *The Woman Warrior*."

*Hume Humanities Honors Fellowships* (Stanford Humanities Center): **Emma Joslyn** and **Reno Tsosie**.

*The John Milton Oskison Writing Award*, awarded by the Stanford Native American Community Center, to recognize American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian undergraduate and graduate students for outstanding papers that contain a substantial emphasis on an issue that impacts the Native community: **Sarah Sadlier**, for "Her Life on the Plains": The Depiction of Native American Women in the Memoirs of Libbie Custer."

*The John Shively Fowler Award in Photography* (Art and Art History): **Cody Laux**.

*The Louis Sudler Prize for the Performing Arts*: **Carly Lave**.

*The Robert M. Golden Medal for Excellence in the Humanities and Creative Arts*: **Luke Lorentzen** (minor).

*Tom Ford Fellowship in Philanthropy*: **Makshya Tolbert**.

*The Wreden Prize for Collecting Books and Related Material* (Stanford Libraries): **Sarah Sadlier**, Second Place, for "'My [Imagined] Life on the Plains': Storytelling and the Battle of the Little Bighorn."

*2015 graduates elected to Phi Beta Kappa*: **Makshya Tolbert** and **Luke Lorentzen** (minor).

*Distinction*: **Makshya Tolbert**.

## AMSTUD'S GOT TALENT

**A** **AMERICAN STUDIES STUDENTS ARE A CREATIVE BUNCH.** This is true, as graduating senior Allison Gold pointed out in her 2015 commencement speech, in a broad sense. Not content to be passive consumers of prepackaged disciplinary fare, American Studies majors are dynamic *makers*, forging unique perspectives and original syntheses all their own out of the raw materials they draw from multiple fields—and bringing “outside-the-box” imagination to whatever they approach, whether it’s politics, law, medicine, business, or education.

It is also true, however, that American Studies seems to attract creative students in the stricter sense. Indeed, if you have been tuned in at all to the arts scene at Stanford in the past few years, chances are pretty good that you encountered one of our talented majors or minors. What’s more, American Studies students are also (and, it seems, increasingly) combining their creative endeavors with their intellectual pursuits in the major. True to that notorious American Studies distaste for boundaries, many students have been erasing the line between student and artist, infusing theses and projects with creative components, while also giving their learning and interpretations radiant public life on stages, on canvases, on film, in stanzas, and even in silk and linen.

Take **Allison Gold** herself. A prolific director of remarkable range, originality, and substance, Gold has brought her Midas touch to everything from *Eurydice* (Sarah Ruhl’s retake on the Greek myth) for the experimental Stanford Theater Laboratory (which she founded) to her hilarious production of *Gaieties* in 2013 (whose title, *Gaietiesburg: A Campus Divided*, is an implicit nod to her American Studies roots). Allison has also been lauded for her inventive and emotionally absorbing productions of musicals and dramas that tackle big issues. Her all-in production of the rock musical *Next to Normal*—which was co-sponsored by the Stanford course, Psychology 1—drew rave reviews. (“Authentic, moving, and vocally and visually stunning,” the *Daily* called it.) So did her boldly pared-down 2015 interpretation of Arthur Miller’s post-WWII play *All My Sons*, a production that Allison—whose thematic concentration was government and who maintains particular fascination with the Cold-War era—mounted as the capstone for her American Studies major. Staged outdoors at dusk with minimal props and lighting, *All My Sons* was, as the *Daily* put it, nothing short of “riveting”—a testament to Allison’s abiding love of American history and theater, and proof of her compelling talents for both.

Joining Allison in making the theatrical scene at Stanford have been a number of other American Studies majors, including the versatile **Benina Stern** (‘16), whose academic and artistic endeavors also thrive in cross-fertilizing relationship. Benina, who is writing her senior thesis on the pioneering experimental performance group The Living Theatre—and who this past summer helped put on Theatreworks’ New Works Festival as part a Stanford-sponsored internship—is at home both behind the scenes and on stage. In addition to assistant-producing *Gaietiesburg* and stage-managing *Eurydice*, she took the directorial helm for the cabaret *Did We Offend You?*, assistant-produced Stanford’s production of the rock musical *Spring Awakening*, and served as dramaturge for the Ram’s Head musical *Les Miserables*. As an actor, Benina has appeared in some of the most experimental and literally moving productions on campus, performing in *Violet*—a musical that traveled on a bus—and most recently acting in *bacchae*, a roving, interactive, and hugely well-received performance-event that translated “Euripides’ classical tragedy into an immersive rave experience” (as the Arts Institute described it), making the performance “a playground for student artists and spectators alike.”

Now, had you been among the enchanted throng following *bacchae* across campus, you also might have spied among the performers AmStud majors **Molly Seligman** (‘16) and **Ali Stack** (‘17), and you would undoubtedly have encountered the choreography of another American Studies creative force, **Carly Lave** (‘15). Carly, who appeared in Cardinal Ballet and Dance division performances, as well as productions by Ram’s Head and The Freeks theatrical groups, was awarded Stanford’s Louis Sudler Prize for the Performing Arts in 2015 for her contributions to campus arts. She also earned a coveted spot (one of only eleven) in

Allison Gold  
*All My Sons*



photos: Frank Chen



Benina Stern (in headdress, top) and  
Molly Seligman (bottom, right) in *bacchae*



the 2014-15 cohort of Stanford's Interdisciplinary Honors Program in the Arts, in which students from across the spectrum of academic fields pursue creative capstone projects in conversation with their majors. Drawing on coursework and research in the history of American dance, along with performance and feminist studies, Carly choreographed and danced a duet entitled *Duality*, in which she explored “how new forms of contemporary ballet reconstruct and empower the female body onstage” (as she put it in her Honors in the Arts profile), forging new balletic beauty and power as she increasingly incorporated gestures typically considered “masculine” and even “ugly” over the piece. Carly performed part or all of *Duality* at multiple venues on campus, including an arts showcase she organized at EBF, (a further push-back on any rarified conception of art). As she told Arts Institute blogger Irene Hsu, “I wanted to do it in a student space, of and for my peers, that will make my art—my dancing—more impactful and resonate personally.” Not content to rest there, Carly also produced a 35-page companion essay on choreographer William Forsythe, on whose own groundbreaking experiments with balletic vocabulary she drew inspiration.

Remarkably, Carly was not the only American-Studies-affiliated student in the 2014-15 Honors in the Arts cohort. Filmmaker **Luke Lorentzen** ('15), an American Studies minor, was also among that select company. Luke had already garnered serious attention for “Santa Cruz del Islote,” a short form documentary he did in 2014 about a small, densely populated island off Colombia. That film not only screened at festivals internationally, but also won awards for best short at a number of them, including the San Francisco International Film Festival. Poised to make an even bigger splash is the full-length documentary he completed for Honors in the Arts. Titled *New York Cuts*, it draws viewers inside six haircutting venues in different New York City neighborhoods. The film speaks to Luke's fundamental love of storytelling, whether in the barber's chair or via film; it also attests to his engagement with American life—including issues of class, ethnicity, and community. As he said during an hour-long interview on Angie Coiro's *In Deep* radio show, his interest in salons and barber shops derived from a sense that these microcommunities offer unique glimpses into the diverse cultural enclaves inhabiting the city—and that together they represent something of the multicultural collage that is America. Luke's combination of scholarly and creative talents has earned him laurels locally as well as internationally, as he received at Stanford in 2015 a Dean's Awards for Academic Achievement and a Robert M. Golden Medal for Excellence in the Humanities and Creative Arts, among other laurels.

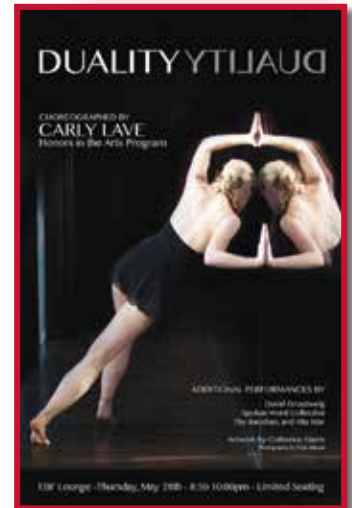
Cameras feature in the work of at least two more recent American Studies majors. As an undergraduate, self-trained filmmaker **Ty Olson** ('14) was already producing videos for professional music groups, including Sweden-based artists Postiljonen, jj, 1987, and The Embassy, as well as the Danish band Indians—videos that evoke complex emotions and dreamlike sensibilities out of elemental landscapes, limited color palettes, chiaroscuro lighting, and hypnotic pacing. During his senior year, Ty also began work on a film exploring Norwegian-American experience, his research taking him not only back to his own home community, but on to Norway, and thence to Sweden as the project developed—a transnational venture that, Ty writes, “has given me more perspective on the American experience than did working as a ranch hand in rural Wyoming three summers ago.” By uncanny coincidence, Scandinavian travels also figure in investigations into identity and American perspective undertaken by fellow major **Cody Laux** ('15). A keen student and practitioner of American street photography, Cody received a Chappell Lougee scholarship for summer of 2013 to train her lens on a Norway wrestling with questions of national identity amidst increasing ethnic and racial diversity. The results of her expedition were displayed in a solo exhibition in Cummings Art Building in spring 2014, titled “The Norwegians: An American Perspective on the Reconfiguration of Norwegian National Identity,” the title making a canny reference to Swiss-born Robert Frank's 1958 photographic study *The Americans*, which too brought an “outsider's” eye to bear on racial and social issues within a national identity. The show included thirty large black and white prints, at once beautiful and provocative. Not surprisingly, Cody won the Art and Art History Department's John Shively Fowler Award for Photography in 2015. She is also, by the way, an accomplished fiction writer, winning two prizes for her writing, plus two for her photography, in the nationwide 2014 Samuel Eells Literary and Educational Foundation Literary Competition, including the grand prize Daniel Pearl ('85) Award, for the single entry that shows the greatest level of overall excellence in all categories.

Speaking of creative writers, we certainly have our share of those. (In fact, it is hard to find AmStud majors

photo: Pat Mazzera



Luke Lorentzen with SFIFF award



Carly Lave Duality



Photograph from Cody Laux's The Norwegians

who haven't tried their hand, whether in classes, as a minor, or extracurricularly.) We have poets. **Makshya Tolbert** ('15)—who also expressed her creativity by founding the community garden at Ujamaa—snagged one of the coveted Levinthal Tutorials for poetry in her junior year. So did **Monica Masiello** ('14), a double major in English (Creative Writing emphasis), who wrote her American Studies honors thesis on Junot Diaz's short fiction. **Thomas Plank** ('16) has published poems in *El Aguila* (Stanford's quarterly magazine of the Chican@/Latin@ community) and *STATIC*, and completed a chapbook entitled *Sunrise* (though he tells us he is focusing for the time being on fiction-writing). **Nora Engel-Hall** ('17) has racked up snaps as a member of Stanford's Spoken Word Collective, which not only performs, but—equally important to Nora—also offers public workshops “to support and collaborate with a broader community of poets and writers on campus and beyond” as she puts it. We also have storytellers, humorists, star journalists: among them our very own newsletter editor **Molly Vorwerck** ('14) an award-winning writer (and editor) for the *Daily* and freelancer for *USA Today* during her senior year; **Sasha Arijanto** ('14) a creative force at *Intermission*, the *Daily's* Arts and Entertainment section; and **Sam Corrao Clanon** ('13), who (in addition to editing the previous American Studies newsletter) wrote for the *Chappie*, composed a screenplay, and wrote, directed, and performed with Stanford's sketch comedy group the *Robber Barons*, twice earning spots at the internationally renowned SF Sketchfest, including headlining performances. (Sam, we're happy to report, kept up writing and performing alongside his erstwhile “day job” in finance in NYC after graduation.)



Nora Engel-Hall

photo: Molly Vorwerck

Painters we have too. **McKenzie Culler** ('15) not only enjoyed painting (as well as sculpture and drawing) in his free time at Stanford; he wove this engagement into his thematic concentration on the social impact of the visual arts in America—a focus that epitomizes the kind of interconnected awareness we hope our majors carry with them beyond Stanford, even if, like McKenzie, they are pursuing careers in pediatric medicine. **Will Robins** ('14), meanwhile, fused his interest in the visual arts directly into his honor thesis, “Challenges of Illustrating Slavery in Nineteenth-Century American Literature.” In the already exemplary written portion of his thesis, Will plumbed a multitude of factors (financial, cultural, technical, institutional) to explain why scenes of slave resistance in 19<sup>th</sup> century writings so rarely found visual depiction in their time—and why, when there were illustrations at all, they tended to replicate demeaning racial stereotypes. But not content to just report, Will put his talent where his mouth was, undertaking an act of recuperative visual justice by creating six oil paintings depicting moments of slave resistance in works by Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, Charles Chesnutt, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and others—paintings that invested their subjects with the humanity and dignity denied them by 19<sup>th</sup> century illustrators. The paintings were astonishingly powerful. (Not least astonished were members of the Stanford Men's Crew Team who attended Will's exhibition and presentation, and who before had no inkling that their teammate—a two-time US national team rower—even painted!)



Will Robins in front of his Thesis Presentation

Will's thesis is part of that uptick in recent years in American Studies capstones involving a creative element (a trend that perhaps stems back to alum **Emily Layden's** 2011 thesis, which included a full-length historical novel). And the trend promises to continue and grow. Indeed, it's contagious: inspired by Will's example, for instance, senior **Sarah Sadlier** ('16) is undertaking a multipart project (in conjunction with a Cantor Center exhibition she is helping mount for 2016), producing a biography of the Minneconjou Sioux warrior and artist Red Cloud both in written form and in a series of drawings based in Native American pictorial modes, recovering at once a neglected historical figure and an art-form.

Also taking the torch in terms of “mixed media” creative-historical theses this year has been **Reno Tsosie** ('15). Reno (who is also tapped into Stanford theater via costume work) is a fast-rising clothing designer who infuses historically and culturally-informed awareness into his designs, intermeshing his sartorial expertise with his American Studies engagements. Having already designed a line of evening wear inspired by Frida Kahlo, Reno is now completing an honors thesis that combines a historical essay with design. He is producing a full fashion show's worth of contemporary designs that reflect his research into a convergence of Native American cultures and Euro-American modernism in the American Southwest between the World Wars—a project inspired by the uniforms of the “Harvey Couriers” (university-educated women hired to lead “Indian Detours” in the 1920s and 1930s), which Reno happened upon in a small museum at the Grand Canyon. Reno's designs



One of Reno Tsosie's designs for his honors thesis

have already garnered some big-time attention, including notice from the editor of Italian *Vogue*, Franca Sozzani, and from designer Dennis Basso, who selected Reno to apprentice on his creative team this past summer.

Why has American Studies become the academic home-base for so many talented movers and shakers at Stanford? Why has there grown to be such a symbiosis between American Studies and creative pursuits in recent years? Noteworthy though it is, the phenomenon is not very hard to explain. In part, it goes back to the kind of students who choose American Studies—self-motivated individuals who love to make things for themselves. In part it comes from a magnetizing effect that occurs as current majors in the arts tell their compeers about American Studies. (Perhaps it also doesn't hurt that our current Academic Program Administrator, **Rachel Meisels**, was a drama major at Stanford.) Of course, it also has to do with the famously open-ended responsiveness of the American Studies program itself, which not only allows, but heartily encourages students to pursue their passions within the major. As Reno recently wrote, "I remember when Dick Gillam converted me during a sophomore majors' event in the Faculty Club. I didn't believe him when he said I could study whatever I wanted, even if it was fashion." Reno found that Gillam was true to his word—that he could indeed study fashion as an American Studies major. Even more, he has found that being an American Studies major allows him to bring uncommon depth and perspective to the table as a designer. Working in New York this past summer, Reno was often asked what his major had to do with his aspirations in fashion. What Reno realized in response: "I see the bigger picture."

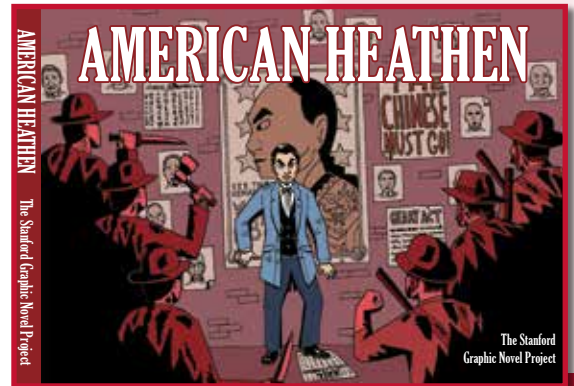
This idea—that American Studies doesn't just allow students to incorporate the arts into their studies as topics, but also nourishes their creative endeavors—is echoed by recent graduate **Arielle Basich** ('15) who has the rare distinction of completing two tours of duty with Stanford's renowned Graphic Novel Project. "I think one of the greatest things about American Studies is that it is applicable to basically any creative endeavor you could want to take," Arielle says, "because the interdisciplinary aspect of the major/minor gives you a really good understanding of People and Place, which is indispensable for a storyteller. It's actually one of the reasons that I was an American Studies major instead of just an English major." Arielle found her American Studies experiences especially relevant to her work on Graphic Novel Project, as both of the books she worked on were based in American history: the 1960s feminist movement and space race in *A Place Among the Stars* (2014), and late 19th century anti-Chinese movements in *American Heathen* (2015). As Arielle puts it, "I was able to interact with the books in a much deeper and personal way than I would have been able to otherwise, and on a practical level I could often bring in background . . . that helped improve the narrative, dialogue, and world building." All told, she says, "Being part of the Stanford Graphic Novel Project would have been fun and rewarding no matter what, but being an American Studies major at the same time made it a particularly rich experience, in a way I don't think it would have been otherwise."

As these talented majors move beyond Stanford horizons, we can't wait to see how they enrich the wider world with their informed creativity, whether—like Arielle and so many others here—they pursue careers in the arts and media, or go on to work in other areas. Meanwhile, we also have plenty of local talent to keep us challenged, delighted, and entertained here at Stanford, as the pool of AmStud talent seems to just keep refilling. What with Benina, Molly S., Ali, Thomas, Nora, and Sarah still here—what with **Holly Grench** ('16), who has played mellophone in LSJUMB's elite Red Vest corps and also draws; and **Jordan Huelskamp** ('17), a dancer and writer, just back from composing essays on Southwestern land art via a Chappell Lougee this summer, now starting on a novel; and **Lindsay Mewes** ('16), who is on her way to career in film; and **Ashley Westhem** ('16), whose forte is sports-writing; and **Kenna Little** ('17), who plays accordion and bass with various Stanford groups, and is learning to play violin. . . . No Sahara of the beaux-arts here! ■

- Judy Richardson (American Studies Program Coordinator)

Image credit: 2015 Stanford Graphic Novel Project

download at:  
<http://creativewriting.stanford.edu/stanford-graphic-novel-project-2015>



*American Heathen* was one of two books Arielle Basich worked on with the Stanford Graphic Novel Project

photo: Frank Chen



Kenna and Carly (l) and Allison (r) in *Gaieites* 2014



## TEACHING 'BOUT THE U.S.A.: AFTER THREE DECADES, RICHARD GILLAM RETIRES FROM AMERICAN STUDIES

On April 6, 2015, faculty, students, staff, friends—and even family—gathered in Margaret Jacks Hall to celebrate the career of Professor Richard Gillam, one of Stanford Humanities' most cherished members and quite literally an icon of the American Studies Program itself. Unbeknownst to Gillam, huge fanfare—and a poster signed by his favorite musician and another American icon, Bruce Springsteen—awaited him on what he assumed would be a typical afternoon spent in his office.

After 30 years at Stanford and 29 as Program Coordinator of the American Studies Program, Gillam's farewell party marked the bittersweet retirement of a deeply passionate and committed member of Stanford's humanities faculty and one of only a handful of professors exclusively in the American Studies Program.

The recipient of an ASSU Teaching Award and Gores Award, Gillam was fiercely committed not only to his intellectual passions—Bruce Springsteen and American working class culture being only one of them—but also his students. To many undergrads, Gillam was an integral component of a well-rounded academic experience; in addition to taking his ever-popular seminar on the American 1960s, students in recent years could be found conversing about myriad topics with him after class, during his office hours, or over a coffee in the Quad.

Gillam came to Stanford as a Visiting Professor in 1985 from the University of Redlands, where he had received a Rockefeller Fellowship to pursue work on an independent research project. A Stanford graduate (he received his B.A. in 1965 and Ph.D. in 1972) who was heavily involved in Civil Rights activism while on campus, Gillam moved to Northern California with his wife, Kathy, to work at his alma mater, at first for just one year of research—and then, for good.

"We both came up to Stanford to do work in the 1984-1985 school year, and realized that we never wanted to go back," he said.

Although he joined Stanford's faculty on a temporary basis, Gillam ended up a fixture in the American Studies Program quite rapidly. In his first year, he became a second reader on a number of American Studies honors theses, and found that many of his research interests were shared by undergraduates who were majoring in the program. By 1986, he was hired as the program's faculty coordinator and the

rest is – if you'll excuse the pun – American Studies history. Over the course of the next 29 years, Gillam would not only serve as coordinator, but also advise hundreds of students' research projects and teach an array of American Studies classes.

In many ways, what stood out to Gillam about the program was the generosity of spirit he felt among its faculty members. "Most of the faculty in American Studies is borrowed," he said. "I met – and I think this is still true – a lot of faculty who didn't have to do anything for American Studies but were [teaching in it] because they wanted to." Gillam's own belief in American Studies was solidified by the commitment to it he saw in other Stanford faculty. Not least, Gillam says he will never forget colleague Bart Bernstein's numerous attempts to convert up-and-coming History majors to American Studies: "[He] would often tell a particular student 'I think you might like American Studies better than History, or English, or Sociology.'"

photo: Jacob Nierenberg



**Richard Gillam**

Beyond this, Gillam suggests that what makes American Studies appealing—and unique among other interdisciplinary programs at Stanford—is that it truly allows students to chart their own academic courses, both literally and figuratively. "[As an undergraduate], you really do get to a significant degree to design your own major and find a particular focus that you like, and most of the requirements get checked with courses you take," he said.

According to Gillam, his favorite class to teach at Stanford was "American Intellectual History," a lecture-based course he led until 2004. In his opinion, the course not only touched on some of his most beloved historical interests, but also posited significant and challenging questions about American cultural practices. "I was very fond of that course, in part because of the books that ended up being the central readings," he said. "I always thought of it, along with the '60s class, to be my bread and butter course. And frankly, I kind of enjoyed lecturing because I'm a bit of a ham."

Gillam believes that the program's appeal for undergraduates is very similar to its appeal for him: in short, that it gives students the ability to pursue unique academic interests that don't fit under the umbrella of a single department. "I have always thought that [American Studies] tends to attract students who are very interesting and sometimes eccentric," he said. "[In many American Studies undergraduates], there is a kind of imagination that has great value both personally and professionally. American Studies finds itself with people who are round pegs who don't fit in the typical square peg holes."

Without a doubt, Gillam has helped lay the ground work for such round pegs to continue to find themselves in American Studies for years to come. And although he's retired, Gillam says that his interest in the future of the program will continue long after he cleans out his office, particularly as a desire to pursue degrees in the humanities continues to grow among Stanford undergraduates.

"I'm somewhere between hopeful and optimistic about the future [of the program]," he noted. "Obviously American Studies is against the STEM tide, but studies suggest that there will not be enough STEM jobs in the future, and there will be some swing back towards the liberal arts and humanities. I think American Studies will get its fair share of people."

In many ways, Gillam is to Stanford's American Studies Program what his 1960s seminar is to American Studies, or what "Born in the USA" is to Bruce Springsteen's career; it's hard to imagine the program without him.

His perspective on those 29 years?

"It's been a great ride." ■

- Molly Vorwerck, '14



**Richard Gillam and Teddy Steinkellner**

*photo: Shelley Fishkin*



**Richard Gillam and Sarah Sadlier**

## **MAKING TRACKS: AN UPDATE ON THE CHINESE RAILROAD WORKERS IN NORTH AMERICA PROJECT**



**I**n his 1865 report to Congress on the Central Pacific Railroad, Leland Stanford acknowledged, "The greater portion of the laborers employed by us are Chinese, who constitute a large

element of the population of California. Without them it would be impossible to complete the western portion of this great national enterprise, within the time required by the Acts of Congress." 150 years later, on June 6, 2015, the Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project (CRWNAP) and the Chinese Historical Society of America convened at Stanford to celebrate the Chinese who built the Transcontinental Railroad. These workers were crucial in the construction of the Central Pacific; however, little was known of their lives. Even their names remained anonymous to the pages of history—until now.

Over the past three years, the CRWNAP has united archeologists, artists, historians, literature experts, musicians, and writers in the quest to better understand the forgotten experiences and monumental contributions of the Chinese railroad workers. The gathering of this diverse group of scholars from China and the United States in June was, according to Stanford Dean of the School of Humanities and Sciences Richard Saller, an "unprecedented event" in that it acknowledged "the crucial role that the Chinese who built the Central Pacific Railroad played in creating the fortune with which Leland Stanford founded our university" and marked "the first time that Stanford University has formally honored their memory."

The Chinese Railroad Workers in North American Project reflects the field of American Studies' increasing attention to transnational perspectives on America's past, to issues of race and racism, and to the nation's longstanding global links to Asia.

*cont. on page 14*





Breaking barriers, the CRWNAP has brought together not only scholars from different disciplines but also the descendants of the railroad workers. Of the 250 attendees of the 150th anniversary event, fifty were there to celebrate the accomplishments of their forefathers. In fact, the contributions of these descendants have proved indispensable, as they have provided the project with oral family histories to help reconstruct the lives of the average Chinese worker.

Also in attendance were the project's undergraduate researchers. Since its inception, the CRWNAP has involved Stanford students. From budding biologists to aspiring historians, the only prerequisite is a passion for the subject. They are welcomed by the project's American Studies-affiliated co-directors Shelley Fisher Fishkin and Gordon Chang—and by Associate Director Hilton Obenzinger, Research Coordinator Teri Hessel, and Project Manager Gabriel Wolfenstein—at the project's home base in the Center for Spatial and Textual Analysis (CESTA). Known for their investment in undergraduate instruction, the faculty and staff have engaged students inside and outside of the classroom in the project. They have given the undergraduate researchers the tremendous responsibility of mining the archives for documents and have encouraged them to pursue their interests through individual research projects. As a result, the students' work has proved invaluable: their location of the Central Pacific payroll records has yielded the names of hundreds of Chinese laborers and their research into historical

newspapers has helped flesh out information about topics from accidents in which Chinese workers were killed to details about their daily lives. By adding this material to Bibliopedia, a searchable resource tool developed at Stanford and customized for CRWNAP, they have made important strides towards the project's ultimate goal of creating an open-access digital archive that will be hosted by Stanford University Libraries. Indeed, Stanford Libraries and Information Resources have played a central role in the Project from the start, sharing expertise and resources in Academic Technology, acquiring relevant materials, and giving the project an office in the East Asia Library. The East Asia Library hosted an exhibit on the Chinese Railroad Workers Project during the spring and summer of 2015 curated by two Stanford undergraduates, Eve Simister '16 and Noelle Herring '16 (those who attended the June 6 event were treated to a personal tour of the exhibit by Eve).

As the project forges forward, it begins looking towards April of 2016, when it will hold its major academic conference at Stanford, where participants from China, the United States, and Taiwan will present their current research and receive feedback from their fellow scholars. Subsequently, papers from the conference will be published in an edited volume, which will exemplify the project's cross-disciplinary excellence of scholarship. These efforts will be made possible in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, as well as the generous and continuous support of the university. A grant from the Chiang Ching Kuo Foundation also has allowed for further research trips, including one in which the project's archaeology director, Professor Barbara Voss, and her fellow archeologists will travel to Guangdong; it will also provide support for the digital archive.

Until the conference, the researchers will continue working in earnest. "Over the course of the next academic year, we will be developing more complex visualizations that will help access the material and make it more digestible for the general public and the researchers," noted Gabriel Wolfenstein. "In the meantime, the project will continue adding material to the website and Bibliopedia, searching out archives both at Stanford and beyond to seek those elusive bits and pieces that will help us piece out the forgotten experiences of the Chinese railroad workers on the Central Pacific."

While researchers will endeavor to make their research available to public, they will not abandon their quest for the project's "holy grail"—a document written by a Chinese railroad worker on the Central Pacific. To this date, none has been found, but for the



*Photo exhibition at June 6th event*



intrepid researchers of the Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project, this is not a demoralizing deterrent—it is an exhilarating challenge. ■

- Sarah Sadlier, '16

*Sarah Sadlier's work with the CRWNAP began in her freshman year and inspired her to join the American Studies Program during her sophomore year. She would like to encourage anyone interested in the American West to participate in the project, as it is "a fabulous opportunity to meet a fascinating and friendly family of scholars." If you would like to talk to Sarah about her experience majoring in American Studies or working for the CRWNAP, you can contact her at [sadlier@stanford.edu](mailto:sadlier@stanford.edu). For more information about the Project, go to <http://web.stanford.edu/group/chineserailroad/cgi-bin/wordpress/>.*

## CONGRATULATIONS!

In April 2014 "The Committee of 100"—a leading international organization dedicated to making cultural connections between the United States and Asia—honored Stanford University with its Common Ground Award for the Advancement in U.S.-China Relations at a gala in San Francisco, where they showed a video about the Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project to exemplify how Stanford research is bridging a historical divide in Chinese American relations. President Hennessy accepted the award for Stanford with project co-directors (and American Studies faculty) Gordon Chang and Shelley Fishkin. With a distinguished team of some 150 scholars in history, American Studies, literature, archaeology, anthropology, architecture, and cultural studies collecting what will become the single largest archive on Chinese American history, the CRWNAP is the largest investigation of Chinese American history ever undertaken. It is also the largest and most ambitious trans-Pacific collaborative historical project to date. The end products of the research will include multilingual books and articles, conferences and commemorative events, an open-access digital archive of primary materials, and a massive documentary digital archive for Stanford's library, among others. ■



**Gordon Chang and Shelley Fishkin with Chinese Consul General Luo Linquan at June 6, 2015 event**

## THE LAST LAUGH: HILTON OBENZINGER ENTERS FINAL YEAR TEACHING HALLMARK STAND-UP COMEDY CLASS



Entering his fifth and final year as instructor of one of the American Studies Program's most popular courses, "Stand Up Comedy and the 'Great American Joke' Since 1945," Dr. Hilton Obenzinger has a lot to reflect on. Or rather, laugh about.

For those unfamiliar with Obenzinger's *shtick* at Stanford, his stand-up comedy course is just one of many classes on American arts and culture that Obenzinger has taught since coming to the Farm over 20 years ago to pursue his Ph.D. in Modern Thought and Literature. However, the course is in many ways the hallmark of his teaching at Stanford, and certainly the most memorable—if not amusing—class he's taught.

The class was a natural fit for Obenzinger's academic interests, and his own background as a member of San Francisco's activist counterculture during the 1970s where stand-up comedy as a tool for social and political advocacy thrived. As a result of these influences, a class on American stand-up comedy was born.

"[In the early 2000s], I had been teaching stand-up as part of this American comedy satire class. In 2010, Shelley [Fisher Fishkin] asked me, 'why don't [you] teach a course on comedy in American Studies,'" he said. "So it became *this* course, and I just focused on stand-up, in an entirely intimate scenario."

According to Obenzinger, what modern historians identify as stand-up comedy was born from a variety of historical and cultural forces in early 20th century America, including vaudeville, minstrelsy, and music hall entertainment, as well as classic comedy teams like the Marx Brothers and Laurel and Hardy.

By mid-twentieth century, stand-up became a means by which entertainers could critique societal injustices in a way that ruffled feathers, perhaps, but was veiled in jest. Thus, stand-up became a central component of social advocacy at mid-century, facilitating a safe, more light-hearted venue for freedom of speech.

"It became way for people to say things that they couldn't say," Obenzinger said. "For instance, that time in 1953 when Mort Sahl made jokes about Joe McCarthy during a stand-up routine in New York City and it was outrageous."

Since first teaching the class during the 2010-2011 school year, Obenzinger has incorporated new material into the course as more groups break comedic barriers and more

*cont. on page 16*



*Hilton Obenzinger with his 2014 Stand Up Comedy class (l)*

*Former class member Stu Melton performing in 2014 (r)*

transgressive talents join the fold of the American stand-up canon. In fact, many students come to the class with the names of comedians Obenzinger has never heard of. “I’ve been able to incorporate material that the students have developed from contemporary comics,” he said. “And it’s great!”

Despite the comedic roots of the class, Obenzinger suggests that it’s not an easy course. In fact, analyzing and interpreting the satirical elements of a comedian’s shtick can be quite challenging.

“For a lot of people, they’re like, ‘oh good, stand-up! It’s gonna be easy, it’s gonna be fun,’ but it’s not an easy class,” he said. “We see right off the bat that serious things are discussed like race, gender, all kinds of different dynamics, and religion. These subjects can be very explosive, but by talking about it through the lines of comedy, it makes it a way to enter into different ways people think about these issues.”

One of the most noteworthy—and memorable—elements of the class is the year-end Comedy Club held in Margaret Jacks Hall in which class participants must perform two or three minutes of original stand-up. At first, Obenzinger offered an out for students intimidated by performing in front of their classmates, but now, the stand-up assignment is an integral component of the course.

And after five years of student stand-up, Obenzinger has certainly seen some interesting original stand-up routines by his students. “There have been some really outstanding performances; I found out a lot about undergraduate life that maybe I didn’t want to know,” he laughs. “People were feeling free to unloosen and let this side of them come out. In a lot of instances, the women were more raunchy than the men.”

Some students have even been inspired by the class to strike out on their own in the world of stand-up, most notably, Stuart Melton, ’15, who took the class during the first quarter of his freshman year. Melton, who had no previous exposure to performing stand-

up comedy, took the class out of interest, but after his Comedy Club performance, he was hooked.

The summer after his junior year, Melton took his newfound talent to New York City, receiving a research grant from Stanford to conduct research on the current state of stand-up comedy. “I went to New York and I performed everywhere,” he said. “It ended up being two–three open mics a day, just going to different clubs throughout the city and meeting different comics and working on my set.”

As his final project for the grant, Melton delivered a whopping 30 minutes of stand-up in an on-campus performance for faculty and friends, including Obenzinger. “It’s not something most comedians get to do, just practice their stand-up for 30 minutes on a built-in audience” he said. “I was very lucky.”

Despite the popularity of the class and protestations from grateful students like Melton that he continue teaching, Obenzinger suggests that after one more year, it’s time to move on. According to Obenzinger, his wife is retiring, he’s “not as spry” as he once was, and he has other projects in the works that are taking over the punch line of his life, so to speak. But don’t worry: he’s certain he’ll get the last laugh.

“I’m determined to go out while its still strong, just like a good stand-up comedian,” he joked. “Stand-up has a very solid place in American culture. It’s never going to go away. I hope others pick up the torch and keep teaching it.” ■

*- Molly Vorwerck, '14*

## UPDATE ON THE JOURNAL OF TRANSNATIONAL AMERICAN STUDIES

The Journal of Transnational American Studies (JTAS), a peer-reviewed, open-access journal sponsored by Stanford's American Studies Program and the American Cultures and Global Contexts Center at the University of California, Santa Barbara, continues to thrive. Indeed, a measure of the journal's visibility is the fact that a session devoted to it was held at the Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association in 2014 in Los Angeles.

JTAS was founded to provide a home for cutting-edge, border-crossing, multidisciplinary scholarship in American Studies focused on transnational topics that deserved a broad global audience. One of the relatively small number of born digital journals selected for preservation by the Library of Congress, JTAS has sought fresh and original work in a broad range of fields from locations across the globe.

During the six years it has been in existence, JTAS has published 101 peer-reviewed articles. The Forward section has published excerpts from 52 recently published or soon-to-be published books and articles. And the Reprise section has given new online life and accessibility to 59 outstanding articles or book chapters that had been previously available in hard copy only. Current and past issues are available at [http://escholarship.org/uc/acgcc\\_jtas](http://escholarship.org/uc/acgcc_jtas)

The journal is shaped at its core by the assumption that building transnational American Studies requires paying attention to work done outside the US—and engaging it—as much as it involves the substantive work of identifying historical, literary, and cultural connections across borders. Our Editorial Board is composed of scholars working in five countries on three different continents (which turns out to be an insomniac's dream: whatever hour of the day or night one wants to have a stimulating online conversation, we know that a colleague is likely to be up and about and answering email on some continent or other!).

Among the nearly two hundred pieces JTAS has published over the last six years are works by scholars based in Argentina, Austria, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, Morocco, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Russia, Spain, Taiwan, Turkey, and the U.K. We have featured work by contributors who teach in departments and programs including African and African American Studies; American Indian Studies; American Studies; Anthropology; Asian American Studies; Asian Studies; Communication; Comparative Literature; Education; English; Environmental Humanities; Film; Foreign Languages; Gender Studies; History; Latin American and Iberian Studies; Law; Philosophy; Political Science; Religious Studies; Sexuality Studies; Sociology; Theatre Studies; Visual and Cultural Studies; and Urban Studies.

The range of topics engaged in the most recent issue suggests in microcosm the diversity of topics and approaches that the field of Transnational American Studies encompasses. They include an examination of ideas about Chinese and US law that shaped a chapter of US legal history as startlingly hubristic as it is unjustly neglected; a discussion of the impact of US racial and ethnic anxieties and ideologies on the racialization of Japanese Mexicans and Mexican Indians in Mexico during World War II; an inquiry into the ways in which the Haitian Revolution spurred the development of ideas of transnational, cosmopolitan, diasporic identities among writers of African descent

in the US; an analysis of the role played by a Chinese American US senator and a Japanese American US congressman in post-World War II public diplomacy in Asia; and a study of the representation of Arabs and Arab realities in American cinema during the Silent Era that focuses on the life and work of a leading American film director who moved to Morocco, made films there, and eventually converted to Islam.

The current issue includes pieces that address what gets lost—and found—in translation, in contexts that range from translations of Edgar Allan Poe in Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America to the role played by multilingual vernacular humor in the 2013 Turkish protests in Gezi Park. The transnational dimensions of religions that have shaped America are addressed as well—but not the





usual suspects: there are pieces on transnational dimensions of Mormonism, Buddhism and Islam that explore a range of American spiritual traditions. Transnational cultural memory is at the center of discussions of war memoirs of the Spanish-American War and Iraq War; transnational 9/11 monuments and memorials; and visual iconography and collective memory. One piece examines responses in New York and Montreal newspapers to the London trials of Oscar Wilde, and another explores the responses to a controversial Hollywood film—*Blackboard Jungle*—in Japan, Germany, and the US, with passing comments on responses in Australia, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, and Egypt. Another piece gleans insights into transborder feminism by exploring the formal indebtedness of a contemporary Chicana novel to a largely neglected Mexican precursor.

The more we learn, it seems, the less we know. Definitions of our field that seemed clear a few years ago may now appear to be more blurred or porous than we thought. What is our object of study? What methods do we use to study it? As we endlessly debate these basic questions, we sometimes feel we may be further away from, rather than closer to, answering the question, What is transnational American Studies? Jorge Luis Borges wrote in the afterword to *El Hacedor* in 1960, “A man sets out to draw the world. As the years go by, he peoples a space with images of provinces, kingdoms, mountains, bays, ships, islands, fishes, rooms, instruments, stars, horses, and individuals. A short time before he dies, he discovers that the patient labyrinth of lines traces the lineaments of his own face.” To borrow Borges’s trope, perhaps when the articles, essays, chapters, and book excerpts we have presented to the world are viewed from some point in the distant future, it is possible that the “labyrinth of lines” will strike that future reader as “the lineaments” of our field. ■

—Excerpted from “Envisioning Transnational American Studies,” *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 6:1 (2015) by Shelley Fisher Fishkin, a Founding Editor of the journal, which may be read in its entirety at <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/1pd1074m>.

## Congratulations Monica!



Monica Moore was honored by President John Hennessy with an Amy J. Blue award in recognition of four decades of superb service to the University. The award honors staff who are exceptionally dedicated, supportive of colleagues, and passionate about their work. American Studies is one of three interdisciplinary programs at Stanford for which Monica is program administrator—but we feel as if she gives us 100% of her energy and devotion.



**SCOTT BUKATMAN.** Scott Bukatman's recently completed book on comic-book demon-hunter Hellboy is due out from University of California Press in early 2016. Titled *Hellboy's World: Comics and Monsters on the Margins* it

centers on the materiality of the comics reading experience.



**JAMES CAMPBELL.** James Campbell continues to spend as much time as possible in Mississippi, conducting research for a book tentatively entitled "Freedom Now: The Mississippi Freedom Struggle in History and Memory." He presented an early version of the work in March at Sussex University in

England, where he delivered the annual Cunliffe Lecture in American History. He is also completing a side project from the research, a book entitled "Mississippi Witness: The Photographs of Florence Mars," which is under contract with the University of Mississippi Press.



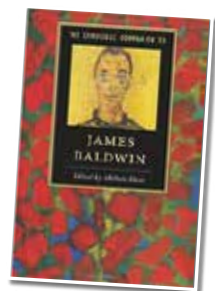
**GORDON CHANG.** In April, Harvard University Press published Gordon Chang's latest book, *Fateful Ties: The History of America's Preoccupation with China*. Tracing American fascination with China from the earliest colonial days, and giving special attention to the views of cultural entrepreneurs—

writers, artists, business visionaries, missionaries, and social activists—the book adds a deep historical foundation for understanding current U.S. attention to China, both positive and negative. (See p. 23.) With Shelley Fisher Fishkin, Chang recently received an NEH grant for the Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project, which the two co-direct (see pp. 13-15). Chang was also honored in September 2014 at the Chinese Historical Society of America's Voice and Vision Gala for his numerous, groundbreaking efforts to illuminate Chinese American history.



**MICHELE ELAM.** In 2015, *The Cambridge Companion to James Baldwin* that Michele Elam edited was published, along with her introduction, titled "Baldwin's Art." She also published two

articles (both on Baldwin) and a book-review essay, and gave four talks at national conferences as well as an invited lecture at Princeton's Center for African American



Studies. She was invited as the keynote at the International James Baldwin conference in Montpellier, France, and conducted research on Baldwin in Paris at the Sorbonne, as well as hosting a public discussion of Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* for Stanford's "Another Look" book club (see p. 29). In addition, she served on the advisory council and editorial board for *The Wiley-Blackwell Anthology of African American Literature Volumes I & II* (2014). Last year Elam became very involved with three national advisory boards: the Executive Council (of which she was Chair) for the American Literature Society of the Modern Language Association; the Critical Mixed Race Studies Association; and the Mixed Race Initiative, a project in which 100 universities worldwide joined in a multi-institutional synchronous teaching program focused on the study of mixed race. This year she looks forward to teaching new courses at Stanford, including an exciting team-taught introsem with Lauren Davenport (Political Science) on mixed race culture and politics. She is also very pleased to be assuming a new role as Chair of the interdisciplinary graduate program, Modern Thought and Literature beginning in fall 2015.



**SHELLEY FISHER FISHKIN.** Shelley Fisher Fishkin completed *Writing America: Literary Landmarks from Walden Pond to Wounded Knee* (Rutgers University Press, 2015), a book that the writer Junot Díaz has called "a triumph of scholarship and passion." (See pp. 26-27.) She also published five

articles: "Envisioning Transnational American Studies" in the *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 6:1 (2015); "Mapping American Studies in the 21st Century: Transnational Perspectives" in *Transnational American Cultures*, edited by Rocio Davis (Routledge, 2013); "Remembering Makoto Nagawara," in *Mark Twain Studies*, which is published in Japan (2014); "Still 'The Most Conspicuous Person on the Planet' – Mark Twain in 2014," published (in Japanese) in the *Japan Mark Twain Society Newsletter* (2014); and, with Gordon Chang, "Fragments of the Past: Archaeology, History, and the Chinese Railroad Workers in North America," in *Historical Archaeology* 49:2 (2015). She gave a keynote talk at a conference on "Transnational Currents of US-China Relations" at Hong Kong University and also keynoted conferences at Sun Yat-sen University (Guangzhou) on "The North America Chinese Laborers and the Society of the Guangdong Qiaoxiang" and at Academia Sinica (Taipei) on "Chinese Railroad Workers in North America." She gave lectures at the Asia Society (Hong Kong), National Sun Yat-sen University (Kaohsiung), the Pacific Asia Museum (Pasadena), Occidental College (Los Angeles), and the Asia Society of Texas (Houston), and delivered papers at the American Studies Association annual meetings. She also attended the opening of the 2014 American Film Institute AFI-DOCS Festival for the world premiere of *Holbrook/Twain*, a film by Scott Teems and Laura Smith in which



she is featured. She continued to serve as Director of Stanford's American Studies Program, which was reviewed and reauthorized through 2023. She also continued to serve as Co-Director (with Gordon Chang) of the Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project at Stanford and as Founding Editor and Editorial Board Member of the *Journal of Transnational American Studies* (see pp. 13-15 and 17-18). She was appointed to a three-year term on the Advisory Committee of the Institute for European and American Studies, Academia Sinica.



**LEAH GORDON.** Leah Gordon published her first book, *From Power to Prejudice: The Rise of Racial Individualism in Midcentury America* with the University of Chicago Press in May of 2015. (You can listen to a June 18th podcast of her discussing the book on Doug Henwood's radio show *Behind the News* at <http://www.leftbusinessobserver.com/Radio.html>.) Gordon recently received a Charles A. Ryskamp Research Fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies for work on her second book, a cultural history of the concept of equal educational opportunity in twentieth-century America.



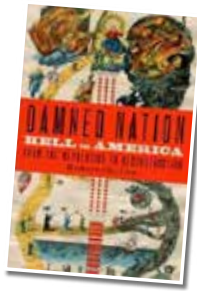
**ALLYSON HOBBS.** Allyson Hobbs' first book, *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life*, was published by Harvard University Press in October 2014, winning two prizes from the Organization of American Historians: the Frederick Jackson Turner Prize for best first book in American history and the Lawrence Levine Prize for best book in American cultural history. The book was selected as a *New York Times* Book Review Editor's Choice, a "Best Book of 2014" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and a "Book of the Week" by the *Times Higher Education* in London, as well as being named one of the "Best 15 Nonfiction Books by Black Authors in 2014" by *The Root*. (See p. 22.) In June 2013, Hobbs added Stanford's Phi Beta Kappa Prize to her list of teaching awards.



**MARGO HORN.** Margo Horn continues to globalize her teaching, particularly with regards to women's history. In 2015 she taught "Global Women Leaders" in Stanford Summer Session. Always grounded in US history, she began with Eleanor Roosevelt and ended with Hillary Clinton. But her global focus included three women prime ministers from South Asia: Indira Ghandi of India, Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, and Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh. Professor Horn is plagued by the question, why has the US not had a woman president?



**KATHRYN GIN LUM.** Kathryn Gin Lum's book *Damned Nation: Hell in America from the Revolution to Reconstruction* was published by Oxford University Press in September of 2014.



**DOUG MCADAM.** Doug McAdam spent the 2013-14 academic year as a Visiting Scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation in New York City. His book *Deeply Divided: Racial Politics and Social Movements in Post-War America*, co-authored with Karina Kloos, was published by Oxford University Press in 2014 (see p. 25). The book received honorable mention in the category of Sociology and Social Work from the American Publishers Awards for Professional and Scholarly Excellence (the PROSE Awards).



**CHRISTINA MESA.** With her book *The American History of Black and White Race Relations in Film* contracted with Routledge for 2016, Christina Mesa has been taking her scholarship to the street, so to speak, studying and teaching about automobiles in American life and participating in the Revs Program at Stanford. She is working on her next book project in collaboration with students from her American Studies class "On the Road: Cars and Auto-Mobility in American Fiction, Film, and History," and hopes to do a cross-country trip to get the draft done by year's end. This past January she appeared on a panel at the MLA convention called "Beyond the Professoriate," where she spoke about "Bridging the Humanities and Engineering." In March she joined the Stanford Revs contingent at the Revs Annual Symposium on Historic Cars in Naples, FL. She also presented "The American Auto-mobility Story" at the Society of Automotive Historians conference, here at CARS-REVS, in April 2014. She continues to love teaching for American Studies, and looks forward to offering in 2015-16 "Ten Ways to Study Cars" and "American Fiction into Film: How Hollywood Scripts and Projects Black and White Relations" (now in its tenth year).



**ALEXANDER NEMEROV.** Alexander Nemerov published *Silent Dialogues: Diane Arbus and Howard Nemerov*, an intimate reflection on the artistic relationship of his aunt and father. The book was published by Fraenkel Gallery in San Francisco. He also completed a book on the photographer Lewis Hine, to be published by Princeton University Press. Titled *Soulmaker: The Times of Lewis Hine*, the book will appear in early





2016 in conjunction with an exhibition of Hine's work at the Cantor Arts Center on campus.



**HILTON OBENZINGER.** In 2015, Hilton Obenzinger curated and edited a small book of poems his father wrote before and right after immigrating to the U.S., titled *Beginning: The Immigration Poems, 1924-1926, of Nachman Obzinger*, and translated from Yiddish by Benjamin Weiner. His essay, "Holy

Lands, Restoration and Zionism in *Ben-Hur*," will appear this fall (2015) in *Bigger Than Ben Hur!*, edited by Barbara Ryan and Milete Shamir. This October, the book *How We Write: The Varieties of Writing Experience*—based on the How I Write Project conversations Hilton has hosted at Stanford since 2002—will be released. As Associate Director of the Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project, Hilton has also been giving presentations at panels and conferences in China and the U.S. (For more on Hilton, see pp. 15-16.)



*Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, edited by Esther Peeren and Maria del Pilar Blanco (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013). She also co-authored two pieces with Gavin Jones: an essay titled "Lost in the City" for *Carleton Watkins: The Stanford Albums*, published by Stanford UP in conjunction with a Cantor Center exhibition; and a chapter on "Proslavery Fiction" for the forthcoming *Cambridge Companion to Slavery in American Literature*. She continues to explore what she calls the "plantmindedness" of nineteenth-century America, recently sending off an article titled "Nathaniel Hawthorne's Secret Gardens." She also continues to cherish her role as program coordinator of American Studies.



**CAROLINE WINTERER.** Caroline Winterer became director of the Stanford Humanities Center in September 2013, and that fall received the Smithsonian's American Ingenuity Award for her work on Benjamin Franklin's correspondence network. An article about the project appeared in

*Smithsonian Magazine*. She also discussed Thomas Jefferson's design for the Virginia state capitol building for the PBS series, *10 Buildings That Changed America*. Her new book, entitled *American Enlightenments*, is being published next year by Yale University Press, and she has a chapter titled "What Was the American Enlightenment?" in the forthcoming volume, *The Worlds of American Intellectual History* (Oxford University Press). With Stanford colleague Jennifer Burns, Winterer co-founded the Bay Area Consortium in the History of Ideas in America (BACHIA: <https://bachia.stanford.edu/>), which brings together faculty and graduate students from Stanford, Berkeley, and the greater Bay Area for discussions of new scholarship in intellectual history. In June 2015, she joined Tobias Wolff for a conversation about Albert Camus's *The Stranger* in the last session of the "Another Look" Book Club that Wolff founded a few years ago.



**JACK RAKOVE.** Jack Rakove spent spring quarter 2015 teaching at Stanford-in-Washington, followed by a two-week stint at the law school of Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where he taught a mini-course on "The Free Exercise of Religion in America."

He also wrote an amicus curiae brief in the case *Arizona State Legislature v. Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission*, which seems to find some echoes in Justice Ginsburg's opinion siding with the Redistricting Commission.



**VAUGHN RASBERRY.** In spring 2015, Vaughn Rasberry published "JFK and the Global Anti-Colonial Movement" in *The Cambridge Companion to John F. Kennedy*; and "The 'Lost Years' or a 'Decade of Progress'? African American Writers and the Second World War" in Blackwell's *Companion to the*

*Harlem Renaissance*.



**JUDITH RICHARDSON.** In the summers of 2013 and 2015, Judith Richardson participated as faculty in an NEH-sponsored workshop for K-12 teachers on "The Hudson River in the Nineteenth Century and the Modernization of America." A portion of her book *Possessions: The History and Uses of Haunting*

*in the Hudson Valley* was selected for inclusion in *The Spectralities*



**GAVIN WRIGHT.** Gavin Wright may have officially retired from Stanford in August 2015, but he shows no sign of taking it easy. He will be visiting at Yale to teach during their spring semester, beginning in January. After that he will be back at Stanford, taking part in campus life as usual, including American

Studies. (See p. 28 for more on Gavin Wright's *Sharing the Prize*.)

## IN SEARCH OF LOST HISTORIES: ALLYSON HOBBS AND A CHOSEN EXILE

In South Side Chicago in the 1940s, the Bud Billiken Parade was an event of wonder, festivity—and inclusion. An annual rite for families of the Windy City, the parade helped black children imagine a Chicago undivided by race, unmarred by bigotry. For those children who would later renounce their communities of color, however—who would swap one raced body for another by passing—the sights, sounds, and smells of the parade would cease to be family heirlooms; they would be lost in search of gain.

During her book talk in October 2014 at Stanford's Black Community Center, historian Allyson Hobbs relayed this and other accounts as impetuses for her recent book, *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life* (Harvard University Press, 2014). In the book, Hobbs retrieves lost stories from overlooked archives to reconceptualize racial passing as an act of loss—a landmark project, as many historians had previously dismissed passing as a topic to be pursued by artists, citing a lack of source materials for historical study. Convinced of the importance of untold histories of racial passing, Hobbs “scoured the archives for ghosts”—traces of those who had passed—and found them.

Culling from a variety of sources, Hobbs amplifies the echoes of different types of passing—a Chinese national as a Mexican immigrant, a Cuban citizen as a Confederate soldier, a gay man as a straight husband, a Jewish jazz clarinetist as a black musician—to frame the act as a social practice with consequences that, like a disrupted body of water, ripple across generations. These ripples carry across time and space the weight of choice, the gravity of choosing family and cultural history or whiteness and potential social gain in a racially polarized America.

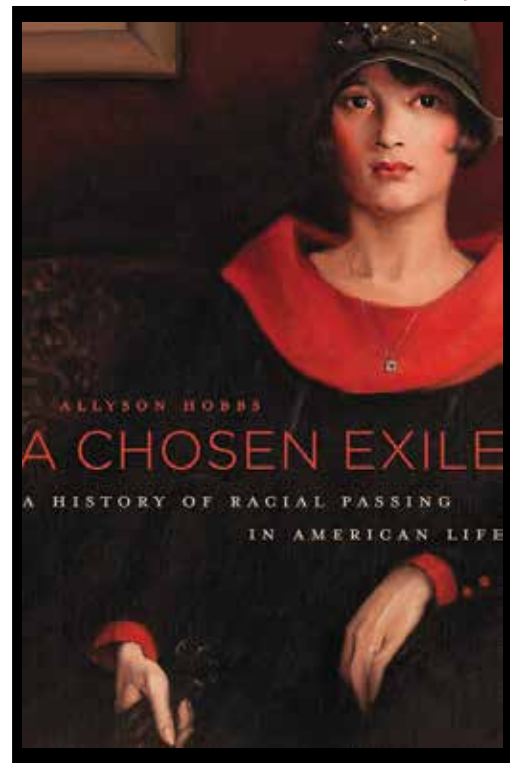
Undeniably, Hobbs's intellectual rigor shines through not only in her written work, but also in the real-time articulation of her ideas. In her talk, Hobbs described how passing has

changed since the early twentieth century: current conditions and the more frequent acceptance of multiraciality in the United States have influenced how and how often people pass. She connected these changes to the idea that passing is an enduring social phenomenon, a phenomenon with the potential to open doors for scholars interested in engaging contemporary intercultural issues through an overlooked historical record.

During questions, Hobbs shared with the riveted room full of students and colleagues additional information about passing as it relates to geographical mobility and the greater African American community. Dazzling her audience, she also riffed on differences between racial and ethnic passing, stating that the sounds of different languages complicate the belief that passing is purely a visual endeavor.

As she concluded, Hobbs revealed that the hardest part of writing her monograph was the tragic nature of passing, reiterating in the final moments of her talk the truth with which she began: “To write a history of passing is to explore a field of loss.” To the benefit of the greater scholastic community, such instances of loss—of foregone families, experiences, and even lives—have now been found as a result of Hobbs's stellar scholarship. ■

- Jonathan Leal (Graduate Student,  
Modern Thought and Literature)



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## FATEFUL TIES: A HISTORY OF AMERICA'S PREOCCUPATION WITH CHINA

A Chinese-inspired headdress worn by Sarah Jessica Parker, a statue of Christopher Columbus next to San Francisco's Coit tower, a dozen U.S. cities named Canton or Peking, and a marketing executive who describes China as a potential market for deodorant of "two billion armpits." For Professor Gordon Chang of the History Department and the Center for East Asian Studies, these are indicators of a continuous and deep American fascination with Chinese culture, and his new book, *Fateful Ties*, documents the history of this obsession.

In May 2015, Chang gave a presentation for American Studies on his research, assembling examples spanning five centuries to support his claim that the United States' imagined relationship with China has been central to the nation's vision of its own future, and thus to its identity. This claim is, admittedly, a provocation. For why is China's influence greater on the United States than that of Latin America, typically considered the United States' sphere of influence, or the Holy Land? And why not the entirety of Asia?

According to Chang, China's role in the United States' imagination has been unique in part because of its persistent significance since the colonial period. Chang took his audience back to Columbus' voyage across the Atlantic; Columbus carried with him both a letter from Spanish royalty to the "Great Khan" that the sailor believed ruled over China, and a copy of Marco Polo's *Travels* with the following note scribbled in the text's margins: "incalculable amounts of trade."

Five hundred years later, these "amounts" have retained their significance: for instance, twenty-nine percent of Apple's revenues come from sales in China, with projections that it will soon be the corporation's biggest market, while deodorant manufacturers view China as the potential market for one billion consumers, or rather, two billion armpits.

Not everything about this relationship is economics, however. According to Chang, Parker's headdress, worn to an exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art called "China Through the Looking Glass," recalled the Chinese-inspired dresses worn by Julia Grant and Helen Taft to their husbands' inaugural balls. In fact, the history of Chinese-themed museum exhibitions itself goes back

to an 1838 exhibit in Philadelphia. Rather jokingly, Chang suggested the possibility that President Richard Nixon's diplomatic overtures to China were inspired by his childhood experience lying on the California beach, his gaze wandering off longingly to the horizon.

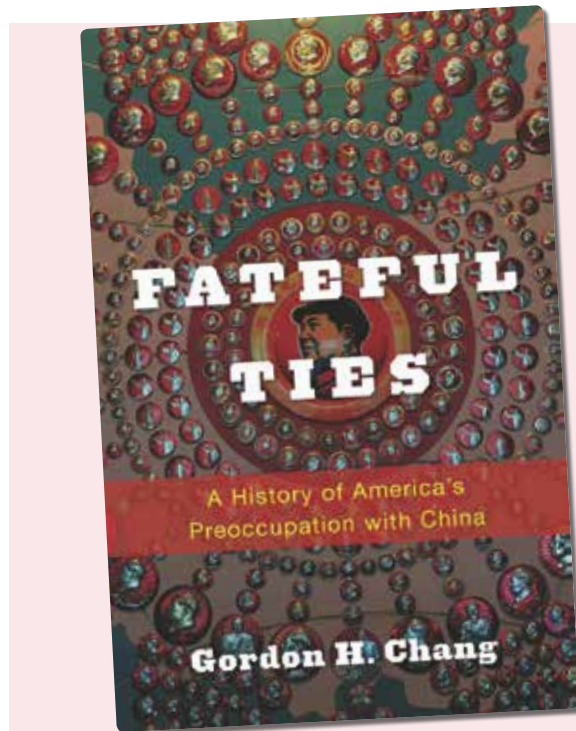
Of course, the awe inspired by a potentially enormous market and the fixation on cultural difference could easily fuel much more negative ideas about China and Chinese people than the previous examples imply. Students of U.S. history are familiar with stereotypical images of Chinese immigrants as embodying a 'yellow peril' which drove efforts for the Chinese Exclusion Act in the late 19th century; contemporary observers have noted a resurgence of tropes rooted in the same stereotypes.

The many facets of the United States' imaginings of China have been essential in a national reckoning with the country's own future, and so Chang's work allows us to

rethink the fundamentals of American history. Expansion and empire—from Lewis and Clark to the Mexican-American War, to the acquisition of Alaska and the colonization of Hawai'i and the Philippines—acquire a different resonance against the backdrop that Chang provides in *Fateful Ties*. Indeed, one can easily extend this list to include the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the 'pivot to Asia', demonstrating that these decisive ties are likely to endure.

■

- Calvin Miaw (Graduate Student, *Modern Thought and Literature*)



### GORDON CHANG'S BOOK *FATEFUL TIES*

*The many facets of the United States' imaginings of China have been essential in a national reckoning with the country's own future, and so Chang's work allows us to rethink the fundamentals of American history.*



## REDEFINING RAPE: SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE ERA OF SUFFRAGE AND SEGREGATION

### An Interview with Estelle Freedman

Professor Estelle Freedman's latest book traces the history of sexual violence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In *Redefining Rape: Sexual Violence in the Era of Suffrage and Segregation*, she argues that the changing meaning of rape has been directly linked to the politics of American citizenship. White women, black women, and black men organized in parallel movements to assert the political authority to define rape and to be protected from it. Selected by *Choice* magazine as an Outstanding Academic Title of 2014, *Redefining Rape* won numerous awards, including the Organization of American Historians' Darlene Clark Hine Award; the Popular Culture Association and American Culture Association's Emily Toth Award; and the Western Association of Women Historians' Frances Richardson Keller-Sierra Prize. Alum Miranda Mammen, '14, interviewed Professor Freedman about her groundbreaking project and her related course, "Topics in the History of Sexuality: Sexual Violence."

#### DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU WOULD WRITE A POLITICAL HISTORY, OR DID YOU MAKE THAT CHOICE BASED ON THE SOURCES AND EVIDENCE YOU FOUND?

I did. The only way I could write about this very difficult subject was to write about politics.

I was very curious about how people had responded to sexual violence in the past. I came of age as a feminist at the time that the feminist anti-violence movement was taking shape in the late '60s and early '70s, and I wanted to know what had come before. So I knew that I would begin by looking at the woman's suffrage movement. At the time, the few historians who had even looked at this history said sexual violence wasn't part of it – there was a response to domestic violence and prostitution, but there wasn't an anti-rape movement.

I did know, from the historical literature about race, that rape had been extremely important in the justification for lynching, in the reassertion of white supremacy in the South in the 19th century and then in the Jim Crow era. So I really began digging in those two areas, the women's suffrage press and the anti-lynching movement. I was looking for how people tried to change the meaning of rape – the cultural meaning, the legal definition, the prosecution – and what it got them.

I'm hoping that my book will inspire other scholars to dig even

more deeply into local sources. With a national study, you gain scope but lose some of the depth that you can get from looking at local records and the grassroots.

#### WHAT'S THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BOOK AND YOUR CLASS?

I've been teaching a history of sexuality colloquium for decades. It started out as a survey, when I was writing *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*. Once we [John D'Emilio and I] finished that book, 25 years ago, I picked topics to teach together – for example, reproduction, prostitution, and sexual identity.

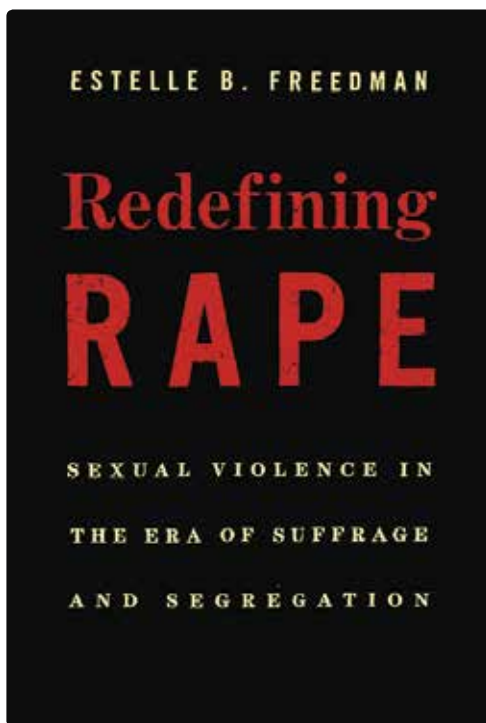
As I began writing this book, I focused the course as *Topics in the History of Sexuality: Sexual Violence*, with the option of changing that to some other topic at another time. I've taught this version six or seven times over almost ten years. I would assign sources for my class that I was using in the book. So as I was writing, I was working out some of my questions in teaching.

Sometimes students' papers would give me an idea. For example, the chapter on the "masher" wouldn't have happened if a student from eight or nine years ago hadn't

come across some articles in the Chicago press and included them in a paper. I got really interested in that, and I found sources not only in Chicago, but lo and behold, the "masher" was everywhere. My summer interns through American Studies were the first research assistants who searched through newspapers and other sources. So students were integral to the book, both through the course and the summer internship program.

Two years ago, I taught the class for the first time using my book. Students are a little bit hesitant to criticize; they're more absorbing the material. I tell them, there's the Freedman who wrote the book, and I can give you some insights into that person's perspective, but then there's the Freedman who's teaching the class, so it's okay to critique or compare.

The past two years, I've added some non-U.S. material. When we talk about lynching, I've added an article from southern Africa about sex panics and the demonization of black men as sexual threats. Along with my chapter on the "masher," we read an article about street harassment in London in the 1880s, just trying to get a little bit of perspective.



**WAS THERE ANYTHING YOU WANTED TO INCLUDE IN THE BOOK THAT DIDN'T MAKE IT IN?**

I was limited to political responses at the time. So if the women's movement or the anti-lynching movement or the child-saving movement wasn't talking about the subject, I couldn't write about it. There are a couple subjects we're really concerned about today that didn't show up, like sexual assault in the military or trying to change international law to include wartime rape as a crime.

**THERE'S AN IMPULSE TO MAKE SEXUAL VIOLENCE OUTSIDE OF HISTORY, TO SAY THAT NOTHING HAS CHANGED. WHERE DOES THAT COME FROM AND WHAT'S THE RIGHT RESPONSE?**

It's a pattern called the naturalization of behavior – calling something human nature rather than historicizing it. Gender has been treated that way; it's been understood as a God-given truth that men and women are different, that women should serve men, that men should rule the family, and that these beliefs are natural because men are strong and aggressive while women are vulnerable and need protection. These are all cultural constructs that, in my view, justify and reinforce social hierarchies of gender.

The same thing can be said about race. Racial hierarchies often rest on supposedly natural, biological differences. This view is really at its height in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in scientific racism, but it applies to gender also. It's this natural, biological determinism.

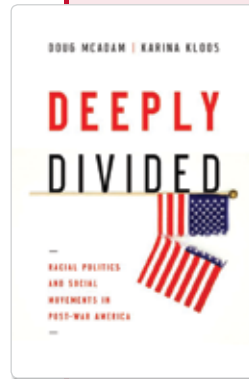
You can see it in our own time whenever people start talking about how things are “hardwired” in the brain – women are hardwired to be bad at science, or men are hardwired to be aggressive and that's why they rape. Socio-biologists have argued that there's an evolutionary strategy for men to sow their seed, and that rape is one of the ways they do this.

But to me, all of this ignores history. It also ignores information about cultures where men are not considered naturally aggressive, or where there are differences in how women are socialized to respond to sexual aggression.

I don't think there are any universals, but wherever you have a strong legacy of patriarchy, like coverture in Anglo-American law, you're going to have this justification of sexual violence through theories of gender. It's an effort to reinforce social hierarchies, especially when they're weakening. When patriarchy is really disintegrating in terms of its material base, as women are getting educated and earning wages, theories of male aggression may escalate. It's not just a way of reinforcing an existing system but shoring it up, just as lynching based on rape allegations was a way of shoring up white supremacy at the time that the material base of slavery was no longer supporting it. ■

- Interview by Miranda Mammen, '14

**DEEPLY DIVIDED:  
RACIAL POLITICS AND  
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN  
POST-WAR AMERICA**



On October 22, 2015, American Studies presented a talk by Professor Doug McAdam of Stanford's Sociology Department about his new book, *Deeply Divided: Racial Politics and Social Movements in Post-War America*, co-written by Sociology Ph.D. Candidate Karina Kloos. Known for his research on the relationship between race and politics in the United States, McAdam uses his latest work as a means of tackling one of the most prominent questions in contemporary politics: why are we so politically divided?

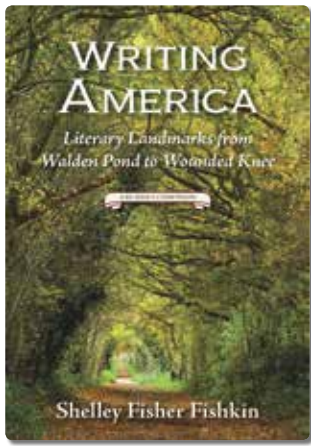
The overarching focus of McAdam's talk was to use the book to give the audience a sweeping look at the origins of the deep partisanship so evident in today's society. The book's answer, McAdam revealed, lies in the interplay between social movements and political parties that rapidly pushed Democrats and Republicans toward the margins of their ideologies, undermining the sense of consensus that began to take shape after World War II.

Taking us into the pages of *Deeply Divided*, McAdam linked historical factors to contemporary issues. To aid his presentation, McAdam presented various graphics that evidence the change in electoral voting patterns over the course of nine decades in American politics. In conjunction with voting patterns, he also shared graphs highlighting income inequality and overviews of various critical social movements, such as the civil rights movement and the white southern resistance movement, both of which influenced much of this observed polarization. Those trends led McAdam to focus on complicated change processes that developed throughout the 20th century, helping us to understand the contexts that land us in the present time.

When McAdam discussed the last chapter of *Deeply Divided*—a chapter that makes predictions about the current political environment—he noted the drastically different profiles of the 1960 presidential platforms and the 2014 platforms, and situated the 2008 election results in the continuum of American electoral politics and history; he also hinted at an urgent need to shift the geography of politics while also tracking today's social movements.

At the close of his presentation, McAdam contextualized Stanford University—an environment flush with entry points into various spaces of 21st century activism and advocacy—as a space to re-frame the American political and social narrative, and to imagine what comes next. ■

- Makshya Tolbert, '15



## **WRITING AMERICA: AN INTERVIEW WITH SHELLEY FISHER FISHKIN**

This November, Director of American Studies Shelley Fisher Fishkin will release her latest book, *Writing America: Literary Landmarks from Walden Pond to Wounded Knee*. Slated for publication on

the eve of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Historic Preservation Act, *Writing America* is composed of a selection of meditations on over 150 important National Register historic sites closely tied to critical works of American literature. From the Connecticut home that served as the backdrop for much of Mark Twain's writing, to the New York tenements responsible for spawning Abraham Cahan's fiction and the tranquil woods surrounding Henry David Thoreau's iconic Walden Pond, Fishkin spotlights the historic locations across the country that truly "write" America. American Studies alum Molly Vorwerck '14 sat down with Fisher Fishkin to discuss her new book, the research that went into writing it, and which literary locations are most memorable for her:

**AS A PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN STUDIES, I'M SURE YOU FREQUENTLY COVER THESE TEXTS IN BOTH YOUR CLASSES AND SCHOLARSHIP. WHAT MOST INSPIRED YOU TO UNDERTAKE THIS PROJECT?**

I was inspired by my realization that visiting some of these places was often the catalyst that first ignited my interest in much of what I teach and write about.

My mother's decision to take me to Mark Twain's house in Hartford, Connecticut, when I was a child ignited a lifelong fascination with Twain that led me to write two books and fifty-four articles, essays, columns, book chapters, and reviews; edit thirty-three books; coedit two special issues of academic journals; deliver lectures on four continents; and bring a play he wrote to the Broadway stage.

A trip I took to Paul Laurence Dunbar's home in Dayton, Ohio, persuaded me that a reevaluation of his place in American letters was long overdue; it kindled an interest in the writer and his work that led me not only to write several articles about him, but also to propose the international conference that took place at Stanford on the hundredth anniversary of his death, and to coedit both a new anthology of his writings and a special issue of *African American Review* devoted to reappraising his achievement.

Lessons I learned about the Chinese Exclusion Act during a trip to the Angel Island Immigration Station in the San Francisco Bay sparked my interest in the place of Chinese Americans in the national imaginary and impelled me to think about the relative invisibility of the twelve thousand Chinese laborers whose work on the Transcontinental Railroad was key to creating the fortune that made it possible for Leland Stanford to found our university.

They are now at center of the research project I co-direct with Gordon Chang, and figure prominently in the course I co-teach on the American West.

The ways in which physical places have refocused my interest in chapters of American literature and of the nation's past, and my recognition of how my understanding of so many poems, stories, novels, essays, and plays has been enriched by an awareness of the places that shaped them compelled me to write this book.

**DID YOU MOSTLY COVER LOCATIONS FEATURED IN PROMINENT WORKS OF LITERATURE, OR PLACES WHERE AUTHORS DID MOST OF THEIR WRITING? OR A COMBINATION OF BOTH?**

Both. I was intrigued by the challenge presented by the disconnect between the richness and diversity of American literature as we recognize it today and the view of America's literary heritage one would get solely from the "literary sites" listed on the National Register. What about the literature produced by writers too poor or too transient to have permanent homes capable of being preserved—such as early-twentieth-century writers who were impoverished workers from China or Russia, for example, or late-twentieth-century migrant farm workers in the Southwest? As of this writing, there are still no homes on the National Register associated with Chicano, Asian American, or Jewish American authors. Rather than limit the scope of this book to landmarks with obvious literary roots and the writers linked to them, I have pressed into the service of literature sites that are on the National Register for historical, architectural, military, engineering, technological, or religious reasons. In many cases, this book explores their connection to American literature for the first time. I write about some authors' homes, as you might expect—but I also write about streets, theaters, chapels, schools, docks, plantations, and battlefields; a statue, a body of water, a bicycle shop, a ship, a YMCA, a factory, a hotel, graveyards, internment camps, a lighthouse, and an irrigation pumping station.

Reading the work of the writers examined in this book can help illuminate the complexities of the physical, social, and cultural landscape that shaped their writing—and encountering that landscape, in turn, can help us gain insight into the nuances and complexities of their art. While this book uses historical sites as windows on literary history, it also uses literature as way of framing, interpreting, and understanding the social, political, and cultural meanings of physical places.

When we go to these sites today, we can still encounter some of the tensions reflected in what these writers wrote about them. The racism exposed and condemned by Mark Twain, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Gloria Anzaldúa has still not been eradicated. One can grasp more fully the roots of these writers' frustration and despair in visits to the locales that shaped their art—in Hannibal, Missouri, which still largely erases the place of slavery in its past, and downplays Mark Twain's role as an antiracist writer; in Dayton, Ohio, which instead of celebrating the interracial adolescent friendship of Paul Laurence Dunbar and the Wright brothers, ignores it almost entirely; and in the Rio Grande Valley, where the disregard for Mexican farm workers' health and well-being that





**Mark Twain in the window of his study in Elmira, New York, 1903.** Courtesy of the Mark Twain Archive, Gannett-Tripp Library, Elmira College, Elmira, N.Y.



**Paul Laurence Dunbar's desk in his home in Dayton, Ohio.**



**Sign near entrance to Jim's Journey: The Huck Finn Freedom Center, Hannibal, Missouri.**



**Lower Rio Grande Canal (above)**

**The Hidalgo Pumphouse irrigated the fields in which Gloria Anzaldúa picked produce as a child. (right)**



cut short the life of Anzaldúa's father continues to curtail the life expectancies of the people who pick the fruit and vegetables that appear on our dinner tables.

**YOUR NEW TEXT COVERS A LOT OF GROUND – INCLUDING POETS, NOVELISTS, ESSAYISTS, AND EVEN PLAYWRIGHTS. HOW DID YOU DECIDE WHICH WRITERS TO FEATURE?**

The book is unabashedly eclectic. I chose to focus on writers whose work continues to draw me into its orbit after many readings. I'm particularly interested in literature and sites that can help us think about questions that are as unresolved today as they were when these writers wrote about them. A trip to the Angel Island Immigration Station, or the Statue of Liberty, or Wounded Knee, or the Original Main Street, or the Roma Historic District, or Manzanar can help us think about questions like: Who is an American? What is an American? What unites us? What divides us? Who and what are still left out of the nation's narratives of whom and what we are, and where we came from? What counternarratives are erased and suppressed in public spaces? Who gets to tell our public stories? Whose voices get silenced? Who gets heard?

**HOW DID THIS PROJECT DIFFER FROM SOME OF YOUR PREVIOUS, MORE FOCUSED RESEARCH? (I'M NO STRANGER TO YOUR COMPREHENSIVE SCHOLARSHIP ON MARK TWAIN.)**

I paid more attention in this book to architecture and artifacts than I have in my previous research—and I was unprepared for some of the lessons about the literary past that architecture and artifacts had to teach me. I was surprised by the resonances between the humble materials and careful carpentry of Walt Whitman's birthplace home and the poems the poet would go on to write. I was struck by the ways in which the exotic architecture along Hollywood Boulevard that cavalierly made all the cultures of the world its own reflected the tendency of so many films made there to turn ethnic and racial "others" into stereotyped creatures of the imagination as far from real people as Grauman's Chinese Theatre was from China—a tendency that inspired writers from some of those ethnic and racial groups to set the record straight with poetry and fiction of their own. I hadn't expected to find the mélange of Spanish, Mexican, Anglo, and German architectural elements in buildings in the Lower Rio Grande Valley to be such an apt metaphor for the cultural hybridity that is such a central theme in the poetry and fiction produced there. Nor had I imagined that a sugar bowl in Sinclair Lewis's Minnesota boyhood home would evoke the significance of the history that helped make Lewis who he was or that a bathroom in a Lower East Side tenement building would shed the light it did on Anzia Yezierska's first reaction to Hollywood. And I certainly hadn't expected to gain new insight into the racial politics of Paul Laurence Dunbar's poetry from a distinctive piece of furniture his mother kept in the home he purchased for the two of them in Dayton, Ohio.

**IF YOU COULD CHOOSE ONE LOCATION ANYWHERE IN THE COUNTRY THAT'S MOST INFLUENCED YOUR CAREER OR WRITING, WHERE WOULD IT BE AND WHY?**

My visit to the Mark Twain Historic District in Hannibal, Missouri, prompted me to think long and hard about the ways in which the town's erasure of its slave past—and of the role of African Americans in shaping Twain's life and his biting critiques of American racism after he left Hannibal—echoed America's efforts to bury rather than engage its troubled history of race relations. I became intrigued, as a result, with the broader issues of public memory and public history that this book explores. That memorable first trip to Hannibal also planted the seeds of new courses I developed at Stanford such as "Race and American Memory," which I teach with Professor Allyson Hobbs — a class that explores how history infuses the present in ways we ignore at our own risk. ■

- Interview by Molly Vorwerck, '14



## GAVIN WRIGHT TALKS ABOUT SHARING THE PRIZE

For fifty years, Stanford economic historian Gavin Wright has been pondering the meaning of the summer he spent living above Brown's Superette in Warrenton, North Carolina. In 1963, Wright visited the rural tobacco-growing region as a member of an interracial group of voting rights activists. "We were trying to get

something going in this area where not a lot was happening yet," explained Wright. His own role was small, but the experience sparked a desire to understand the broader economic consequences of the Civil Rights Movement. "Was the Civil Rights revolution an economic, as well as a moral and legal revolution?" he wondered.

Wright provided an answer to that question and an overview of his new book, *Sharing the Prize: The Economics of the Civil Rights Revolution* (Harvard University Press, 2013), at a recent talk sponsored by the American Studies Program. In *Sharing the Prize*, Wright applies the tools of the economist and the historian to the Civil Rights Movement. He examines the economic impacts of the desegregation of public accommodations, labor markets, and schools and the effect of increased voter participation among African Americans.

"Were there economic gains for African Americans? I say emphatically yes. [The Civil Rights Movement] did have a payoff," said Wright. What's more, for the most part, the gains did not come at the expense of white southerners. Instead, fairer treatment for African Americans resulted in a general restructuring that benefitted everyone economically, argued Wright.

Before delving into his economic analysis, Wright took time to correct a common misperception about the Civil Rights Movement. "You often hear," he said "that the movement was about rights and then it transitioned to economics. Baloney! It was about economics from the beginning. Not only economics—dignity and self-respect, of course. But economics was a big part of it."

To accentuate the point, Wright showed a document saved from his days working on the voting rights project in Warrenton, North Carolina. It urged a boycott of stores in which African Americans could not work or experience the same level of service given to white customers. "From the bus boycotts of the 1950s to the sit-ins of the early 1960s, demands for equal access to services were almost always coupled with demands for jobs providing those services," said Wright.

Wright stressed that to fully see the economic consequences of the Civil Rights Movement, it is necessary to take a regional view. "This is really a regional story, and people working with national data have missed it," said Wright. If analyses only consider data for

the entire United States, he said, it is hard to see the pronounced changes that the southern region of the country experienced. A regional perspective shows, for example, that personal income stagnated in the South during the 1950s and early 1960s, but it generally accelerated after Civil Rights breakthroughs in the mid-1960s.

To further illustrate his point, Wright displayed telling local economic indicators, including charts of department store sales before and after the desegregation of downtown shopping areas in southern cities. In Dallas, where city officials required desegregation in response to picketing campaigns by Civil Rights activists in 1961, retail sales accelerated after desegregation. Stores in Little Rock, Atlanta, and Birmingham also experienced sales upticks after desegregation.

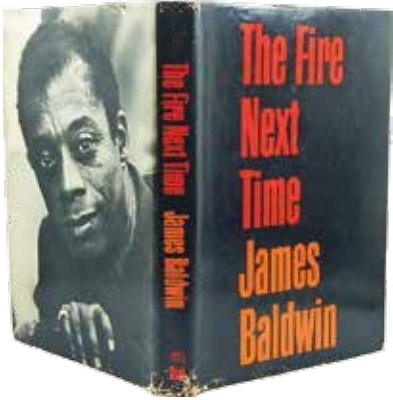
Federal legislation—the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965—forced change, according to Wright. Change was not inevitable because white southerners held economic theories in which race played a key role. Business owners really thought that desegregation would be bad for their bottom line, and they based their resistance on that belief. When federal legislation required that they change, they did; and they discovered their economic theories were wrong. "Desegregation had a very positive economic payoff, but [white southerners] did not see it coming," said Wright.

Wright also discussed the effect of increased voter registration and participation amongst blacks. It is not true, he said, that Civil Rights meant that the South was turned over to the Republicans for a generation. Rather, a period of healthy two-party competition occurred in the region following Civil Rights advances and continued until the 1990s.

An influx of black voters eventually resulted in a higher proportion of black elected officials in the South, although litigation and congressional support were necessary to ensure fair representation. Electoral competition produced a breed of progressive southern governors and resulted in increased public spending for education and other social services. These changes had real material impacts that improved the lives of ordinary people in the South.

In the 1990s, however, as conservative Republican majorities in the South consolidated and electoral competition diminished, such trends lost steam. Civil rights had positive economic consequences, but bringing the story up to the present day is messy, said Wright. "I'm confident in the economic history," he concluded, "but where we are going now, I'm not so sure." ■

- Natalie Marine-Street (Graduate Student, History)



## MICHELE ELAM TAKES “ANOTHER LOOK” AT JAMES BALDWIN’S *THE FIRE NEXT TIME*

Professor Michele Elam of the American Studies Program and English Department delivered a spirited presentation on James Baldwin’s landmark text—and staple of American civil rights literature—*The Fire Next Time* during Stanford’s “Another Look” book club meeting on March 5, 2015. For those unfamiliar with it, “Another Look” is a seasonal discussion of iconic books chosen by members of the Stanford faculty that regularly draws writers, scholars and interested readers from across the Bay Area. Introducing the program to the audience, Professor Jennifer Brody suggested that participants think of the selected books as “short masterpieces” that have “fallen off the screen of our attention.”

As she primed the audience for the night’s conversation, Elam drew attention to the connection between Baldwin’s work and current events in the United States. In her eyes, *The Fire Next Time* cannot be read “without immediately calling to mind how pressing and urgent his voice is [in contemporary society].”

The evening provided an opportunity for thoughtful discussion about one of Baldwin’s most provocative works, a collection of two essays, published in 1962 and quickly re-printed in 1963, that tackle issues of race and identity in mid-century America. During her presentation, Michele Elam moderated a conversation between Professor Tobias Wolff of the English Department and Vice Provost Harry Elam, and pushed them to share their interpretations of the text and reflect on what drew them to Baldwin’s work in the first place. Michele Elam advanced questions on all topics Baldwin discussed in the book, including perhaps most prominently, religion, art, and love. She noted that, throughout the essays, innocence and love were key political and cultural terms that Baldwin continuously defined and redefined as they related to art and politics.

Wolff, who read the book in 1963 as a teenage boy in a “culture marinated by race,” remembered being specifically provoked by “the way [Baldwin] spoke in the text about white people as if they were standing in the corner of the room, often the way white people talked about black people.” As a young man, Wolff had been given the opportunity to invite Baldwin to his home; after hours of waiting, a disappointed Wolff gave up, only to later find out that Baldwin had, in fact, been turned away by the doorman.

Harry Elam also had personal memories of reading and relating to Baldwin. He had the pleasure of meeting Baldwin during Elam’s

time as a graduate student at University of California, Berkeley. At the time, Baldwin struck Elam as being the only black writer of his kind, fascinating for his ability to attract audiences across color lines. Elam was quick to point out that his most recent reading of *The Fire Next Time* occurred alongside the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. As he revisited Baldwin’s words this time around, his perception of the text centered on his experience witnessing these instances of systemic racism across the United States on the news. During their discussion, Elam pointed to a passage from the text where Baldwin warns his nephew of the imminent dangers of being who he is “simply by birth.” Elam noted this sentiment was eerily relevant today, as African American fathers must warn their own their sons about life as a young black man and the conflict that they face simply due to their race.



***“Love takes off the mask that we fear we cannot live without, and we know we cannot live within.”***

**—James Baldwin**

After their poignant discussion, Michele Elam invited audience members to share their favorite passages from the book and pose questions about them to the panel. One audience member’s selection was particularly moving for the panelists, and touched on a central theme of Baldwin’s book: the need for contemporary Americans across the country and socioeconomic backgrounds to cultivate a “radical and demanding” love for all people, regardless of skin color. The quote, “Love takes off the mask that we fear we cannot live without, and we know we cannot live within,” stood out to the panelists as well. As Wolff noted, the passage directly reflected Baldwin’s interest in diagnosing the underlying problem that was causing these inequalities and social injustices: a rampant racism that was destructive to all Americans. To heal, then, it was only a matter of prescribing a fix – love. ■

- Makshya Tolbert, '15



SCRAPBOOK



YEAR END 2014



YEAR END 2015



SCRAPBOOK



SENIOR DINNER 2015



**American Studies Mocktail Party**

Come meet fellow American Studies students and chat with recent graduates about their career paths.

Enjoy good food, fun drinks, and interesting conversation—drop in for a few minutes or stay a while!

Wednesday, May 14  
5-7pm  
English Lounge, Margaret Jacks Bldg 460, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

Featured Drinks:  
Tallahassee Tickler • Prohibitionist's Martini

Join us for an American Studies

**Java Jive**

Coffee and breakfast treats!

Thursday, 9:30-10:30am  
November 6, Amstad Aloves  
Margaret Jacks Bldg 460

Featuring homemade pumpkin muffins from Rachel's new kitchen, as well as pumpkin spiced coffee, pumpkin pie creamer, and pumpkin Hershey's!

Bring a friend!

**City Girls: The Nisei Social World in Los Angeles, 1920-1950**

A book talk by  
**Valerie Matsumoto**

*Nisei girls and young women played vital roles in the ethnic community in prewar Los Angeles, working in the family economy and serving as cultural mediators. Because, like other youth of color, they were unwelcome in many school clubs and activities during the 1920s and 30s, they formed an extensive network of ethnic youth clubs through which they could enjoy parties, dancing, and sports, as well as gaining leadership training. For urban Nisei, clubs offered a haven of belonging in an era of racial exclusion and a vehicle through which girls could demonstrate American identity and claim modern femininity. Their organizational skills would prove important to the rebuilding of Japanese American communities after World War II uprooting and incarceration.*

April 23, 2013  
4:15 pm  
Lane History Corner  
Room 307

SPECIAL EVENTS 2013-15



SCRAPBOOK

STANFORD'S AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM and  
BILL LANE CENTER FOR THE AMERICAN WEST



Present a luncheon talk by  
**Joel Dinerstein**  
The James H. Clark Endowed Chair in American Civilization at  
Yale University and creator of *American Cool* at the Smithsonian

**AMERICAN COOL:**  
An Outlaw Sensibility for a Consumer Society

The American cultural concept of cool emerged in the jazz culture of the 1940s and resurged one of the nation's most influential exports. Cool is an evocative term evocative of our fantasies of a rebel and icon of cool existence: success, independence, artistic originality, and rebellious self-expression for a given generation, qualities associated with imagined frontiers of all kinds, from the arts to social norms and even sensibility as transposed from the West.



**Tuesday, May 5 @ 12pm**  
West, Tresidder Memorial Union, Second Floor  
Donation Required. RSVP at <http://bit.ly/SJAYFO>  
Open to the public without charge

STANFORD'S ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AND AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM



Present a talk by  
**Pin-chia Feng**  
Chair Professor of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures  
at National Chiao Tung University (NCTU) and Research Fellow of the  
Institute of European and American Studies, Academia Sinica

**EAST ASIAN APPROACHES TO ASIAN AMERICAN LITERARY STUDIES: The Cases of Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea**

再現政治  
再現美國文學

**Wednesday, April 23 @ 12pm**  
The Terrace Room, 4th Floor, Margaret Jacks Hall, Bldg. 460

Co-sponsored by Asian American Studies and the Center for East Asian Studies

**This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color**

A Two-Day Intergenerational Conversation & Celebration of the new 4th edition of this classic 1981 anthology edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa

FEATURING 'BRIDGE' CONTRIBUTORS:  
Audre Lorde, Audre Carson, Cheryll Clarke, Felicia D'Amico, Gloria Lam, Minnie Yarnall, Cherrie Moraga, Julia Muckersmith, Barbara Smith, Lashon Truitt, Mia Walz Vinton, Nella Wang, Mark West

**Friday, May 14, 2015**  
5:30pm - Book Signing & Reception  
7pm Reading & Presentations

Lafayette Library, Bishop Anderson  
147 Memorial Way  
Stanford, CA 94305

**Saturday, May 15, 2015**  
10am Bridge Arroyo Park  
Calle Homeno Rodriguez, Hoppel House, Yubaqui Lopez,  
& Holman Exhibition

Followed by discussion of student candidates  
for President of GLBTQ Organizing Panel

The Black Community Services Center  
at Santa Teresa School  
Stanford, CA 94305

For more info: [stanford.edu/~thisbridge](http://stanford.edu/~thisbridge)

"The work: To make revolution irresistible."  
- Toni Cade Bambara

Join fellow American Studies majors and friends for a **Presidents' Day Party!**

I'd bring the...  
I would like to...  
I would like to...  
I would like to...

Join us for **FOOD, games, trivia, and PRIZES**

**Wednesday, February 19**  
12-1:30pm  
English Lounge (Bldg 460, 3rd floor)

Push the...  
I would like to...  
I would like to...

STANFORD'S AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM

Present a talk by  
**Fred Turner**  
Associate Professor of Communication at Stanford University

**ON HIS NEW BOOK**  
**The Democratic Surround**  
Multimedia and American Liberation from World War II to the Psychodrama Studios  
University of Chicago Press, 2014

Monday, April 21, 12-1 pm  
Terrace Room, Margaret Jacks Hall, Bldg. 460, 4th floor

Co-sponsored by Asian American Studies and the Center for East Asian Studies

SPECIAL SCREENING OF:

**THE MASK YOU LIVE IN**

Is American masculinity harming our boys, men, and society at large?

A film by Jennifer Stebel Newsom (creator of *Miss Representation*)

**MARCH 31, 2015 - 7PM | CUBBERLEY AUDITORIUM**

Following the film will be a discussion with  
Ms. Newsom and Dr. Judy Chu, lecturer in Human Biology &  
Dr. Joseph Marshall, Executive Director and Co-Founder of Alive & Free

United viewing. First come, first seated.

Join us for the annual American Studies **Fireside Chat**

Featuring spiced apple cider and pie tasting!

**Thursday, November 13**  
5:15-6:15  
Margaret Jacks (bldg. 460)  
3rd Floor English Lounge

We will be raffling off two signed books!  
Doug McAdam's *Deeply Divided: Racial Politics and Social Movements in Post-War America*, and Allyson Hobbs' *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life*

STANFORD'S AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM

Present a Talk By  
**Richard Meyer**  
Robert and Ruth Halperin Professor in Art History  
at Stanford University

On his new book  
**WHAT WAS CONTEMPORARY ART?**  
MIT Press, 2013

Friday, October 25, 12-1 pm  
The Terrace Room, 4th Floor, Margaret Jacks Hall, Bldg. 460

Co-sponsored by Asian American Studies and the Center for East Asian Studies

SPECIAL EVENTS 2013-15



# THE NEWEST TRANSNATIONAL AMERICANS? TESTIMONIOS BY MEXICAN IMMIGRANT YOUTH IN THE AFTERMATH OF DEPORTATION AND RETURN

*A Book Talk by Jill Anderson*

In the spring of 2010, a group of undocumented immigrant youth occupied Arizona Senator John McCain's office until they were arrested for trespassing. These young activists were known as Dreamers—undocumented immigrants who first arrived in the United States as children—and they were calling on the Senate to pass the DREAM Act, legislation that would have opened up the doors of citizenship to the hundreds of thousands of undocumented youth in school or the military. They were also directly risking their own deportation.

While such actions lifted Dreamer activism to national prominence in the United States, few were paying attention to the lives of those undocumented youth who *were*—unlike the Dreamers—deported. Jill Anderson's talk on "The Newest Transnational Americans" focused on this underappreciated but intensely illuminating facet of contemporary immigration. Anderson collected the *testimonios* of twenty-six young adults who lived in the United States as undocumented individuals and then either returned or were deported to Mexico. The testimonios are published in *Los Otros Dreamers*, a book authored by Anderson and photographer Nin Solis, and accompanied with eloquent full-color photographs by Solis. Taken together, the testimonios explore what it might mean to identify as a Dreamer in the context of expulsion or exile's aftermath. *Los Otros Dreamers* was published in the fall of 2014, with all the proceeds going to non-profit organizations in Mexico, and Anderson's talk at Stanford was part of a larger and extremely successful effort to bring the book to a broad audience.

Anderson began her talk with a discussion of the origins of the Dreamer identity in debates over immigration policy. The DREAM Act, originally proposed in 2001, sought to provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented youth who entered the United States before the age of fifteen, who pursued either military service or

higher education, and who had no criminal record. To date, the federal legislation still has not been enacted, although a series of occupations of Obama campaign offices in 2012 led to administrative measures granting some young immigrants temporary legal status. At the outset of the movement, the Dreamers were those that would benefit from the DREAM Act. The identity was thus formed in the U.S. context. But, Anderson pointed out, there are probably around 500,000 individuals between ages 18 and 35 who were born in Mexico, lived in the U.S., and are now living in Mexico again. They may have been deported after a minor run-in with the law or after serving time in jail; they also may have returned after graduating from high school or college and found themselves unable to secure employment in the field of their training. In addition to this population, upwards of 700,000 U.S. citizen children migrated from the U.S. to Mexico with their families since 2007. These statistics raise a question: what happens to the Dreamer identity when it migrates?

*Los Otros Dreamers* presents an enormously diverse selection of testimonios. The book powerfully challenges conventional ideas about 'good immigrants' and 'bad immigrants' by including the accounts of youth who have been through the criminal justice system in the U.S. prior to their deportation. But we also find the testimonio of Adriana, a transgender woman who reflects on her experiences of safety and assault; Luis, who gets politicized inside of Texas prisons after a robbery conviction; Nancy, who is deported in the middle of a career in community development, and who manages to gain admission to a study abroad program in London.

Perhaps the most startling aspect to emerge from the collected testimonios is the sense of being "undocumented" in Mexico in

addition to the United States. Due to Kafkaesque bureaucratic regulations, secondary or higher education in the United States is sometimes not recognized by the Mexican state. In addition to such legally-determined situations, the testimonios collected in *Los Otros Dreamers* also discuss other social and cultural mechanisms by which individuals are made to feel they don't belong in Mexico: through stigma attached to the experience of deportation, or through being marked linguistically or culturally as "gringo." As Azul states in the book's first testimonio, "as a public service announcement to you, my exiled sister or brother, I'd like to tell you that you will always, always be a foreigner." But if they are foreigners in Mexico, these individuals typically find that the U.S. Embassy has barred

STANFORD'S AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM

Presents a talk  
**"The Newest Transnational Americans?  
Testimonios by Mexican Immigrant Youth in  
the Aftermath of Deportation and Return"**

A talk by **Jill Anderson**, author of the new book  
**Los Otros Dreamers** with photographer Nin Solis


*Los Otros Dreamers* is a collective *testimonio* by young people who have been deported by the U.S. government, as well as those who made the difficult decision to return to Mexico after coming up against obstacles in the States, often upon graduation from high school or college. The book brings together twenty-six stories, written in the preferred language of the contributor and then translated into English or Spanish, and in three cases, the native indigenous language. A series of photos accompanies each testimonio, offering a parallel, visual narrative of return. Each story focuses on an aspect of deportation and return to Mexico. These are the stories of the struggle to recognize oneself as *de aquí y de allá* (from here and from there), despite the daily challenges to lay claim to a bicultural birthright post-deportation and return. An independent, not-for-profit, and community-driven publication, this book is a process as much as it is a product. This book has been creating visibility and solidarity with the returning and deported youth from its conception to its distribution.

Thursday, May 7 @ 12:15pm

The Terrace Room, 4<sup>th</sup> floor,  
Margaret Jacks Hall, Bldg. 460

Lunch will be served  
Please R.S.V.P. by Friday, May 1 to  
Rachel Meisels at [rmeisels@stanford.edu](mailto:rmeisels@stanford.edu)  
Open to the public

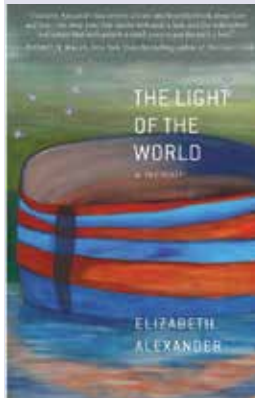
CO-SPONSORED BY THE CENTER FOR COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN RACE AND ETHNICITY, THE PROGRAM IN MODERN THOUGHT AND LITERATURE, AND INSTITUTE FOR IBERIAN AND LATIN AMERICAN CULTURES, STANFORD UNIVERSITY



them from applying for reentry to the United States for a decade. *Ni de aquí, ni de allá* (Neither from here, nor from there).

The book is also, in some ways, a political project that reflects Anderson's roots in transnational human rights activism—and transnational American literary studies—in both Texas and Mexico. It does not simply describe the predicament of these individuals who suffer in extra-legal limbo, but is also part of the very process by which these young people begin to articulate and claim a new identity: the Otr@s Dreamers. Anderson, an English Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin, was living in Mexico City and researching the relationship between Mexican nationalists and American literature; while strolling the streets of her neighborhood, she noticed groups of young people speaking English. They turned out to be from Los Angeles, Chicago, or other parts of the United States, and many of them worked in call centers, where they were valued for their fluency in U.S.-accented English. There, they were beginning to meet other individuals with the same histories of deportation or return. These were L@s Otr@s Dreamers. The ones who participated in Anderson's book project also began to meet and discuss with a much broader network of individuals. From this process emerged new ideas about relationships to the U.S., Mexico, and the Dreamer identity. When Anderson first met these individuals, nobody identified themselves as a Dreamer; through creating their testimonios, however, many came to see that the desires and visions that motivated them in the United States—for higher education or access to good jobs—remained fundamentally unchanged. In the end, dreams are borderless. ■

- Calvin Miaw (Graduate Student in  
*Modern Thought and Literature*)



## THE IDEA OF ANCESTRY IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN AMERICAN ART

In February, 2015, Elizabeth Alexander, a renowned poet, essayist, and playwright, and the current Frederick Iseman Professor of English at Yale University, gave a lecture entitled “The Idea of Ancestry in Contemporary African American Art.” In the lecture, sponsored by the Anderson Collection, and co-sponsored by American Studies, Alexander ruminated on how African American artists—particularly poets Etheridge Knight and Lucille Clifton, dancer and choreographer Bill T. Jones, pianist Jason Moran, and Alexander's late husband, Ficre Ghebreyesus, a painter—shape their work in relation to African American ancestry.

A central question Alexander posed was: how do the living remain in relation to the dead and the ancestral in a way that is both culturally specific and universal?

Deftly navigating through different genres of art, Alexander identified multiple sites where issues of ancestry emerge for the artists she discussed, from the family, to scenes of migration and a “creeping mortality” alive in the city, to prophetic interpretations of what it means to die. I was particularly intrigued by Alexander's articulation of artistic impressions of life and death, both of which intimately relate to the ancestral. For Ghebreyesus, Alexander said, this relationship between life and death came alive in works that illustrated the “proximity of life to death and the importance of ritual and community”; that sentiment echoes across all of the artists showcased in her lecture.

Alexander's final words were these: “The black artist in some way, spoken or not, contends with death...we listen for silences to make that art...by making art, we feed the ancestors, leave water and a little food we made for them.” The artists in her lecture have cherished that intimacy with ancestry, and in her talk, Alexander perhaps suggests that we would all benefit in doing so.

Elizabeth Alexander has written six volumes of poetry and has also written several works of literary criticism. Her newest book, *The Light of the World*, which marks her first experience in publishing a memoir, was released in April. An excerpt from the memoir, titled “Lottery Ticket,” also appeared in *The New Yorker* in February. ■

- Makshya Tolbert, '15

## ANGELA DAVIS ON “RACISM AND CRIMINALIZATION: NEGLECTED DIMENSIONS”

Hundreds of people from Stanford and the wider community—including East Palo Alto, the East Bay, and beyond—were among those lucky to find a seat at CEMEX Auditorium on April 15, 2015 for activist, scholar and professor Angela Davis’ lecture, “Racism and Criminalization: Neglected Dimensions” which was presented by the Program in African and African American Studies and the Institute for Diversity in the Arts, and co-sponsored by American Studies, among others. Davis’ lecture was part of a series titled “Race, Policing, and Mass Incarceration,” which approached the nexus of those concerns from social scientific, legal, theoretical, and activist viewpoints. Davis, a civil rights icon and distinguished professor emerita at the University of California, Santa Cruz, continues to study incarceration, criminalization, and prison abolition in the United States and abroad.



A central concept of Davis’ lecture was the disarticulation of crime and punishment, which ultimately deconstructs the framework of linking crime and punishment to blackness. Instead, Davis considers that it might be “far more productive to think about the role that race and regimes of power play in building associations between crime and punishment . . . perhaps then there would be a recognizable logic about why these things happen.”

Davis also made sure to touch on the gendered assumptions about state violence, acknowledging that black men are customarily the targets of racism, several specific instances of which were listed throughout the night. A similarly long list of female and trans-identified names were also listed, as Davis made her point that understanding the targeting of black men does not mediate the failure to recognize that black women are also targets of criminalization. Understanding how certain lives are neglected built a transition for Davis to acknowledge the work of the Black Lives Matter movement and their leadership, and also to explicate a misunderstanding of the movement as exclusive. The attempt to shift “black lives matters” to “all lives matter” fit neatly into a broader conversation about race in the United States, she argued, where “universals [prevent] us from understanding material violence and oppression.”

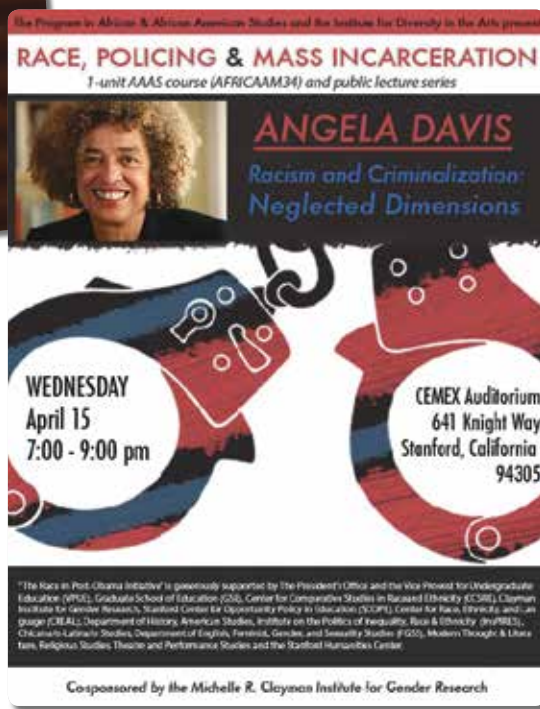
Davis spoke on her lifelong dream of prison abolition, suggesting that police violence fits into an economy of violence and tracing the debate between reform and abolition. She reminded the audience that abolition wasn’t merely about eradicating slavery, but was also about creating the institutions needed to productively incorporate the formerly enslaved into a new and inclusive democracy. In that sense, it was clear that Davis considered abolition a somewhat failed movement that brought down an institution but left its partner institutions standing. According to Davis, “in order to abolish prison as the primary mode of imprisonment, [one would] have to re-create the society . . . thinking about the needs and desires of people, and not on the profit that can be generated.”

Davis ended her presentation with a call-to-action for her audience: “We should begin to ask what we want, not we think

will be offered to us. . . there was a period where people who called for an end to slavery were considered absolutely insane! For a white person to call for an end to slavery was even considered to be the height of insanity! I think now is the time when we have to look beyond the horizon of reality . . . to indeed demand the impossible.”

In closing, Davis noted the progress she’s witnessed, suggesting that there is now a much more elevated, popular consciousness

about “this crisis” that is finally being addressed, however slowly, by Americans at large. That sentiment was re-articulated at the end of the night after a student question about matching the political energy of young activists in the late 20th century. Davis was quick to correct that sentiment and what she sees as maybe even a reversal of activist energy, noting, “As someone who has been excited and has seen decades of activist work, this is the most excited that I have been in a very long time.” ■



- Makshya Tolbert, '15



## “MAO AND POSTMODERNISM” – ALFRED HORNUNG AND CHINAMERICA

That morning, the front page of the *New York Times* featured a photograph of President Obama standing calmly in the middle of a group of his “peers” (that’s NYT caption-speak) in Beijing. Obama’s slightly amused gaze is directed off camera, while those around him appear to move toward one another. Like his peers, the American president sports “Chinese garb”: a dark burgundy silk jacket with Mandarin collar. The staging of this image, along with its priority placement in one of the most widely circulated news platforms, suggests that China’s “Maobama” (or “Obamao”) fascination – charged by Obama’s ethnicity and attention to the working man’s interests – has not yet been put to rest.

So says Alfred Hornung, at any rate. Hornung is Professor of English and American Studies at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany. On November 11, 2014, he introduced his lecture on “Mao and Postmodernism” by flashing the newspaper image at the lunchtime audience. Professor Hornung is considered an expert on postmodernism in Europe and was a founding editor of the *Journal of Transnational American Studies*. The journal, along with Stanford University’s American Studies Program, Department of English, and Center for East Asian Studies, sponsored Professor Hornung’s visit and lecture.

Beginning with this provocative gloss on Obama’s transnational image, Professor Hornung’s lecture outlined a history of cultural exchange and appropriation between China and America – conceptualized by Hornung as “ChinAmerica,” a space of transnational and transcultural exchange. Hornung focused primarily on visual elements, and particularly mass-reproducible images, as a cipher for this relationship, tracing a lineage beginning with Ezra Pound’s interest in Chinese characters as a medium for poetry. As America experienced cultural unrest in the late 1960s, Chairman Mao’s Cultural Revolution (and the ensuing Mao Cult) provided a fertile set of elements for American expressions of difference; in particular, Hornung cited Andy Warhol’s paintings of Mao as well as Edward Albee’s short play *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* as moments in which Chinese culture served as a screen for American popular opinion.

Hornung also noted the coincidence of the reestablishment of diplomatic ties between China and America with the meeting of Mao and Nixon in 1972 and located within this burgeoning relationship the seeds of Western postmodernism’s irreverent

treatment of authority and convention. In a Chinese context, the work of artists such as Zhang Hongtu, Li Shan, and Liu Dahong received attention from Hornung for their deconstructive pairing of political imagery from both China and America. In particular, these artists adapted Western postmodern techniques in combination once again with images of Mao, contributing further to the kind of reflexive circulation of Mao’s hyperreal image still at work today.

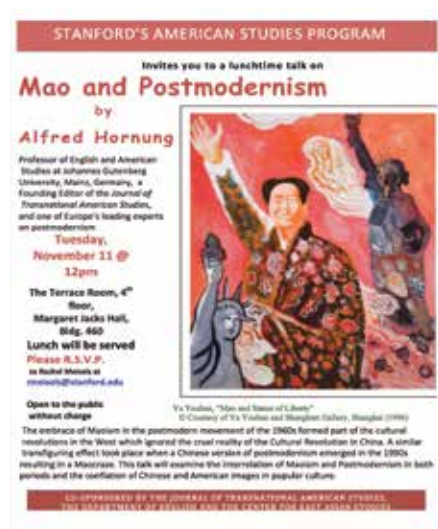
Finally, Professor Hornung’s lecture situated Don DeLillo’s novel *Mao II* (1991) as another moment of convergence and an important harbinger for what he describes as a “planetary consciousness” that “replaces global competitiveness and ideological contrasts with the consensus of a transnational community.” Hornung argued adroitly for planetarity as a holistic ethical framework for transnational thought, opposing it to the structure of “the global” as an economic or imperial concept. Hornung’s talk suggested that future research could help to tease out how to translate cultural exchange into political and environmental action.

During an energetic discussion following his talk, Professor Hornung addressed the meanings of China’s cultural revolution in relation to contemporary politics there. He clarified why Mao, in particular, was and remains a figure ripe for the kinds of appropriation and visual processing that characterize the postmodern moment, hinting that Obama’s broad popularity (and “likeness” with Mao) has shifted in China over the last few years. He fielded questions regarding the role of European intellectuals like Sartre and Althusser, who functioned as spokespeople and allies for Mao’s theories and made ideological connections between the “people’s”

movements of the 1960s, East and West. And he acknowledged the limits of using popular media alone in support of scholarly work, since what is really needed, he said, is “to look behind” the uses and functions of images.

Looking with Professor Hornung behind the *New York Times*’ timely re-instantiation of “Maobama” in Beijing, then, we must reflect seriously on the spectacle of an American president donning what journalists called “Chinese garb.” This image might portend what Hornung hopes will be a “transcultural convergence that replaces global competitiveness and ideological contrasts with the consensus of a transnational community.” After all, politically and culturally charged images like these often help usher ideological shifts in the transnational imaginary. Let’s hope he’s right. ■

– Maxwell Suechting and Maria McVarish (Graduate Students, *Modern Thought and Literature*)



*In a Chinese context, the work of artists such as Zhang Hongtu, Li Shan, and Liu Dahong received attention from Hornung for their deconstructive pairing of political imagery from both China and America.*

## ALUMNI NEWS

### Jonathan Holloway '89 Named Dean of Yale College



Stanford American Studies alum Jonathan Holloway '89 was named the new Dean of Yale College in July 2014.

Despite his busy schedule as Dean, Holloway still lectures in African American Studies, American Studies, and History at the college, focusing on social and intellectual history in the post-emancipation United States. Before becoming Dean, Holloway served at Yale as the master of Calhoun College from 2005-2014, and was Chair of the Council of Masters from 2009-2013; he was beginning a three-year term as Chair of the Department of African American Studies in 2013 when he was tapped for his new role. Holloway is the author of *Confronting the Veil: Abram Harris Jr., E. Franklin Frazier, and Ralph Bunche, 1919-1941* (2002) and *Jim Crow Wisdom: Memory and Identity in Black America Since 1940* (2013), both with the University of North Carolina Press. He edited Ralph Bunche's *A Brief and Tentative Analysis of Negro Leadership* (NYU Press, 2005) and co-edited *Black Scholars on the Line: Race, Social Science, and American Thought in the 20th Century* (Notre Dame University Press, 2007). Most recently, he has written an introduction for a new edition of W.E.B. Du Bois's *Souls of Black Folk*, to be published by Yale University Press in 2015. Holloway has held fellowships from the W.E.B. Du Bois Research Institute at Harvard University, the Stanford Humanities Center (where he worked on *Jim Crow Wisdom*), and the Ford Foundation, among other honors and roles in academia. It goes without saying that the American Studies Program is proud to claim Dean Holloway as one of our own!

-- Molly Vorwerck '14

—edited by  
Molly Vorwerck, '14

#### SANDY KALISON PECCERILLO, '79

After graduating from Stanford, Sandy Kallison Peccerillo pursued a three-year program at the Yale School of Nursing. After graduating from Yale in 1996, she worked as a family nurse practitioner, providing primary care at a large drug clinic in New Haven. She then worked at a private practice seeing all ages in an area of Connecticut that had very few nurse practitioners. "I did a lot of public speaking and teaching during that time, but the grad school loans needed to diminish so I found a job at a Community Health Center in Waterbury, CT, one of the poorest cities in the Northeast, with state loan repayment and free immersion lessons in Spanish!" she says. She stayed there for seven years, then took a job working at a private pediatric and adolescent practice. She married Jim Peccerillo (Harvard '78) in 1985 and had two sons. She welcomes any inquiries about Advance Practice Nursing from any interested undergrads or grads considering a career in healthcare.

#### RICK HUMPHRESS, '81

In 1981, Rick Humphress graduated with Honors and Distinction in American Studies under the late Jay Fliegelman. "I have two outstanding memories of that experience," he says. "First, the three-course American History track featuring Jack Rakove, Donald Fehrenbacher, and David Kennedy. Second, I wrote a long honors thesis on John Marshall Harlan with emphasis on civil rights and anti-trust. It was the first paper I ever created using a computer instead of a typewriter as my college roommate, Matt Knox, had just acquired a Mac. It seemed like magic at the time but when I tell me children about it they laugh." After college, Rick received a master's degree in Business Administration and a doctorate in Public Policy and Administration. Currently, Rick consults for Oracle in the public sector helping jurisdictions at all levels implement human resource systems.

#### BARBARA LEVENSON, '84

Currently a legal recruiter in California, Barbara Levenson believes American Studies was the ideal major for her. "As one of the first interdisciplinary majors offered," she says. "I had the opportunity to take wonderful literature and history courses." After Stanford, she went to law school intending (and expecting) to practice law. However, she realized early on that she enjoyed working with attorneys, but was better suited to work with them as a career advisor and coach. For the past 26 years, she has worked as legal recruiter, and in 1999, she and her husband started their own legal recruiting company, Levenson Schweitzer, Inc. For the past few years, she has advised Stanford Law students who are going through on-campus interviews, helping them assess opportunities in different markets.

In her spare time, she serves on the Board of Stanford Professional Women. In 2013, she was elected to the Stanford Associates.

#### JENNIFER KUIPER, '86

Jennifer Kuiper moved to Washington, D.C., about five years ago to start a Congressional briefing series on U.S. policy related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. She now works as an independent consultant conducting evaluations of international development programs and conflict assessments. Some of these assignments have included the evaluation of USAID support for civil society in Iraq, conflict assessment in South Sudan and setting up a monitoring and evaluation system for a workforce development project in Jordan.

#### ANNE FARNHAM TAYLOR, '87

For the past 24 years, Anne Farnham Taylor has taught English and History to high school students in the Bay Area and Colorado. "My degree gave me the flexibility to be qualified to teach both history and English, and I have taught many courses in both," she says. "My first year teaching, I distinctly remember using my spiral notebooks from Barton Bernstein's *America Since '45* class to prep for my seminars!" Several years after graduating from Stanford, she went back to UC Berkeley to get a master's degree in English. In her current position, she teaches World History and AP Psychology classes. She frequently leads one-month intensive seminars in subjects ranging from Andean Cultures in Peru to Homelessness in Colorado Springs and even the American Legal System.

#### KRISTIN MACLAREN ABBOTT, '88

Kristin MacLaren Abbott has been working as an illustrator and visual development artist for several years now. As a freelancer, her work is very wide-ranging. Last year, her largest project was to design the entire park for a winter lantern festival in Barcelona, Spain. "It was a thrill to visit the festival in January and see all my work made real. I realize I am the only one who knew the difference if there were only four monkeys where there should've been six, or a giant purple fish instead of a giant orange fish. I can't complain too much after walking through acres of beautiful, light-filled scenes," she says. This year, she is illustrating more children's books and writing some of her own that she hopes to have published. She continues to teach illustration at the Academy of Art in San Francisco. Her daughter Elizabeth is a geo-physicist working as a seismic risk analyst in Wellington, New Zealand, her son Robert is a software engineer for Bracket, and her youngest finished his freshman year at Washington University in St. Louis, studying math and computer science. Her husband Bob (Stanford '87, '88, '98) works at Norwest Venture Partners.

#### RUSSELL KOROBKIN, '89, JD '94

Russell Korobkin recently finished his 14th year as a professor at the UCLA School of Law, and was recently appointed a Vice Dean. He writes and teaches in the areas of Contract Law, Negotiation, Law and Economics, and Health

cont. on page 38

Care Law. He lives with his wife, daughter, and dog in Los Angeles, CA.

**JULIE LYTHCOTT-HAIMS, '89**

Former Dean of Freshman and Undergraduate Advising at Stanford, Julie Lythcott-Haims has just written her first book, *How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success* (Henry Holt & Co, 2015), an anti-helicopter parenting manifesto born of her years at Stanford, and as a Palo Alto parent. It was reviewed favorably by *The New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune* and is now a best-seller.

**ASHLEY MCCLAIN, '90**

After graduating, Ashley McClain worked as a legal assistant in midtown Manhattan before confirming that she had no interest in corporate law. In 1994, she entered the University of Texas at Austin's M.S. in Community and Regional Planning graduate program. She finished graduate school in winter 1996, in time to move to Paris with her husband, J.C. Schmeill ('90), where she taught English and interned with the United Nations Environment Programme. "That was an amazing year of travel that took [us] from France to Italy, Russia, and later that year to Singapore," she said. In fall of 1997, she joined a woman-led environmental consulting firm called Hicks & Company where she worked for 10 years. In 2007, she co-founded her own environmental consulting business, CoxMcClain Environmental Consulting, where she has worked for the last 8 years. She has two sons Corbin (15) and Beckett (12). She keeps in touch with friends, roommates, and the Dollies ('87-'88), and she and J.C. are looking forward to attending their 25th Stanford reunion in October of this year.

**KELLY O'NEILL, '90**

Currently based in Atlanta, GA, and working as a veterinary internist in a small animal specialty hospital, Kelly O'Neill and her partner, Erin, are planning a move to Dhaka, Bangladesh, in the next year. In Dhaka, Kelly will be working with a local clinic in training veterinary students and doing public health research in zoonotic and emerging infectious diseases.

**JEANNETTE LAFORS, BA '91, MA '92, PHD '04.**

Jeanette LaFors has been putting her American Studies degree to use in a variety of positions, starting with her first full-time job as a high school social studies teacher at Carlmont High School in Belmont, CA. She came back to the Farm to earn her doctorate in education administration and policy analysis with a focus on instructional leadership. After two years post-doctorate as a Director of Professional Services at Teachscape, Inc., she was hired as the Director of Equity Initiatives at The Education Trust – West, in Oakland, CA, advocating for the high academic achievement of all students—and particularly those of color or living in poverty. She just recently moved to Santiago, Chile, with her husband, Matt Kelemen, PhD (APA) '01, to support education reform efforts in Chile and experience the world from a different perspective with their children Dylan (12) and Adela (9).

**SUZANNE MOLLER COLODNY '92**

Suzanne Moller Colodny volunteers for several organizations including the Starkey Foundation, a nonprofit that has given away 100,000 hearing aids to children and adults around the world, and has recently joined a mission to distribute hearing aids in the Dominican Republic. She recently spoke on a panel for the Stanford Initiative to Cure Hearing Loss (SICHL). "With Starkey, I am able to help people today and with SICHL, I hope to eliminate the need for hearing aids in the future," she says. When not volunteering, she loves seeing her Stanford friends on both coasts, and splits her time between New York City and Sausalito with her husband Mark.

**JONATHAN M. EISENBERG, '92**

After graduating from Stanford, Jonathan M. Eisenberg spent the next year working as a research associate at a non-profit group called The Business Enterprise Trust. From 1993-1996, Jonathan attended law school at U.C. Berkeley. Prior to getting his law degree and passing the California State Bar Exam in 1996, he served as a law clerk to a federal trial judge and practiced civil litigation with an emphasis on intellectual property disputes with three private law firms. Now married with two kids and living in South Pasadena, CA, Jonathan joined the Office of the California Attorney General as a deputy attorney general in 2007.

**CAROLINE PARK, '92**

Caroline is a Deputy Section Chief with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of General Counsel. While working as a fish lawyer, she has continued to pursue music in various ways. Search YouTube for "cparkplay coffee song" (a ditty on hyper-individualistic society) or "cparkplay metro song" (an ode to D.C. metro).

**ERYN BROWN, '96**

Eryn Brown is a partner at Management 360, currently one of the largest management and production companies in Hollywood. At Management360, she represents writers, actors, and directors from around the world.

**ANNIE SIMPSON FROEHLICH, '97**

Annie Simpson Froehlich is currently living in Washington, D.C., with her husband and two sons, Graham (2), and Elias (2 months). She is an associate at Latham & Watkins LLP, where she practices in the firm's Export Controls and Trade Sanctions group. In this capacity, she counsels clients with respect to compliance with the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), Export Administration Regulations (EAR), and the various economic sanctions regulations administered by the Office of Foreign Assets Control. Living in the nation's capital, she and her family take full advantage of D.C.'s many rich offerings. That said, she misses the Farm and is thankful for the many Stanford grads who have laid down roots in D.C. as well.

**NATHAN REED, '99, MA '02**

Following his graduation from Stanford, Nathan Reed co-termed in Sociology. He then ventured

into the corporate world for twelve years as a paralegal. After deciding that he didn't want to go to law school, he enrolled at the University of Notre Dame to pursue his second graduate degree in sociology. He plans on applying to other programs in the Fall to complete his doctorate in Sociology, and hopes to become a race and sexuality scholar with particular emphasis on how those (and other) social identities take shape in the United States. He thinks this research agenda and career choice is an excellent synthesis of American Studies, Sociology and his personal interests.

**CHRISTINE JACOBSON, '00**

Christine Jacobson works in advertising, crediting her American Studies degree with giving her deep insight into consumer behavior and an interdisciplinary approach to solving creative problems. She lives in New York City with her husband Justin and their dog Scout.

**EMILIANO MARTINEZ, '00**

This July, Emiliano Martinez switched jobs, moving from Associate General Counsel at Humanity United (a private foundation based in San Francisco) to Corporate Counsel at Omidyar Network (a philanthropic investment firm in Redwood City). "I am excited about the move—including the shorter commute since I live in Menlo Park—and am happy to be continuing my career in the nonprofit sector," he says. He lives in Menlo Park with his wife, Meghan, also '00, and two young sons, Julian and Oliver.

**LE TIM LY, '01**

Le Tim Ly is Deputy Director at the Chinese Progressive Association in San Francisco, working to grow a new generation of activists and organizers with the Seeding Change (seeding-change.org) Fellowship. Last year, he welcomed his third child, baby girl Quena, with wife Lolita Roibal (CSRE '03).

**EMILY CADEI, '02**

Emily Cadei started a new job as *Newsweek's* political correspondent in Washington, D.C., in May. She is covering national politics and the 2016 race for the magazine as well as *Newsweek.com*.

**DAVID MARTIN, '03**

After playing on the professional tennis circuit for eight years, David Martin graduated from Loyola Law School, Los Angeles, in 2015. He is currently studying for the Texas Bar Exam, and will work for Winstead Law in Dallas in this coming September.

**MAUREEN SULLIVAN, '04**

Maureen Sullivan lives and works in New York City with her husband and two daughters, Ryan (2 1/2) and Lucy (11 months). She is the President of AOL.com and Lifestyle Brands, overseeing brands that play an important role in women's lives—like MAKERS, the largest collection of women's stories, which was recently nominated for an Emmy. Her firm is launching another MAKERS film this fall to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Women's Summit.

**TANYA KOSHY, '06**

Tanya Koshy is a Product Manager at Google, working on the same-day delivery service, Google



Express. She and her Stanford sweetheart (and fellow Googler), Blair Beverly ('06), are expecting a baby girl in August of this year. She thinks often and fondly of her AmStud classes, honors thesis research, professors, and peers.

**ALLISON FALK, '08**

After playing professional soccer for a number of years, Allison Falk is currently living in San Francisco and working for Dropbox. She completed her first Olympic triathlon in April with her sister. She recently finished up a trip to Lisbon, Portugal, where espresso with traditional custard tarts was an afternoon staple, along with the great beaches, people, and warm weather.

**REBECCA VELASCO, '08**

Rebecca Velasco finished her Masters in Public Policy at the USC Price School of Public Policy in May 2015, where she focused her studies on education policy. Currently, she's working in new school development at the CA Charter Schools Association and is based in their office in downtown L.A.

**KELLEY FONG, '09**

Kelley Fong recently finished her second year of a Ph.D. program in sociology and social policy at Harvard, where she is studying low-income families in America and their interactions with public systems like schools and child welfare. "It's pretty much just a continuation of my AmStud concentration (Children, Youth, and Families in America), so of course I'm loving it!" she says.

**DEAN SCHAFFER, '10, MA '11**

After graduating from Stanford, Dean co-termed in Communication (Journalism), receiving his master's degree in June 2011. For the last year and a half, he's been working as a product manager for a music tech company called Smule, which creates social music apps.

**ALEXEI KOSEFF, '12, MA '13**

After graduating in 2012, Alexei Koseff stayed on at Stanford another year to get his master's degree in journalism. From there, he interned with the *Los Angeles Times* in Washington, D.C., for a summer, which led to a job in the *Sacramento Bee's* Capitol bureau. He moved up to Sacramento in December 2013 and has been writing about California state politics ever since, mostly with a focus on higher education and the state Senate.

**LISA QUAN, '12**

After graduation, Lisa Quan worked as a Research Assistant under Joan Petersilia and Robert Weisberg at the Stanford Criminal Justice Center. In fall 2014, she moved to Princeton, New Jersey to work at Mathematica Policy Research as a Survey Associate. She is planning to go back to school for a graduate degree, hopefully by next year.

**SAM CORRAO CLANON, '13**

Sam left Morgan Stanley at the end of June, where he had been working on the Structured Products

desk since graduating from Stanford in 2013. After spending the summer traveling around Southeast Asia, he started at Harvard Law this fall.

**TAYLOR DEWBERRY, '14**

Taylor Dewberry is beginning her second year at the Washington University School of Law in St. Louis. This summer, she had the opportunity to work as a summer associate at Hunton & Williams LLP and at the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals for Judge James A. Wynn. Next school year, she will be a staff editor on the Washington University Journal of Law and Policy.

**MIRANDA MAMMEN, '14**

Miranda Mammen has been working at the National Center for Youth Law, in Oakland, CA, as FosterEd Operations Manager since October 2014. FosterEd improves the educational outcomes of youth in the foster care and probation systems.

**WILLIAM ROBINS, '14**

The day after graduation, William Robins began a long road trip that would last the majority of the summer. "I wanted to see the country I had studied with my own eyes, and began a meandering path that would bring me through most of the lower 48. I used National Parks and Monuments as my geographical targets, venturing through Yosemite, Sequoia, Kings Canyon, Death Valley, and a number of other historic sites," he says. During this adventure, he spent a few days digging for fossils in Kemmerer, WY, Herkimer Diamonds in NY, and Native American artifacts in Utah. He also explored the Pacific Northwest, buying a crabbing license and learning how hard Dungeness and rock crabs can pinch, and even boarded the *National Geographic Ice Cream Expedition*. Will began his role as Senior Numismatist at Heritage Auctions in Dallas in late September 2014, but soon could feel that California was pulling him back. By the middle of April 2015, he had moved back to Palo Alto. Shortly thereafter, he began an internship in business operations at Gainsight. In the process, Will picked up a new hobby: teaching himself an antique photography method called wetplate collodion.

**MOLLY VORWERCK, '14**

After working basically full time at the Stanford Daily for four years and graduating from the American Studies Program in June 2014, Molly Vorwerck began her career in communications at S.F.-based PR firm TriplePoint. Using her journalism and writing background, she was integral in planning long-term strategy, organizing media tours, and creating promotional content for a variety of gaming and consumer tech clients. After a year at TriplePoint, Molly joined the tech practice at global communications firm Hill + Knowlton Strategies in September 2015. At H+K, Molly works with such tech companies as the Ford Motor Company's Ford Research and Innovation Center, Dolby Digital, and VMware, among others. She plans to keep writing, and in the near future, publish a book (or two... or three).



KRISTIN MACLAREN ABBOTT

*Images from the winter lantern show Kristin MacLaren Abbott designed for a park in Barcelona, Spain*



WILL ROBINS

*Digging for fossils; and aboard the National Geographic Ice Cream Expedition*



SUZANNE MOLLER COLODNY

*Suzanne Moller Colodny helped fit over 3,500 adults and children with hearing aids in the Dominican Republic*



## Q&A: CATCHING UP WITH JULIE LYTHCOTT-HAIMS

With her new book, *How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success*, former Dean of Freshmen and Undergraduate Advising at Stanford—and American Studies alum—Julie Lythcott-Haims, '89, brings her years of working with students adjusting to life on the Farm to the page. Published this year by Henry Holt and Co., the book exposes the harms of helicopter parenting, asserts the need to give preteens and teens agency over their personal and academic decisions, and above all, gives tips and tricks for raising healthy, independent adults. Fellow alum Molly Vorwerck, '14, sat down with Lythcott-Haims to discuss her new book, its road to the *New York Times* bestseller list, and why overparenting, despite its positive intentions, is ultimately detrimental to adolescent growth:

**YOU RECENTLY LEFT YOUR POSITION AS A DEAN OF FRESHMEN AND UNDERGRADUATE ADVISING AT STANFORD. HOW DID YOUR EXPERIENCE AT STANFORD INFORM YOUR NEW BOOK, *HOW TO RAISE AN ADULT*?**

Lythcott-Haims: My book is quite deeply informed by my years as dean, during which time the concept of helicopter parenting of college students moved from a one-off oddity to a regular practice on the part of many parents at Stanford and around the nation. Concern for over-parented students is what made me want to write the book. By the time I was actually writing it, though, I was concerned not only for them, but for their parents (who tend to be frazzled and anxious) and for the sake of all of us who may one day find ourselves living in a society led by such so-called “adults.”

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE KEY INSIGHTS YOU HAVE FOR PARENTS SEEKING TO RAISE HEALTHY, WELL-ROUNDED KIDS?**

If we pause to think about it critically, it's our biological imperative as mammals to raise our offspring to independence. So, at a philosophical or existential level we ought to embrace the fact that our job as parents is to put ourselves out of a job. It may entail interrogating our own ego a bit. If instead of fostering that independence in our kids we are overly protective (think “bubble wrapped kids”), overly directive (“Tiger Mom”), or do too much hand-holding (“parent as concierge”) we might achieve a short term “win” of the unbruised knee or feelings, the higher grade, or admission to the “right” college, but in the long term, when we've done this, we deprive kids of the chance not only to be independent but to construct a healthy sense of self, which is only formed when they do the thinking, planning, deciding, problem-solving, and

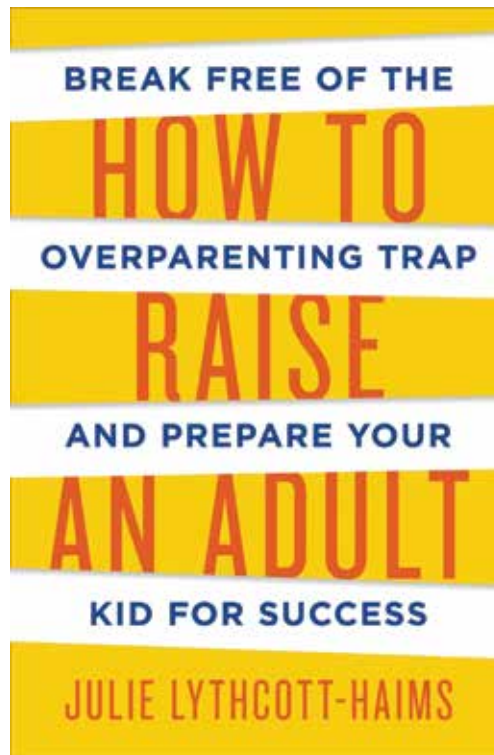
coping (the *be*-ing, if you will) for themselves.

Practically-speaking there are a couple key things people can stop and start doing now. First, stop: 1) saying “we” when you really mean your kid; 2) arguing with all the authority figures in their lives; 3) doing their homework. Second, from toddlerhood forward start building skills in kids with this four step method: 1) first you do it for them; 2) then you do it with them; 3) then you watch them do it; 4) then they do it independently. This method applies to almost any skill—[whether] teaching them to cross the street, make a meal, or do their taxes. Implicit in starting and stopping these behaviors is a willingness to tolerate our kids' failure, and appreciate that failure is one of life's greatest teachers and an essential aspect of childhood.

**WHY DO YOU THINK THERE ARE SO MANY HELICOPTER PARENTS NOWADAYS COMPARED TO 20 OR EVEN 10 YEARS AGO?**

Well, first, it appears to “work”; we all know kids who've been admitted to a highly selective college after having been manufactured to the point of perfection by parents who've carefully cultivated every moment. (The point is, they may have gotten in but then what? Do they have the skills and confidence

to fend for themselves once there, and in the world of work or graduate school after, or will they always need you to be there to handle things for them.) Second, this manner of parenting grew in popularity over time, so many new parents see it simply as the norm in the community in which they are raising kids. And, because it's such an involved style of parenting, it takes a lot of guts to say you're not going to do that—you're labeled lazy, negligent, or uncaring if you buck the trend.



*My book is quite deeply informed by my years as dean, during which time the concept of helicopter parenting of college students moved from a one-off oddity to a regular practice on the part of many parents at Stanford and around the nation.*

Taking a step back and looking at the historical origins, the term was first coined in 1990 by researchers Jim Fay and Foster Cline who had observed in the 1980s a number of shifts toward greater parental involvement in children's lives and a decrease in the opportunity for children to do for themselves. As I detail in my book, these shifts included: 1) two well-publicized cases of stranger abduction leading to our nation's collective fear of "Stranger Danger;" 2) the concept of Play Date (parent scheduling, planning, directing, and mediating play); 3) a self esteem movement (aka "everyone gets a trophy"); and 4) publication of *A Nation at Risk* which argued for more homework and testing.

#### **DID YOUR OWN PARENTING EXPERIENCES INFLUENCE THE CREATION OF THIS BOOK?**

Oh heck yes. My book takes a rather empathetic tone accordingly. My mortifying aha moment came in 2009, when, having just given a big talk to parents of new Stanford freshmen, I then went home to dinner with my own family and began cutting my ten year old's meat. In that instant I realized you can't be expected to let go of your eighteen-year-old if you've been holding tight to your seventeen-year-old, and so on, and that childhood is supposed to offer continual skill-building. I had to ask myself: *When do you stop cutting their meat? When do you stop looking both ways for them as they cross the street? When do you stop helping with homework? When do you let them talk to strangers?* Questions like these formed the basis of my initial inquiry into why so many young adults seem to lack the basic skills needed at college, in the workplace, and in life generally. I think I'm a better parent now that I've seen the results of thousands of upbringings (in the form of other people's grown sons and daughters) and from having learned of the harm of overhelping.

#### **DID YOUR DEGREE IN AMERICAN STUDIES CONTRIBUTE TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF U.S. CULTURAL TRENDS?**

I've always been interested in the American condition broadly speaking and in the suffering of "the other" in our diverse democracy, which is why American Studies was the perfect intellectual home for me at Stanford. As an undergrad I never dreamed I'd one day spend so much time writing and thinking about over-parented middle and upper middle class kids, but, as it turns out, those children are suffering.

#### **ANY OTHER BOOKS IN THE WORKS?**

In theory, yes. In practice, for now just being in community with people around the nation who care about this issue is absorbing all of my time, and I have little room left for creative expression to the degree needed in order to hatch a new project. I'll be finishing my MFA in Creative Writing at California College of the Arts this Spring, and it's possible that my thesis—which I intend will be a collection of literary essays focusing on what we think, do, say, and feel when we're not focused on *performing* ourselves—could be a basis for my next book. We shall see. I'm certainly enjoying discovering myself as a writer, and I'm deeply interested in what I might find next. ■



photo: Kristina Vetter

*"I've always been interested in the American condition broadly speaking and in the suffering of "the other" in our diverse democracy, which is why American Studies was the perfect intellectual home for me at Stanford. As an undergrad I never dreamed I'd one day spend so much time writing and thinking about over-parented middle and upper middle class kids, but, as it turns out, those children are suffering."*

- Interviewed by Molly Vorwerck, '14



## AN INTERVIEW WITH RAHIEL TESFAMARIAM

On Saturday, April 5, 2015, Stanford American Studies alum and critically acclaimed public theologian, social activist, writer, and speaker Rahiel Tesfamariam, '03, delivered the keynote address at the national Youth Empowerment Conference which was held at Stanford this year, with the theme "DRIVE: Dreams Require Initiative, Value, and Effort," and co-sponsored by American Studies, the Black Student Union, and the Black Community Services Center. Fellow American Studies major Makshya Tolbert, '15, sat down with Tesfamariam to discuss her path from American Studies to who she is now: a leading voice in the public debate about civil rights and social change.

### COULD YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE AT STANFORD - ACADEMICS, STUDENT LIFE, IDENTITY POLITICS, AND BEYOND?

That era of my life was one of the best things that ever happened to me. Coming to Stanford, all I knew was my inner city, working class reality [in Washington, D.C.]. Stanford showed me how big the world is—from classmates who represented all walks of life to my time overseas studying at Oxford. It was undoubtedly my peers that made for an unforgettable experience, as they stretched and challenged me to no end. My freshman year roommate was a Jehovah's Witness, my best friend was in the Nation of Islam, and my boyfriend was a devout Christian. It was during that time that I came to more deeply understand my commitment to the black freedom struggle, embrace my African identity and ultimately have a spiritual awakening that changed the course of my life.

### WHAT AREAS OF YOUR STANFORD EXPERIENCE REALLY TOOK ROOT IN YOUR LIFE BEYOND STANFORD, AND HOW MUCH DID YOUR TIME HERE PUSH THE POLITICAL, CULTURAL, AND COMMUNITY-BASED INTERESTS THAT HAVE BUILT YOUR CAREER?

Amadou Diallo<sup>1</sup> was killed my freshman year and it was the first time in my life that I engaged in social protest. Coupling that with the books (like the *Autobiography of Malcolm X*) I was reading, the provocative class discussions on race and class [I was having with my colleagues], and the organizations I was active in, I was unknowingly being radicalized. How could I not be, with the Black Nationalist energy that existed in

Ujamaa and amongst the black student body at that time? That radicalized consciousness soon became evident in my poetry and spoken word. Stanford was also where I began to see my writing as a powerful tool, leading me to work at a grassroots black-owned newspaper after graduation.



Tesfamariam's blog, "Urban Cusp"

PEOPLE HAVE PINNED YOU AS AN ACTIVIST, SCHOLAR, WRITER, AND THEOLOGIAN, AMONG MANY OTHER ROLES. HOW DO THOSE LABELS RELATE? WHEN AND TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THERE BEEN CONFLICT AMONG THOSE MARKERS OF IDENTITY? IN YOUR OPINION, HOW MUCH DOES THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF YOUR AREAS OF EXPERTISE PLAY INTO THE WORK THAT YOU ARE DOING?

My Christian values and passion for social justice, specifically as it relates to the liberation and empowerment of oppressed people, are the driving forces of my career. As it relates to *Urban Cusp* [Tesfamariam's online life style and social justice magazine], I launched it to ensure there was a media platform that highlighted the issues and perspectives that I am passionate about. It is often hard for me to see a reflection of myself in mainstream media, and I know that I couldn't be the only young Christian black woman who is progressive and a product of hip-hop culture to feel that way. After launching *Urban Cusp* and experiencing its success, I began to more fully embrace my complex identity and the intersectionality of my work as valuable to my generation. As a justice-seeker, I am drawn to the teachings of Liberation Theology and Christ as a freedom fighter. As both a writer and Christian, I know the power of the written and spoken word. I know that "the power of life and death is in the tongue," which is why I am drawn to public speaking. All of these intersections

<sup>1</sup> Amadou Diallo was an unarmed 22 year-old immigrant from Guinea who was shot and killed by plain-clothed NYPD officers in February 1999, igniting nationwide debates about police brutality, racial profiling, and contagious shooting.

inform everything that I do. When there is conflict, it is rarely internal these days, as I have reconciled a lot of my internal tension over identity politics. The conflict most often comes from *Urban Cusp* followers or the general public requiring that I lay one side down in order to privilege the other. And I work daily to resist that need to choose; I instead choose wholeness. And by being fully, unapologetically myself, I find that often frees others to do the same.

**ESSENCE MAGAZINE LABELED YOU RECENTLY AS ONE OF THE “NEW CIVIL RIGHTS LEADERS,” A COINAGE WHICH CARRIES A VAST LEGACY OF PAST AND PRESENT CIVIL RIGHTS LEADERS IN OUR NATION’S CULTURAL MEMORY. WHOSE CIVIL RIGHTS LEADERSHIP AND LESSONS HAVE YOU’VE TAKEN MOST HEAVILY INTO CONSIDERATION AS IT UNDERLIES YOUR OWN WORK?**

Countless past and present civil rights leaders influence me, but the one that quickly comes to mind is Malcolm X. I have always admired his deep, unconditional love for black people. Malcolm wanted black folks to love themselves and see themselves as beautiful, brilliant, and resilient. He wanted us to break free from the chains of not only systemic oppression and white supremacy but also from self-hatred and nihilism. I believe I am driven by that same love for my people and I am learning to be unapologetic about it. And I too ground my passion for justice and freedom in a spiritual worldview.

**MY FINAL QUESTION: WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS LEAVING THE UNIVERSITY TO ENTER THE WORKFORCE, PARTICULARLY AS IT PERTAINS TO ADVOCACY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE WORK? WHAT LEADERS DO YOU THINK YOUNG PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO ARE ACTIVIST-MINDED, COULD LEARN THE MOST FROM AND WHY? WHAT ADVICE DO YOU WISH YOU’D BEEN GIVEN WHEN YOU WERE IN A SIMILAR POSITION?**

A lot of young professionals play it so safe that they never do anything extraordinary. Success in life cannot solely be measured by how much money is in the bank. Never underestimate the value of social capital. If you don’t have any money but a lot of social capital, that can still get you very far. In this same line of thought, remember that the end does not always justify the means. People want leaders that made it to the top without comprising integrity, self-respect and community values.

Seek out both grassroots and mainstream experience, learn the process of developing a respected brand, hone your strategy skills, gain some social media expertise, and improve on your writing skills. All of that is critical in today’s advocacy landscape. I highly recommend overseas travel and immersion trips; there is no better way to train in community organizing than to see what people are doing in search of social change all over the world. Take what you learn and figure out how it is and is not applicable to your local community.

As you are doing all of this, identify people who have done what you want to do in the world. Reflect on what you want to do that’s similar to them and what it is that you want to do that’s never been done.

Lastly, and most importantly, enjoy the journey and learn from it, because we too often are destination-oriented. This is why I always encourage people to read Paulo Coelho’s *The Alchemist*! ■



When there is conflict, it is rarely internal these days, as I have reconciled a lot of my internal tension over identity politics. The conflict most often comes from *Urban Cusp* followers or the general public requiring that I lay one side down in order to privilege the other. And I work daily to resist that need to choose; I instead choose wholeness. And by being fully, unapologetically myself, I find that often frees others to do the same.

# AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

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