



AMERICAN CULTURE

ARTS AND RESISTANCE

NEWSLETTER FALL 2023



QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF AMERICAN STUDIES

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN CULTURE,
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, ANN ARBOR

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letter from the chair

BY LAWRENCE
LA FOUNTAIN-STOKES

CHAIR OF AMERICAN CULTURE,
PROFESSOR OF AMERICAN CULTURE,
ROMANCE LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES,
AND WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES

Dear alumni, students, faculty, and friends,
Art and resistance take many forms at the University of Michigan, in the Department of American Culture, and in our four ethnic studies programs. Whether it is presenting Asian and Pacific Islander American studies research papers by students at the University of Michigan Museum of Art (UMMA); sponsoring the visit of leading Guatemalan American performer Alex Alphaoh to present his one-man show *WET: A DACamented Journey*; inviting *New York Times*-best-selling author Angeline Boulley (Sault Ste.



Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians) to speak about her novels; screening the landmark Arab American documentary *Brooklyn, Inshallah* (dir. Ahmed Mansour, 2021), which focuses on a political campaign in Brooklyn, New York; or in the poetry and scholarship of our award-winning students, our community engages the connections between politics and aesthetics as a tool for social change in myriad ways, making powerful interventions in our society. This year's AC newsletter is full of compelling stories about the many things we do as part of this vibrant, complex community, which extends beyond Ann Arbor and even beyond Southeast Michigan.

Emily Ziwei Gong's poem "Where Am I From?" (adapted from Laura Harjo's *Spiral to the Stars: Mvskoke Tools of Futurity*), included in this volume, is part of her Richard Meisler Award-winning essay, which recognizes outstanding writing by undergraduate students in our department. Emily, an A/PIA Studies minor alumna (Class of 2023), bridges American and Asian cultural referents, highlighting how they help to explain who she is and what her experience has been.

Another Meisler Award-winning author, American Culture major (now alumna) Sophia Janevik (Class of 2023), traces the origins of

remixes in her essay “TikTok Remixes and the Democratization of Remix Culture,” explaining how this musical modality first developed in Jamaica. She goes on to propose three TikTok categories: “good” remixes, “(purposefully) bad” remixes, and “meme” remixes. Sophia’s discussion of CupcakKe’s 2021 remix of Olivia Rodrigo’s hit breakup ballad “Driver’s License” is fascinating and highlights the unusual intersections of African American hip hop and Filipina American pop stardom on a media platform geared towards youth.

What does arts and resistance mean to me at this very challenging moment? It means unexpectedly having to field numerous press interviews from media across the US, Puerto Rico, and Spain after Tennessee threatened to ban drag performance in March of 2023. When I published my recent book *Translocas: The Politics of Puerto Rican Drag and Trans Performance* with the University of Michigan Press in 2021, I did not anticipate that drag would become a touchstone of contemporary culture wars, and that the livelihoods of so many performers would be threatened, to say nothing about how this intimidation affects LGBTQ+ persons, particularly gender nonconforming and trans individuals.

Arts and resistance mark the research and teaching of many faculty and students in our department. For Grammy-award winning professor Amy K. Stillman, who received the Shirley Verrett Award in May 2023, it is about maintaining Hawaiian hula traditions vibrant. For associate professor Clare Croft, recently appointed the university’s inaugural director of arts research / creative practice in the provosts’ office, it is about the intersections of arts and society, for example in her *Daring Dances* project, which brings dancers and arts administrators to Ann Arbor and Detroit. For recently tenured associate professor William Calvo-Quiros, it is about the intersections of religion, popular devotion, and the arts, including the ways that officially recognized and popular (unofficial) Mexican saints such as Jesús Malverde, Santa Olguita, Juan Soldado, Saint Toribio Romo, and La Santa Muerte are represented, as he explores in his award-winning book *Undocumented Saints: The Politics of Migrating Devotions* (2022).

Other faculty approach art and resistance in diverse ways. Assistant professor Bethany Hughes (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma) is an expert on race, performance, and indigeneity, and has written on Native American representa-

tion in theatrical performances. Recently tenured associate professor Charlotte Karem Albrecht explores queerness and Arab American representation, for example in Oklahoman Cherokee playwright Lynn Riggs’s 1931 hit play *Green Grow the Lilacs* and Rodgers and Hammerstein’s 1943 musical adaptation, *Oklahoma!* Associate professor Su’ad Abdul-Khabeer’s groundbreaking book *Muslim Cool* was precisely about the intersections of American hip hop and Islam. And in his piece in this newsletter, associate professor Manan Desai, who served as director of A/PIA Studies for the last two academic years, highlights the ways students and faculty approach arts and resistance as it pertains to Asian/Pacific Islander American experience.

For associate professor Ashley Lucas, who is in her third year as director of the Latina/o Studies Program, arts and resistance are manifest in prison theater and many additional creative expressions by formerly incarcerated persons, as well as in the performances of formerly undocumented immigrant artists such as Alex Alphaaraoh. Associate professor Anna Watkins Fisher explores performance and disruption in her two books, *The Play in the System: The Art of Parasitical Resistance* (2020) and *Safety Orange* (2021). Graduate student Julianna Loera Wiggins is writing a doctoral dissertation on the topic of Latina stand-up comedy in Chicago, while Charlotte Juergens organized a multi-day event titled *Afterthoughts: Remembering a Pandemic* (September 28-October 27, 2023), including the exhibit of artist Laura Taylor’s COVID-19 memorial “Half-Built House” and the screening of the documentary *Afterthoughts* at UMMA. Meanwhile, Aurelis Troncoso is writing about queer Santería practitioners in Puerto Rico; Kerry White is writing about trans life in Cuba; and two students completed their dissertations: Sergio Barrera, writing about fraternities, dance, and performance; and Belquis Elhadi, who focused on representations of visibly Muslim women in Western media. It is a privilege that this year’s annual Robert J. Berkhofer Jr. Lecture on Native American Studies featured the esteemed Chippewa author Angeline Boulley, who tells stories about her Ojibwe community. Her first novel *Firekeeper’s Daughter* is a #1 New York Times best seller. I greatly hope you enjoy and are inspired by reading about our department.



NEW PEOPLE

BY JOHN CHENEY-LIPPOLD

As Associate Chair of American Culture, I write to welcome and introduce—in newsletter-fashion—some new faces to the third floor of Haven Hall: our new Chief Administrator and our new cohort of AC graduate students. We are incredibly excited to expand our community to include these new members, and I invite you to read more about them, their backgrounds, and their interests below.

STEPHANIE HART (SHE/HER)

Stephanie is the Department of American Culture's new Chief Administrator. A native of East Lansing—where she grew up as a dedicated viola player—Stephanie comes to Haven Hall from across the street at LSA where she was most recently a business administrator for the Division of Undergraduate Education. Previously, she served as a program and research manager at the School for Environment and Sustainability and the Institute for Social Research.

A University of Michigan alumna in forest ecology, she moved to Oregon after completing her B.S. It was there on the Pacific Coast where she further developed a love for the outdoors, namely hiking and biking, and continued her education about the environment, receiving an M.S. and managing research in forestry. Through this work, she learned how to best understand and improve systems—both human and ecological—and led her to transition into higher education administration.

Outside the office, Stephanie makes good use of Michigan's soil, from biking around the region to gardening. This year she is enjoying the fruits of her 23 tomato plants. A 27-year vegetarian with incredible tips for tofu (crumble, don't cube!), she also is able to clear her head when playing with the Ypsilanti Symphony Orchestra—"You can't worry about anything when playing music."



LILY JIALE CHEN (SHE/THEY)

Lily holds a B.A. in Sociology and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies from the University of Chicago and an M.A. in Public History from Wayne State University. Her doctoral work focuses on the decolonization of sites of collective memory, including museums, memorials, and markers. She examines the relationship between museums and contemporary projects of American settler colonialism, including violence against Indigenous peoples of North America, Pacific Islanders, and Latin American Indigenous Diasporas. Lily situates the museum within the broader trajectory of American imperialism and the nonprofit industrial complex, but dreams of how museums might use affect and emotion to move material reality and engender change.



JESSIE NEAL (THEY/SHE)

Jessie holds a B.A. in Women’s Studies and History from the University of Arizona and an M.A. in Women’s Studies from Brandeis University. Their research interests include “expression of Indigenous CHamoru knowledge within maternal family formations in the diaspora.” For their doctoral project, they would like to employ ethnography to study oral history of CHamoru elders and their descendants in Guåhan/Guam and within the CHamoru communities in the incorporated United States. They would like to focus especially on how CHamoru people have been producing Indigenous knowledge and passed ancestral wisdom before, during, and after the WWII Japanese occupation.

BROOKLYN OXANDABOURE (SHE/HER)

Brooklyn holds a B.A. in Gender Studies from University of California Los Angeles. She plans to focus her doctoral research on the “cultural constructions of whiteness amongst members of the working class, through critical analysis of media, political mechanisms, and community formation.” While exploring the role of whiteness in the proliferation of racialized ontologies as reflected in conceptions of nation building, security, and citizenship, she wants to examine how that racial positionality affects solidarity formation, community organizing, and political climates. Her work aims to challenge routine pathologization and dismissal of the white-working class.

ALLYSON PÉREZ (SHE/HER)

Allyson holds an A.B. in Social Studies from Harvard College and an M.A. from University of Gastronomic Sciences in Pollenzo, Italy. She plans to focus her doctoral research on “Caribbean immigrant communities and how they create, perpetuate, and negate nationalist mythologies through food and restaurants.” Using ethnographic methods, she would like to explore how food businesses in Cuban, Dominican, and Puerto Rican immigrant communities become sites where people build communal identities and politics around food, nationhood, and race.



CHEYENNE TRAVIOLI (SHE/HER)

Cheyenne holds a B.A. in History of Art from the University of Michigan and an M.A. in History from Eastern Michigan University. Her doctoral research will focus on uncovering and telling the oral histories of Indigenous adoptees, boarding school survivors, and shed light on international generational trauma and its effects that continue to be felt within Indigenous communities today.



(from left to right) Allyson Pérez, Lily Jiale Chen, jessie neal, Cheyenne Travioli, Brooklyn Oxandaboure

ARAB AND MUSLIM AMERICAN STUDIES

BY JUAN R. COLE

AMAS had a vigorous program of talks, presentations, and exhibits in 2022-2023. In the fall we welcomed Edward Curtis, a major authority in the history of early twentieth century Muslim Americans in the Midwest, who spoke on his recent book, *Muslims of the Heartland*. We also had a talk by Lydia Magras Muhammad on the literacy program of the Nation of Islam.

In the Winter, we commemorated the appearance of the first reader in Arab American studies, *Sajjilu Arab American: A Reader in SWANA Studies*, edited by Louise Cainkar, Pauline Homsy Vinson, and Amira Jarmakani. We brought the editors out to speak on the importance of the volume, along with University of Michigan contributors and AMAS faculty Charlotte Karem Albrecht, Umayyah Cable, and Andrew Shryock. In February and March we co-sponsored an exhibit curated by AMAS faculty member Sascha Crasnow, "Sense of Self: The Islamic Contemporary," at the Residential College Art Gallery. It featured the work of Arab and Muslim American artists Nour Ballout, Yasmine Diaz, Arshia Fatima Haq, Yasmine Kasem, Manal Shoukair, and Saba Taj. On February 21, Saba Taj spoke on her work for AMAS at the AC conference room. On March 9, AMAS supported the Global Islamic Studies Center's book event for AMAS faculty member Charlotte Karem Albrecht, concerning her just-published *Possible Histories: Arab Americans and the Queer Ecology of Peddling*. She was interviewed by GISC director and AMAS faculty associate Aliyah Khan. On March 13, AMAS supported the Annual Betty Ch'maj Distinguished American Studies Lecture, given by former AMAS founding director Evelyn Alsultany of the University of Southern California, on her recent book *Broken: The Failed Promise of Muslim Inclusion*. On March 23, AMAS hosted Marc Lamont Hill of Temple University for a talk at the Rackham Amphitheatre on "The Limits and Possibilities of Black-Palestinian Transnational Solidarity." It was well attended and sparked a lively and fruitful discussion. On April 12, AMAS sponsored an Iftar at the Trotter Multicultural Center.

This event is co-sponsored by SAFE, the Muslim Coalition, the Arab Students Association, the Department of History, the Edward Ginsberg Center, the Global Islamic Studies Center, the Middle East Studies Department, the Department of Film, Television and Media, the Psychology department, and the Department of Anthropology



Monday, February 20th
Angell Hall Aud B
7:30 PM

BROOKLYN, INSHAALLAH

FILM SCREENING

and a conversation with *Linda Sarsour*
and Director, *Ahmed Mansour*

M | **LSA** DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN CULTURE
ARAB AND MUSLIM AMERICAN STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



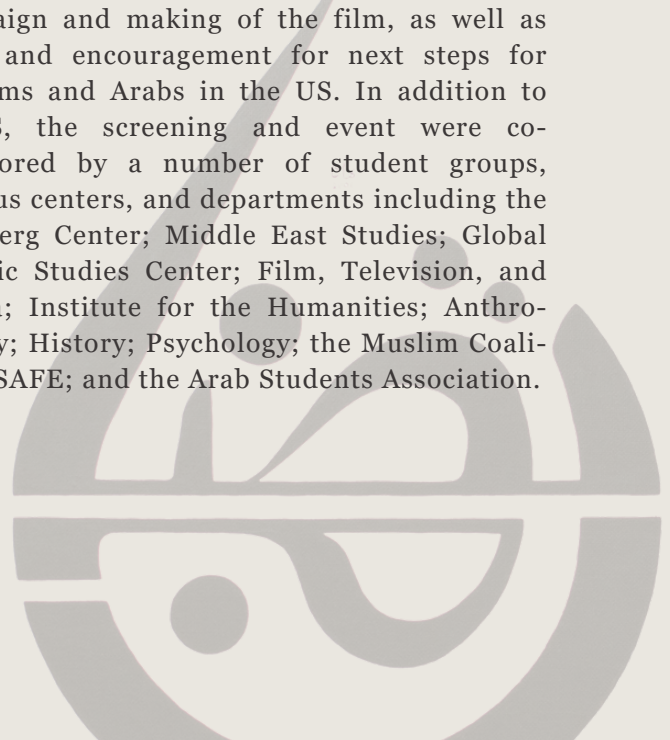


One of the best attended and liveliest events AMAS sponsored this year was the screening of the acclaimed documentary *Brooklyn, Inshallah*, which was arranged by AMAS faculty member Nancy Khalil. She brought out director Ahmed Mansour and one of the principals, Linda Sarsour, for a conversation about the film led by Razi Jafri, who graduated from the U-M Film, Television, and Media Department.

BY NANCY A. KHALIL

On Monday, February 20th, 2023, the Arab and Muslim American Studies (AMAS) Program hosted a screening of film, *Brooklyn, InshaAllah*, followed by a conversation with film Director, Ahmed Mansour, and Muslim activist and film participant, Linda Sarsour, with University of Michigan Stamps School of Art & Design alum and filmmaker, Razi Jafri. Just under an hour long, the film chronicles the 2017 campaign of Palestinian Pastor, Khader El-Yateem, for City Council in New York City. It captures vitriolic Islamophobic bias and discrimination El-Yateem encounters during debates and knocking on doors campaigning, despite his regular visible Christian pastor collared-attire. The Islamophobic resistance and hate he contends with as an Arab Christian make evident for viewers what it means for Islam to be racialized, demonstrating how that can be experienced effectively on the ground by a visible Christian through threats, slurs, and hatred for being linked to Islam. One doesn't actually need to be Muslim to be a victim of Islamophobia because the world has an imagined prototype of who a

Muslim is, and what they look like, regardless of whether or not that imagined prototype identifies as Muslim. The film further demonstrates the importance of an Arab or MENA category in the census, without which El-Yateem could not demonstrate the need for Arab translators at the polls, resulting in a loss of votes and, ultimately, his election. One silver lining that emerges in the film, despite the loss of the election, was a seed of political power that sprouted for Arabs in Brooklyn because of the mobilizing and organizing of their community as fruits of the campaign. With this organized body, they have the ear and interest of the elected City Councilor, and, for instance, have been able to add translators to the polls. The discussion after the film took a Q & A format between Razi Jafri and our two guests in front of an audience of over 120 people including students, faculty, community members, as well as local politicians and artists. The conversation was dynamic and riveting filled with background details on the campaign and making of the film, as well as hope and encouragement for next steps for Muslims and Arabs in the US. In addition to AMAS, the screening and event were co-sponsored by a number of student groups, campus centers, and departments including the Ginsberg Center; Middle East Studies; Global Islamic Studies Center; Film, Television, and Media; Institute for the Humanities; Anthropology; History; Psychology; the Muslim Coalition; SAFE; and the Arab Students Association.





A/PIA STUDIES

BY MANAN DESAI

On April 11, 2023, the University of Michigan Museum of Art hosted the very first “U-M A/PIA Studies Research Symposium,” showcasing original scholarship from twenty undergraduate and graduate researchers who shared their work in posters displayed throughout the UMMA entrance hall and presentations at the Helmut Stern auditorium. A truly interdisciplinary gathering, the symposium featured poster exhibits featuring research on topics like “Boba Liberalism” (Caroline Hsu), the “Mixed-Race Literature Database” (Jasmin Lee), and “Primitive Pasifika on Primetime: Wrestlemania and the Samoan Warrior” (Wren Palmer). As the evening continued, undergraduate and graduate student speakers took stage at the Helmut Stern auditorium, presenting on issues ranging from “Politician Responses to Covid-19 Racism” (Aditya Kalahasti) to the subtle racism conveyed in the ubiquitous “Chop Suey font” (PinYi Lee). The first of its kind, the “University of Michigan A/PIA Studies Research Symposium” was the culmination of a year-long effort from Ph.D. students Joey Song (English), Henry Chen (AC), and Wren Palmer (AC), who run the Critical Ethnic & Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies Rackham Interdisciplinary Workshop (CE&A/PIA RIW).





Over the years, the RIW has hosted events including external guest speakers, writing groups, and workshops, but this year, the organizers focused on highlighting all the great research that U-M graduate and undergraduate students do and developing a more tightly-knit community of students interested in further pursuing Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies. As co-organizer Joey Song explained, one of the goals was to “demystify the world of academia” for undergraduate students:

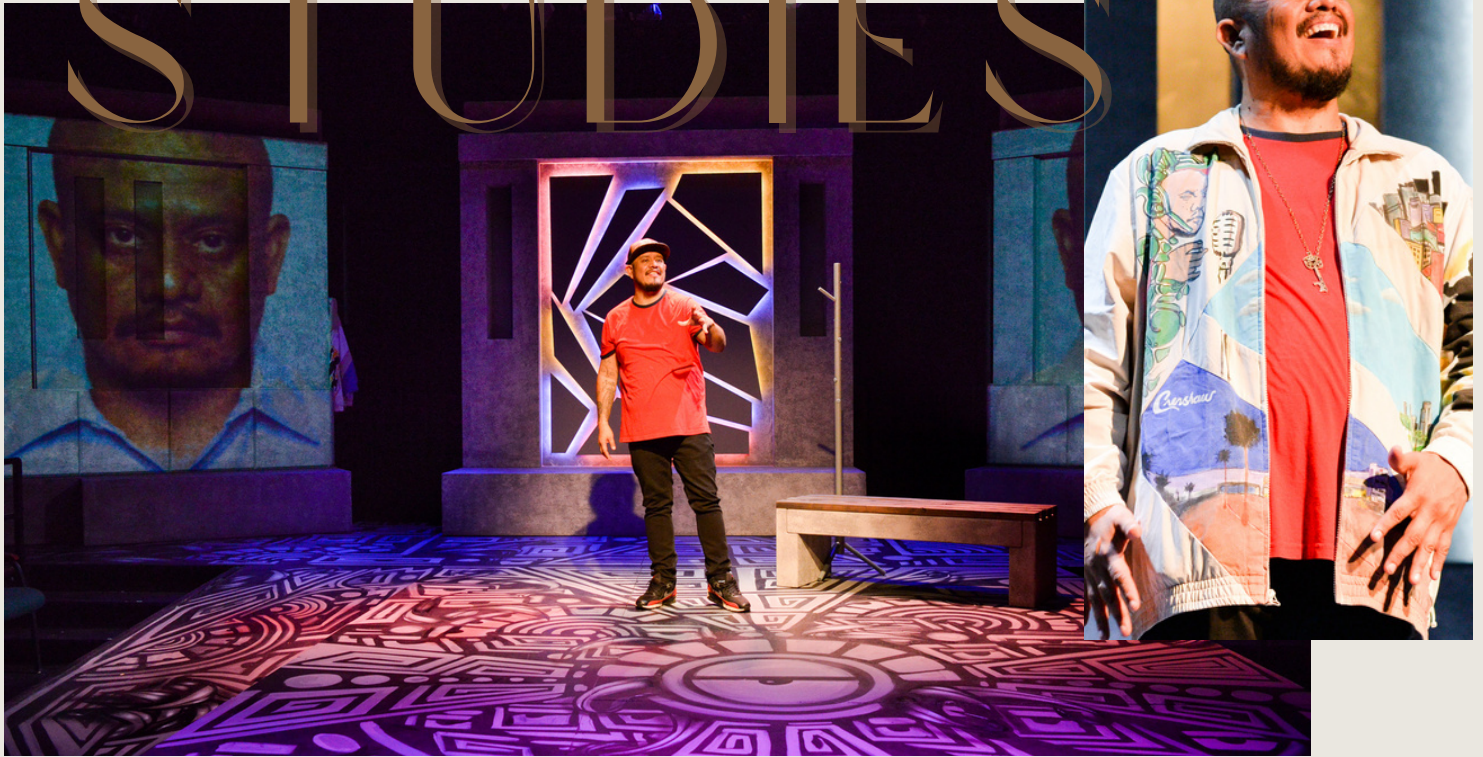
“In the humanities, there are few opportunities for undergraduates to showcase academic work in a social setting. Research symposiums are generally associated with STEM fields, so students majoring in the humanities miss out on these types of events. There’s a certain level of catharsis and pride that accompanies presenting your work in this format, and having a dedicated symposium honors the meaningful, incredible work that undergrads do in A/PIA Studies and beyond.”

The student symposium capped the end of a busy academic year calendar. A/PIA Studies hosted a speaker series that included Nitasha Sharma (Northwestern), Carolyn Chen (Berkeley), Shelley Lee (Brown), and Leslie Bow (Wisconsin-Madison). The RIW hosted both MSU Professor Shreena Gandhi who spoke on appropriation and yoga, as well as AC alum Professor Sony Coráñez Bolton, whose

book *Crip Colony: Mestizaje, US Imperialism, and the Queer Politics of Disability in the Philippines* (Duke University Press) was published earlier this year (2023). With funding from the Donia Human Rights Center, Professor Melissa Borja organized a forum titled “Asian Americans, Religious Freedom, and the State” this past Fall (2022), inviting scholars at U-M and across the country to discuss how Asian American religious communities have advocated for rights and recognition. Professor Melissa Phruksachart organized and moderated the panel, “Thinking Beyond Stereotypes in Asian American Media” which brought together media and cultural studies scholars Vivian L. Huang (SF State), Denise Khor (Northeastern), Lori Kido Lopez (Wisconsin), and Mila Zuo (British Columbia). At the Association of Asian American Studies in Long Beach, U-M maintained a strong presence, with over twenty faculty and graduate students presenting papers throughout the four-day event.

In other news, A/PIA Studies has much to celebrate. Professor Borja’s book *Follow the New Way: American Refugee Resettlement Policy and Hmong Religious Change* (Harvard University Press) was published in February. Professor Ian Shin was invited as AAPI Heritage Month keynote speaker at the University of Idaho and also presented his research on “Charles Lang Freer, Chinese Art, and the Making of Global Detroit” at the Freer House sponsored by the Detroit Institute of Arts. Ph.D. student Loveleen Brar was awarded first place for Graduate Student Essay by the Ethnography Caucus of the American Studies Association for her paper, “Roaming Communities: Race, Labor, and Care in the Punjabi American Trucking Industry.” Roland Hwang was named a “Game Changer” by the Ilitch family (Red Wings, Tigers) as part of their efforts to celebrate AAPI Heritage month. Finally, the semester culminated in a beautiful ceremony at UMMA, when Amy Stillman was announced as the winner of 11th Shirley Verrett Award, organized by the U-M Women of Color in the Academy Project. Kudos to all on a wonderful and eventful academic year!

LATINA/O STUDIES



BY ASHLEY LUCAS

Playwright and actor Alex Alpharaoh turned his journey of being undocumented into an award-winning, one-man play titled *WET: A DACAmended Journey*. His family brought him to the United States from Guatemala when he was just three months old, and Los Angeles is the only hometown he has ever known. He describes himself as being “American in every sense of the word except for one: on paper.”

As Alpharaoh grew up, he became acutely aware of the fact that his undocumented status meant that he had to live in the shadows, constantly worrying that even the most innocuous mistake or encounter with government entities could result in his deportation.

In 2012, the Obama administration enacted a new immigration policy called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), granting certain undocumented Americans who had arrived in the country as minors to apply for a new kind of temporary but renewable immigration status. DACA recipients have the rights not to be deported for two years and to hold legal employment in the U.S. Alpharaoh became one of the approximately 800,000 people who received DACA status and was able to attend UCLA and hold jobs that helped to support his family. He was also able to apply for a travel document, available to DACA holders, called advance parole, which enabled him to fly to Guatemala to see his dying grandfather and then return to Los Angeles.



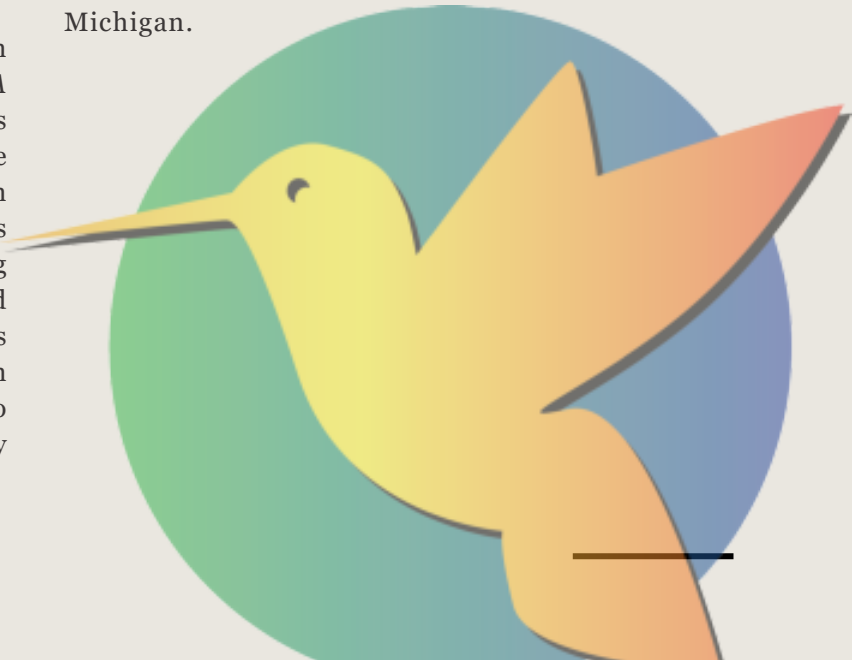
This trip proved significant because Alpharaoh could travel internationally for the first time, visit his family in Guatemala, and have the opportunity to know his grandfather before he passed away. Additionally, like most DACA recipients who travel with advance parole, he finally gained his first legal entry into the U.S.—a necessary first step in applying for permanent residency status. Without a legal entry into the country, undocumented Americans are forced to leave the U.S. for up to ten years before being able to apply for permanent residency or citizenship.

All these experiences are chronicled in Alpharaoh's one-man performance *WET: A DACAmended Journey*. Though he now has permanent residency status in the U.S., he bravely performed his autobiographical play on stages throughout the nation while his residency status was still in question. In doing so, Alpharaoh has inspired audiences and honored the lives of undocumented Americans across the country. In Los Angeles, Alpharaoh now works as a professional actor and also offers weekly acting classes to formerly incarcerated people.

On February 22, 2023, Alpharaoh joined University of Michigan students and alumni in an online conversation about growing up without documents, his play, and navigating family concerns, employment, and travel as a DACA recipient. The students and alumni who took part in this conversation came from the Latina/o Studies Program, Theatre & Drama Department, Residential College, and Student Community of Progressive Empowerment (SCOPE), which is the student organization for undocumented students and their allies on our campus. They were so inspired by their interactions with Alpharaoh that they invited him to come to Ann Arbor in person.

Alpharaoh had a one-week residency on the University of Michigan's Ann Arbor campus from September 18-24, 2023. During this time, he visited classes in the Residential College, Latina/o Studies Program in the American Culture Department, and the Theatre & Drama Department. He also offered an acting class for formerly incarcerated participants at the Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) and visited a PCAP theatre workshop in a prison. He also met with SCOPE students and alumni.

On Saturday, September 23, 2023, Alpharaoh performed *WET: A DACAmended Journey* in the Lydia Mendelssohn Theater. Tickets were free and open to the public, with special invitations sent to SCOPE students and local organizations that work with undocumented populations, including the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center. His residency was sponsored by the Latina/o Studies Program, the Arts & Resistance Theme Semester, and Arts at Michigan.



NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES



An Evening With
Angeline Bouley

The 7th annual **Robert J. Berkhofer Jr.** lecture on Native American Studies is generously supported by the **Tomshank Family Fund**

November 2
7:00pm
@Rogel Ballroom - Michigan Union

Angeline Bouley, an enrolled member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, is a storyteller who writes about her Ojibwe community in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. She is a former Director of the Office of Indian Education at the U.S. Department of Education. Angeline lives in southwest Michigan, but her home will always be on Sugar Island. *Firekeeper's Daughter* is her debut novel, and was an instant #1 NYT Bestseller. The book has been named the Walter Dean Myers Award for Outstanding Children's Literature, the Printz Award, the William C. Morris award for YA debut literature, and was an American Indian Youth Literature Award Honor Book.

This is a hybrid event. Please scan here to watch:
Free and open to the public

RACKHAM GRADUATE SCHOOL
 UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

LSA (LITERATURE, SPEECH & JOURNALISM) DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES
 UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

ARTS & RESISTANCE **NASA** **CEW+**
 DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION MULTI-ETHNIC

BY AMY STILLMAN

We welcomed esteemed legal scholar and tribal chief justice Matthew L. M. Fletcher last fall (2022). He is the Harry Burns Hutchings Collegiate Professor of Law and also Professor in American Culture. His stature has been recognized in his recent election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Prof. Fletcher brings his extensive knowledge and practice of tribal law to undergraduate courses, where, among other things, he creates comics that draw in all readers. In Fall 2023, Prof. Fletcher is teaching a course on American Indian Law in

Popular Culture, sure to reach far beyond the classroom! We sent our very best wishes with Professor Barbra A. Meek and Professor Gregory E. Dowd as they took up new responsibilities in the College of Literature, Science and the Arts, as Associate Dean for the Social Sciences and Associate Dean for the Humanities, respectively. It's nice to have friends in the Dean's office!!! We welcomed new Faculty Associates Dr. Dmitri Brown from the Michigan Society of

Fellows and the Department of American Culture, Dr. Sherina Feliciano-Santos in the Department of Anthropology, and longtime friend Dr. Susan Najita in Departments of American Culture and English. The three new faculty associates presented lightning talks on their research in November 2022 that generated a wonderful mid-day gathering of minds.

We welcomed many new students into the Native American Studies Minor, including Brendan Ireland, Claire Arp, Alana Gale, Alexandria Williams, Paige Cushman, and Baylee Carlisle, and we sent off with our best wishes recent graduates Gaea Gaecke, Emily J. Goodrich, Cornelia Redd, John-Solomon Milner, Brianne Renee Ackley, and Catherine Frost.

For the 2023-2024 Academic Year, we scheduled several major activities. The annual Robert J. Berkhofer, Jr. Lecture (now available on YouTube), generously supported by the Tomshack Family Fund, took place on November 2, 2023. We were thrilled to present novelist Angeline Boulley, a member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. Her second novel, *Warrior Girl Unearthed*, was released in May 2023, following on her first novel, the *New York Times* bestselling *Firekeeper's Daughter*.

The Berkhofer Lecture was free and open to the public; it took place in the Rogel Ballroom of the University of Michigan Union. Ms. Boulley's Berkhofer Lecture was part of a 2-day residency sponsored by the Arts & Resistance Theme Semester. Speaking of the Arts & Resistance Theme Semester, NAS is front and center there, as well! Professor Bethany Hughes is serving as a member of the Steering Committee, contributing her insights from performance studies. She is also directing a team of students documenting the history of the Native American Student Association (NASA) at U-M, which reaches back to the 1970s. And the theme of Arts & Resistance moves offshore in Professor Amy Stillman's fall 2023 offering of her popular experiential course on The Hula. Under her tutelage, students come to appreciate hula as an Indigenous cultural system of knowledge safeguarded by traditional protocols.

This semester Prof. Stillman immersed students in the political turmoil that ended the sovereign kingdom in the 1890s, first through an illegal coup d'état in 1893, and culminating with annexation to the United States in 1898. The near loss of Hawaiian language through most of the 20th century meant that descendants were cut off from a substantial archive of Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) opposition to the U.S. takeover. Much of this opposition was expressed through several hundred newly-composed poetic texts that circulated widely through multiple nationalist newspapers. Thanks to a successful language revitalization movement since the 1970s, a generation of Kanaka Maoli scholars have been recuperating this knowledge out of the archives. The hula class will trace 1890s resistance to more recent resistance to continued exploitation of Hawaiian lands without Hawaiian consent, such as the 2019 protests at Mauna Kea, learning contemporary repertoire, and creating original choreographies for several archival repertoire. The students' work was presented in an amazing end-of-semester public performance on Thursday, November 30, 2023, which was extremely well attended.



People in motion appears to be the perfect expression to celebrate what is happening in Native American Studies!

MEISLER AWARDS

The Department of American Culture's Richard Meisler Award is a prize that celebrates the best of our department's undergraduate student writing. Named in memory of our dear colleague Richard Meisler, stalwart advisor and committed advocate to our undergraduate students, the award gives winners \$500 and an impressive line on their resume.

This year we celebrated two winners: Emily Gong's "Looking Back to Look Forward" and Sophia Janevic's "The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly: TikTok Remix and the Democratization of Remix Culture." Edited sections from both of these essays are included in this issue of our newsletter. We invite you to read these examples of excellence in undergraduate writing.

WHERE AM I FROM?

BY EMILY ZIWEI GONG

Adapted from Laura Harjo's Spiral to the Stars.

I am from the suburban neighborhoods, from the home of rock and roll and the land of basketball. I am from the scents of freshly mowed grass and sounds of cardinals chirping away in the mornings. I am from the vibrant hydrangeas in the front yard and the green beans and cherry tomatoes in the garden.

I am from dragon boats and paper lanterns, from a lineage of Gong's and Qian's and Yang's.

I am from the calm and humble, but resilient and ambitious family.

From respecting my elders, creating harmonious relationships, and working hard to bring success and fortune.

I am from Rhode Island and calamari and doughboys. From the hours and hours of the fathers playing mahjong and poker, the mothers singing karaoke and chatting away, the children competing in Mario Kart tournaments.

I am from the stacks of photo albums stowed away in my grandmother's dresser, the grainy videotape recordings of my classical Dunhuang dance performances, the red threaded bracelet worn during my zodiac year of the snake.



You can read Emily and Sophia's full pieces here:



TIKTOK REMIXES AND THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF REMIX CULTURE

BY SOPHIA JANEVIC

With just a few swipes of your finger, in under one minute you can watch a man whistle a flawless rendition of a Bach flute sonata, learn how to properly pronounce “pecan” based on its Kickapoo origins, laugh over a purse made entirely out of Kraft singles, cringe over someone driving down the sidewalk after mistaking it for the road, and cry over a photo montage of someone’s dead boyfriend—an experience of such emotional whiplash that it is bound to leave irreversible damage on the human psyche. To scroll down TikTok is to absorb a constant barrage of curated yet surprising audio-visual information, so much so that by this point everyone is trained to expect the unexpected. Yet just when you think nothing can shock you, TikTok proves you wrong.

For many users, myself included, the shock of summer 2021 was the CupcakKe remix. It went something like this: As I innocently scrolled down my For You Page, I heard the classic rhythmic car-beep opening of Olivia Rodrigo’s hit breakup ballad “Driver’s License.” Olivia crooned the familiar lyrics “I know we weren’t perfect, but I’ve never felt this way for no one.” It was a song I’d heard a hundred times and loved dearly, so I hovered over the video to listen to the remainder of the chorus play out. But when Olivia sang the start of the next line, “And I just can’t imagine how you could—” the audio abruptly cut to female rapper CupcakKe’s autotuned phrase “smack my ass like a drum!” This sudden vulgarity in an otherwise earnest song was jarring, hilarious, and the start of an overwhelming trend.

No audio was safe that fateful summer, and every familiar tune made audiences tense up as they waited for the inevitable, auto-tuned graphic moan of “I’m horny” or “slurp that dick ‘til it cum.” Even now, over a year after the trend peaked, users will still stumble across a familiar tune injected with CupcakKe’s unabashed lyricism. But who are the masterminds behind these viral songs, and how did we arrive at such an over-the-top trend? Are these remixes just the modern iteration of inappropriate teenage humor, or do they perhaps hint at something bigger—a broader shift in musical remix culture, in which the average person is no longer just a consumer, but an active producer of music?

To explore this phenomenon of the meme remix and understand its development, this paper first dives into the history of the remix, tracing the genre’s origins in Jamaican dancehall culture in the 1960s through its transition to online spaces in the 1990s and early 2000s. I then explore the evolution of remixes on TikTok, analyzing them by grouping them into three categories: “good” remixes, “(purposefully) bad” remixes, and “meme” remixes. Good remixes are positioned as well-produced, danceable remixes whose visual presentation establishes a blank canvas for dance trends. (Purposefully) bad remixes are argued to be discordant remixes with mismatched beats, rhythms, pitches, keys, and/or genres, who derive humor from cacophony and aren’t intended to be danceable. I posit that meme remixes are derived from bad remixes, but instead feature one dominant song that other soundbites are then added and molded to, often created through a collaborative trial-and-error process. Overall, I argue that meme remixes represent a major shift in how remixes are created and spread, with the average person now in control of online mixing and its subsequent trends—not just those with access to high-end music technology.





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