

PANDEMIC, INTOLERANCE & INEQUALITY



CONTENTS

- 4-5** Letter from the Chair
- 6-9** New Faculty Profiles
- 10** Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies
- 11** Anti-Asian Bias on the Rise: Focus on Ian Shin
- 12-17** Q&A with Melissa Borja
- 18-19** Roland Hwang: A Year in Review
- 20-25** Racial Identifiers and the Impact of the Pandemic on Arab and Muslim American Communities
- 26-29** Latina/o Studies and Michigan's Missing Minorities
- 30-35** Native American Studies News for 2020-21
- 36-39** Racist Zoombombing: An Interview with Co-Authors Kyle Lindsey and Hanah Stiverson
- 40-44** Class of 2021
- 45-47** Scholarships and Awards

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a letter from the chair

HOP

by Lawrence La Foun

Dear alumni, students, faculty, and friends of the Department of American Culture,

A word comes to mind: hope. It is a sentiment that helps us to keep going, given the challenges we have faced and will most likely continue to face. Hope and patience are the virtues I am invoking in my first year as chair of the Department of American Culture, as we start a new year with great optimism but also with some well-warranted trepidation. Many things have changed since March of 2020, and we still do not know how the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to unfold. In this context, we must acknowledge the profound pain and suffering experienced and envision better things to come. We can also reflect critically on the way this pandemic has led us to find new ways of sociality and transformed our relationship to technology. COVID-19 has brought into focus the profound inequality and intolerance that mark this country (for example, anti-Asian sentiment) and that go beyond health as it intersects with race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, citizenship status, age, and other factors and social movements, such as Black Lives Matters, UndocuQueers, and #MeToo. It has also illuminated what we can do when we come together.

This summer I spent six weeks in Puerto Rico, where I am from. Coming home after more than a year to help my elderly mom, to see friends and neighbors, and to research

E tain-Stokes

and learn more about contemporary Puerto Rican performing arts has been complex. Just as we all became excited about waning rates of infection, the Delta variant brought everyone back into high alert. But COVID-19 is not the worst crisis this colonial possession of the United States is facing. The collapse of the economy in 2008, President Barack Obama's PROMESA bill, the imposition of a Fiscal Supervision Board, the impacts of Hurricanes Irma and María in 2017, the open homophobia, sexism, and lack of compassion of former governor Ricardo Rosselló Nevares which brought him down in the summer of 2019, and the privatization of the electric utility company in July of 2021 are some of the indignities and challenges that have only been exacerbated by the pandemic. There is no justice when more than three million U.S. citizens live in a state of impoverishment upheld by the U.S. Congress and Supreme Court, with decaying infrastructure, school closings, and massive out-migration.

We are all very much hoping for transformative fall and winter semesters, with new and returning faculty, students, and staff. We are very excited to continue to develop relationships with our alumni, learning about your diverse career paths, and fostering connections. How to continue to build on the thriving legacy of the first American studies program in the nation? Our new ethnic studies sub-plan is now allowing undergraduate students to take greater advantage of our four ethnic studies units, bringing Arab and Muslim American, Asian/Pacific Islander American, Latina/o or Latinx, and Native American scholarship more fully into our fold in a comparative frame. I hope you enjoy reading about our achievements and vision in this issue of our newsletter.

Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes

Chair of American Culture
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor





SHLEY LUCAS

Professor, Director of the Program in Latina/o Studies and Undergraduate Advisor for the Major and Minor

Although she is “new” neither to the university or our Latina/o Studies program (LS), we are delighted to welcome Ashley Lucas into the Department of American Culture as Professor, where she will serve as Director of LS for a three-year term. Lucas has long been and remains a professor in the Departments of Theatre and Drama and English Language and Literature and in the Residential College. With a B.A. from Yale and a joint Ph.D. in Ethnic Studies and Theatre and Drama from the University of California, San Diego, Professor Lucas explores Latinx

studies, prison studies, and comparative ethnic studies in tandem with theatre studies. She is the author of *Prison Theatre and the Global Crisis of Incarceration* (2020), she has published in journals such as the *Journal of American Drama and Theatre*, the *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, *Latin American Theatre Review*, *American Music*, and *Revista de Literatura Contemporánea de México*, and she has coedited both a special issue for the *National Women’s Association Journal* and a volume of essays: *Razor Wire Women: Prisoners, Activists, Scholars, and Artists*. At Michigan, Professor Lucas has six years of experience as the former director of the Prison Creative Arts Project.



R

ETIKA ADHIKARI

Assistant Professor, American Culture

Assistant Professor Retika Adhikari's manuscript project, *Refugee Crossings*, has won her a prestigious American Council for Learned Societies fellowship for the calendar year, 2022. Using multiple languages, Dr. Adhikari ethnographically explores the refugee encampment experiences of Nepali and Bhutanese people and the impact of those experiences on their resettlement in the United States. Methodologically, she innovatively follows the entirety of the

refugee resettlement journey: from a long-term residence in refugee camps in the Nepali lowlands to settlement in the rust-belt city of Syracuse, New York. To carry this out, Dr. Adhikari actually accompanied several families on the journey from Nepal to the U.S. as they navigated multiple border controls with humanitarian paperwork in lieu of passports. Where others investigate the pre-departure site or the resettlement site, Adhikari explores not only both but the trip between.

This transnational work dovetails nicely with much of the scholarships in our program, including that of Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, Silvia Pedraza, Yeidy Rivero, Colin Gunckel, Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes, and Manan Desai, who all research the back and forth of immigration and migration, the ebb and flow of culture from country of origin to the United States and back. Her work also resonates with a broad departmental interest in refugees: Hmong, Palestinian, and Cuban. Her work is informed by her previous experience as an activist for women's rights in South Asia, and her arrival deepens our Asian/Pacific Islander American studies program's bench in South Asian studies.

A cultural anthropologist by training, Retika Adhikari earned her Ph.D. from Syracuse University, has Masters' degrees in Gender and Peacebuilding from the United Nations University for Peace in Costa Rica and in Social Sciences from the University of Chicago, and gained her B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Michigan. She joins us following two years as Chancellor's Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Department of Asian American Studies at the University of Illinois.



LORENA CHAMBERS

Postdoctoral Fellow, Departments of American Culture and History

American Culture, joined by our partner the Department of History, is thrilled to welcome Dr. Lorena Chambers as Postdoctoral Fellow. Dr. Chambers will be revising her 2021 dissertation (History, University of Michigan) for publication as a book, and she will teach a course for each year of her fellowship. Dr. Chamber's dissertation, "From Mexicanidad study in

Statecraft to Stagecraft: The Politics of Peddling in U.S. Culture, 1886-1906," is an innovative cultural diplomacy between the United States and Mexico. Dr. Chambers explores the ways in which public and private entities in both nations generated and marketed images of racialized Mexicans during a formative period

in modern America. Her work resonates with examinations of cultural diplomacy by AC's own Clare Croft and it supports our formidable Latina/o Studies program.

Dr. Chambers' impressive formal scholarship only begins to suggest what knowledge and experience she brings to campus. Dr. Chambers already has an active scholarly life in public history—establishing, for example, a project titled "The First 100: 50 Years of Chicana Historians Changing Knowledge" for the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History and Latino Initiatives Center. What's more, she has a career history of collaborative and impactful work in political marketing, polling, and media in Washington D.C., giving her many experiences in career diversity, a much-discussed topic in the humanities today.



AYLA GONYON

Lecturer 1, Ojibwe Language

The Department is excited to welcome, as a formal instructor of Ojibwe language, Kayla Gonyon. Since her undergraduate days at the University (B.A., U-M, History, Native American Studies minor, 2013), Kayla Gonyon has worked with Alphonse Pitawanakwat in the Ojibwe curriculum, and she and Alphonse will continue this work together as co-instructors.

Not only has her knowledge of the language and its proper instruction intensified over a decade of work with, and under the mentorship of, Mr. Pitawanakwat, she has in the meantime gained formal knowledge of linguistics through graduate training at Eastern Michigan University (M.A., Linguistics, 2019). What's more, Kayla Gonyon has worked with our postdoctoral fellow and Ojibwe specialist Dr. Cherry Meyer (written up in these pages last Fall). Indeed, Gonyon, Pitawanakwat, and Meyer recently and collaboratively secured a Level 1 grant from our college's Technology Services and Language Resource Center. Kayla Gonyon has presented her research on Ojibwe linguistics, pedagogy, and literature at such conferences as the annual Algonquian Conference and the annual Anishinaabemowin-Teg Conference, the latter of which is generally held at Sault Ste. Marie, MI. We are delighted that Kayla Gonyon, long a collaborator in our language restoration efforts, now becomes a member of our faculty.

ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER AMERICAN STUDIES

BY HITOMI TONOMURA

Asian/Pacific Islander American studies is having a moment. The surge in anti-Asian bias incidents over the past year and a half has ironically thrown Asian Americans out of national invisibility to the limelight for better or worse. Amidst the pandemic, the 'hate' incidents energized all of us and led to broad engagements not only among A/PIA scholars but also with the broader public across the country. There was much to both celebrate and reflect on as many A/PIA faculty became steeped in public-engaged scholarship. But quite apart from the pandemic, in coordination with the Spectrum Center and UAAO, A/PIA nominated and joyfully congratulated Jim Toy, an Asian American revolutionary, pioneer LGBTQ activist, and founder of the Spectrum Center, for his receipt of the University's Honorary Degree. Getting the first Asian/African American, female Vice President in the country's history was of course a cause for celebration. While it is no exaggeration to state that, throughout the challenging time, every A/PIA faculty member was pushing themselves into overdrive, we highlight here the contribution and thoughtful reflection of three scholars: Ian Shin, Melissa Borja, and Roland Hwang.



STOP
AAPI
HATE



Image source: Getty Images

Anti-Asian Bias on the Rise

CONTRIBUTIONS BY IAN SHIN, MELISSA BORJA, AND ROLAND HWANG

When the anti-Asian bias incidents began to rise, Ian Shin quickly became the spokesperson for the public in order to help them make sense of current events. He created podcasts, took part in media events, and spoke to secondary schools, foreign policymakers, and even industries, such as consulting, travel, and financial services. He joined a group of Asian American studies scholars who worked nearly around the clock to field media inquiries, circulate research for talking points, and support one another. The media inquired about the social and historical dimensions of Asian American lives, including the very diversity of who Asian Americans are and the myth of model minority stereotype. In Ian's public outreach, he observed a genuine desire to learn and to effect change in their communities. After making connections, he came off with a hope and appreciation that the public, including influential corporations, would approach their work with an understanding of how white supremacy permeated social structures in the U.S., and how to view current events through an intersectional lens. But he also encountered a less receptive and thoughtful

public, especially when he disclosed the data, compiled by Melissa Borja's team, described below, that white (not Black) assailants were responsible for the vast majority of attacks on Asian Americans. The reactions of some were derisive and hostile, enough for Ian to be concerned about his family's safety. Ironically, it was other Asian Americans, who delivered the most upsetting remarks, revealing the depth of anti-Blackness in our community. The fact that Ian lived outside the coasts allowed them to question his credibility, despite Indiana recording the highest number of anti-Asian attacks per capita. Others called him a "boba Asian," which, he later learned, is a derogatory term for an Asian person who betrays their community. Ian admits that his position at U-M is one of privilege that gives him a platform to be taken seriously, and also realizes that his female colleagues endure far more harassment from public-facing scholarship than he. He hopes that U-M, which benefits from their scholarship, especially critiques of misogyny and racism, supports them with the resources to safely and bravely speak truth to power.

Q & A

WITH MELISSA BORJA

During these difficult months, the painstaking work of Melissa Borja and her colleagues in the Virulent Hate project has created the highly resourceful Stop AAPI Hate, an online self-reporting system with plenty of useful information, such as the Movement Hub and Bystander Intervention. These findings have made transparent the extent and nature of the current state of anti-Asian racism not only for the A/PIA community but everyone in the country. For this newsletter, Melissa's colleague, Susan Najita, interviewed her to learn what it means to do this type of activist, public-engaged research work as a scholar of A/PIA studies. The interview begins with the question of how the pandemic year has shaped the kinds of research questions Melissa was pursuing. An abridged version of the interview is presented here.

The pandemic has caused us to reflect on what our values and principles are. I think this is true broadly when we are in a situation where a lot of people are getting sick, dying, losing their jobs, and facing uncertainty. We ask ourselves, "Why are we here in the first place, and how are we using our lives?" And, so for me, the pandemic has made me center serving the community in my scholarship, maybe even more, though I have always been a community-engaged scholar. I realized that being a researcher is an amazing contribution to a suffering world. I often say to people, "We can't really change the world until we understand the world, and we actually don't understand the world very well sometimes!" So, one thing that's felt good about the year—and it's been a challenging year—was that I was able to really learn this and carry it forward in my career as a scholar. We can use our research to alleviate suffering in the world and do good in the world.

FACILITATED BY SUSANNAJITA



Would you provide some examples of when that became particularly evident to you?

I have two main COVID-related projects which both spring from March 2020. I heard so many stories of people I know who were spit on, coughed at, yelled at while they were just going about their daily lives. A friend who is a religious scholar told me about how she was grocery shopping in San Francisco when somebody spat on her. These stories were coming in as I was hearing news stories of more extreme acts like the stabbing of a Burmese family in Texas. A colleague of mine at San Francisco State, Russel Jeung, and I worked together on a committee at the American Academy of Religion. He told me he needed help with his research. Early in the pandemic, he had tracked hate incidents in the news media. He eventually in March created Stop AAPI Hate, an online self-reporting system. He asked me to take on the role of news media research. I assembled a research team, brought in as many volunteers as possible, and began to track incidents reported in the news media. We created a database and began mapping incidents. In total, for 2020—between January 1st and December 31st—we searched and reviewed over 4,000 news articles in which we identified over a thousand incidents of anti-Asian hate and racism reported in the news. We systematically coded these and this was the origin of the Virulent Hate project. Having used my own research funds initially, I was lucky to get a grant for this year.

The second project is related to how religious communities are responding at this moment. I got a grant from the Louisville Institute to do a study of how Filipino Americans have been turning to theology and spiritual resilience in navigating the pandemic. You may know that many Filipino Americans are nurses. My own mom is a nurse, and many nurses have died.

In one of the families of my mom's nursing classmates, the wife, the husband, and the son all died of COVID within a month of each other in California. So, the toll has been really big. This is also a project that reflects a desire to meet the needs of the community.

There is something really powerful in these projects as forms of collective scholarship. They involved a team of 15 researchers for my Virulent Hate team--that's just here at the University of Michigan, and I have a group of 5 researchers on the Filipino American theology project. Throughout the pandemic, we were really each other's support network, not just checking in with each other as scholars but as humans. I think the academy is better when we care for each other as humans and as friends, and not just as fellow researchers. That was really powerful.

For the Virulent Hate project, I realized the power of doing research in a way that lifts up the next generation of engaged scholars. There was mentoring and a showing up for them. The youngest researcher is 16 years old, so she's young. When Atlanta happened, we didn't talk about research. We talked about how we could support each other during this really difficult time, and what it means to embrace the responsibility of doing research on such a difficult topic in a way that honors the responsibility to care for the community but also to care for oneself, in a context of so much trauma. I felt it was a really wonderful thing to be there for young people at that moment, and show up for them, by offering a community-oriented model for how to navigate this moment with strength, resilience, and generosity.



Image source: Jason Leung, Unsplash.com

Does the notion of caring for one's collaborators present a different model for doing research?

It does to me because it's not about you as an individual. It's about multiple forms of community and multiple forms of responsibility and care. I think that one thing this pandemic really forced me to do is to re-imagine scholarship as an act of care for colleagues and for the broader world. It's not about production so much as about caring and leaning into that responsibility to see in this moment of pain and suffering opportunities for possibility and transformation. I've been emphasizing that ever since March 2021. What happened in Atlanta was so paralyzing and traumatic. And, I live in Indianapolis, as you know, so what happened later here was also paralyzing and traumatic. To do scholarship that attends to the pain that your community is feeling does feel like a very different way of approaching scholarship than having a research question, doing historiographical research, and doing a study. There is space for both.

It's intergenerational, community-engaged, and centered on the value of caring. It's also emotionally exhausting. I've often joked that I

am a part-time professor and part-time pastor because people are grieving right now, and we should be grieving. It just takes a lot out of you. It has been illuminating to me to think about types of scholarship that are meaningful and can be sustained because they are meaningful. At the same time, boundaries need to be set so that one can sustain this work in the long run.

“We can't do our work as intellectuals well if we don't do the work as human beings who feel the world.”

I think about this question a lot with regard to my spouse who is also an academic but in a completely different context. People often say that the best healers, the best doctors, and nurses, are people who connect with people. I think there is a parallel here. I think the best scholars are the ones who connect with people, understand people, and really lean into the relational aspects of scholarship.



I want to say that I decided I would become a historian in the context of pain. It was right after 9/11. I was 19 years old. It was why I became a religious scholar. I saw my Arab American friends, my Muslim American friends, my Sikh American friends being treated so terribly.

“I began this journey of being an academic because I thought I could learn about the world, and maybe through the work I do.”

I could create a world that was safer for them. In my idealistic 19-year-old phase, I really began with a very principled connection to scholarship, centered on ethical commitments, moral commitments, and I think I forgot that a little bit in graduate school. It wasn't that I didn't

have people who modeled scholarship that intervenes in the world. I worked with some of the most publicly engaged scholars. But, there was something I learned about other dimensions of being a publicly engaged scholar. It is about being genuinely present, almost radically so, for people who are hurting, grieving, and building up an emotional reserve and a spiritual reserve alongside using the intellectual, scholarly tools that I've been honing over the years. I think this might be coded as feminine. I think I've become more comfortable in returning to how I thought about scholarship in the beginning. It feels more authentic, for sure.

What sorts of changes should we be working toward to create the kinds of worlds we actually would like to inhabit as the world starts to come out of this pandemic?

I'm almost nervous about returning to normal. If there was anything that was good about the pandemic, I did appreciate the chance to just slow down a little bit. I am worried that in our quest for normalcy, we're going to return without thinking critically about our practices from before. One thing that would be really useful in trying to be generous and generative scholars is to continue to be more collaborative, and to be expansive in our view of who is a good collaborator in producing knowledge. When I think about a research collaborator, I often think about a graduate student in the department or a faculty member at another university, but what if that research collaborator is a member of a community organization, or what if this research collaborator is an undergraduate student or a faculty member in a completely different field? This year, I was put in a position of collaborating with all sorts of people that I'd never had any connection before. I do a lot of work with the Bridging Divides Initiative at Princeton which researches political violence. They have been very supportive of our work. I don't think I had been as adventurous until this year in reaching outside my discipline. I want us to be more open to who can produce knowledge with us, and I would also hope that universities would have a broader view of what it means to do scholarship. All of the things I did this year have not resulted in a peer-reviewed journal article yet because we've been so busy mapping things and making them available to the public, and I do hope to write it up in a book at some point. I have been producing different forms of scholarship. I think we should be imaginative in all the ways we can generate and share knowledge. As scholars in a university, we very much have a responsibility to do this work with the broader world. That's my hope.

“I’m almost nervous about returning to normal. I am worried that in our quest for normalcy, we’re going to return without thinking critically about our practices from before.”



People hold placards during



a "Stop Asian Hate" rally, following the deadly shootings, in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S., March 20, 2021. REUTERS/Shannon Stapleton

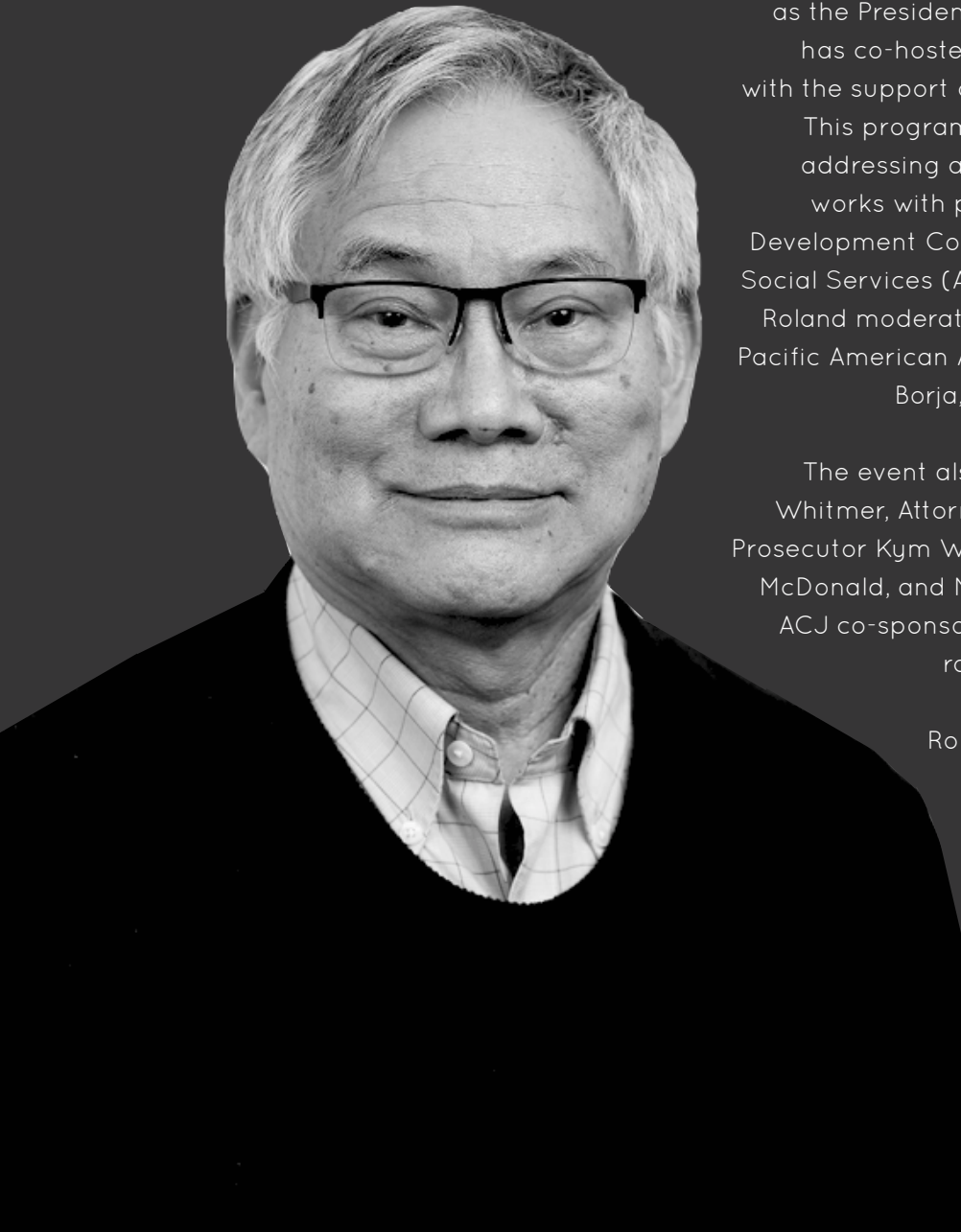


Image source: Wall Street Journal

ROLAND HWANG

a year in review

BY HITOMI TONOMURA



An experienced legal scholar, Roland Hwang's engagement is extensive and often involves political officials. He serves as the President of American Citizens for Justice, which has co-hosted the Racial Equity Learning Community with the support of a newly won Kresge Foundation grant.

This program promotes anti-racism conversations by addressing anti-Asian racism and anti-Blackness. ACJ works with partners NAACP Detroit chapter, Hispanic Development Corporation, Arab Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS), and Black Family Development.

Roland moderated a panel hosted by the Michigan Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission that included Melissa Borja, who spoke on her Virulent Hate project.

The event also featured Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Attorney General Dana Nessel, Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy, Oakland County Prosecutor Karen McDonald, and Macomb County Prosecutor Peter Lucido. ACJ co-sponsored a Stop Asian Hate Downtown Detroit rally, 11 days after the shootings in Atlanta.

Roland's other activities include addressing AAPI history and Japanese Americans, the beating death of Vincent Chin in 1982, and the current tide of anti-Asian hate during the COVID-19 pandemic to groups such as TCF Bank's Asian ERG, Van Dyke Horn Public Relations, General Motors Asian Connections, Alix Partners ALIGN (Asian Leadership Insights &



Image source: Getty Images

Growth Network), Anti-Defamation League's Asian staff ERG, University of Michigan Development Office, US Steel LEAD, and Henry Ford Hospital's Connect for Grand Rounds.

Roland was a panelist on "Remembering Vincent Chin 39 Years Later," an event held by OCA Asian Pacific American Advocates, on April 9, 2021, to commemorate Vincent Chin, who was beaten to death in June 1982, by two white autoworkers who accused him of depriving them of work. Vincent Chin's murder gave rise to two civil rights trials. On June 19, on the 39th anniversary of the beating, Ian Shin organized a panel moderated by Roland Hwang and included author and ACJ co-founder Helen Zia, attorney Jim Shimoura, and recent American Culture graduate and past UAAO chair, Anna Dang.

Roland contributes to a broad effort to increase the visibility of AAPIs in the K-12 US history curriculum and to raise funds and distribute storybooks vetted by Asian American scholars in the program One Book One World in Michigan. Roland has been involved in a series of community conversations, sponsored by American Citizens for Justice with the American Human Rights Council (AHRC). The goal was to ensure that law enforcement is alert to identify racial hate when incidents happen and engage officials in charge, such as Acting US attorneys, FBI agents, Chiefs of Police, and others. On a different occasion, Roland spoke to

the Michigan State Police cadet class graduates about AAPI perspectives about law enforcement, emphasizing how AAPI is a largely immigrant community.

Roland joined fellow Association of Chinese Americans board members and officers Shenlin Chen and Sharon Dow on "Community Conversations" with news anchor Carolyn Clifford to talk about the AAPI community, the race relations climate, and the Vincent Chin case. The segment aired in early June on WXYZ-TV Channel 7 in Detroit. Roland also appeared on "How We Got Here: The Asian American Experience in Metro Detroit" on Detroit Public Television's One Detroit joining attorney Jim Shimoura, and Paula Yoo, author of "From a Whisper to a Rallying Cry," which aired on May 19. Finally, API Alumni Association, which is new, hosted their first meeting and held a panel titled "Anti-Asian Racism: Then, Now and Beyond" on May 27. Roland joined U.S. Congresswoman Grace Meng of Queens, NYC (a U-M grad), State Rep Stephanie Chang, Ann Arbor city councilwoman Linh Song, and Palak Sheth on the panel.



RACIAL IDENTIFIERS AND THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON ARAB AND MUSLIM AMERICAN COMMUNITIES



BY KHALED MATTAWA



Image source: PAHO.org

How Arab and Muslim communities in the U.S., and worldwide, have been impacted and how they have responded doubtlessly reflects the politics and resources around them, as well as their capacity to resist and react to inequalities. The question remains as to how we can actually find out the impact that the pandemic has had on the Arab and Muslim communities in the U.S. This has been difficult to discern precisely because these communities' status is very much politicized.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data shows that Latinx, Native Americans, and black and brown Americans are at considerably higher risk to die from the virus compared to white Americans.¹ The numbers have become closer now, but at some point, black and brown folks were more than twice as likely to die of COVID-19. While this information is helpful, it is not precise enough. Arab, Muslim, and Black Muslim American communities are often not separated from other ethnic and racial identifiers in social and medical research. African and Asian American Muslims are included with Asian and African American communities. As for Arab Americans and other Middle Easterners, there is no dedicated racial or ethnic identifier in the health data collection of the CDC where these groups fall under the racial category of "white."²

Yet, researchers are fully aware that race, religion, and ethnicity are essential factors for knowing the health status of given groups and the epidemiological decisions they make or that are needed to be made for them. Writing on how

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (2021, April 19), "Health Equity Considerations and Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups." <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html>

² Abuelezam, Nadia. "Health Equity During COVID-19: the Case of Arab Americans." 2020, June 17. *US National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7298462/>



Image source: ifyc.org

the Black Muslim community has fared during the pandemic, reporter Tasmihah Khan informs that “Black Muslims endure socioeconomic and racial impacts of the virus in multiple ways while also navigating the threat of anti-Black violence.”³ With many members of the community living in food deserts, and in under-resourced and over-polluted neighborhoods where they lack access to basic healthcare, “Black Muslims are targeted for harassment, discrimination, and violence due to both racism and Islamophobia,”⁴ states Khan. Similarly, Khan adds that “because Black Muslims are regularly left out of research there’s little data available to track just how badly their communities are being affected by the pandemic.”⁵

Information about Arab and Muslim Americans is also difficult to glean from official sources. The Obama administration had agreed to include the racial category of ME/NA (Middle East/ North African) in the future census collection.⁶ However, the Trump administration, doubtlessly due to its hostile attitude toward the community, had decided not to move forward with the inclusion.⁷ According to medical professionals, this decision has affected our knowledge of how COVID-19 has impacted the Arab and Muslim American communities.

³ Khan, Tasmihah. May 14, 2021. “Black Muslims have been disproportionately impacted by two crises. Does anyone care?” *Interfaith America*. <https://ifyc.org/article/black-muslims-have-been-disproportionately-impacted-two-crises-does-anyone-care>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Wang, Hansi Lo. 2018, January 29. “No Middle Eastern Or North African Category On 2020 Census, Bureau Says.” *National Public Radio*. <https://www.npr.org/2018/01/29/581541111/no-middle-eastern-or-north-african-category-on-2020-census-bureau-says>

⁷ Ibid

Researchers are having to tease out the impact on given Arab and Muslim communities from locally focused research. Dr. Raed Al-Naser examined a geographic survey by San Diego County in California in order to estimate the pandemic's effect on the Arab American community in San Diego. Based on his analysis on cases per Zipcode, he found that "The center of the city of El Cajon, an Arab American enclave, is one of the top five zip codes in COVID-19 numbers, hospitalizations, and mortality in the county."⁸ Using the same data set Al-Naser discovered that inoculation was lagging in this particular area. In New Jersey, Dr. Khaled Bader, president of the New Jersey chapter of the National Arab American Medical Association, claims that there are "higher rates among Arabic and Latino residents" in the city of Paterson where he works "than in wealthier surrounding areas."⁹ But the impact COVID-19 has had on Arab Americans "is unclear because they are not tracked as a distinct category by the federal government and are instead counted as white,"¹⁰ asserts journalist Hannan Adely.

The lack of community-specific data has also made it difficult in Arab and Muslim American communities to address misperceptions about the pandemic and in the drive to encourage people to get vaccinated. Many people in these communities rely on overseas news sources and social media for their information. Bader reports that an anti-vaccine post by a Lebanese pop star a few months ago caused a ripple in his community and had to be addressed.¹¹ A global survey of Arabic speakers, including some in the U.S., has found "a significant rate of vaccine hesitancy among Arabs in and outside the Arab region."¹² Respondents were concerned about side effects, distrusted health care policies, and felt the vaccines were produced too quickly. More specific research about local communities' attitudes regarding vaccination can be very helpful in mitigating the impact of the pandemic. Al-Naser argues that narrowly focused data "is vital for health care organizations, public health agencies and policymakers" to better communities and to "prioritize their focus of care and understand these allocate resources"¹³ to them.

Despite the lack of data and dissonant information about the pandemic in Arab and Muslim communities, community leaders are keen on getting the people vaccinated. Religious institutions, community organizations, and medical professionals are forging coalitions to encourage vaccination. The Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative and the Muslim Wellness Foundation have banded

⁸ Al-Naser, Raed. 2021, March 17. "Arab Americans: Disproportionate Impact of COVID-19 and Vaccine Inequity." *Arab America*. <https://www.arabamerica.com/arab-americans-disproportionate-impact-of-covid-19-and-vaccine-inequity/>

⁹ Adely, Hannan. 2021, April 23. "How many COVID-19 deaths? How many vaccinated? In Arab American communities, we don't know." *North Jersey*. <https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/new-jersey/2021/04/23/nj-covid-vaccine-rate-deaths-arab-americans-unknown-lack-data/7190864002/>.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Qunaibi, Eyad A.; Helmy, Mohamed; Basheti, Iman; Sultan, Iyad. 2021.03.09. "A High Rate of COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy Among Arabs: Results of a Large-scale Survey". *MedRxiv*. <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.03.09.21252764v1>

¹³ Al-Naser. 2021, March 17.

together to create the National Black Muslim COVID-19 Coalition to “address the need for effective planning, preparedness, and organizing during this global pandemic within Black Muslim communities”¹⁴ and to ensure “that the community receives culturally sensitive, faith-sensitive care as it faces the pandemic.”¹⁵

Similarly, faith centers have been active in combating the pandemic. A mosque in New Jersey has offered a regular online workshop on vaccines in Arabic and English to address misperceptions and to encourage people to get the jab. The Islamic Center of America in Dearborn has collaborated with the Henry Ford Medical Center to vaccinate the Muslim community at Friday prayers.¹⁷ A month before Ramadan, a time when Muslim families were going to gather in worship and festivities, Mirvat Kadouh, vice-chair of the Islamic Center of America’s Board of Trustees, saw a silver lining in a potentially dangerous situation.

The ICA made sure that its imams were all vaccinated and encouraged their community to receive the vaccine. The imams also assured the faithful that the vaccines do not violate their ritual fast. The Center also set up a vaccine clinic at the mosque in collaboration with the Henry Ford Medical Center.

¹⁴ *Black Muslim Coalition* (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://www.blackmuslimcoalition.com>

¹⁵ Owens, Cassie. 2020, May 13. “How National Black Muslim COVID-19 Coalition serves communities during the pandemic.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. <https://www.inquirer.com/news/coronavirus-national-black-muslim-covid-coalition-ramadan-faith-resources-20200513.html>

¹⁶ Adely, Hannan. 2021, April 23.

¹⁷ Shamus, Kristen Jordan. 2021, March 8. “Vaccine-mobile brings COVID-19 shots to Dearborn mosque, helping to convince the hesitant.” *The Detroit Free Press*. <https://www.freep.com/story/news/health/2021/03/09/islamic-center-dearborn-covid-19-vaccine-clinic-henry-ford/4631987001/>





ICA and HFMC aim to continue their collaboration in providing essential health information and screenings to the community beyond COVID-19, turning a crisis into an opportunity.¹⁸

Such collaborations can indeed help Arab and Muslim American communities to gather much needed information about them. But “right now,” without data that is specific to them, Arab and Muslim American communities “are blind to certain information and facts”¹⁹ regarding COVID’s impact on them, states Dr. Ahmad Qatanani of the Hackensack Meridian Health System in New Jersey.

University of Michigan students and faculty have been at the forefront of calling for a ME/NA ethnic/racial categorization at the university which was incorporated in 2019.²⁰ President Biden, during the 2020 presidential campaign stated that he would add the ME/NA category to Federal surveys and applications.²¹ This should be helpful in the future, but it may take some time yet, and the process may yet be politicized as well. In the meantime, health professionals, religious leaders, and community organizers are picking up the slack to address a multitude of challenges borne out of intolerance and inequality.

¹⁸ Bathija, Priya. “Hospital Partners with Faith-based Group to Vaccinate Muslim Community.” *American Hospital Association*. <https://soundcloud.com/advancinghealth/aha-joining-hands-for-greater-impact>

¹⁹ Adely, Hannan. 2021, April 23.

²⁰ Syed, Zayna. 2019, January 10. “ME/NA identity boxes now included in Rackham Applications.” *The Michigan Daily*. <https://www.michigandaily.com/news/academics/mena-identity-boxes-now-included-rackham-applications/>
It should also be noted that U-M students are also leading an effort to change the ME/NA categorization to SWANA (Southwest Asian and North African). They object to “the phrase ‘Middle East’” because it “was coined by colonizers that aimed to exploit the region. See Mustafa et al, 2021, April 21, “We are still here: the continued need for SWANA recognition at the University of Michigan.” *The Michigan Daily*. <https://www.michigandaily.com/michigan-in-color/we-are-still-here-the-continued-need-for-swana-recognition-at-the-university-of-michigan/>

²¹ “Joe Biden and the Arab American Community: A Plan for Partnership.” *Joe Biden.com*. Retrieved July 9, 2021. <https://joebiden.com/joe-biden-and-the-arab-american-community-a-plan-for-partnership/>

Latina/o Studies & Michigan's Missing Minorities

BY ANTHONY P. MORA

Over the past year, we have seen national debate about the humanities curriculum in public schools and at universities. Questions from across the political spectrum ask how much course content intersects with contemporary concerns about racial justice. Of course, our Latina/o Studies Program and its partner ethnic studies units in American Culture have a foundational commitment to teaching and researching the diversity of the nation in the past and present. Given the broader debates, though, we wondered at what level Michigan's other humanities courses incorporated ethnic studies scholarship. Working with Anthony P. Mora, the interim Director of Latina/o Studies in 2020-2021, graduate researcher Yezefia Sandoval conducted a targeted survey of syllabi from the Departments of History and English. Her final report suggests that we have quite a bit further to go before we meet our collective goals around diversity and inclusion.

Many might be surprised to learn that we have a century of scholarly publications on Latinx people's experiences and contributions to the United States. Small numbers of pioneering Latinx scholars, like Arthur Campa or Jovita González, established themselves in academic fields like folklore studies, history, and literature as early as the 1920s. They sought to document Latinx people's unique contributions to the nation. Another generation of scholars from the middle of the twentieth century expanded on that early work and ensured the stability of the Latinx studies field that we know today. During the 1960s and 1970s, students from a wide range of backgrounds noted that they paid tuition and taxes which funded their universities. Those same institutions, they argued, therefore had an obligation to provide courses and research relevant to their students' diverse communities. Over many decades, student activists successfully pushed university administrators across the nation to fund race and ethnic studies, LGBTQ studies, and women and gender studies. At the University of



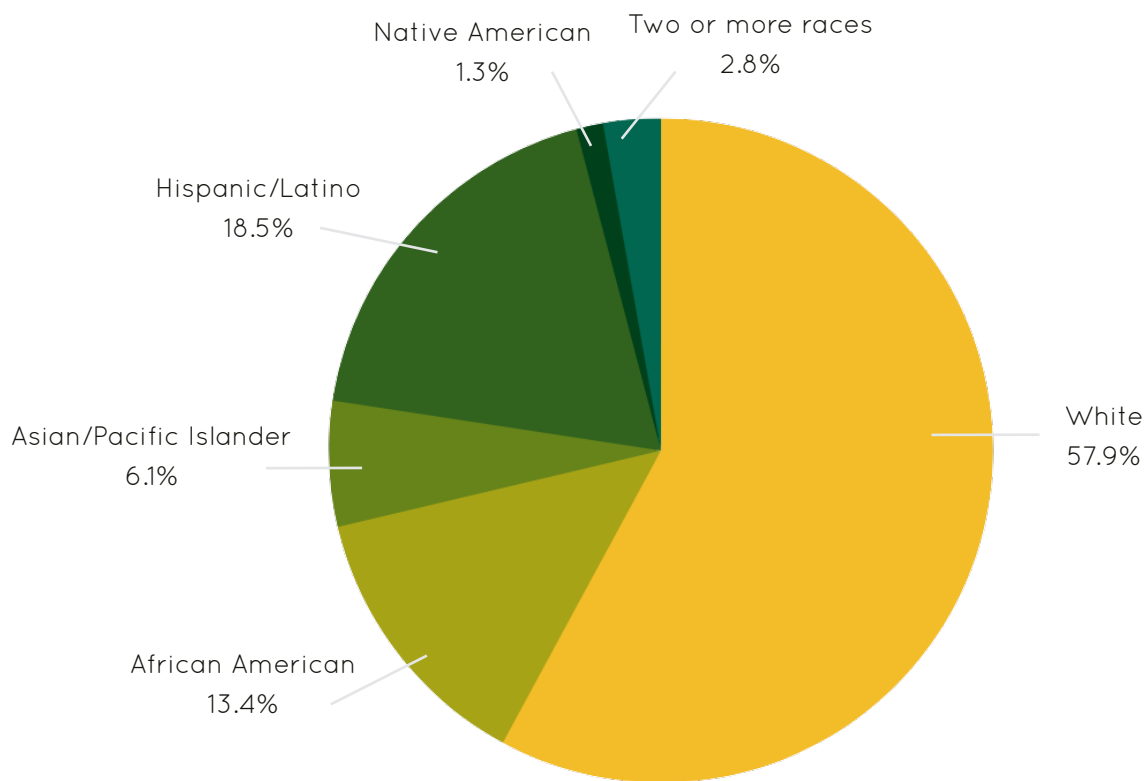


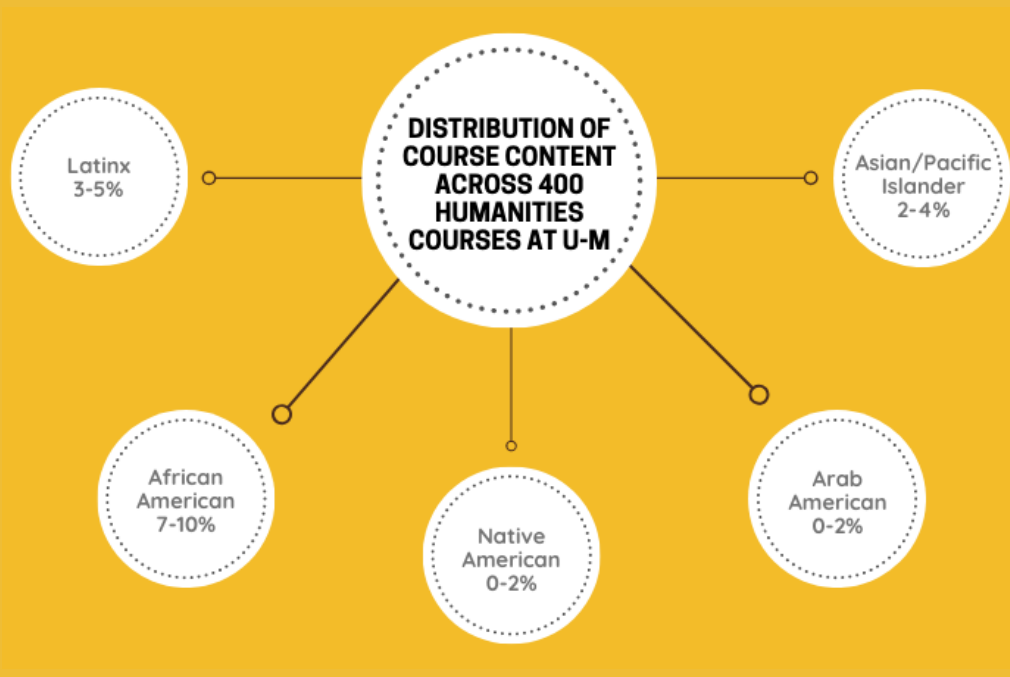
Image source: unsplash.com, Igor Rodrigues

Michigan, that activism resulted in the creation of the now Department of Afroamerican and African Studies in 1970. Over a decade later, students and faculty founded the Latina/o Studies Program within American Culture. Eventually, partner units such as Native American Studies, Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies, and Arab and Muslim American Studies all achieved institutional recognition.

Activists and scholars always intended such units to work in conjunction with “traditional” fields like history and literature. They hoped that their work would transform established classes in the United States so that they would better represent the nation’s diversity to all students. For Latinx people, this meant combatting the pervasive erasure of their 160 years of history in the nation. In our study, therefore, we asked just how well that goal had been achieved here at U-M. We established certain parameters to make our study as fair as possible. Specifically, we excluded courses that would not logically have content on a specific group. We would not penalize a course on the Salem witch trials, for example, for not including Latinx people. Logically, such a course would not lend itself to that inclusion given that Latinx people did not reside in Massachusetts in large numbers during the seventeenth century. Instead, we focused our attention on the undergraduate and graduate courses that purported to represent the broad histories and works of literature of the United States. We asked whether students, regardless of their background, had opportunities to think critically about Latinx and other people of color in Michigan’s classrooms.

There are different ways to measure equity, but a common one considers whether the content is on parity with the population. In other words, if all things were equal, we might expect that course content would match each group's percentage of the U.S. population. According to the United States Census Bureau as of 2021, Latinx people make up about 18.5 percent of the nation's population; African Americans about 13.4 percent; Asians/Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders around 6.1 percent; and Native Americans about 1.3 percent (see figure below). Ms. Sandoval carefully cataloged and analyzed the content of 400 humanities courses taught between Fall 2015 and Winter 2020. Although the pattern showed some progress in inclusion, we were disheartened that most broad history and literature courses continue to lack content on these groups at parity with their percentage of the population.





Although now the largest minority in the United States, Latinx people constituted only between 3 to 5 percent of the combined course content. Many history and literature classes had no Latinx content whatsoever. Asian American content was even more limited with only 2 to 4 percent. African American content tended to be the largest, but still far short of parity at only 7 to 10 percent. Shockingly Native American and Arab American content was almost nonexistent, ranging from zero to just 2 percent. Digging a bit deeper, we also found that when they did appear, minorities tended to be relegated to only specific themes or time periods. When included at all, Latinx people most often appeared in discussions about recent undocumented migrations or in discussions about crime and drugs. We fear that this limited representation only enforces xenophobic tropes of Latinx people as a recent “invasion” rather than being critical to the national story. African Americans, although represented in the highest numbers, remained relegated mostly to discussions of the Civil Rights era of the 1950s and 1960s. We also found that most of the representations of people of color in these classes tended to be male.

Although only a sample of the much larger curriculum across the College of LSA, our initial study suggests the serious work still ahead of us. We reject the notion that adding these additional perspectives threatens a sense of national coherence. On the contrary, we believe that building a curriculum that more fully reflects how deeply interwoven Latinx and other people of color are into the U.S. culture and history will create a more equitable future. *Saber es Poder.*

NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES NEWS FOR 2020-21

BY BARBRA MEEK



For NAS, this has been a remarkable year. As social justice initiatives took center stage (amidst the pandemic), we witnessed the removal of the Washington football teams' racist moniker and the renaming of Cleveland's baseball team, now called the Guardians. We celebrated the Supreme Court's decision to recognize and uphold the reservation boundaries of the Oklahoma Creek Nation (in *McGirt v. Oklahoma*), and we saw for the first time ever the appointment of a Native American woman, Deb Haaland, as the 54th United States Secretary of the Interior under President Biden.

And yet, it has been an unprecedented year, of pandemic-related suffering, politically and racially charged violence, and death. It was a year that drew us close but kept us at a distance. It laid bare some of our greatest weaknesses (structural inequities, harmful acts of discrimination, rationalized exclusion) while it demanded of us our strength, and our capacity to be resilient, generous, and kind. As director of NAS this past year, I had several opportunities to observe, participate in, and admire my colleagues' strength and capacity to move forward at a time when it would have been just as easy to stand still.

We pivoted to an online/remote modality to maintain events like the Berkhofer lecture (award-winning author Tommy Orange) and Native American Heritage month (Dr. Adrienne Keene) - and our own teaching!

The Berkhofer Lecture, now in its fifth year, is an annual event that celebrates the literary and scholarly accomplishments of innovative/groundbreaking Native American intellectuals. Established in 2014 by an alumni gift from the Dan and Carmen Brenner family of Seattle, Washington, this lecture series has showcased the musical and poetic artistry of 23rd U.S. poet laureate Joy Harjo (Muskovke), up-and-coming playwright and lawyer Mary Kathryn Nagle (Cherokee), prolific author, critic, and professor emeritus Gerald Vizenor (Chippewa), and our inaugural speaker, legendary writer N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa). Our fifth speaker, Tommy Orange, maintained this tradition but in a slightly different format: via Zoom and



Tommy Orange, Author of *There There*

as a conversation (rather than a lecture). Our former NAS director Michael Witgen guided the conversation of Mr. Orange’s award-winning book, *There There*. Attended by well over 400 people, the evening’s event offered a glimpse into the author’s writing process, his inspirations and challenges, and his connection to his many characters. Though remote, it was an evening not to be missed.

Not only were such momentous occasions shifted online, but our classes also became remote ventures, for better or for worse. We learned that “hybrid” has many different meanings: as alternating between in-person and remote synchronous classes, as coordinating in-person and remote audiences simultaneously, and as holding some classes synchronously (in person or remote) and others asynchronously (remote). Courses not well-suited to online instruction, hybrid or not, were language courses because pedagogically they emphasize interaction and speaking as part of the process of language learning. So, how did language instructors manage?

AC’s own Ojibwe language instructional team - Elder Alphonse Pitawanakwat, Kayla Gonyon, and Dr. Cherry Meyer - offered to share their experience. In a conversation over Zoom (of course), we chatted about some of the challenges and rewards of this past year teaching online. Here’s an edited excerpt from our conversation.

Animate Intransitive Independent Inflection Template

PERSON PREFIX	TENSE	VERB	NEGATIVE	VERB ENDINGS
n- 1 g- 2	-gii Past -ga/da Future -wii Future (want)	VAI	-sii (vowel-final) -zii (consonant-final)	-mi 1.PL -m 2.PL -wag/-oog 3.PL -wan OBV (Plural or obviative)

- SOME SPEAKERS ADD N TO THE END OF VERB ENDINGS THAT ARE VOWEL-FINAL

First and foremost, we'd like to thank Phill Cameron, at the Language Resource Center (LRC), and Vivian Nash. Phill helped the team get training on Zoom and on how to use Canvas for exams. We hired Vivian Nash, a former student who is now starting her Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in Linguistics, with funding from the LRC as a graduate student assistant in the winter term. She made reference sheets (charts for verb paradigms) for us, including Alphonse's variety of Ojibwe [see illustration].

Kayla: Teaching online seemed more time-consuming. My role became running Zoom and screen-sharing worksheets, verb charts, and other materials (while Alphonse lectured). One of the most difficult things was making sure students were comfortable participating remotely.

Everything takes longer online

- Kayla Gonyon

Kayla: One of the unexpected benefits of remote learning was that students participated more, not in terms of speaking, but in terms of using the chat function to share their thoughts and ask questions.

Kayla: Quiet students opened up more online, and all students loved the chat feature, using both Ojibwe and English.

Cherry: When I was present, I used the chat feature to add to lectures (live transcription of Alphonse's lecture) and to explain things (grammatical breakdown of verb forms), as well as providing opportunities for discussion in chat about linguistic differences (pronunciation, spelling). The Chat feature was an unexpected plus.

The chat function really enhances participation & learning

- Cherry Meyer

While many language courses at U-M emphasize speaking from the very beginning, the Ojibwe language courses emphasize sounds, pronunciation, and grammar over conversation and interaction – because most of the

students who take the class have zero knowledge of Ojibwe or any Native American language. Almost everything about the language is completely new to them. Despite that, second-year students are already able to read Ojibwe stories, translate texts, and analyze Ojibwe grammatical structures. Most recently, the instructional team was awarded a summer funding grant from LSAIT in partnership with the LRC to build their Ojibwe language database and to continue to improve their instructional materials.

We grew, welcoming Dr. Kyle Whyte (School of Environment and Sustainability) for the first time and Dr. Scott Lyons (English) for the second time to our faculty group. We continued to build and strengthen our relationships around campus, through IILG (led by Dr. Fiona Lee this past year), as sitting members on the University's NAGPRA Advisory Committee (led by Dr. Ben Secunda), and as enthusiastic fans of Dr. Stephanie Fryberg (Psychology) and her newly funded RISE Center. Two of our own faculty, Dr. Bethany Hughes and Dr. David Temin, achieved important milestones, and both have been recipients of a year-long faculty fellowship at the Institute for the Humanities (IH). Dr. Hughes wrapped up her year as a fellow in Winter 2021 and Dr. Temin begins his term this fall.



Last meeting for the Faculty Fellows at the Institute for Humanities

Over the course of her IH fellowship, Dr. Hughes revised her book manuscript, workshopping sections of it at the Institute for the Humanities and with the Native American Studies faculty. Titled *Redface: Race, Performance and Indigeneity*, it's an intriguing history of the scripting and performing of Indigenous characters from the 1800s up until today while it's also a performance itself, with interludes ("refrains") that offer counterpoints to the entrenched versions of Indianness in American culture. Additionally, she was selected to participate in the summer 2021 Mellon School of Theatre and Performance Research at Harvard University where she attended seminars, engaged with scholars across the globe, and participated in a faculty writing group. The dedicated time to focus on research and writing as well as the constructive and collegial conversations she experienced in these three communities were invaluable in the process of creating a manuscript draft that reflects her intellectual commitments. In recognition of her writing and intellectual commitments, this August Dr. Hughes received an Honorable Mention for the Vera Mowry Roberts Award (best essay published in English) from the American Theatre and Drama Society for her article, "Oka Apesvchi: Indigenous Feminism, Performance, and Protest." *Theatre Journal*, Volume 72.2 (June). Congratulations, Dr. Hughes!



Bethany Hughes getting ready to present a virtual talk.

In preparation for his upcoming year as an IH fellow, Dr. Temin shared with the NAS faculty the introduction to his book manuscript, *Remapping Sovereignty*. It is a careful exploration of Indigenous politics in the U.S. and the ways in which anti-colonial Indigenous intellectuals retheorized decolonization in the 20th century and "remapped the relationship between self-determination and sovereignty." David also used this workshop as an opportunity to deepen his participation in NAS by becoming a voting member of the unit. We enthusiastically supported his change in status, welcoming him to the role of Administrative faculty member.

Finally, we shrank, bidding farewell to our colleague and friend, Dr. Michael Witgen, and wishing him well in his new position.

RACIST ZOOMBOMBING

American Culture graduate students Kyle Lindsey and Hanah Stiverson recently co-authored the book *Racist Zoombombing* (Routledge, 2021) with Professor and Director of the Digital Studies Institute Lisa Nakamura. Grappling with our collective reliance on Zoom since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the book examines the phenomenon of Zoombombing as a racist and gendered phenomenon that targets Black users and communities in particular. This interview with Lindsey and Stiverson focuses on the collaborative process of co-authoring a full-length book as graduate students.

Lisa Nakamura, Hanah Stiverson
and Kyle Lindsey

Racist Zoombombing: An Interview w/co-authors Kyle Lindsey & Hanah Stiverson

BY COLIN GUNCKEL

Colin Gunckel: So maybe I'll start by asking you how this project came together because it's pretty remarkable for grad students to co-author a book with a faculty member.

Kyle Lindsey: Originally Lisa wanted to do a Diversity Allies project with me. It was just going to be a small article on racist Zoombombing. At some point, we got an email saying there was additional funding for Diversity Allies, which got Hanah on the research project as well. Around the same time, Routledge sent an email asking Lisa to write a short series book on a topic. So those two things kind of came together by circumstance: having two additional research partners and a short series book.

CG: How was it for you as grad students who are already juggling a lot? How did you find time to co-author a book? The great thing about the book is that it's timely. The difficult thing about the book is that we're all going through a pandemic and trying to balance everything at once. How was that process for both of you?

KL: I think starting in the summer certainly helped for me, the fact that this was my summer project to do alongside the American Culture summer reading. It was as simple as having a meeting every two weeks at the

beginning. That ramped up as the book got finished during the school year, which became more difficult to accommodate. Then it was just about being honest about how much we were able to do. I think coauthoring allowed for us not so much to pick up each other's slack, but there were weeks when I had more time to write so I could write a bit more. Or there was a time when I couldn't write as much, but the other two could write a bit more. We were able to alleviate responsibility as best we could, this being a co-authored project with a singular voice.

Hanah Stiverson: Yeah, I think it was really kind of serendipitous that it hit both of us at a time when we had more freedom in our schedules. In my case, I was on fellowship and had already made some progress on my dissertation, but I did have to put my dissertation writing on the back burner. In the fall, that's when we really started leaning on each other depending on the week. What worked really well for us was that we all to some extent have a similar working style and were able to compartmentalize and focus when needed. And we were really good at responding quickly. So the communication between the three of us was great. I also had a little bit more freedom in my schedule so I became the coordinating author. And Kyle was so excellent at doing the calendar, the

scheduling, and the organizing for the three of us. We all just leaned on each other's strengths and were very open and communicative with each other. The process itself was a good experience. It was fun rather than stressful. Even if that workload did kind of offset some of our other work, we ended up with a book. So I don't begrudge that in the least.

CG: How did you manage to coauthor a book that had a single, cohesive voice? How did that process work?

KL: I think we did a good job of synthesizing at all levels, making sure each sentence made sense after the other. I think that one of the strengths of co-authoring is that it's inherently conversational in a way that a single-author document isn't. That's something we were actually able to lean into a bit because we come from different areas of expertise. It's very clear that the sections about early Internet history are in Lisa's voice since she's such a major architect of digital studies as we know it. I think it's very clear where Hanah's expertise comes in with far-right studies and reception studies. And then my offerings on Black life and the digital are all there. As far as actual ideas coming together, I think that letting it be conversational when it needed to be was actually very helpful.

HS: One of the things that we did that I really liked was taking turns with chapters. We would do this fast, free-form writing on a chapter just to get pages down. Then we would flip them, come back, and rewrite over each other's sections. So every single piece of this had been touched by each hand, and that provided some cohesiveness. The intro, that was completely co-written as we were all talking out loud. So I can still see who put more emphasis on which chapter. I can recognize everyone's voice, but I can also see where we've taken time to touch each other's

writing. We started each writing session with a conversation. We had really cool conversations around the various uses of the word "viral" and other medical terminology that was new information to Lisa. And we were able to just draw from each other's strengths and knowledge in a way that worked really well.

CG: You're both at different points of your careers as graduate students. You're also at a point where you're still finding your respective scholarly voices and your place within the field. For me, when I did a similar project with a mentor, finishing the dissertation still seemed as challenging, but perhaps a little less so now because I now knew I could take a project like that to completion. So I was wondering if you came out of the process with a new relationship to your research and writing.

HS: I think we probably have slightly different answers because of how we're approaching our timelines. For me, I knew a book project was on the horizon and I had no clue what that looks like because it's not something that's really demystified for us as grad students. These are things that we're terrified of and we're now more and more expected to publish before we even get on the job market. And while publishing an article is very different than publishing a book, there are some similarities in the negotiation and editing processes. Even though I've sat through as many talks as possible about how to get an article published, some of that needs to be experienced to understand it. Now I have this energy around wanting to co-author, and I'm not as fearful about negotiating a book contract or knowing what kind of weird things are put in contracts, or even what the editing process would look like. And I can translate that to an article in a way that I think will be very useful for me. The process of writing an



Image source: Lucas Law, Unplash.com

article feels more approachable now that I've done this because so much of my hesitancy I think came from not knowing. And that's gone. So for me, especially emerging on the job market, this was just incredibly helpful for so many reasons. But I think an important element I got out of this was just confidence in knowing what's ahead of me.

KL: On a logistical level, I think the contract process was an important learning experience for me: that you don't have to just accept a contract and say yes. I now know that you don't have to take the first thing a publisher gives you, which gives me some sense of relief on a logistical level. I also think it gave me more confidence to just write and let workshopping, office hours, and peer review do their work. I'm a person who really loves to edit as I go. But that also makes writing very difficult. Being forced to write this book knocked me out of that habit. I

think this process has also strengthened the importance for me of making academic work as collaborative as possible. There's a way in which this book—and this is something that Lisa and Hanah would also say—was really an ideal circumstance for us, aside from the pandemic, as co-writing and co-research partners. Because it's really inspired me to think about what it means to collaborate across other aspects of academic life whenever possible, even if I never publish another co-authored piece ever again. What does it mean for other kinds of academic work to be collaborative as well? What does it mean to seriously invest in a reading and writing group, to seriously invest in a community of peer editing? How do I really sing the praises of a peer review when I'm teaching even? I think that this process highlighted what collaborators can look like in academic life.

American
Culture's

20 21

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Dang, Anna My-Duyen
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Jindal-Talib, Anju
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Frisina, Kyle
Jolly, Jallicia
Klein Hernandez, Kris
Lee, Peggy
Moses, Janée
Truong, Vivian
Whiteley, Kathleen



Scholarships & Awards

HONOR STUDENTS

Anju Jindal-Taib "SESTA-FOSTA's Impact on Black, LGBTQ+ Sex Workers' Use of the Internet and Digital Support Tools."

JOEL S. SIEGEL SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Stephany Mendez Ortega
Mira Simonton-Chao
Suki Zhao

RICHARD MEISLER WRITING AWARD WINNERS

Dustin Gladstone
Desiree Neveau

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Emily Ohl



Joel S. Siegel Scholarship

Each year the American Culture Department awards the Joel Siegel Scholarship to several students with financial needs who demonstrate the potential for excellence in any of our programs. This year we had a large group of particularly deserving applicants. The winners were Stephany Mendez Ortega, Mira Simonton-Chao, and Suki Zhao.

Stephany Mendez Ortega is a senior who transferred to the University of Michigan in 2019. Stephany is a Latina/o Studies minor with a double major in Neuroscience and Communication & Media. After completion of her bachelor's degree, Stephany's goal is to attend medical school and specialize in neuro-ophthalmology. As an aspiring doctor, Stephany hopes to be an advocate for the Latino/a community and help eliminate the barriers present when seeking and receiving preventive care.

Mira Simonton-Chao is a double major in American Culture (Ethnic Studies) and Humanities. During her time at U-M, Mira has had the opportunity to work as a research assistant for the Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies Program and to serve as Community Historian for United Asian American Organizations (UAAO). In Mira's position as Community Historian, Mira has been able to develop and explore her interests in American culture, A/PIA studies, and organizing and to gain experience in research and project management.

Suki Zhao is a triple major in American Culture (Ethnic Studies), Political Science, and International Studies. Suki aspires to work in immigration law and expects that this field will draw on the intersection of her three majors. During her Michigan in Washington program, Suki interned with Human Rights First, a human rights organization that advocates for refugees and immigrants, and has previously volunteered at Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees. Both of these opportunities allowed her to engage with the political and social aspects of immigration.

Each of these students demonstrates the very best of what our diverse, creative, and intrepid undergraduate students are able to accomplish.



Richard Meisler Writing Award

Each year our department also presents two awards to undergraduates in any of our degree programs for excellence in writing. This prize is named the Richard Meisler Award, in memory of our dear colleague Richard Meisler, who served as an undergraduate advisor in our department for more than a decade and who was both playful and deeply respectful of the ideas and commitments of our undergraduate students. The recipients of the 2021 Richard Meisler Writing Award are Desiree Neveau and Dustin Gladstone, as well as an honorable mention awarded to Emily Ohl.

Desiree Neveau's winning submission, "Rethinking Rebranding: Land O' Lakes and Settler Colonialism," offered a richly nuanced reading of the history and corporate decision-making around the Land O' Lakes logo and the ways that this connects to both Native representation and myths of Native disappearance. The committee was impressed with the ways that the essay considered both the removal of stereotyping imagery of a Native woman as well as the politics of another "disappearing" Native person. The essay considered who should be part of branding conversations and how companies might responsibly engage with Native communities and imagery.

Dustin Gladstone's winning essay, "Legal Restriction of Black Movement in the Wake of Slavery," explored how Fugitive Slave Law inflected racial state politics and white supremacist legislature in the North, and Ohio specifically. The well-researched essay engaged a range of laws and restrictions significant in their own historical context and to contemporary conversations around structural inequality in America today. The Committee was specifically impressed with Dustin's thoughtful use of state archives and scholarship in African American history and commends Dustin's passion for and painstaking documentation of his subject. Dustin's essay was richly informative, engaging a broad range of evidence, and moreover, was a pleasure to read.

Emily Ohl's honorable mention essay, "Models for Each Other: Accounts and Effects of Consciousness Raising Women's Groups," used oral history and photographs to explore how grassroots activism by middle and upper-middle-class white women contributed to their political education about gender and class. Emily's work showed attention to the complexities of how consciousness-raising practices were understood by some women who engaged in them without necessarily considering them particularly radical acts.

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