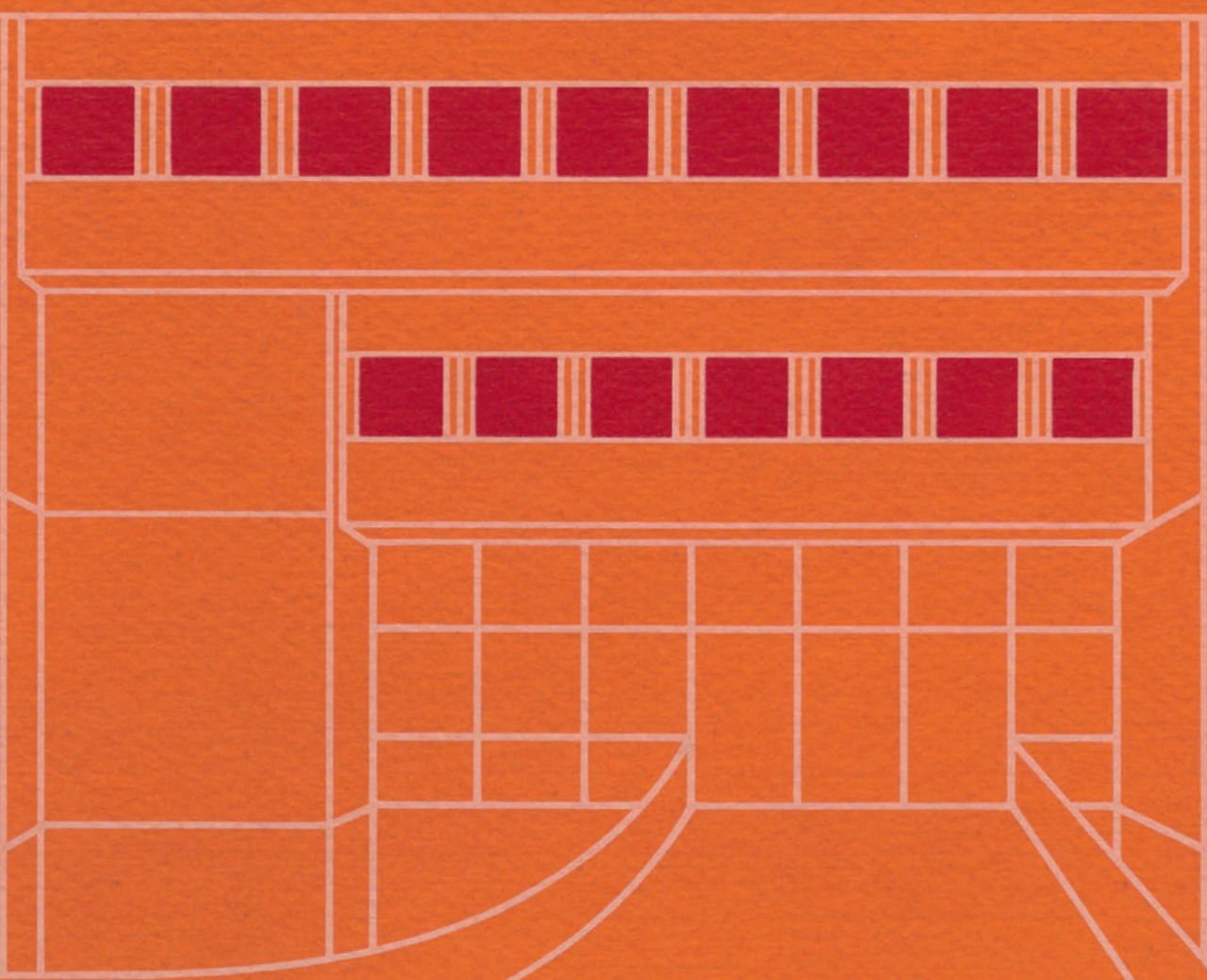


Oberlin

OBERLIN ALUMNI MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2024

M U D D A T 5 0







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THERE GOES THE SUN

On April 8, 2024, all eyes were on Oberlin: The city was in the path of totality for the once in a lifetime total solar eclipse. Students, staff, alums, and families donned their snazzy Oberlin eclipse viewing glasses and gathered on Bailey Field for the two hour viewing party OCLIPSE.

PHOTO BY MIKE CRUPI

ON THE COVER

The program of the 1974 dedication of Mudd.
COURTESY OF THE OBERLIN COLLEGE ARCHIVES



The Old, the New, and You

IF YOU’VE VISITED CAMPUS IN RECENT YEARS, YOU’VE NOTICED THAT ONE CONSTANT around here is change. As I’m fond of saying, it’s all part of Oberlin doing its part to change the world for good.

For four years now, crews have been implementing sweeping changes to our campus infrastructure, replacing an antiquated fossil fuel-based heating system with an environmentally sustainable system. In the near future, this system will heat and cool our buildings using geothermal energy harnessed from deep underground. It’s the giant leap that’s making our journey to carbon neutrality possible.

In June, we got our first glimpse of newly completed renovations to Wilder Hall. Among the highlights are bright and spacious new homes for two pivotal sources of support for our students: our Office for Disability and Access and the Multicultural Resource Commons. Also new to Wilder are an elevator and ADA-compliant restrooms on every floor. Additional renovations to all four floors will continue over the next several years, including new studios for WOBC and enhanced meeting spaces and dining options.

Another grand old building, Carnegie, is in the midst of upgrades to its numerous offices, among them Academic Advising and Financial Aid. We’ve also recently opened the Center for Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, which recently hired its inaugural executive director, JeffriAnne Wilder. You can read more about her on Page 7.

Over on Woodland Street, our new 400-bed residence hall is quickly taking shape. Its four floors rose up in what seemed like the blink of an eye during spring semester, and interior work is progressing rapidly. Obies will call it home starting in fall 2025.

With all the new additions and welcome updates coming to fruition, it’s an especially exciting time to be here. These improvements don’t come easy, but they represent the necessary work that reaffirms our ability *and* our historic obligation to be a true leader among institutions of higher learning as we look back on nearly 200 years—and lay the groundwork for 200 more.

CARMEN TWILLIE AMBAR
President, Oberlin College and Conservatory

Oberlin

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DAIRY DETERMINATION

I enjoyed reading the story about Sarah Lyons Chase '10 and her dairy farm in upstate New York ["The Cream of the Crop," Winter/Spring 2024]. It reminded me of another Obie, Barbara Blachly Carpenter '52, who moved to Cabot, Vermont, after graduating with a major in art history. There she bought a dilapidated farm, which she rebuilt with the help of a local carpenter into a long life of dairying until her passing in 2019 at the age of 90. I was incredibly fortunate that my father had purchased a few neighboring acres as a summer place, and I first just hung out with and then as a teenager worked for Barbara and her husband, Charles. Their life would have been much easier if they had adopted the practice of milking just once a day as Sarah Chase has done. As in Sarah's neighborhood, dairying in Cabot is almost a lost art. Where there were more than 40 dairies when I worked there, now there may be two or three. Dairying in New England is no easy life, but for me summers there were absolutely marvelous. Kudos to Ms. Chase for keeping at it.

PETER TOBIAS '65
Encinitas, Calif.

A GOLD MEDAL MEMORY

The 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris represent 100 years since my father, Dan Kinsey MA '35, won a gold medal in the 110-meter high hurdles at the 1924 Summer Olympics in Paris. He taught at Oberlin for nearly 30 years, starting in the late 1920s. Besides teaching general physical education, he coached track and field, cross country, and swimming, and occasionally coached tennis, fencing, and wrestling when needed. In 1987, my father was posthumously inducted into



the John W. Heisman Club Hall of Fame. The college's indoor track field was named after him, as is the annual Dan Kinsey Invitational.

My father had been very good at many sports all through school and into college, and his father was always very much part of his successes. And so, when my father won the Olympics, he sent a telegram to my grandfather, saying, "Pops, we did it!" I still have the special Sèvres vase given to all gold medal winners that year, as well as his Olympic shorts, shirt with his number safety pinned to it, and terry cloth robe. The gold medal is now with his grandson and namesake, Dan Kinsey.

DEA KINSEY ANDREWS '61 MAT '65
South Bend, Ind.

P.S. My sister-in-law Marjorie Kinsey also reminded me that future Oberlin President William Edwards Stevenson was on the same Olympic team. [Editor's note: Stevenson also won a gold medal, in the 4x400 meters relay.]

EDITOR'S NOTE

Robin Gelman '88 has one of the more eye-catching personalized license plates out there—with an Oberlin twist. "I've had it for about 25 years now, but I have to say it made more sense to me when I had my V6 Alero and I sped past slower drivers on the Beltway. Now that it's on a Prius, I feel like I'm not passing as many people as before, but I still

love the plate. It also saved me once from getting a ticket. The officer said he really liked my plate, as he too had a vanity. His name was Officer Orr, and his plate read ORRELSE. He let me go with a warning. Thanks so much for the opportunity to share."



SAVE THE DATE!

Alumni in our 15th (Classes of '08, '09, and '10) and 35th (Classes of '88, '89, and '90) clusters, plus alums from the Oberlin Alumni Association of African Ancestry (OA4) will hold reunions this fall during Homecoming and Reunion Weekend, September 27-29.

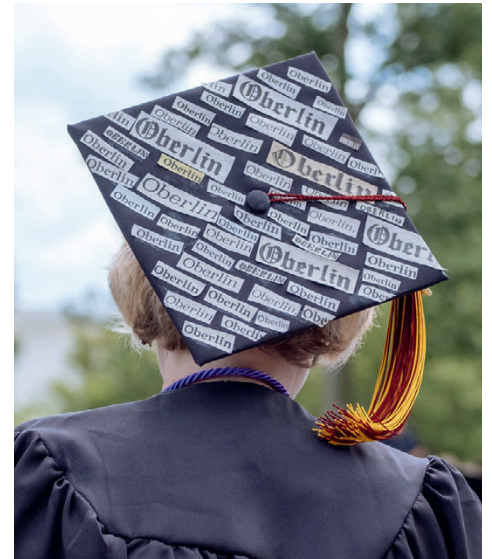
FOR INFO, VISIT: GO.OBERLIN.EDU/REUNION

SCHEDULING NOTE: The 65th (Classes of '58, '59, and '60) reunion will be held in spring 2025 during Commencement and Milestone Reunion Weekend, along with the 25th and 50th class reunions.

Send letters to the editor, story tips, and pitches to alum.mag@oberlin.edu. If you are submitting a letter to the editor, please specify that your note is for publication and also include your class year and how your name should appear in print.

Around Tappan Square





CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2024! On Monday, May 27, 629 members of the Oberlin College and Conservatory Class of 2024 participated in commencement exercises. The ceremony featured a keynote address from Pulitzer Prize-winning musician Rhiannon Giddens '00. Giddens also earned an Honorary Doctor of Music; other awards were given to Dr. Kathryn Anastos '75 (pictured above, Honorary Doctor of Science), John Gates, MAT '72 and Linda Gates, MAT '65 (Award for Distinguished Service to the Community), and Nancy Dandridge Cooper '51, MA '54 (Alumni Medal). For more scenes from the weekend, visit [flickr.com/oberlin](https://www.flickr.com/photos/oberlin/).

Around Tappan Square



WELCOME BACK! The 2024 Commencement and Milestone Reunion Weekend was a rousing success, as alums returned to campus and celebrated their 25th (Class of 1999) and 50th (Class of 1974) reunions. The weekend of festivities included panel discussions, a lively Music and Words program, open houses, and Illumination. For more photos: [flickr.com/oberlin](https://www.flickr.com/photos/oberlin/).

WARM WELCOME

Oberlin Welcomes New Executive Director of Center for Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

In June, JeffriAnne Wilder became the inaugural executive director of the Oberlin Center for Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. The center was developed through the work commissioned by Oberlin's Presidential Initiative on Racial Equity and Diversity, a comprehensive examination of the campus and its programs conducted from 2020 to 2022.

As a member of Oberlin's executive leadership team, Wilder guides the center and the ongoing implementation of recommendations presented in the Presidential Initiative report. She also provides leadership in all facets of the center's operations, including fundraising, research, and ongoing assessment of Oberlin's progress and effectiveness related to DEI efforts.

An accomplished educator and developer of higher education diversity programs, Wilder served the University of North Florida as an associate professor of sociology and later as the founding director of the school's Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations. She



has also held roles as senior lecturer and designer of the Master of Science in DEI Leadership at Glasgow Caledonian New York College and senior research scientist and director of racial equity and strategy for the National Center for Women and Information Technology in Colorado.



OBERLIN HONORS FIRST BLACK GRADUATE This year marks the bicentennial of the birth of Oberlin's first Black graduate, George Boyer Vashon, Class of 1844, who later became the first Black lawyer in the state of New York as well as a prominent educator, writer, and abolitionist. During Commencement Weekend, Oberlin honored Vashon's historic ties to the college by planting an elm tree in Tappan Square. At the dedication ceremony, Vashon's great-great grandson, Paul Thornell, gave remarks, as did Oberlin President Carmen Twillie Ambar and A.G. Miller, emeritus professor of religion and Africana studies. Look for a longer story on Vashon's life in a future *OAM*.

LISTEN TO

RUNNING TO THE NOISE

A monthly podcast with

**PRESIDENT
CARMEN
TWILLIE AMBAR**



Scan now for the latest episode, available on Oberlin's website and your favorite streaming platforms:



[oberlin.edu/running to the noise](https://oberlin.edu/running-to-the-noise)

WORLD-CHANGING SERVICE

Oberlin No. 1 in Producing Peace Corps Volunteers

In April, the Peace Corps announced that Oberlin College and Conservatory ranks No. 1 on the all-time list of volunteers among small colleges and universities with fewer than 5,000 undergraduates. Since 1961, 509 Oberlin alumni have served their country as Peace Corps volunteers. Historically, the college boasts ties to the Peace Corps as old as the agency itself. Between 1963 and 1967, Oberlin hosted a Peace Corps regional recruiting and training center.



A FOND FAREWELL After 48 years of teaching, Peter Takács, professor of piano, retired from Oberlin. Many of his former students returned to campus for a celebratory concert in Warner Concert Hall on May 12. These included conductor Robert Spano '84, pictured.

A+ TEACHERS

Five Faculty Earn Excellence in Teaching Honors



Five Oberlin faculty members received Excellence in Teaching Awards for the 2022-23 academic year. Presented annually, these awards recognize faculty in the college and conservatory who have demonstrated sustained and distinctive excellence in the classroom and beyond. Honorees include:

- **Jay Ashby**, associate professor of jazz studies
- **Jonathan Moyer**, David S. Boe associate professor of organ
- **Lynn Powell**, emerita assistant professor of creative writing
- **Lisa Ryno**, associate professor of chemistry and biochemistry
- **Md Rumi Shammin**, professor of environmental studies

SPORTS STATS

Athletics by the Numbers

Oberlin Athletics had a busy and productive year! Student-athletes racked up academic honors galore and made great strides on the field. Here's a snapshot of their accolades from this past academic year.

60

North Coast Athletic Conference (NCAC) All-Conference Selections

37

NCAC Athletes of the Week

5

NCAC Players of the Year

2

NCAA All-Americans

31

Athletes selected for the NCAC All-Decade Team

11

Categories in which volleyball was the NCAC statistical leader

57

All-academic honors achieved by athletes

25

Oberlin records broken by various teams



GENEROUS GIFT In April, Athena Tacha '61 returned to campus for the dedication of *Charles River*, an aluminum sculpture she presented to Oberlin as a gift. A former studio art faculty member and curator at the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Tacha created the work in 1974 during a fellowship at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Its new home is in the Eric Baker Nord Performing Arts Annex, next to Hall Auditorium. Tacha (middle) is pictured with her husband, former Oberlin art history professor and Allen director Richard Spear (left), and Andria Derstine, John G. W. Cowles Director of the Allen (right).

Keep in touch with Oberlin!

Update Your Address

Have you recently moved?

Share your new contact info online:









go.oberlin.edu/oam-address-update

Submit a Class Note

You can now submit a class note (along with a photo) online:

go.oberlin.edu/submit-class-notes

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Thought Process



RECIPE

The Power of Thinking Local

BY HANNA RASKIN '98

With Beak Restaurant, Renee Jakaitis Trafton '07 is transforming the dining scene in Sitka, Alaska.

The mac and cheese that Beak Restaurant serves at both lunch and dinner is in some ways a departure from the Sitka, Alaska, bistro's culinary precepts.

Certainly, the bowtie pasta is in keeping with the playful attitude that chef-owner Renee Jakaitis Trafton '07 tries to cultivate in her kitchen. And Trafton's staunch locavorism—which likely helped her become a semifinalist for Best Chef (Northwest and Pacific) at the 2023 James Beard Foundation restaurant awards—is evident in the optional upgrades: It costs \$5 to accessorize the noodles with reindeer sausage or burly bits of blush pink salmon.

But on a menu dominated by dishes finished with little more than olive oil or soy sauce, the mac stands out for being sluiced with cheddar cheese.

Still, Trafton stresses she doesn't use butter or heavy cream. "I want food that you can eat and feel fantastic afterward. I want food that makes you feel powerful."

Trafton has focused on seizing and shifting power through food choices ever since she was a philosophy major at Oberlin. As she puts it on Beak's website, "I am dedicated to putting employees first, even ahead of the guest. Without a team, there is no restaurant."

Case in point: Beak opened in 2017 as a no-tipping restaurant as a way to arm her front-of-house workers with a consistent wage and liberate them from potential guest harassment.

"My female employees have the power to not be bothered by a guy being a jerk," Trafton says. "They're not going to be financially penalized if they're short with someone."

Trafton's commitment to teamwork has roots in her membership in the Oberlin Student

Cooperative Association. She initially oversaw OSCA's tofu-making program, making sure a crew curdled and pressed soybeans every Sunday afternoon. Then she was elected lead dinner cook at Harkness Hall, a position she held for four semesters.

She credits the experience with determining her eventual career trajectory. "Majoring in philosophy, you can work on a paper for two hours and get two sentences," she says. "If you're working in the kitchen for two hours, you can feed your whole co-op, and people are happy. It's really rewarding."

As lead dinner cook, Trafton was charged with planning and sourcing ingredients for dinners. In one memorable instance, this included 7 grams of saffron that her mother brought back from her native Panama.

Although Trafton would later earn the affection of countless cruise passengers with her signature rockfish tacos, she didn't include fish or shellfish in the massive paella she made with that saffron. Like many of her fellow Harkness residents, Trafton gave up eating meat while at Oberlin.

“Midway through my freshman year, thinking about my sense of agency in the world, I decided the food I put in my body was what I was going to focus on,” she says.

Her vegetarianism lasted until she moved to Ithaca, New York, after graduation with her classmate (now husband) Math Trafton. Working as a cook at two restaurants, she was often faced with leftovers that didn’t conform to her dietary restrictions. “We’d have all this grouper and steak, and we’d have to throw it out or eat it,” she says, adding, “I am still very intentional about the food I eat.”

While Trafton intended to sign up for culinary school at some point, she worked in restaurants for so long that culinary school students started doing their externships with her. By the time she moved to Sitka, where Math Trafton had been offered a job in the University of Alaska Southeast’s English department, she felt fully confident in her kitchen skills.

After relocating, Trafton cooked at a public school. But when a restaurant space in town became available, she enrolled in Oberlin’s LaunchU program to help bring about Beak.

At first, the restaurant was a tough sell to locals. They didn’t much care for the restaurant that Beak had replaced and couldn’t understand why they’d go out for seafood they could prepare cheaply at home. Yet Trafton insisted that Beak offered something new—namely, “a more nuanced way of cooking fish than the way you cook for yourself.”

Eventually, Trafton’s can-do attitude won over Sitka skeptics. But in the summer, most of Beak’s tables are booked by tourists arriving by cruise ship. Online raves for the restaurant originate from Orlando, Florida; Pearland, Texas; and Las Vegas.

According to Trafton, it’s not uncommon for those guests to preface their orders by saying, “This is my first time having salmon.”

That’s quite meaningful for Trafton. “Hopefully they’ll take the memory with them for a lifetime,” she says.

Along with the memory, of course, those satisfied diners leave knowing more about food and themselves. Some might even call that power. ■

HANNA RASKIN '98 IS EDITOR AND PUBLISHER OF THE FOOD SECTION, AN AWARD-WINNING NEWSLETTER COVERING FOOD AND DRINK ACROSS THE AMERICAN SOUTH (THEFOODSECTION.COM).



Everything Encrusted Rockfish

On the menu since Trafton opened Beak, this dish uses rockfish, which is native to the Pacific from California to Alaska.

“There are about 30 different types and are not very sought after commercially,” Trafton says. “Often, they are bycatch from other fisheries. They sure are delicious, though.” She adds that while you can buy “everything mix” seasoning blends, she’s made her own for a long time. “Mine includes sunflower seeds, garlic, onion, poppy seeds, black sesame seeds, and white sesame seeds.”

Ingredients

- 3 small red potatoes, diced
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon stone-ground mustard
- 1 egg
- 3 tablespoons flour
- ½ teaspoon milk
- 1 rockfish fillet, about 6 ounces, divided
- 2 tablespoons everything mix
- Canola oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Pickled vegetables such as carrots, red onions, or bull kelp for garnish

Directions

Heat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit.

Place diced potatoes in a saucepan with cold water to cover. Bring the water to a boil over high heat.

While the potatoes are cooking, combine the mayonnaise and mustard into an aioli in a small bowl. Refrigerate.

Once the potatoes are tender, drain and place in a bowl.

In a separate pan, slowly melt the butter over medium-low heat, stirring with a wooden spoon to prevent burning. Once melted, add the heavy cream.

Mash the potatoes, then add the butter and cream mixture to the bowl. Salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.

Make an egg wash by combining the egg, flour, and milk to form a medium-thick paste.

Place the two rockfish fillets on a plate. Season with salt. Using a pastry brush, brush the egg wash onto the fish. Sprinkle the everything mix on the fish.

Heat a heavy-bottomed skillet over medium heat. Add canola oil to coat the bottom. The oil should shimmer a bit, which indicates that the pan is hot enough.

Place the fish pieces in the skillet, everything mix side down. It should become fragrant, and you should be able to see the crust form a bit. Flip the fish with a fish spatula, taking care not to disturb the crust.

Transfer skillet to the oven for 4 to 6 minutes, depending on the thickness of the fillet.

To plate the dish, place a dollop of the aioli above the center of the plate. Drag the back of your spoon through it to make an appealing “swoosh.”

Below that, scoop a nice helping of the mashed potatoes. Flatten them slightly; the fish will rest on top.

Once the fish is done, carefully stack both pieces on top of the potatoes, pushing down slightly so they don’t fall over. Top with pickled vegetables if desired.

Note: OAM publishes recipes as provided but doesn’t test them independently.

CAREER PIVOT

Called to Action

BY MAURA JOHNSTON

For Menna Demessie, meaningful change is more than an aspiration—it's a profession.

Menna Demessie '02 has flexed her political science savvy in the halls of Congress and the upper echelons of the music business. A senior vice president at Universal Music Group, she currently serves as the executive director of UMG's Task Force for Meaningful Change. Before that, Demessie worked at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, where she was senior vice president for policy analysis and research.

Some might consider political scientist to music industry executive an unconventional career path. But Demessie sees this journey as a natural extension of her time at Oberlin.

"When I told my Obie friends, 'I'm leaving Capitol Hill to go into the music industry,' they said, 'Makes sense. Of course—that's what we do,'" she says. In fact, one of the first people to reach out to welcome her to the task force was Jamie Krents '97. The head of the renowned jazz label Verve Records, Krents is one of the most respected music minds in the industry; among the artists he's signed and worked with are Jon Batiste and Samara Joy.

With the Task Force for Meaningful Change, Demessie leads initiatives related to disparities in the music industry, as well as criminal justice reform, food insecurity, voting rights, and public health. Demessie and her colleagues have partnered with artists, athletes, and actors to create the Alliance for Criminal Justice Reform in support of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act in the Senate. She also oversees the task force's Pull Up to the Polls Campaign, where UMG works with civic organizations such as Voto Latino and the NAACP to provide voter education resources and support to voters, such as rides to and from the polls through various partners.

Demessie also led an effort to widen the pipeline of Black health care providers through a scholarship program across the four HBCU medical schools that supported over 50 scholarships in 2022. "We've seen a change in the industry," she says, "where artists and others are using their platform to address inequities, whether it's gender equality,



Menna Demessie and BMAC co founder and chairman Willie Prophet Stiggers at the September 2023 BMAC Gala.

climate change, criminal justice reform, and disparities within the music industry when it comes to our artists.

"Artistry has the power to shape culture," she adds. "It is the same creative imagination we need to envision, shape, and work towards a free, just, and inclusive society for all."

From Birth, an Oberlin Oeuvre

Demessie's roots in the Oberlin community

run deep. Her parents were born in Ethiopia and spent their senior years of high school in the U.S. as part of the American Field Service exchange program. Her father, Aklilu Demessie, lived with Oberlin resident—and later ExCo instructor of the course "How to Demonstrate Successfully without Getting into Trouble with the Police"—Harvey Gittler. After a socialist regime took over Ethiopia in 1975, Aklilu and Demessie's mother, Zufan

Lemma Demessie, returned to the U.S. with Gittler's help.

Born and raised in Cleveland, Demessie was exposed to a diverse array of opinions and ideas via her parents. She attended preschool at Jewish Community Center and middle school at a Catholic school, and her parents were Coptic Orthodox Christians. "My parents were insistent that my brother and I immerse ourselves with people and cultures different from our own—and to read intentionally the history of African Americans in particular—to better understand why they were able to eventually immigrate to the United States," she says.

"It was all about exposure—learning and appreciating different religions and communities. That's stayed with me. It was a very personal pursuit to situate myself in my culture and history in the world; then it became about joining the fight with other socially progressive folk and marginalized communities who were tied by the common thread of injustice and discrimination."

Demessie recalls that Gittler—her "witty and loving American grandfather," as she called him in the dedication of her 2010 doctoral dissertation—also appreciated this upbringing. "He got a kick out of me being Coptic Orthodox Christian, praying in Hebrew, and attending Catholic school," she says. "It felt normal for me because my grandparents always had a home to celebrate all of our identities and cultures."

An engineer who held every leadership position within the Ohio ACLU, Gittler was fiercely unapologetic in his advocacy for equity—and passed that passion along to Demessie.

"Gramps introduced me to (U.S.) Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder (Colorado) when I was a preteen and told me it was important I did my homework on her when I got older because she cared about making the world a better place for women," she says. Demessie also learned from Gittler's daughter, Amy Gittler '72, a former member of Oberlin's Board of Trustees who won the 1983 U.S. Supreme Court case *Arizona Governing Committee v. Norris*, which made it unlawful for employers to discriminate based on gender when disbursing retirement benefits.

Harvey Gittler also passed along his passion for Oberlin; Demessie smiles as she recalls being told, "Menna, dear, just know you can go to any college as long as it was Oberlin

College." In fact, she adds, "Gramps even fixed the bicycle Amy used at Oberlin College and requested I use the same bike to get to class—and I did."

A double major in economics and law and society, Demessie graduated with honors—her honors thesis made a viable legal and economic case for reparations in modern day—played basketball, and served as senior class president. She was also a regular at Finney Chapel alongside her grandparents, seeing the orchestras and symphonies that visited campus. "We had the same seats every year," she says. "My grandparents would go back to [the retirement community] Kendal, and I'd go back to Langston, across from the gym."

What she learned outside of her studies was just as formative. "Almost since its founding, Oberlin has opened its doors to students who had been denied access at other institutions," she says. "That didn't come out of nowhere. It's not a coincidence. Progress comes out of not just getting uncomfortable, but creating spaces for all these communities to coalition build, work together, know our destinies are always tied, and being unapologetic about freedom and justice for all."

From PhD to Washington, D.C.

Demessie went on to earn a joint PhD in public policy and political science from the University of Michigan, writing a dissertation that was the first mixed-methods study analyzing the influence of Congress on U.S.-Africa foreign policy via congressional caucuses. She was awarded Senate funding and became one of five political scientists to receive the American Political Science Congressional Fellowship in 2010. Demessie then worked in Congress, including at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (CBCF), which gave her the chance to work on informing policy alongside figures she had studied in grad school, including "one of my all-time heroes," longtime U.S. Rep. Barbara Lee of California.

"It was such an honor and cherished responsibility to work for CBCF," she says, noting she carries the organization's mission "deep in my heart" while also "never losing sight of visionaries" like Howard University professor Ronald Walters, who helped create the blueprint for the Congressional Black Caucus.

"Knowing the shoulders we stand on is critical on the road to justice, so we build on

what was before and get to justice that much sooner," she says. "Leading a policy team and diving into issues like voting rights, criminal justice reform, environmental sustainability, and minority access to capital, to name a few, helped us bridge the gap between policy research and policy in practice with the ultimate goal of providing members of Congress with evidence-based analysis to make good, well-informed public policy."

In the summer of 2020, after what she calls the "shock factor the country experienced" in the wake of George Floyd's murder in Minneapolis, Demessie felt called to amplify her efforts to empower underrepresented communities beyond Capitol Hill.

"I've been privileged to work with so many amazing people," she said, "and I watched the rest of the country and world start to pay more attention to issues like police brutality, workforce diversity, and corporate social responsibility."

She heard about the Task Force for Meaningful Change, which had recently been established, and joined in December 2020 as senior vice president and executive director. Her work there is already producing dividends: Last fall, she received the Social Impact Award from the Black Music Action Coalition, a music business organization formed in 2020 to start addressing systemic racism in the music industry. Honored alongside luminaries like Grammy Award-winning artist and producer Jermaine Dupri, Emmy-winning singer-songwriter Keke Palmer, and Epic Records chair and CEO Sylvia Rhone, Demessie was given the award for her work on racial equity in the context of Universal Music Group and beyond. Who was there alongside her? Her parents, her brother, and Amy Gittler.

Today, Oberlin is also still part of Demessie's life: She currently serves on the Board of Trustees and views her current position as a way to build on the knowledge she's accumulated over the years to enact change on a wide scale. "Representation matters," she says. "Equity matters. Using one's position, power, and platform to disrupt and dismantle injustice, racism, xenophobia, and advance social justice for all is a serious responsibility that requires resilience, conviction, and a creative imagination." ■

MAURA JOHNSTON IS A JOURNALIST AND EDITOR WHO TEACHES AT BOSTON COLLEGE.

AWARDS SEASON

A Foundation for Fellowships

BY ANNIE ZALESKI

Oberlin's ongoing Fulbright success is a team effort.

It's a few days after the total solar eclipse, and Alea Strasser '24 is fresh off a call with the Fulbright program coordinator in Denmark, making sure she's on track to secure a visa and residency permit. Next on her plate is figuring out the same permit for Greenland and booking flights.

All of these things are crucial for her imminent plans: a research Fulbright that's allowing her to spend the next year as a master's student at Aarhus University in Denmark and Greenland's Arctic Research Center. At the latter, she plans to study arctic science, taking classes on topics like sea ice ecology and the impact of climate change on Arctic ecosystems.

A biology major, Strasser worked as the lab manager of the Living Machine, which filters and reuses wastewater in the Adam Joseph Lewis Center for Environmental Studies building. She also conducted research with Alex Pike, a visiting assistant professor of biology. Post-graduation, she's interested in focusing on climate solutions—work that builds on a previous NASA internship where she analyzed remote sensing data (in her case, from soil moisture sensors) to figure out climate problems.

"It's using technology to understand what's happening in our climate," she explains, noting that she's especially interested in exploring how to use molecular technology to solve various climate problems. "For example, I [also] really like microbacteria, algae, lichens, and fungi and [studying how to use] those organisms to digest plastics."

Oberlin is perennially a top producer of Fulbright awardees, a group colloquially called Fulbrighters. Sixteen students were selected for Fulbrights for the 2023-24 academic year—ensuring Oberlin was tied for the second-most awardees in the country among baccalaureate institutions. These awardees encompass the popular English Teaching Assistant (ETA) program and Fulbrights geared toward study and research,



including in the creative arts.

Things are looking even brighter for the 2024-25 academic year: Strasser is one of 19 Obies who have been awarded Fulbright grants, breaking Oberlin's previous record of honorees in a single academic year. (The college also had 39 semifinalists overall, including 14 in the study and research category.) Thirteen Fulbrighters will serve as ETAs, and six will pursue graduate study and research projects abroad, living in countries such as Germany, Colombia, Taiwan, Kazakhstan, and Paraguay.

According to Danielle Abdon, director of fellowships and awards, many students who pursue Fulbrights build on past programs they've accessed via the Center for Engaged Liberal Arts (CELA). These include Study Away; Spanish in the Elementary Schools (SITES), where students teach Spanish to local elementary school children; and the Ninde Scholar Program, where students can provide one-on-one tutoring and near-peer mentorship in the Oberlin City Schools.

The Fellowships and Awards office, also located in CELA, is a big part of Oberlin's

Fulbright success. Starting the semester before applications are due and leading up to the fall submission deadline, Abdon and her team provide individualized guidance to Fulbright applicants, ensuring they're supported every step of the way through the process. This assistance includes multiple information sessions; one-on-one meetings; access to dozens of writing associates trained to read Fulbright applications; and the ability to submit essay drafts for unlimited revisions.

The tailored, comprehensive assistance is crucial. Fulbright applications are specialized; their requirements vary depending on the country and the type of fellowship. For example, some students applying for research fellowships must apply to graduate school in their intended country of study. Other applicants need to interview with representatives from their potential host country.

Putting together an application is also an iterative process that takes place over many months. Along the way, Abdon's office provides mock interviews and holds what they call Fulbright Fridays—lunchtime open houses where staff, writing associates, and the Writing



**From left to right:
Alea Strasser in the lab with
Alex Pike, visiting assistant
professor of biology;
Danielle Abdon, director
of fellowships and awards,
and Simon Nosek.**



Center coordinator answer questions and offer help. “Or it’s a writing session for people who just want a space to write,” she adds. As the Fulbright application deadline looms, Abdon says packed rooms are the norm for her office’s all-day writing and feedback sessions.

Before students submit applications, they also have the chance to receive detailed feedback from faculty; in fact, Oberlin has a dedicated fellowships faculty committee that has a further subspecialty in Fulbright applications. Among other things, the Fellowships and Awards office schedules virtual or in-person interview sessions that give students and faculty a chance to connect. “I try to pair the students with two staff and faculty members who have had a Fulbright in that country or have experienced teaching English as a second language,” Abdon says. These interview-driven sessions help applicants contextualize Oberlin-specific things like ExCos or Winter Term for Fulbright reviewers—but also help students refine and prepare their essays.

For Simon Nosek ’24, a politics and religion major with a minor in Jewish studies, this

intensive support was crucial in helping them earn an English Teaching Assistantship to the Czech Republic. “You basically have to sell yourself as a cultural role model for what an American should be abroad,” they said. “It was like going through the college application process again. But I applied to 10 colleges—I only get to apply to one Fulbright.”

Nosek’s application required a personal statement and essays explaining their interest in teaching, why they chose the Czech Republic, how they might be a cultural ambassador, and their future plans. “All of these go through multiple feedback rounds,” they said. “You have a full sit-down meeting. They’ve annotated all of your essays and give you really detailed feedback, and then you turn in a new draft. It’s an involved process.”

Nosek found that hearing feedback from professors who had “read hundreds of Fulbright essays and knew what worked and what didn’t” was helpful. “It’s definitely a specialized way of writing that I [wasn’t] used to,” they said. “You also are trying to pitch yourself in a competitive field of candidates. [The professors] were able to help me refine

everything down to a point where even if I had other things I wanted to say, they’re like, ‘Cut those out. Make one argument—and make it really well.’”

Oberlin’s support for Fulbright applications extends beyond campus; for example, Nosek was able to connect with an Obie alum who had also completed a Fulbright fellowship in the Czech Republic for insights and feedback. And Strasser worked with Abdon to seek out experts in their collective network who could give insights into the particulars of the Denmark-specific application.

But Strasser’s Fulbright journey had begun months earlier. During the 2023 spring semester, she attended a Fulbright introduction session and then booked a one-on-one meeting with Abdon as she mulled options within her target parameters: an English-speaking country in a colder climate with a big research institution. Over the next few months, Strasser worked on refining the shorter essays in her application.

But several days before the applications were due, she realized that her crucial statement of grant purpose needed significant work—and came to Abdon seeking assistance.

“I [was] like, ‘I’ve been really stressed with all my work and have been scared to look at this. And I’ve been trying to write it—and I just can’t. Please help me,’” Strasser recalls. “And Danielle was like, ‘It’s OK—you still have time. You can do this.’ And that was incredible. Because it wasn’t, ‘You can’t do this’—it’s ‘You *can* do this. Let’s figure it out. And I’m here to support you.’ It felt really nice ... I felt really supported. I’m really thankful for Danielle because I wouldn’t be here if not for her help.”

Nosek sensed the same kind of encouragement and collaboration among their peers applying for Fulbrights, which made the experience that much better. “There’s definitely an institutional push among students to help each other refine their programs,” they said. “You’re not really competing with the other students. Even [though] there’s another student applying for the Czech Republic, we felt no competition [or] animosity. I think we got a recommendation from the same person.

“It’s nice that it doesn’t feel like a competitive process because you never see the other applicants [or] the reviews,” Nosek added. “You just try to put forward your best pitch. And if it works—it works.” ■

Thought Process

THE STORIES WE TELL

Time of the Season

BY KATE BIGAM KAPUT

Edan Lepucki '02 embraces the power of storytelling—with a little time travel on the side.

From a young age, Edan Lepucki '02 knew she was going to be a writer. Growing up in Los Angeles, she wasn't sure *how* she was going to accomplish this—and had no proof she could *actually* make this dream come true—although she viewed majoring in English and creative writing at Oberlin as a solid start.

Even that choice came with some unexpected challenges. "I'd been a big poet at my high school, but when I took a poetry seminar at Oberlin, we had to write in iambic pentameter, and it practically broke my brain," Lepucki says. "I was totally out of my depth." Still, she was undeterred. "In my final semester, everyone was scheduling big job interviews, and I was like, 'Well, I'm just going back to Los Angeles to work in a bookstore because my dream is to become a writer.'"

Lepucki's determination paid off. She's now the author of three novels—2014's *New York Times* best seller *California*, 2017's *Woman No. 17*, and 2023's *Time's Mouth*—and the editor of the essay collection *Mothers Before: Stories and Portraits of Our Mothers as We Never Saw Them*. Her latest, *Time's Mouth*—which is coming out on paperback on August 6—made the long list for the 2024 Joyce Carol Oates Prize, which honors mid-career fiction authors.

In 2014, the *New York Times* described you as having "won the literary Lotto" when late-night host Stephen Colbert encouraged *The Colbert Report* viewers to buy your debut novel, *California*. How did that experience jump-start your career?

I'd written an earlier book that didn't get published, and I'd been through a two-year process of rejection, so when *California* was sold at auction and multiple publishers wanted to buy it, it felt like a very big deal. But I also had low expectations for how well it would do.

Around the time the book became available for preorder, Stephen Colbert's publishing imprint, Hachette, was in a contract dispute with Amazon. Amazon was retaliating by removing preorder



buttons for all Hachette titles, and Colbert wanted to highlight that. He also wanted to teach Amazon a lesson.

He brought author Sherman Alexie onto the show to recommend a Hachette novel—and they chose mine. They encouraged people to order the book from an independent bookstore, which led to a preorder frenzy. *California* became an instant *New York Times* best seller.

Of all the author fantasies I'd nursed over the years, this wasn't one of them. I didn't know this was a fantasy I could have! It was surreal.

Since then, you've published two more books. How has your career trajectory looked since such a public big debut?

People think that once you publish a book, you have a career as a writer, but it's actually very much book-to-book. In some ways, the way *California* debuted meant

that my second book would be much easier to sell, no matter what I wrote. That felt liberating.

California was a post-apocalyptic story about a couple escaping L.A. to live by themselves in the woods. *Woman No. 17* is very different; it's a realist contemporary story about art and having children, with traditionally unlikable literary characters. I never expected it to do as well as *California*, but when it came out, the scales really fell from my eyes. It got good reviews, so I felt vindicated in my progress as a writer, but it was not a best seller. It became clear that you can be hot one day and not the next.

My third book, *Time's Mouth*, is told from multiple points of view, and it spans decades with elements of time travel. It took me seven years to write, and in some ways, publishing felt like a different world this time around. I've learned so much

about myself as a writer and about the stories I want to tell.

What kind of stories are those?

When you've written multiple books, there's nowhere to hide in terms of seeing the patterns in your work. First, there's public proof that I'm obsessed with California and the problematic burden of a mythologized place. I'm very interested in how setting influences what we feel and how where we come from shapes who we are.

I also keep returning to themes of parenting and being parented—not just the everyday logistics and experiences of being a parent, but also the existential questions of it. What does it mean to raise somebody? What does it mean to be a good parent, and how can you be there for your children? How does it feel to raise someone who then grows up to have their own life?

My own mother has always been very present in my life, so I think about it a lot: What if she weren't, and how would that affect me? The way you're mothered and whether or not you're mothered poorly reverberates throughout your life again and again. Everything parents do has existential weight for their children.

You're firmly rooted in California now, but how did your time at Oberlin shape you as a writer?

I've always wanted to remain engaged in the wider world and to do something that matters. That comes from having gone to Oberlin.

Oberlin also taught me to pay attention to words—to stop and look at an individual passage and think about its relevance, both within the text and within a larger cultural context.

Two summers ago, two friends and I came back to spend a day on campus. We walked around in a daze and sat on the rocking chairs at Wilder, swapping memories and remembering our younger selves—how long ago that was and yet how immediate it still feels. Working on *Time's Mouth* taught me that you can't wish for time travel, but there are some very specific memories that I would love to revisit, for even a day. ■

KATE BIGAM KAPUT IS A CLEVELAND-BASED WRITER.

OBERLIN
COLLEGE & CONSERVATORY

“We attended Oberlin in different decades and all had different academic interests. But each of us made Oberlin our own. We give because it changed all of us for the better at pivotal points in our lives.”

— WILLA ROWAN '15, EMMA ROWAN '12, ANDREA LEHMAN '83, ANDY ROWAN '83



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The unwavering support of our generous alumni, parents, and friends enables Oberlin to offer students access to a world-class education. For nearly two centuries, this tradition of giving has empowered Oberlin to nurture thoughtful leaders that drive positive change in our ever-evolving world.

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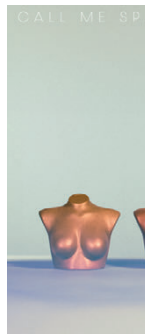
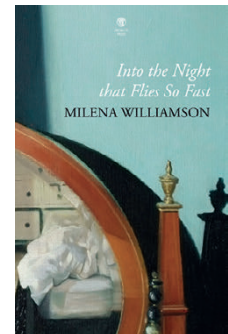
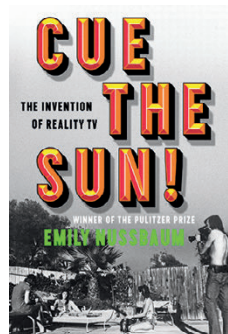
Annual Fund. Your contribution ensures the next generation of Obies has the kind of opportunities and transformative experiences only found at Oberlin.

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RECENT RELEASES

Sound and Vision



Books

FICTION

Ghost Mother

Kelly Dwyer '87

UNION SQUARE & CO.

It's a common real estate mistake: A buyer impetuously falls in love with a house and goes all-in before learning key details. In Kelly Dwyer's third novel, *Ghost Mother*, protagonist Lilly Bly persuades her husband to stretch the budget for a dilapidated estate in their new hometown with the hope their fertility fortunes will improve. "Now that I'd seen this forsaken mansion, its neglectedness calling to me like the big eyes of a regal but mangy greyhound dog at a shelter, I could not imagine living anywhere else," Lilly recounts. But she quickly learns that the place is known to locals as "the Murder House" and finds herself pulled into a world of ghosts—which may or may not be real. Dwyer weaves light humor into this creepy, psychological page-turner. —Karen Sandstrom

YA FICTION

Riot Act

Sarah Lariviere '97

KNOFF

Sarah Lariviere's thrilling, head-spinning *Riot Act* is narrated by the wisecracking

(and wise) Maximus "Max" Bowl, a teenager recently murdered by men working on behalf of an oppressive government. Unfortunately, such violence is par for the course in a dystopian 1991 version of Champaign, Illinois, where anyone expressing anti-American thought is considered an enemy, and figuring out whom to trust is impossible. Max's surviving friends, Axl and Gigi, turn to high school theater (and their friendship) as their lives spiral more out of control, disrupted by both surging hormones and shifting allegiances. Lariviere's prose is fresh and incisive as the book critiques authoritarianism, misogyny, and political polarization and offers up art as rebellious solace. And don't be fooled by the early-'90s setting—the parallels to the present day are pointed and unmistakable. —Annie Zaleski

FICTION

Women! In! Peril!

Jessie Ren Marshall '01

BLOOMSBURY

In an interview with *Honolulu* magazine, Jessie Ren Marshall points out that contradiction makes adults uncomfortable: "We erase strangeness and replace it with knowledge." In the short story collection *Women! In! Peril!*, she grabs

contradiction in a bear hug and files compulsively readable fiction distinguished by humor, despair, and deep social commentary. The title story finds a young woman aboard a spaceship headed away from a ruined Earth recounting her experiences through tweetlike "blurts" that won't reach their audience for years, if ever. "Annie2" centers on a robot programmed to please and becomes a gift to a teenage boy, with unexpected results. "Dogs" starts as what seems like an average marital breakup story—and just as you're wondering if there's any fresh take on the subject, Marshall delivers. —KS

NONFICTION

Cue the Sun! The Invention of Reality TV

Emily Nussbaum '88

RANDOM HOUSE

In the crucial, fascinating *Cue the Sun!*, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Emily Nussbaum turns her sharp analytical skills and critical rigor toward the history and impact of reality television. The medium is ripe for such a serious treatment: Drawing on intensive research, including interviews with more than 300 sources, the book takes a comprehensive look at early influences (*An American*

Family, The Dating Game), groundbreaking series (MTV's *The Real World, Survivor*), and culture-shifting juggernauts (*The Bachelor, The Apprentice*). Using crisp and entertaining prose, Nussbaum dissects reality television's moral lapses, ethical dilemmas, logistical challenges, and (of course) headline-grabbing drama. In the end, *Cue the Sun!* argues successfully that reality television both reflects and propels culture. —AZ

NONFICTION

Raising Children to Thrive

Ronald Ruff '67

BOOKS FORWARD

Twenty-first-century parents wondering how to raise happy, healthy children are awash in advice, much of it contradictory. In *Raising Children to Thrive*, Ronald Ruff uses his 48 years as a clinical psychologist to make the case for tender, thoughtful, interactive parenting, especially during the first years of a child's life. Ruff concentrates on affect hunger, a baby's innate need for closeness and physical touch from a primary caregiver, typically the mother. Today's better understanding of neuroscience has helped shed new light on child development.



Using contemporary science and anecdotes from his experience treating patients who were deprived and neglected (some of this is quite grim), Ruff provides a persuasive and compassionate guide for those involved in the care and feeding of new humans. —KS

POETRY

Into the Night That Flies So Fast

Milena Williamson '17
DEDALUS

Nearly 130 years ago in Ireland, Bridget Cleary was murdered by her husband, Michael. With the help of others, he set her on fire, convinced Bridget was a fairy changeling, or a kind of magical impostor. The crime has inspired nursery rhymes, books, music, and podcasts. Now comes Milena Williamson's *Into the Night That Flies So Fast*, an arresting "docupoetry" collection that unfolds as Bridget, Michael, relatives, and townsfolk step onstage to impart their versions of events. In "My Actions Are Their Dreams," Bridget gives voice to the contradictory gossip about her: *I was thin as a wisp / or I rode a white horse / I held dances in my house / or I was bedridden for years.* This debut collection bears rereading. —KS

Albums

Potholes

Call Me Spinster
STROLLING BONES

Call Me Spinster—a trio of sisters that includes vocalist/multi-instrumentalist Amelia Graber Jacobs '07—defies categorization on a smart, thoughtful debut album, *Potholes*. The Chattanooga-based band crafts bewitching soundscapes rooted in burbling synth-pop (the Robyn-inspired "Feet Are Dirty"), dewy indie ("Married in My Mind"), stormy folk ("Constantly Dying"), and antique-sounding country (the pedal steel guitar- and accordion-augmented standout "White Lines"). The sisters' familial harmonies are also magical—conspiratorial on the horn-peppered "Burn the Boxes" and as delicate as a shimmering rainbow on "I Went Down." Like Waxahatchee? You'll love Call Me Spinster. —AZ

Have, Know, Want

Chase Elodia '16
BIOPHILIA RECORDS

The cloudy specter of grief hovers over the ambitious *Have, Know, Want*, the sophomore solo effort from Brooklyn-based composer, drummer, and writer Chase Elodia. Throughout these eight

songs, Elodia—who's also a member of the band Perennials—explores the psychosocial concept of "ambiguous loss," a painful state of being that manifests in a disorienting emotional fog. *Have, Know, Want* adroitly (and acutely) captures this concept, led by the sizzling jazz of "Hold" and the tearjerker "Drift," the latter a somber piano tune written from the perspective of a 95-year-old living with dementia. —AZ

EZRA

EZRA
ADHYĀROPA RECORDS

For the last two Winter Terms, Jesse Jones, associate professor of composition, and Conservatory composition major Max Allard '25 have focused on EZRA, a self-described "progressive bluegrass/chamber ensemble." Such focused care and dedication is evident on the quartet's recent self-titled debut album. Driven by Allard's soulful, thoughtful banjo and Jones' evocative guitar and piano (as well as mandolin and double bass), *EZRA* contains nine instrumentals braided with influences from jazz, rock, and classical. It's a promising first effort that portends great things to come. —AZ

Podcasts

Good Ol' Grateful Deadcast

dead.net/deadcast

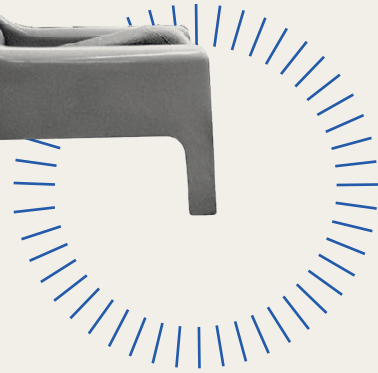
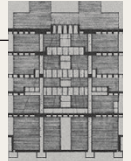
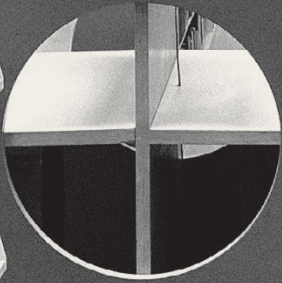
Noted Grateful Dead scholar Jesse Jarnow '01 cohosts the meticulously researched *Good Ol' Grateful Deadcast*, the official podcast of the iconic band. The show's ninth season, launched this past spring, explores the 50th anniversary of the Dead's pivotal 1974, which encompassed the LP *From the Mars Hotel* and the legendary run of shows at San Francisco's Winterland Ballroom. —AZ

Magic in the United States

magicintheunitedstates.com

Host Heather Freeman '07 and producer Amber Walker '11 recently released the second season of *Magic in the United States*, a thoroughly fascinating look at "the hidden magical, religious, and spiritual realms of the United States." Take the story of Montague and Duck, an elderly Virginia couple who "engaged in magical racketeering" during the early 1900s, leading to an absorbing discussion about Appalachian folk practices and folklore. *Magic in the United States* more than delivers on its promises that "the mystical, mysterious, and misunderstood is happening all around us." —AZ

The



Marvels

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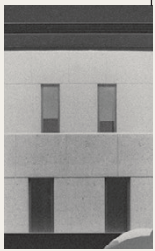
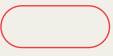
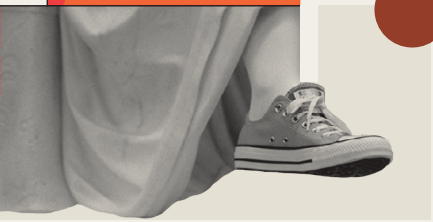
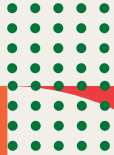
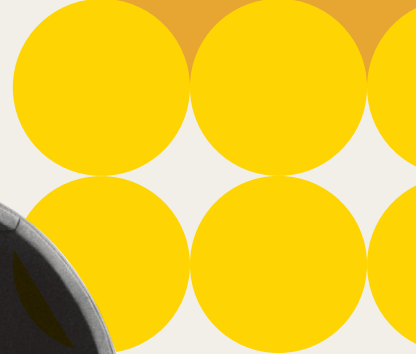
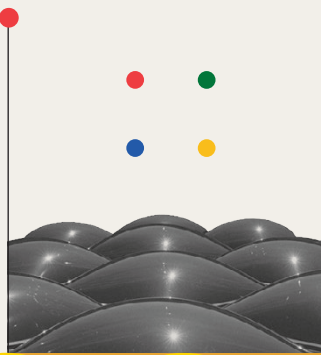
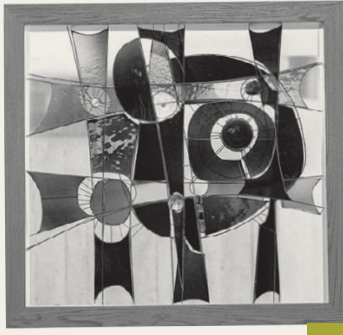


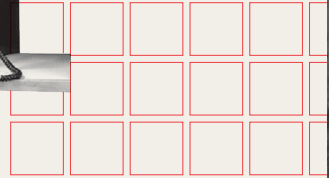
ILLUSTRATION BY NICOLE SLATINSKY




of



BY ANNIE ZALESKI



Mudd



n May 25, 1974, Oberlin held a dedication celebration for The Seeley G. Mudd Learning Center. The event's program outlined a lofty vision for the space:

“The building must enhance the campus and provide study and work space that is in keeping with the informal atmosphere, but high standards, of Oberlin College.” Fifty years later, Mudd is continuing to fulfill this mission—and then some. Anchored by the Mary Church Terrell Main Library, the five-story, 200,000-square-foot space hums with activity not just within the book stacks or study areas, but in the letterpress studio, the Oberlin College Archives, or Azariah’s Café.

Although Mudd’s decor is a retro dream, the center has evolved. Smoking’s no longer allowed in the building and the basement Houck Computing Center has transformed into the Center for Engaged Liberal Arts (CELA), a bustling hub to connect students to experiential learning opportunities. But you can still curl up for hours in a womb chair, camp out in a study room overlooking Wilder Bowl, or scribble your thoughts on MuddSlinger. And the mind-expanding research opportunities and vibrant conversations that make Oberlin, well, Oberlin, remain a vital part of campus life.

As Mudd turns 50, here are 50 things we love about the brutalist beauty.



Oberlin Alumni Magazine would like to thank Valerie Hotchkiss, the Azariah S. Root Director of Oberlin College Libraries, the Oberlin College Archives, and all of the staff of the campus libraries for their insights, photos, and input into this story.



3. Stepping into Mudd is like traveling back in time ...

4. ... although Mudd is always evolving and changing to meet student needs.

50 THINGS WE LOVE ABOUT MUDD

1. Embrace peak relaxation (or a refreshing nap) in one of the colorful, Eero Aarnio-designed Ball Chairs – womb chairs to Obies.

2. We're part of an open, community-based project – the Cataloging Lab – that flags Library of Congress Subject Headings as being potentially problematic.



5. Directly across from the analog Letterpress Studio is the scholarship focused Digital Collaborative, a world of cutting edge creativity that handles media digitization and web based projects.



6. Her sneaker size? Six. Her natural state? Focused on a book. Her name? *The Reading Girl*. John Adams Jackson's marble statue has resided at Oberlin since 1885 and in Mudd since the early 1980s.



7. Our main library's namesake, **Mary Church Terrell** Class of 1884, MA 1888, was an internationally respected educator, writer, suffragist, and civil rights leader.

8. Soak up the sun while soaking up knowledge during a **Terrell Library sun deck** study session.



9.
Have your say on the MuddSlinger whiteboard, a decades-long tradition that gives library visitors a chance to opine about hot topics.

10. Whether you prefer a comfy couch or sturdy carrel, Mudd’s “organized nooks and crannies” offer **cozy study spaces galore.**

11. **Learning and wellness go hand in hand.** Students can borrow light therapy lamps and white noise machines, do yoga, or decompress with adorable therapy dogs during finals.

12. Catch up with friends — or make new ones — at the Robert S. Lemle ’75 and Roni Kohen-Lemle ’76 **Academic Commons**, a buzzing hive of activity.

13. Forget your password? Wi-Fi connection giving you issues? The **CIT Help Desk** is standing by with quick solutions to all of your computer problems.

14. Want to know what’s going on at Oberlin? Flyer-filled **bulletin boards** provide the scoop on campus events, performances, and other goings-on.

15.
Colors and patterns and fabrics, oh my! Bold hues (and bold prints) are everywhere you look — including on the walls, floors, bookshelves, and furniture.

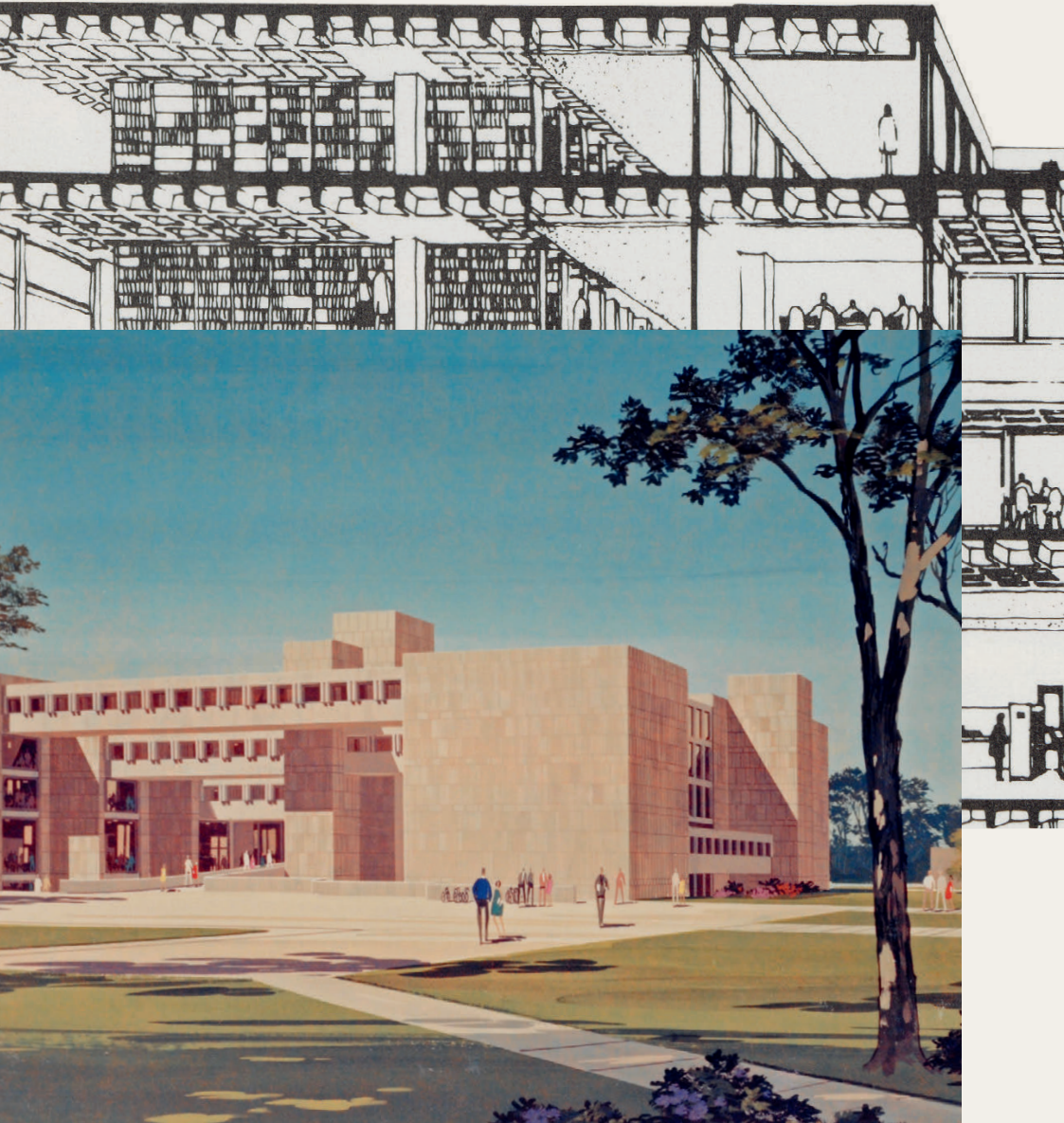


16. **Talented student assistants** keep every department running like clockwork — and use this important work as a springboard for the future. The first student assistant, Keyes Metcalf Class of 1911, later became director of Harvard University’s libraries.

17. **Hands-on learning happens here.** Not only does the library staff teach courses, but professors regularly bring in classes to learn about Shakespeare, woodblock cutting, and the history of the printing press.

18. **Library catalogers** work in dozens of languages, making sure that books and resources are findable. All those links to digital books? They’re made by the invisible hands (and real, live brains!) of acquisitions experts.





19. Built by Alex Rosen '15, the **Lego model of Mudd** is an impressive, brick-by-brick re-creation of the building.

20. Students can keep tabs on what's going on in the libraries—and offer perspectives on services—by joining the **Oberlin College Student Friends of the Libraries (SFOL)**.

21. Alums can join the **Friends of the Libraries** and receive the *Library Perspectives* newsletter, invitations to events, and limited OhioLink print borrowing. The Friends also fund scholarships for students and alums attending graduate school in library and information science and give awards for exceptional student research that uses library resources.

22. The Lead Project Designer

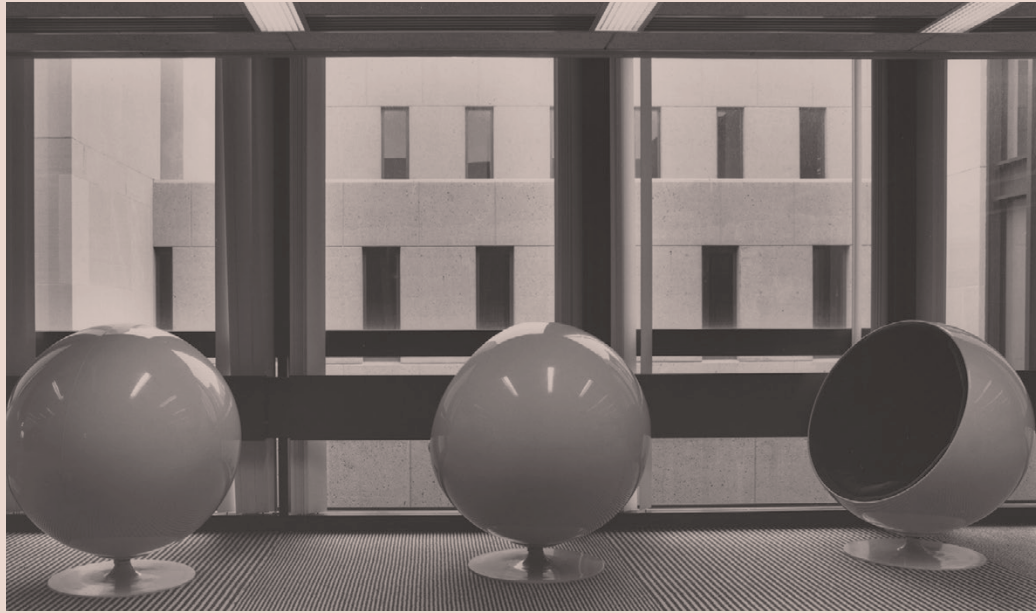
A DESIGNER FOR LIFE

Mudd's brutalist beauty emerged thanks to the vision and insights of project designer **M. Rosaria Piomelli**, then working as an architect in the New York firm Warner, Burns, Toan and Lunde. Piomelli pointedly championed women architects: In 1974, she co-presented a showcase of work by New York female architects that attracted worldwide press and highlighted the gender imbalance within the field. Six years later, Piomelli became the first woman to serve as dean at a U.S. architectural school—City College of New York's School of Architecture.

Mudd's design "was generated principally by seeking to fulfill a wish of the librarians: to know whether thesis students actually entered the study spaces assigned to them," Piomelli says today. "Hence the bridges with those spaces in the front of the building to make their occupancy obvious. These bridges conveniently gave me a way to create a formal archway as the entrance to the library. The height of the building stemmed from my desire not to overwhelm Cass Gilbert's adjacent Student Center [Wilder Hall]." Piomelli, now 86, is thrilled her building is still so beloved: "I'm pleased to know that many have enjoyed it over the past half-century."



PHOTO FROM *INTERIORS* MAGAZINE BY JON NAAR, FOUND IN BOX 1, FOLDER 3, M. ROSARIA PIOMELLI ARCHITECTURAL COLLECTION, MS1995-007, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES, VIRGINIA TECH, BLACKSBURG, VA.



23.
The Short Story Dispenser prints out one- to three-minute stories, poems, and even comics — because sometimes a bite-sized burst of inspiration is exactly what you need.



24.
Library internships in archives preservation, cataloging, and the DigiLab offer experiential learning experiences that provide direct pathways to jobs or grad school.

25.
Our rotating exhibitions draw on Oberlin's rich archives and collections to tell interesting stories about campus history — like the impact of folk music and the 150th anniversary of the student newspaper *The Oberlin Review*.

26.
 There's intriguing **art everywhere you look** — brightening up the stairwells and adding vintage flair to the walls and outdoor spaces.

27.
Our Visual Resources Collection — one of the earliest U.S. college slide collections, in existence since the late 19th century — possesses glass-lantern and 35mm slides, mounted study prints, digital images, and architectural postcards.

28.
 Chill out in the **outdoor contemplation garden**, which features the *Oberlin Reader*: a limestone statue by master stone carver Nicholas Fairplay depicting a pair of sneaker-clad feet poking out of a womb chair.

29.
 The first original student art piece purchased for the library's permanent collection, Max Schumann's *Falling Man painting*, is a thought-provoking fixture.

30.
 Let off steam with **fun events** like 2024's Edible Book Festival, where participants created delicious, literary-inspired works of art. Fancy some *Alice in Wonderland* or *Game of Thrones*?

31.
 Print publications are alive and thriving in the **periodical and new book room** at Azariah's Café. Grab the latest issue of your favorite magazine — or pick up the latest opus from Oberlin authors.

32.
 Looking to research *anything* about Oberlin's history? Odds are good the **Oberlin College Archives** possesses a photo, correspondence, document, or periodical related to your quest, no matter how obscure.

33.
 Stuck on the structure of an important paper or need support for a big presentation? The associates at the **Writing Center** and **Speaking Center** are here to help.

34. We celebrate the birthday of Frederick Douglass by participating in the **Douglass Day Transcribe-a-thon**, an event that in 2024 involved transcribing the letters of the abolitionist and civil rights leader.

35. We're a **nexus for Winter Term** projects and classes. In 2024, seven courses were taught or supported by library experts, led by the Digital Archiving Practicum, the popular Letterpress Printing course, and the Archives-sponsored project "Affinity Groups Archiving—Preserving Minority Student Life."

36. All alums registered with OberLink can **access JSTOR content**—scholarly journals and e-books—while local Obies can register as a courtesy borrower for all campus libraries.

37. Fuel up for busy days with a piping hot cup of coffee or baked delight from **Azariah's Café**, a vibrant space named after legendary college librarian Azariah Smith Root Class of 1884, MA 1887.

38. The third-floor East Asian Literature Room contains just a small portion of Oberlin's impressive **East Asian Collection**: 53,000 volumes of books and bound periodicals in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and English.



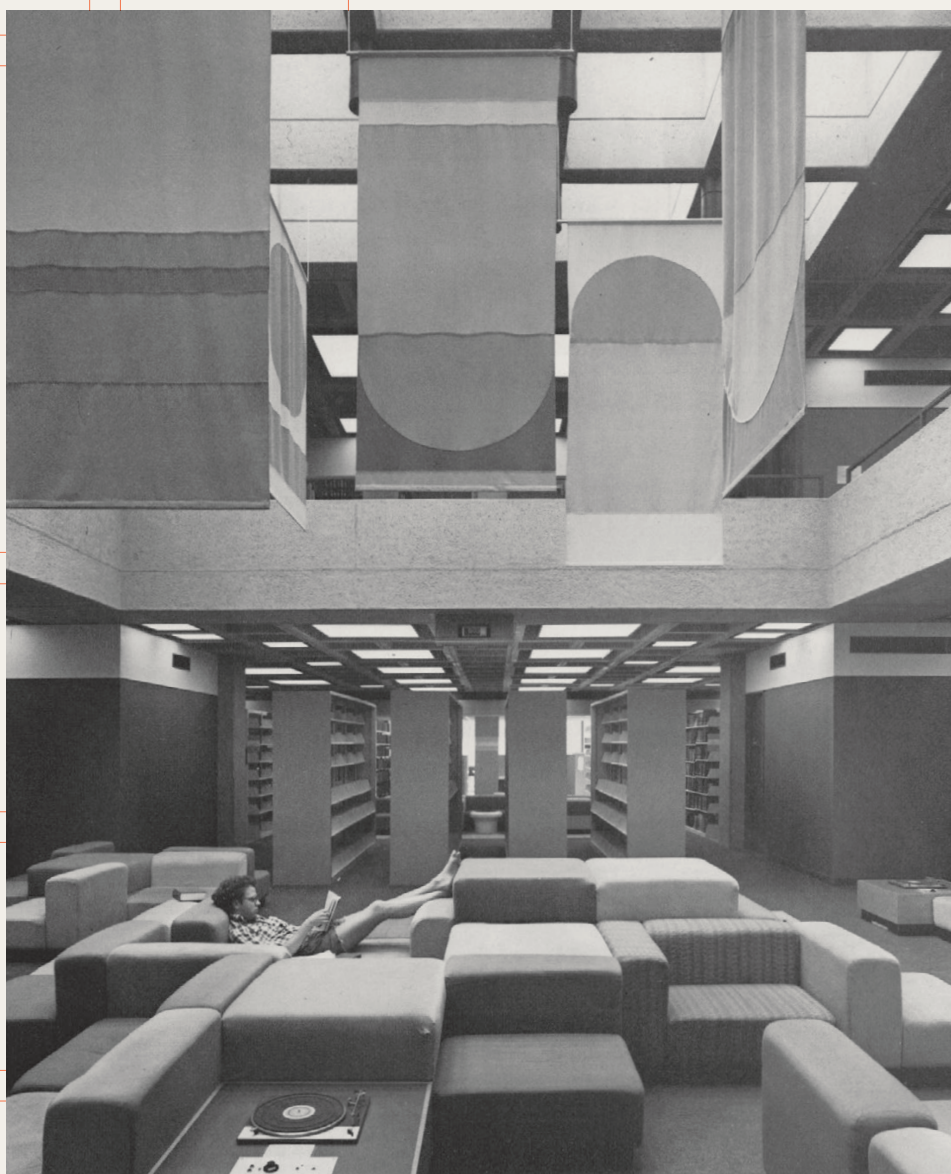
39. Our Letterpress Studio and vast special collections are a huge support for the **Book Studies minor**, which examines the book as a material, cultural, sociological, religious, and artistic artifact.

40. Thanks to the wonders of technology and a deep commitment to collaboration, our programming and collections are in harmony with the **Science, Conservatory, and Clarence Ward Art libraries**.

41.
Our study spaces are not just comfortable — they're also flexible enough to accommodate solo studies, collaborative group work, or multimedia projects.



42.
 Crash into the cushion pit on the second floor (figuratively, of course) and have a marathon conversation, meeting, or study session. Consider it Mudd's unofficial town square.



TANYA ROSEN-JONES '97, PHOTO FROM INTERIORS MAGAZINE BY BALTHAZAR KORAB, COURTESY OF OBERLIN COLLEGE ARCHIVES

43.
It's a borrowing bonanza! Once the largest college library collection in America by number of volumes, we still offer access to millions of physical and e-resources, both at Oberlin and across the state via OhioLINK.

44.
 Students can start planning their next steps after Oberlin at **Career Exploration and Development**, thanks to personalized guidance and insights into internships, career communities, and funding opportunities.

45.
 Our **brilliant librarians** know Oberlin's collections inside and out, meaning they're wizards at finding needed information and research materials. They also go above and beyond to help students, faculty, and staff – in one-on-one research appointments or by teaching information literacy.

46.
 Richard Henry Park's marble sculpture *La Penserosa* (The Thinking Girl) isn't asleep. Befitting her name, she's just deep in thought pondering weighty topics and the state of the world.





47. Get your crafts on via **Book Arts Labs** workshops on bookbinding, stone lettering, calligraphy, and even ink-making.

48. We have a little more than a mile of books and paper in the **Terrell Special Collections**. Treasures include significant holdings from the American antislavery movement; Spanish plays; illustrated Japanese books; the archives of feminist publisher Seal Press; pre-cinematic devices; and rare Audubon prints and bird books.



49. Step back in time with one of Oberlin's most unique gems, the **Letterpress Studio**, which gives visitors a chance to compose text by hand on cylinder and iron platen presses — including a machine dating from 1866!

50. CELA connects students to the world.

You might say that the “A” in Mudd’s A-Level stands for academic excellence. For more than 40 years, the garden level was home to the Houck Computing Center. Starting in 1975, the center housed the Xerox Sigma 9 Model 2 computer, which (among other functions) generated computer music to a room on Mudd’s fourth floor. Later, the Computing Center (later called the Center for Information Technology) hired alums and provided student jobs.

Today, Mudd’s basement floor includes classroom space and the Center for Engaged Liberal Arts (CELA), an umbrella phrase that encompasses Career Exploration and Development and the Bonner Center; the latter is a hub for Obies looking to make a difference via social change and public service. Opened in fall 2022, CELA offers an abundance of experiential learning opportunities that enrich and complement what’s taught in the classroom. Its location in Mudd below the library is also significant, says Laura Baudot, associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

“It sends the message of Oberlin’s connection between theory and study, retreating from the world as a scholar, and going beyond campus to put the learning into practice.”

In practice, CELA is the place for Obies to establish career paths, secure internships and explore undergraduate research, as well as explore study away opportunities, develop Winter Term projects, pursue fellowships and awards, and entrepreneurship. Obies can also attend career-focused panels with established alums, access one-on-one mentoring and peer advising — and, above all, receive tailored support from dedicated staff. “Because the staff connect and collaborate,” Baudot says, “students are able to connect their various experiences into a meaningful whole.”

With a hit Netflix adaptation and a new book looming, Rumaan Alam '99 isn't leaving the world—or Oberlin—behind.

WRITING THE FUTURE

By: Serena Zets '22

Last fall, *Leave the World Behind* was impossible to miss. That's partly due to the cast: The film—an adaptation of the widely lauded novel by Rumaan Alam '99—stars Julia Roberts, Ethan Hawke, Mahershala Ali, and Myha'la Herrold. An immediate hit, *Leave the World Behind* currently ranks in the top 10 of Netflix's most popular English-language films of all time.

Alam's novel, a finalist for the 2020 National Book Award for Fiction, also demanded full attention. *Leave the World Behind* follows two families navigating challenging dynamics of race and class as

an unfamiliar and unnamed global disaster threatens their ways of living. The book is rife with fear and paranoia about the catastrophe that begins to consume the characters' lives. Sound familiar? *Leave the World Behind* was published in October 2020, when ongoing racial tensions and anxiety prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic dominated the country's conversations. The book read like a dystopian account of what could happen to us if we mishandled the challenges of the present day.

Much has happened in the nearly four years since Alam published *Leave the World Behind*. These days, he spends his time in his

writing studio and office, located inside a quintessential Brooklyn row home. Natural light floods the space, illuminating the walls of built-in bookshelves holding hundreds of books. There's a beautiful silk panel propped against a wall, a record player accompanied by boxes of records, and curated tchotchkes from the *Leave the World Behind* movie junket. Alam also has multiple copies of the manuscript of his forthcoming novel, *Entitlement* (out September 17 via Riverhead), piled next to his desk. The room is one of tasteful abundance; no space is wasted, and everything has its place.



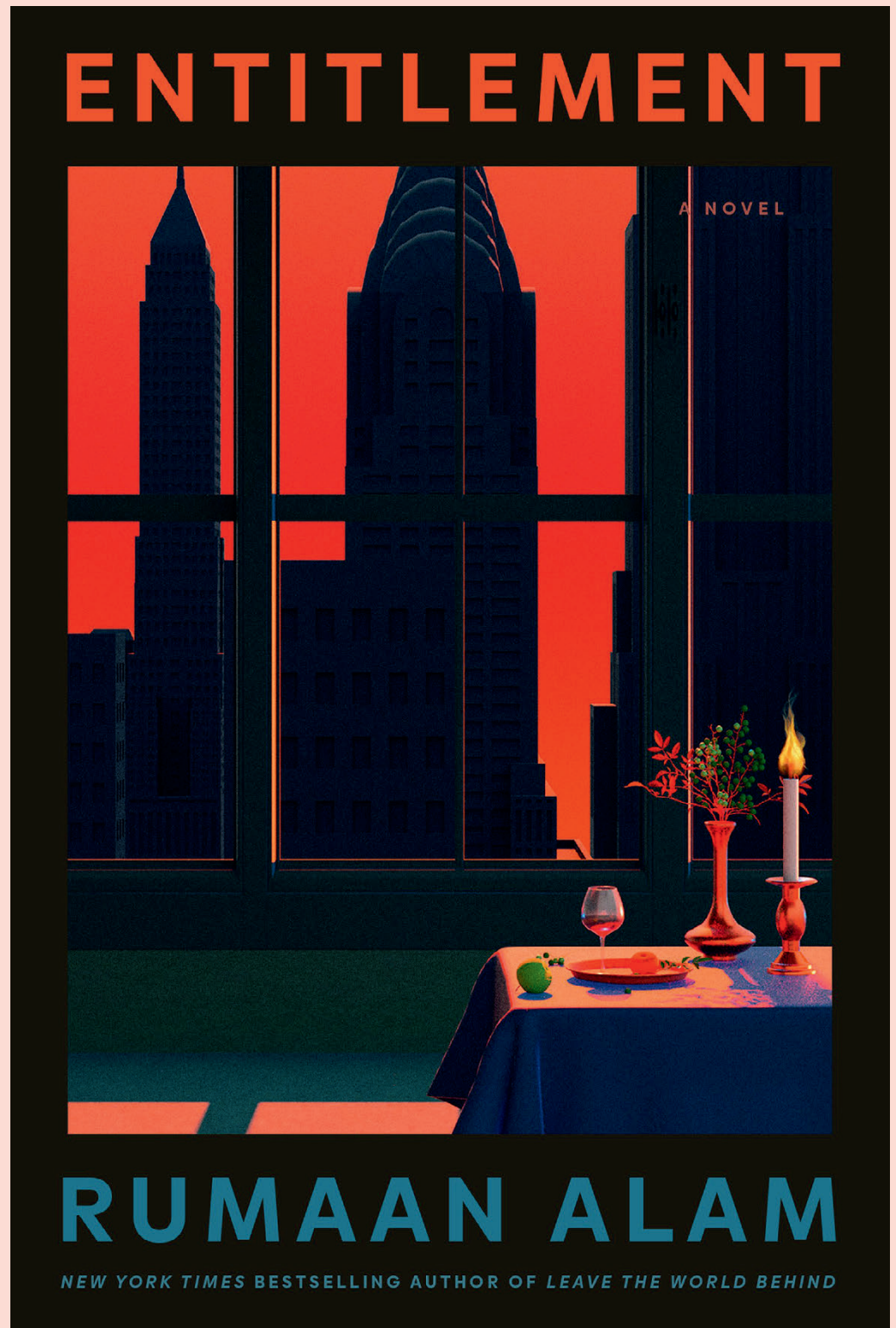
“What a thing to do for your job, to sit at your desk in this comfortable, beautiful place,” Alam says. He and his husband, photographer David Land, began renting this space two years ago after living and writing on top of each other and their two sons throughout the pandemic. Alam is chatting during the stretch of winter when he’s eating so much citrus, “it’s like I’m afraid of getting scurvy,” he says playfully. Spring will come soon, but for now, he offers up strong, steaming black coffee that provides needed warmth.

Alam navigates conversation with the kind of ease possessed by Oberlin students and professors; our comfort reminds me of being back in my Asia House apartment talking to an old friend about a particularly impactful play, opera, or concert we had just witnessed on campus. He moves between jokes, intimate observations, and universal assertions, speaking with familiarity and expertise about everything from the state of our collective cultural consciousness to his thoughts on Jonathan Glazer’s films *Birth* and *The Zone of Interest* to his enduring reliance on his cell phone.

As we move beyond our initial subjects of inquiry, the dialogue resembles the profoundly earth-shattering conversations I had inside and particularly outside of the classroom at Oberlin: at co-op meals, amongst peers at student protests, on long walks through the arb, in the pews of Fairchild Chapel, after last call at the Feve. In conversation and in writing, Alam draws you in and makes you feel at home.

Right after earning a degree in creative writing, Alam started cultivating his home—and artistic tastes—in New York, moving to Brooklyn for an opportunity at Condé Nast. In the subsequent two decades, he rose through the ranks of literary New York by working in media and continuing to write fiction. In fact, Alam had published two acclaimed novels, 2016’s *Rich and Pretty* and 2018’s *That Kind of Mother*, when he landed a seemingly dream job in 2018—editor of special projects at the *New York Times Book Review*.

Alam ended up being in the job only briefly, but his decision to leave secure employment turned out to be the right one, as it led him directly to *Leave the World Behind*. He had been tinkering with a story idea before shelving it to accept the job at the *Times*. Upon quitting, Alam turned back to his idea. That evolved into his first draft of *Leave the World Behind*, which he subsequently sold in a seven-way auction before the pandemic. Similarly, the book’s film adaptation rights sparked a bidding war



before landing at Netflix in July 2020, ahead of the book’s fall publication. A former U.S. president’s cosign didn’t hurt either: Barack and Michelle Obama co-executive produced the film through their production company Higher Ground Productions. (Alam was also co-executive producer.)

The safety net provided by the Netflix deal gave relief to Alam as everything else remained uncertain; in fact, he says selling the *Leave the World Behind* adaptation rights

to Netflix got his family through the pandemic, as he and his husband found their work as freelance artists on pause or drying up. Alam also began working on *Entitlement* in October 2021 and continued developing and editing it throughout the *Leave the World Behind* adaptation process. “I’m glad I had that place to be while the movie was happening,” he says. “It’s a weird thing to be grounded in a fictional world, but that’s an accurate way of putting it.”

A Time for Questions

At Oberlin, Alam was encouraged to use his writing to ask and explore incisive questions about himself and the world, a practice of inquiry that still undergirds all of his work, including *Entitlement*. “I’m sure lots of bad writing came from that because that’s what you turn out when you’re young,” he says. “Unless you do that bad work, you’ll never go anywhere.”

But Alam draws a straight line between Oberlin and his enduring—if constantly evolving—sense of curiosity about experiences beyond his own. For example, while Alam is gay and Bengali, none of the characters in his three published novels (nor *Entitlement*) are. He credits Oberlin as the place where he honed his literary discipline and writing practice.

“The purpose of the education is to teach you how to educate yourself,” he says. “To teach you curiosity and how to sustain that. To teach you rigor. It was at Oberlin where I thought, ‘Everyone here is really smart. They know all this stuff; they care about all this stuff.’ My fellow students struck me as having these profound political consciences

conversation around queer identity that occurred in that time frame. Colleges—specifically open-minded liberal arts schools like Oberlin—have long served as critical sites of identity articulation for queer students. While some current students had opportunities to explore queer identities and formally come out if they chose to prior to reaching Oberlin, for queer writers of Alam’s generation, college was often the first place they were not only acknowledging their queerness, but expressing and writing about it too. “Like a lot of queer people, I didn’t really exist until I was at Oberlin,” Alam says. “In some ways, I feel a much more emotional tie to Oberlin as a geography than I do to the place I grew up.”

Almost 25 years removed from his time at Oberlin, Alam finds himself reminiscing on the uniqueness and expansiveness of the education he received. “Now I have a 14-year-old, and we are weirdly staring down the idea of what he will do in his post-secondary education,” he says. “I’ll admit I have this bias towards this four-year liberal arts collegiate tradition that’s so devalued in our culture now. It’s fascinating because it’s not about

Alam says about the book. “What is money? It’s like a distortion field; it’s a value system. You participate in it without your approval. It’s the oxygen; it’s the atmosphere of contemporary life. There’s no escaping it.”

His commitment to writing about characters who come from backgrounds and communities different from his own is rooted in the idea that our observations, not just our experiences, are at the core of who we are. And Alam knew there was some merit to *Entitlement* once its fictional world began to bleed into his real one. He found himself waking up in the middle of the night to scribble down notes about where the plot should lead, and he noticed that things in the world around him reminded him of Brooke. “When it’s taken over my life to that extent,” Alam says, “my feeling is, ‘OK, there’s something here.’”

This immersion speaks to his belief that the characters and worlds he builds within his novels are all him. “It’s all you have,” he says. “You don’t have anything else to work with; you only have the self and every observation you’ve ever made that you feel really confident in. You see absolutely everything through the lens of the self. That is the raw material for writers and probably most artists. Rather than trying to outrun that, I am comfortable with that.”

Though the success of *Leave the World Behind* has opened more doors for Alam—beyond *Entitlement*, he has another book coming out with Riverhead in the coming years—he doesn’t dwell on his past projects. “There’s a ton of attention right now because a movie is exponentially more significant in the culture that we live in now than a book is going to be,” he says. “I’m proud of the movie, and I’m thrilled about it. But it’s at your own peril to think about something like that being too intimately related to what you’re really doing.”

What’s next, then? As always—writing more books that ask questions of readers rather than authoritatively giving them all the answers. “People are really afraid of nuance and complexity, but reality is more complex and nuanced than it is not. They say, ‘How dare you think expansively about gender, about sex, about violence, about history? How dare you?’ I dare, and you dare, and everyone reading honestly does dare—and I think that’s good. I still believe in that.” ■

Serena Zets ’22 is a Washington, D.C.-based freelance journalist and essayist who is a regular contributor to Washington City Paper.

“People are really afraid of nuance and complexity, but reality is more complex and nuanced than it is not.”

and ideas about the world that had never occurred to me. I feel like that’s when you should be learning that stuff, at 18, 19, and 20.”

Living and working in Oberlin was his first taste of adulthood. As a creative writing major who went to part-time status for his final three semesters, Alam used his time outside of the classroom to explore his own identity through writing and forming deeper bonds with the town than most Obies are able to. When not writing or attending class, Alam worked as a nanny for the family of Randolph Coleman, professor emeritus of composition in the conservatory, and at the Feve when it was a coffee shop; in fact, one of his “oldest and dearest” friends, Lauren Whitehouse ’00, manages the Feve today. “It was the first home I made for myself independent of my family,” Alam says of Oberlin, “and I think that’s why I feel this attachment to it.”

When contrasting Oberlin of the 1990s with Oberlin of the current day, we turn our discussion to the tidal shift in the national

going to learn these sets of facts that will carry your career preparation. It’s the idea that there’s a value in going to study sociology or English literature or the Russian language, and then you can go on and become an attorney, a scientist, whatever you want, but you have the appreciation for the ideas of the world. It’s exciting.”

New Worlds to Build

With promotion for *Leave the World Behind* behind him, Alam is now focused on *Entitlement*. The novel reflects his long-held interest in the role money and class play in society; it explores issues of race while also sharply analyzing money and economic stratification. Set in 2014, *Entitlement* follows the interpersonal relationship between Brooke, a 33-year-old Black woman, and the 83-year-old white billionaire whose foundation she goes to work for; as it happens, he is giving away his vast fortune before he dies. “It’s about money, really,”



Why We Gather

Carmen Twillie Ambar convenes three other Black women college presidents to discuss the challenges — and joys — of blazing a trail for future generations.

The 2023 inauguration of Claudine Gay, the first Black president of Harvard University in the institution's history, was a cause for celebration. After all, Black women presidents make up just 1.6 percent of the leadership of predominantly white four-year colleges and universities in this country.

But Gay's January 2024 resignation marked a painful end to a historic tenure — something Carmen Twillie Ambar, the first Black president in Oberlin's nearly two-century history, acknowledged when she convened a conversation with three other Black women who are the first to lead their long-standing institutions: Joanne Berger-Sweeney of Trinity College, Lori White of DePauw University, and Danielle Holley of Mount Holyoke College.

"It was painful for lots of reasons, but not the least of which was that I felt like I was her," Ambar said. "We are her," White added.

In addition to talking about challenges, Ambar and her guests explored the many things to love about their groundbreaking roles, as well as why it's more important than ever to lean into diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts on campus and how their tenures can serve as inspiration to future generations of young women of color. Below

are edited excerpts from their conversation.

—Annie Zaleski, OAM Editor.

Carmen Twillie Ambar: Oberlin is launching a new Center for Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and just hired a new executive director. Is DEI a phrase you can use?

Joanne Berger-Sweeney: I still do.

Danielle Holley: Those of us who live [and work] in states like Massachusetts, we are very lucky. We can say DEI loud and proud. Indiana, Florida, Texas, Georgia — we have to really be realistic about the fact that we are going to have to start to push back very clearly and loudly about why we value DEI. And what was the old case for diversity — which is basically that it's a business proposition, that it's good for everyone — people seem to have lost sight of that in higher ed at a time when our country is becoming more and more racially and ethnically diverse.

The truth is the future — the existence — of many of our colleges rests on DEI. If you aren't able to recruit and retain a racially and ethnically diverse student body, your college or university might close.

Ambar: Some of those institutions are the anchor employers for the local communities.

Holley: We look at the brain drain, as they call it, that's happening in places like Texas and Florida, unable to recruit faculty [and] academic leaders. All of that hostility is counterproductive to higher ed in itself. But think how few voices there are out there who are willing to be explicit about the fact that DEI is not just important — it's a foundational principle. It should be of our higher ed institutions.

Ambar: We had launched the center conceptually before this backlash to DEI. But I thought it was important to stick with it because it's a foundational look at how our institutions are not just going to thrive, but what's valuable to everyone.

At Oberlin, we did a campus climate survey, and one of the most compelling parts of the survey was students talking about feeling affirmed and mattering. It made sense that students of color taught by faculty of color would say that they felt like they were affirmed more and mattered more. But white students felt the same way: They were affirmed and mattered more in classes taught by faculty of color.

People bring different viewpoints and educate and teach and inform our campus from their learned experience, and that's valuable for everyone.

Lori White: It's part of preparing our young folks to thrive in our democracy. I grew up in San Francisco in this wonderfully multiethnic, multicultural, multireligious neighborhood. I thought the whole world was like my neighborhood until I grew up and moved away.

[Today] our neighborhoods are now resegregated by color, by religion, by income, by ideology. Our colleges [are] the only place left in America where people who are different live together and have to wrestle with the messiness of forming community.

How can we expect our country to be able to really come together if we can't create a place and space for different voices and different perspectives?



I think we've lost sight of the value that higher ed plays in preparing students and young people to take their place as leaders in our democracy.

Berger-Sweeney: What I did at Trinity College was to hire a vice president for diversity and equity and inclusion and make her co-supervisor of human resources. [I wanted] to make sure it was a real position that had substance at the institution, no matter what the tide was for — you know, do we like the word “diversity?” Do we like the word “equity?” “Inclusion” — is that a good word or not?

If you want those principles infused in your organization, create the kind of position in which they have the power to do so.

Ambar: It's the same thing we did. We have this center, but we also hired a more senior staff member in human resources that's focused on it because it has to be someone with position and power.

I also want to talk about the joys [of these presidential positions]. Ruth Simmons [the first Black woman president of an Ivy League institution] and Johnnetta Cole '57 [first Black woman president of Spelman College] were the women that I saw when I was cutting my teeth and thinking about higher ed. I saw those women and aspired to be them, and I want to make sure that despite what young Black women may be seeing, [they should] know that these jobs have joy to them, that there's power to them in all of these wonderful ways.

So talk about what you want this next generation of young Black women leaders to know about being a college president.

White: My joy is the students. I do not have my own biological children, and so [I see] every young person on my campus as my daughter or my son. And the joy of being able to lead an institution that helps them achieve their hopes and their dreams — that fuels me every single day.

Berger-Sweeney: My mother passed away when I was 17 years old, a first-year student at Wellesley College, so she never got to see me get a bachelor's [or] master's [degree] or PhD. However, at my inauguration, just about 10 1/2 years ago, my mother's best friend came. She had served as a surrogate mother after my mother passed away and said, “You know, your mother said to me, ‘I hope one of my children grows up to be a college president.’”

But that was her aspiration and dream. Being able to carry on for your ancestors really resonates with me, even though she wasn't there for me to give a hug.

Holley: [Earlier this spring] I went to our senior symposium, where our students present their yearlong independent research papers — everything from landscape architecture to the effects of climate change on a crab that goes to Maine.

I was astounded by the level of work that our students are doing. It makes me understand why we get up and do this every day. And to see their faculty members sitting in the classrooms with them so proud, you realize higher education is something really special.

It's one of the reasons I've taught every semester since I was a dean. [Higher education] is one of the few places where you

can see people start to grow and grow and grow. And it can give life to all of [us] incredible women who are sitting here, right? One of our students could be Carmen. One of our students could be Lori. They could be Joanne.

Ambar: Every comment that you all made resonates with me. I often say to my leadership team, “If you're ever feeling down, you need to get out of your office and go walk around campus — because when you talk to some students, you'll feel better about the world.”

One of the joys for me has been every time I get up and speak, I talk about my parents. My mom grew up in a small town in Searcy, Arkansas, and got her mind wrapped around getting a PhD in dance. And then I have my dad, who grew up in this really small town called Colt, Arkansas, but they referred to it as Dark Corner, this pejorative way that you refer to African American communities. My dad grew up picking cotton for all of his formative years. I often say to people that I'm five generations removed from slavery, but I'm one generation removed from picking cotton.

That ability to stand on the shoulders of your ancestors [where] it wasn't possible for them to think that this [job] was an opportunity — every day I carry around that sense of pride and the sense of wanting to make them proud. ■

For more of this conversation, listen to Episode 8 of the Oberlin College podcast Running to the Noise: oberlin.edu/running-to-the-noise

L TO R: TANYA ROSEN-JONES '97, JOE ANGELES/ WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS, GINNY KEMP, COURTESY OF JOANNA CHATTMAN

Class Notes

MUDD MEMORIES

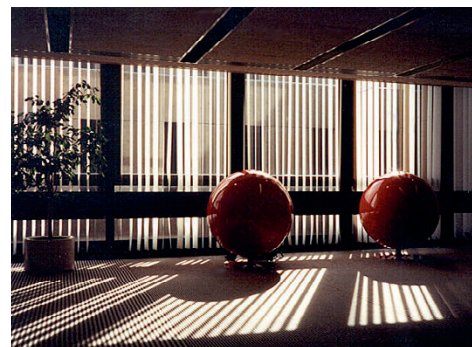
We asked Obies to share their memories of Mudd—and the stories came pouring in, both via email and through the alumni digital community on Facebook. —Annie Zaleski



My husband-to-be, **John B. (Brian) Carney Jr. '75**, and I were recorded while studying in front of the new Mudd building on a lovely day in the spring of 1974. Our appearance on the [July-August 1974 alumni magazine] cover (left) came as a complete surprise to us, as we hadn't seen the photographer and were not asked for our names. The description of the cover referred to us as "two Oberlinians." —**Ann S. Carney '75**

I'm sure there are many, many memories like this one. I remember climbing into a womb chair one day and crawling out after I had finished reading *The Sound and the Fury*. What a space for world-making! —**Dr. Welling Hall '79**

I attended Oberlin from 1990 to '94, and here are a couple of my favorite photos of Mudd from that time. —**Claire (Acher) Sterling '94**



Sterling '94

In the spring of 1999, **Ariel Rogoff Flavin '00** and I created *Falling Off Sidewalks* as our final project for an interdisciplinary performance course through the TIMARA department. Ariel and I conducted interviews with other students about memorable dreams they had and created the dance and video in response, while

Pablo Rojas '99 composed a sound score with the recorded interviews. As we worked with the surreal dream images, we envisioned a performance that was unexpected and almost impossible, like the dreams. So we chose to bring the dance into the air—and Mudd was the perfect location. The light-colored flat wall displayed the video projection beautifully and its expansiveness brought an otherworldly feel.

We approached **Josh Raisler Cohn '99** to help us because he had previous experience suspending from Mudd for an animal rights protest. He did the rigging and trained us how to ascend and descend the wall. We had meetings with Ray English and the head of buildings and grounds trying to get permission to do it. They were understandably reluctant and took a long time deciding. We trained and rehearsed with Josh off the side of the stands at the football field while we waited for permission — which we didn't receive until the day we had intended to perform! That day was a mad rush. It was a hugely fun and terrifying piece to perform.

I believe the short notice factored into our failure to arrange for documentation. I regret the oversight now; I'd love to have even a single photograph. I've often wondered if anyone who saw it took a photo, but it seems unlikely. —**Keely Meehan '99**

I wasn't especially fond of the "new" library when it opened in my junior year. I struggled to complete assignments in BASIC in the computer center in the basement. One night, with no staff on duty, I got some help by sorting through discarded printouts in the trash. I also was among the small group of students who protested the library closing on Saturday nights. —**Anonymous '75**

I remember the PDP-11/70, the state-of-the-art computer at the time. It was the size of a large room. It probably had 1/100 of the computing power of my current smartphone. I recall going down to use the computer (punch cards for a psych experiment?) only to see a large sign, printed on rolls of computer paper with holes on either side saying, "The

computer is down," with a big frown face, all very pixelated. I also remember the last year of the old Carnegie Library: I was studying for finals at one of the beautiful long oak tables in the main room, and a male student streaked by naked, saying something like "I can't do this," opened a window, and jumped out, having placed a mattress below. Did that really happen? —**Janet Penn '76**

In my senior year, there was a map on the wall of the computing center that showed essentially all internet hubs or IP addresses in the entire country at the time. It was a series of continuous-feed dot-matrix pages, with each row being perhaps 10 to 12 pages long. It probably used six to eight rows of pages to cover the entire U.S.; it's amazing that every IP address in the country could be represented on just that printout. My father, **David McCracken '61**, was a professor at the University of Washington, so I tried to figure out what his email address was, without just straight-out asking him, but I couldn't quite do it. But I did get my first email address while at Oberlin in 1991.

—**Michael McCracken '91**

I remember going to the basement to word process print on Osborne computers. You know, the paper with the holes on the sides. I bet most students have their own computers now. It was 24-hour access then too! —**Lydia Oey '81-'86**



During the study period before spring finals our first year [spring 2004], me and some friends from Dascomb painted ourselves colors and ran into Mudd to camouflage among the couches. —**David Smith '07**

I took a lot of French classes, including Vinio Rossi's 19th-century literature class, which required reading a Romantic-era novel in French (of no less than 300 pages) every week. Mudd was new, and the bubble chairs were a phenomenal novelty. On desperation deadline days at dinnertime, I would curl up in one of those bubble chairs with my French dictionary and either a fat Balzac or Stendhal, having snuck in a pint of Gibson's coffee ice cream for fortification, ready to expand my French vocabulary and decipher archaic French verb tenses. One pint and possibly two chapters later ... well, you get the picture. Fond memories. Happy Birthday, Mudd!

—**Gabrielle Shubert '77**



As a student, the most time I spent in the library was my senior year. I got a carrel and was working intensely on several projects all at once. While I always loved the womb chairs (because how could you not?) and the colored couches (excellent for the nap in the middle of the day), I really loved that carrel. I loved that I could have my books all set up for me, that I had the quiet solitude. It helped me create a rhythm and a discipline. Had I been wiser, I might have started that practice earlier in my college career. Maybe I would have been more productive away from my dorm room.

The other memory that I have is a cappella study breaks right in front of Mudd. Just a 15-minute break, go listen to



Sunshine '75



some music, take a breather, lie down on the grass, and then refocus. The acoustics right there were amazing. When I return now, I visit the womb chairs. I've taken my kids to see the womb chairs. They cared

less about the carrel. But when they go to college, they'll learn. —**Elana Gartner '98**

Mudd is one of my favorite buildings. In 1993, the seniors with studies in Mudd put pieces of paper up in the windows that spelled out “Ding dong, the witch is dead” for reasons that seemed very good at the time. It wasn't nice of us! But it was fun. Another time I was walking into Mudd, and beside the *Reading Girl*, I was accosted by a very tiny, very elderly woman who grabbed me by the arm and said, “Do you understand how incredible it is that you, a woman, are getting this education?” I wish I had been able to appreciate her passionate understanding of the fragility of women's so-called equality then, when I was 20. I appreciate it now. Finally, in my junior year, I was working with a pile of early-19th-century

documents dealing with the British abolition movement, and I came out [covered] all over in huge, lurid, purplish-yellow spots. Turns out I was allergic to some emanation from the paper. My professor thought it was hilarious and asked if she could take a picture of me when I went to explain why I couldn't finish the assignment. I'm glad social media didn't yet exist! —**Bethany Schneider '93, Mudd superfan**

Cathy Sunshine '75 sends in a photo (above) of a giant snow barricade that blocked the front entryway of Mudd, taken circa the mid-1970s. Why was it so difficult to remove? There was a pile of bicycles underneath the snow—meaning shoveling or plowing was out of the question—and climbing over was too precarious. ■

1880s

1884

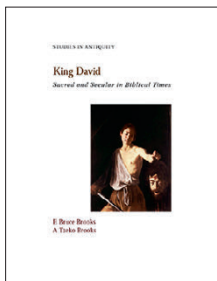
Tempestuous Elements, a new play by Kia Corthron telling the story of influential Black educator and activist **Dr. Anna Julia Cooper**, opened this spring in Washington, D.C., to rave reviews and coverage.

1950s

1956

“We cherish our Oberlin friends now as we did over 70 years ago when we were all young and students,” writes **Janet Michael**, sharing news that four members of the Oberlin football team hold a monthly Zoom call and have an in-person gathering each summer in Maine. “These ex-football stars—they had a great record—are now 93!” Participants include **Steve Davenport ’53** (and wife **Joanna Davenport ’54**), **Don Robertson ’53**, **Robert Long ’53**, and Janet’s husband, **Roger Michael ’53**. The group was joined by Joanne Manheimer, widow of **Bill Manheimer ’53**; over the years, **Jeff Blodgett ’53**, **Mel Williams ’53**, **Bob Burnham ’53**, and **Joe Howell ’53** have all taken part. “We have so much in common besides our time together at Oberlin,” Janet says. “We love the arts and literature and are actively involved in important social issues. The Oberlin experience has brought us all together, and we have enjoyed a lifetime of friendship.”

1958



E Bruce Brooks recently published the book *King David: Sacred and Secular in Bible Times* (University of Massachusetts Press). “The Bible contains many doublets: conflicting

accounts of the same event,” reads the publisher’s description. “This book regards the Bible as words of men *about* God and sees the doublets as evidence of growth over time, as an early opinion is superseded by a later one.” ■ On April 27, 2024, **Marlene Kolbert** was named the first Village of

Larchmont Environmental Warrior for dedicated stewardship to better the quality of life for all living beings of the village in New York. Marlene has been fighting for the environment in the community for over 50 years.

1959

John Baer—who transitioned from being a hospital administrator and later president of a health care management consulting firm to a licensed residential real estate agent in Scarsdale, N.Y.—has retired. He remains a licensed real estate agent but now works as a referral agent helping buyers and sellers identify the best agent based on personal chemistry, professionalism, and integrity. John also founded a Westchester County, N.Y., group called Safeguarding Democracy. Presently, the principal activity of this group is registering eligible high school and college students to vote before the 2024 election. In addition, John writes and emails two to four political blogs a week to a distribution list. For more information about Safeguarding Democracy or to be added to his political blog distribution list, reach out: john@johnebaer.com.

1960s

1961

Marian McCaa Thomas recently moved to Kendal at Oberlin, joining in musical and intellectual pursuits as well as enjoying the presence of her son and grandchildren. “My careers as church organist/choir director, piano teacher, harpsichord builder and technician, community volunteer, and founder of the Brown Bag Concert Series sponsored by the Westport Center for the Arts in Kansas City, Mo., have brought me to this point of gratitude for great friends and colleagues,” Marian says. “I anticipate being part of Oberlin again.”

1962

Ilter Turan and **Sherman Hee**, left and right insides on the nearly undefeated 1961 soccer team, recently reunited in Khiva, Uzbekistan. The pair are pictured here with their wives.

1964

Ken Laufer turned 80 in August 2023. He recently composed “The Rag-Tempered



Hee '62



Fry '66



Way 66

Piano,” ragtime pieces in all 24 keys with a final fugue; “The Oberlin Concert Rag and Fugue” for two pianos; and the four-movement “Symphony in Ragtime.” After Oberlin, Ken earned a master’s degree from Juilliard. To hear the music, write to jassiken@yahoo.com. ■ **Daniel Sher** retired from the University of Colorado in May 2023. After graduating from the Oberlin Conservatory, Dan earned a master’s in music from the Juilliard School of Music and a doctorate in education from Teachers College, Columbia University. During a 24-year career at Louisiana State University, he was a professor of piano and later dean of the School of Music; during this time, he performed throughout the southeastern U.S. as a member of the Festival Arts Trio and presented a duo piano performance at Lincoln Center with his wife, Boyce. Dan then moved on to the University of Colorado, where he was dean of the College of Music for 20 years before stepping back to the faculty for 10 more. During his tenure as dean, the College established the Entrepreneurship Center for Music, the first of its kind in the U.S., as well as degrees at all levels in jazz studies and master’s degrees in collaborative piano and music theory. Dan also served as president of the National

Association of Schools of Music and president of Pi Kappa Lambda, the national honor society for music. He and Boyce continue to reside in Boulder, Colo., enjoying visits with sons Jonathan, Martin, and Aidan.

1965

Betty L. Beer’s poem “Calculating Angles” won third prize in the annual poem contest of the South Dakota State Poetry Society. Winning poems are published in the spring issue of the society’s literary magazine, *Pasque Petals*.

1966

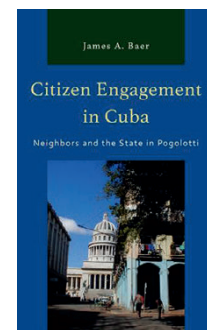
William L. (Bill) Fry is curating his father’s collection of African art. A banker in Liberia in 1934-35, Walter Logan Fry collected textiles, jewelry, bridewealth, and what would become the world’s largest collection of works by the Liberian sculptor Ldamie. Ldamie may well be called one of Africa’s first modern artists, with work in the National Museum of African Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the British Museum, and more than 12 others. Now turning 80, Bill has a goal to promote greater appreciation of Ldamie, enhance the collection with further acquisitions, and find a permanent home for Ldamie’s work. You can contact Bill at



Sweetser '69

wloganfry@aol.com. ■ In early 2024, Oberlin Dance Collective founder **Brenda Way** was inducted into the California Hall of Fame. She helped create an inter-arts department at Oberlin in the late 1960s and launched the ODC there in 1971 before relocating to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1976. Over the last 45 years, Brenda has choreographed more than 85 pieces, including commissions for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, the San Francisco Ballet, the Oakland Ballet, the Equal Justice Society, the San Francisco Girls Chorus, and Cal Performances. In 2011, her work *Investigating Grace* was named an American masterpiece by the National Endowment for the Arts.

1969



Baer '69

James Baer’s *Citizen Engagement in Cuba: Neighbors and the State in Pogolotti* examines citizen engagement at the local level in Cuba through projects initiated by the community since the 1990s. “My goal is to demonstrate the way

community groups organize to improve their neighborhood and to open up an area of Cuban society that is rarely seen,” James says. “Pogolotti is one example of a neighborhood where projects represent active participation by citizens. The willingness of communist authorities to work with officially sanctioned workshops and partner with civic groups provides an



Gold '70



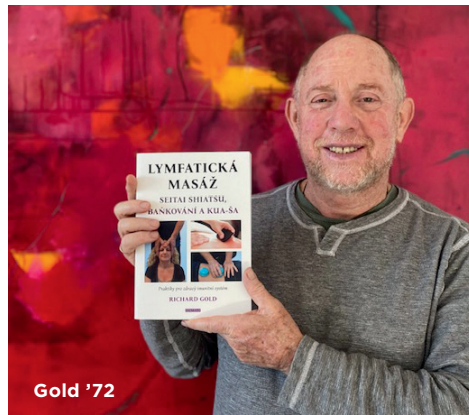
Springer '70

understanding of the relationship between citizens and the state in Cuba.” ■ **Les Leopold** has released a new book, *Wall Street’s War on Workers: How Mass Layoffs and Greed Are Destroying the Working Class and What To Do about It* (Chelsea Green, 2024), which focuses on the causes of mass layoffs and what can be done about them. The book has blurbs by **Rebecca Givan ’97**, **Robert Krulwich ’69**, and **Robert Kuttner ’65**. Les also is writing a weekly column on working-class economic and political issues for CommonDreams.org and Substack. ■ **Ann Shaftel** has received the American Institute of Conservation’s Sheldon and Caroline Keck Award for Excellence in the Education and Training of Conservation Professionals. ■ **Terry Sweetser** writes, “I’ve retired! After 50 years as a practicing Unitarian Universalist minister, I’ve hung up my stole. It was a good run!” ■ **Bob Weiner**, a four-year member of Oberlin’s cross country and track teams, shares that he’s still running masters track—“but much slower!” In March, his Potomac Valley Track Club won the overall combined national team title out of 123 clubs at the USA Track and Field Masters Indoor Track & Field Championships in Chicago. “I did seven events, including three relays, so we could pile up the points. Our club president was brilliant in mixing and matching people to ages and events to maximize points. We clinched with an event to go—and everyone went wild!”

1970s

1970

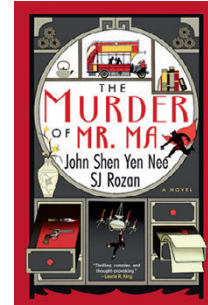
Tom Gold and **Randall Nadeau ’78** joined **Bi-Khim Hsiao ’93** at a rally for Bi-Khim, who went on to be elected as Vice President of Taiwan. ■ **Connie Springer**’s photo of her mother and her son interacting was one of 50 pieces of artwork selected for the 2024 *Embracing Our Differences* outdoor exhibit in Sarasota, Fla. The call for artwork and inspirational quotes pulled in 16,604 entries from 125 countries and 44 states. The annual exhibit uses art as a catalyst to create awareness and promote inclusion, kindness, and respect. ■ **James K. (Jim) Zimmerman**’s third book of poetry, *The Further Adventures of Zen Patriarch Dōgen*, was published in March. He looks forward to hearing from



Gold '72

fellow Obies; click on “contact” at jameskzimmerman.net.

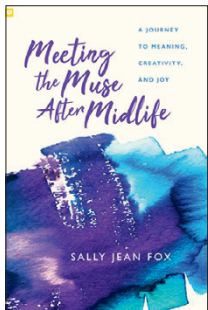
1972



Rozan '72

Richard M. Gold writes in to share news of the Czech edition of his book, *Seitai (Lymphatic) Shiatsu, Cupping and Gua Sha for a Healthy Immune System* (Singing Dragon). ■ *The Murder of Mr. Ma*, co-written by **SJ Rozan** and John Shen Yen Nee, was published in April. In 1924 London, shy academic Lao She meets larger-than-life Judge Dee Ren Jie, and his quiet life abruptly turns from books and lectures to daring chases and narrow escapes. The book blends traditional *gong’an* crime fiction with the most iconic aspects of the Sherlock Holmes canon. “It’s a new thing for me,” SJ says. “Hope people like it.” ■ **David Shipley** was one of 16 faculty athletics representatives (FARs) honored as part of the 2023 National Football Foundation Faculty Salutes initiative, which recognizes the contributions of faculty athletics representatives around the country. David is the Georgia Athletic Association Professor in Law at the University of Georgia School of Law and a member of Oberlin’s Board of Trustees.

1973



Fox '73

Sally Jean Fox

recently published her memoir *Meeting the Muse after Midlife: A Journey to Meaning, Creativity, and Joy* (RWL Publishing). In it, she shares her personal answer to the question many classmates may be

facing: how to find a narrative about aging that provides hope without whitewashing the challenges. The answer Sally sought came through a message to live and express herself more creatively. She shares her journey into aging and her experiences in the worlds of writing, improv, music, and art. Sally lives with her husband on an island off the coast of Seattle. ■ **Russell Pittman**, now the longest-serving economist in the antitrust division of the U.S. Department of Justice, spent March and April as a visiting professor in the Korea University School of Law, teaching a course on the economics of antitrust, regulation, and deregulation. ■

Noel Taylor retired from full-time practice as a chiropractic physician at the end of 2023. He cycles most places, enjoys family, studies Torah with First Fruits of Zion, and serves as a county coordinator for the Amateur Radio Emergency Service. Noel's favorite new book is Michael Nehls' *The Indoctrinated Brain*, an examination of the ways our environment damages the hippocampus, resulting in loss of memory-making and identity-maintaining capacity.

■ **Brian Gross**, **Jane Kleinberg Lebowitz**, **Pat Lifson-Finard**, **Annie Storr**, and **Kristen Bihary '71-'72** were at the American University Museum in Washington, D.C., in

1975

■ **Hank Willems** and family—Bairbre McCarthy, **Patrick '10**, and **Mary '12**—competed in the recent National Toboggan Championship in Camden, Maine, attaining a speed of 36 mph on the 400-foot chute. They raced on a sled built by Hank from lumber harvested from their family farm in Wilton, N.Y. Adds Hank: “The team name, 2 Fast 2 Boggan, was coined by an Oberlin classmate of Patrick’s.”



Pittman '73



Willems '76



Orlowsky '75

February for the opening of painter Dana Hart-Stone's exhibition *Kaleidoscope*, which Brian curated. They were joined by friends and former professors Richard Spear and **Athena Tacha '61** and curator and art historian **Carolyn Carr '65**. The following day, Annie conducted her workshop “Exercises for the Quiet Eye.” After being a gallerist in San Francisco for 40 years, Brian has relocated to Santa Fe, N.M., where he continues his work as an art dealer. ■ *Lost In Living*—a collection of Halyna Kruk poems co-translated from Ukrainian by **Dzvinia Orlowsky** and Ali Kinsella—is now available from Lost Horse Press. Dzvinia received a 2024 National Endowment for the Arts translation grant in support of this project.

1976

■ **Lynne Talley** is a newly elected member of the National Academy of Sciences. After earning a physical oceanography doctorate at Massachusetts Institute of Technology/Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and

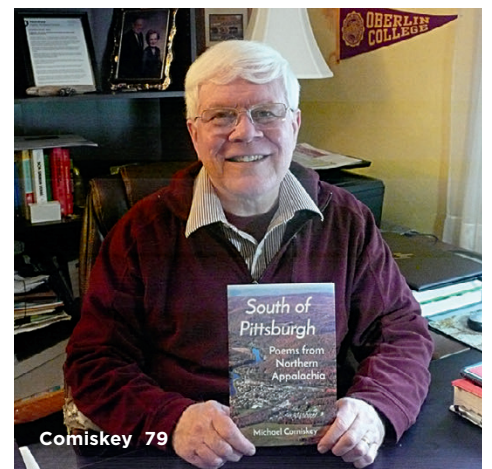
doing a postdoctoral stint at Oregon State University, she joined the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California, San Diego and has been there ever since. Lynne just retired from teaching and is enjoying full-time research and implementing global ocean observing for climate change. Husband **Jeff Severinghaus '84**, who earned a doctorate from Columbia University in geology, was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 2015. “Lots of chamber music (me) and folk music (Jeff), as well as two dogs, are partly filling our three-child empty nest,” Lynne says. “Visit us in Solana Beach!” ■ **Randall Vemer** notes, “I’m celebrating my 50th with the launch of my film *MusArt*, which has gone global!” This includes opening in New York City. Catch the film at: www.VemerPainter.com



Ward '77



Douville '78/'79



Comiskey '79

1977

Cleveland Johnson has retired as CEO of the Morris Museum, where he led a strategic realignment of the organization around the art, sound, and motion of the Guinness Collection of Mechanical Musical Instruments and Automata, embracing contemporary kinetic art and STEAM education, while building strong connections to the museum's performing arts programming. Among other accomplishments: *The New York Times* reported on *Navigating the Pandemic*, the museum's return to live music for live audiences, and for the final exhibition Cleveland facilitated there, he edited the catalog *Federico Solmi: Escape into the Metaverse* (Black Dog Press) and authored the introductory essay. ■ At the end of 2023, **Robert Ward** retired from the San Francisco Symphony after 43 years. He joined the orchestra in 1980 and played in the opening concerts for Davies Symphony Hall. Starting as associate principal horn, he was promoted to principal horn in 2007 and recorded a complete set of Mahler symphonies as solo horn under the direction of conductor Michael Tilson Thomas. In retirement, he plans to continue writing novels (he has written four) and fostering cats; he and his wife, Genevieve Cottraux, have taken in more than 180 and found them good homes.

1978

Andrew Collier has been accepted as a senior fellow at Harvard University's Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government. He will be working with

Harvard Business School professor Meg Rithmire on his fourth book on China, focusing on the crash in the country's property market.

1979

Mike Comiskey has published a book of poems focused on his native region, *South of Pittsburgh: Poems from Northern Appalachia* (Chestnut Ridge Press), which is available from all major online booksellers. Mike is retired from teaching political science and economics at Pennsylvania State University and enjoying life with his wife, Mary Ann, in his hometown of Connellsville, Pa. ■ **Susanni Douville '78/'79** is retiring from the U.S. District Court for the District of Maine on July 31 after 26 years as a career law clerk to three U.S. magistrate judges. She looks forward to decompressing; spending more time with family and friends, including her husband, John R. Hull Jr., and daughters **Kate Hull '18** and Christie Hull; reacquainting herself with her dusty piano and guitar; and being able to savor sunrises (with coffee) and sunsets (with wine) at home in Harpswell, Maine, instead of commuting on I-295. ■ **James McBride** won his first two National Jewish Book Awards for *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store* (Riverhead Books)—the J.J. Greenberg Memorial Award in Fiction and The Miller Family Award in Memory of Helen Dunn Weinstein and June Keit Miller. NPR named the novel one of the best books of 2023, and President Barack Obama included it on his list of favorite books of 2023. A24 and Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment are partnering to develop an adaptation of the

book. ■ **Adam Moss** recently published the *New York Times* best seller *The Work of Art: How Something Comes from Nothing* (Penguin Press), featuring interviews with more than 40 artists and creators—including Sofia Coppola, Stephen Sondheim, Louise Glück, and Twyla Tharp—about how their art comes together.

1980s

1981

Caren Shannon retired as a partner in the world's largest immigration law firm in 2022 in order to serve as executive producer of the award-winning documentary *Las Abogadas: Attorneys on the Front Lines of the Migrant Crisis*, which is now being distributed through New Day Films. Caren serves on the boards of several nonprofit organizations and maintains her connection to Japan, where she was a Shansi Fellow (1981-83). Caren and her husband split their



Shannon '81



SETTING STUDENTS UP FOR FUTURE CAREER SUCCESS

What were you going to be when you grew up? Did you end up working in the job you planned when you graduated? After Oberlin, I had no idea what I wanted to do—and I couldn't predict that my job changes would evolve into my long-term career.

From my frequent visits to campus, I can confidently say that today's Oberlin students are in great shape for the future. After all, they have many options! Students explore interests through the Internship+ Program along with Winter Term projects and summer jobs and research work. They also receive guidance and support from Career Exploration and Development.

As alums, we are also vital to student career preparation. Oberlin counts on us to connect and engage with students to provide life- and career-changing internship and employment opportunities—or even simply to share insights about our own career paths. For example, during Winter Term, participants in the Ashby Business Scholars program visit alums in various cities and learn about business-related jobs. At any time of year, we can also use Career Communities to connect with students interested in various subject areas—like arts and communications; law and public policy; music; business, consulting, and finance; or medical and STEM careers.

That's not the only way you can help current students. For example, the Classes of 1965 and 1966—led by Marcia Aronoff '65, Wendy Solmsen Sommer '66, and Charlie Heck '66—established the Martin Luther King Jr. Internship Program to support high-need students in pursuit of excellent career-building experiences. To date, this alumni-led effort has raised over \$750,000 in current-use dollars and supported 99 Obies—and the classes are looking to raise \$1.5 million for an endowment to make this financial help more permanent.

Finally, the Alumni Leadership Council is developing more ways to reach out to alums who are exploring career and job changes. You will be hearing more about this initiative soon, but contact the Alumni Office if you are interested in seeking or offering assistance in career navigation.

Over time, the outcomes speak for themselves; for example, Oberlin graduates have earned more research doctorates than the graduates of any other four-year colleges. And we all know that Obies bring invaluable critical thinking skills, big ideas, and unique insights to the workplace—and students need us to make these ambitions a reality.

Jan Weintraub Cobb '71
President, Oberlin Alumni Association

time between the New York City area and San Miguel de Allende in Central Mexico.

1982

Pianist **Thomas Hecht** has returned to the United States after leading overseas piano departments for 25 years and currently serves on the chamber music faculty of the Peabody Institute at Johns Hopkins University, where two of his pupils took first prize in the MTNA–Stecher & Horowitz Collegiate Two Piano Competition. He recently released his debut DVD, *A Different Kind of B-Line* (Master Performers), featuring works by Beethoven, Brahms, and Barber. He would love to hear from Obie classmates at thecht1@jh.edu. ■

After graduation and two years working at a bank, **Bill Selonick** earned an MBA from Northwestern University. He met his wife of 36 years on the first day of classes; their first date was at a Chicago blues club. “I exercised the two music theory classes I took at Oberlin to try and explain to (and impress) her by sketching the 12-bar blues pattern on a napkin,” he recalls. Bill began a career in commercial real estate and years later was approached by a client who wished to broadcast live blues performances to European audiences. “What grew from that meeting was an eight-year effort with my wife to build a world-class museum celebrating Chicago blues’ role in the development of contemporary music,” Bill says. Despite assembling an all-star support team—including writers, CEOs, and artists like Mavis Staples, Buddy Guy, Joe Bonamassa, and Santana—the project is on hiatus. However, Bill later conceived of an album, *Chicago Plays the Stones*, featuring a dozen Rolling Stones tunes reimaged in a Chicago blues style. Mick Jagger was impressed enough to contribute harmonica and vocals to a Buddy Guy cover of “Doo Doo Doo Doo Doo (Heartbreaker),” while Keith Richards contributed guitar to “Beast of Burden.” Order copies: chicagoplaysthestones.net.

1983

Nearly 43 years after first meeting at Asia House, and after 32 years of marriage, **Stella Kim** and **Rich Fried** renewed their vows in Fairchild Chapel during the 40th cluster reunion in fall 2023. Music was provided by **Fred Haas** on the chapel organ, and **Kirk Van Scoyoc '84** duetted on banjo with son Sky (prospective double-degree '30!) on



Clockwise from top left: Hecht '82, Fried '83 and Kim '83, Holder '86

saxophone. Notes Stella: “President Ambar dropped by to offer good wishes, and tater tots from the Feve also made an appearance!”

■ **Jonathan Silk** writes, “I’m delighted to announce that I have been named as one of the 2024 Guggenheim Fellows for a project titled ‘Dreaming Dharma’s Decline: Past Portents of Buddhism’s Future Present.’”

1984

Beautiful Findings is the latest theatrical sound design/musical project from composer and sound designer **Howard Fredrics**. A podcast drama with original music, *Beautiful Findings* is based on the life of nuclear physicist Lise Meitner and was produced by Dean Productions Theatre Company as part of its *Premiere the Play* podcast series. The production is on major podcast platforms, as well as Spotify and Amazon Music. For more information, see: deanproductionstheatre.com/premiere-the-play

1985

Eric Fryxell, Amy Harrison, Melanie (Jones) Delcid '86, Libby (Sharp) Tilghman '86, and Rebecca Longley '86 initially met in the fall of 1983 in East Hall. After having mostly lost touch, they reconnected at the May 2021 virtual cluster reunion and started semi-regular Zooms a few months later, now meeting about once a

month and having enjoyable catch-ups. Eric is a family physician in a community health center in Columbus, Ohio. Although still teaching family medicine residents and delivering babies, Amy moved to a 55+ community in Southern California in June 2022. She has learned pickleball and mahjonn, harvests lemons and pomegranates from her trees, and grows a variety of roses. She has two adult daughters of whom she’s immensely proud: Aly, 30, and Katy, 27. Melanie has spent 30 years as an elementary school teacher in the Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Schools and, most recently, in the Mead School District near Spokane, Wash. Melanie has two children, Marisol, 26, and Jesse, 22, and in her spare time enjoys playing with the Spokane Flute Choir, reading, and reconnecting with friends. Libby works at Indiana University as an academic advisor for undergraduate biology majors. She enjoys novels (of course!), flower gardening, fictional mysteries on TV, and, for the first time this year, growing tomatoes in a community garden fenced off from the hordes of Bloomington deer. Libby and her husband have one daughter, who recently turned 25 and loves fiction as much as her mom does. Rebecca lives in Chapel Hill, N.C., and works in human resources for a clinical research company. In her spare time, she

enjoys teaching beginner piano lessons, participating in Scrabble tournaments, and volunteering as a guardian ad litem. Her family recently became empty nesters when her twins left for college this past fall; daughter is a third-generation Obie, and son is at Emory University, both class of '27.

1986

Small Town Universe, a feature-length documentary produced by **Tracie Holder**, had its world premiere at the Cleveland International Film Festival at the Great Lakes Science Center. The film paints an intimate portrait of life in Green Bank, W.Va., home to the world’s most powerful radio telescope and the only U.S. town where Wi-Fi and cell phones are banned. *Small Town Universe* screened following the April 8 total solar eclipse as part of a free community event.

1987

Carnegie Hall featured two of soprano **Karyn Levitt**’s one-woman shows in its 2024 festival “Fall of the Weimar Republic: Dancing on the Precipice.” *On Hollywood and Weimar* celebrated the music of old Hollywood by European composers from the Golden Age of Film, while *Will There Still Be Singing? A Hanns Eisler Cabaret* finds Karyn performing Eric Bentley’s English versions of the songs of Hanns Eisler and Bertolt



Schlesinger '87



Tatum '88

Brecht, one of the 20th century's great songwriting teams. Karyn's close working relationship with Bentley, the foremost translator of Brecht's lyrics and plays, gave her the opportunity of a lifetime to consult with the source of these acclaimed translations. ■ **Eva Schlesinger** and the hiking boots she bought during Winter Term 1987 recently celebrated thirty-seven years together. "They are still going strong," she writes, "albeit a little wrinkled in the toe. We should all be so lucky."

1988

Richard Tatum lives in the Los Angeles area with his wife, Vanessa McGrady, and stepdaughter Grace. He's a full-time artist, working as an actor, director, producer, and improviser, but he specializes in voiceover. You can hear him in video games like *Genshin Impact*, *Spider-Man 2*, and *WWE 2023*; the Netflix anime *My Happy Marriage*; and as Hamlet the dog in the current run of *Beggin' Strips* TV ads, among many others. He also coaches and produces voiceover demos under the heading of Absolute Voiceover LA. ■ **Amanda Udis-Kessler** is publishing two books in 2024: *Abundant Lives: A Progressive Christian Ethic of*

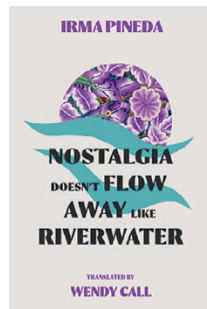


Audette Muniz '90

Flourishing (The Pilgrim Press) and *Cultural Processes of Inequality: A Sociological Perspective* (Anthem Press). Amanda also writes free-use progressive church music, which is available at queersacredmusic.com.

1990s

1990



Call '90

developed together with neighbors in 2005." Lorien is a professor of economics at Northeastern University's Mills College campus in Oakland, Calif.; her research focuses on poverty, inequality, and access to opportunity. Pamila serves as policy counsel at Disability Rights California, where she works to limit solitary confinement in jails, prisons, and immigration detention. Jessie continues her career in renewable energy

Jessie Audette Muniz, Lorien Rice, and Pamila Lew "had a great time meeting up in San Francisco this December,"

Jessie writes. "Here we are at the base of the 16th Avenue Tiled Steps, a mosaic stairway project I

and is embarking on a master's degree in urban planning in Virginia. Jessie adds, "We continue to cherish our days at Oberlin and the deep friendships made there." ■ **Wendy Call** published two trilingual books of poetry in translation in January, both by Mexican Indigenous poets. These include Irma Pineda's *Nostalgia Doesn't Flow Away Like Riverwater* (Deep Vellum), winner of a National Endowment for the Arts grant, and Mikeas Sánchez's *How to Be a Good Savage* (Milkweed); the latter was reviewed in the *New York Times*. In April, Deep Vellum published the new annual anthology *Best Literary Translations*, which Wendy cofounded and coedited.

1991

Cellist **Rebecca Arons** was featured in the *Star Tribune* for her work as a performer and business owner/music contractor in Minneapolis, hiring musicians and ensembles for Broadway shows, ballets, and concerts by artists such as Weird Al Yankovic, The Who, the Eagles and Ed Sheeran. The article also featured **Maisie (Swanson) Block '83**. Visit: stringenius.com.

1992

Eric Stein has been promoted to associate professor and awarded tenure in the College

of Health and Human Services at Widener University in Chester, Pa., where he teaches master's and doctoral students in the Center for Social Work Education. His research focuses on mental health clubhouses, and he writes about clinical practice and supervision. He and **Susan Josephs '93** have been married for 27 years and live in Philadelphia. ■ After a few years in the Boulder, Colo., area, **George Twigg** and spouse Sharon are back in Vermont, where they previously lived for 10 years. George is executive director of the New England Conference of Public Utilities Commissioners, working on regional energy policy and other regulatory issues.

1995

In June, the Dramatically Incorrect Theater Group and Dance Troupe presented the second production of **Kathryn Denney's** musical, which is about the effects of social media on mental health. "*Connected, the Musical* features a transgender male teenager as he discovers his true identity; a trans woman celebrity; and powerful discussions about truth, honesty, and finding our authentic future," Kathryn notes. "People who have participated in this story have really appreciated the opportunity to play a role that matches their gender and to think about practices in our contemporary society that are not often dug deeply into." For more information, visit connectedthemusical.com.

1996

Caroline E. Kelley's monograph about women veterans of the Algerian



Drew '97



Lee '99

war—*Women Writing War: The Life-Writing of the Algerian moudjahidate*—was recently published with Peter Lang Oxford as part of the Studies in Contemporary Women's Writing series.

1997

The Vanderbilt University Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy, directed by **Leah Lowe '84** with assistance from **Molly Barth**, recently hosted author and climate grief specialist **Mary Annaïse Heglar '06** for a residency. Mary's visit was a prelude to three theater productions based on the same topic to be premiered at Vanderbilt University next fall. ■ **Megan Carnes** published her debut novel, *The Celdan Heresies* (MilSpeak Books), in March. *Kirkus Reviews* called the book, the first in the Reaching Man series, a "deeply imagined fable of faith and revolt." Megan majored in English and creative writing and notes she "especially remembers professors T. Scott McMillin, Elaine Perry, and the late Diane Vreuls." ■ In March, **Rachel Drew** released her second folk-Americana album, *Old Sky New*. The album's 12 songs were recorded in Chicago at Grammy-winning Joyride Studios with John Szymanski on guitar,

Alton Smith on piano, Cathie Van Wert Menard on fiddle, Michael Krayniak on bass, Jason Batchko on drums, and Chloe F. Orwell on sax. The public radio program and podcast *The Great American Folk Show* featured songs from the album.

1999



Ames '99

In recognition of her contributions to the Home Energy Rating System (HERS) industry, **Betsy L. Ames** was named to the 2024 class of Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET) Recognition of Women Pioneers in the HERS Industry. As executive director of the Northeast HERS Alliance, in the past 10 months she has raised a total of \$1.55 million for two important initiatives: equity workforce development and a 100-home embodied carbon study for Massachusetts. ■ *Inside Philanthropy* included **Elizabeth Barajas-Román** as a Catalyst in its annual 50 Most Powerful Women in U.S. Philanthropy list. The publication defines Catalysts as "those with

Class Notes



Barajas Román '97

a knack for influencing, inspiring and teaching others. These catalytic leaders can reshape the norms and priorities of the sector or aggregate major giving power by rallying many smaller donors behind a common cause.” Elizabeth also appeared in President Joe Biden’s Women’s History Month Instagram post. ■ **Erika Howsare** published her first nonfiction book, *The Age of Deer* (Catapult Books). “It’s an exploration of the human relationship with deer, throughout history and in our current world, and it uses deer as a lens to contemplate the paradoxes of how we interact with and shape the natural world.” Erika has also published two books of poetry as well as chapbooks. She lives in Virginia, where she’s worked as a journalist for more than 20 years. ■ **Aimee Lee**’s art is included in the Cleveland Museum of Art exhibition “Korean Couture: Generations of Revolution.” Her work, *Two dresses*, appears among many artifacts including some recently excavated 17th-century garments and contributions from contemporary designers. Aimee is writing about toolmakers for hand papermaking for her second book and continues to improve the papermaking studio she built for Oberlin’s library/Book Studies program in an old shower and changing room in the Hales Gym. For the last decade, she has also taught a popular Winter Term course on papermaking and book arts.

2000s

2001

Colleen Matheu Johnson and **Kurt Johnson '99** are entering their seventh



Topham '01



Godlove '07

season as the directors of the Houston Youth Chamber Orchestra. The orchestra was the first to perform a space-inspired program at NASA Johnson Space Center. The group also performed the program at Jones Hall, home of the Houston Symphony, where Kurt is in his 22nd season as a member of the first violin section. Colleen is celebrating her 18th season with the Houston Ballet Orchestra this fall. They are the proud parents of Allegra, 13, and Luke, 9. ■ **James Topham**

became the first person from North America to win a brokerage sales award from Kobe Steel for helping the metal conglomerate expand its aluminum business in the U.S. The former East Asian Studies major sells and markets the Japanese company’s strong, lightweight aluminum to transportation companies looking to improve fuel efficiency, as well as to electric vehicle makers looking to offset weight from batteries.



Kaplan '07

2002

After earning her master's in education from Harvard University and spending 20 years as a middle school and high school teacher, **Annie Neary** launched her own practice supporting neurodivergent/ADHDer tweens, teens, and their families. Her dream is to open a sliding-scale executive function center embedded in other community services. She and her spouse, **Olivia Ambrogio**, live and garden in Silver Spring, Md., with their 8-year-old, Harriet, and their barky terrier.

2004

Aaliyah Bilal, a finalist for the 2023 National Book Awards, was one of 10 emerging writers honored with a 2024 Whiting Award from the Whiting Foundation for her story collection *Temple Folk*. The foundation, which presents a prize of \$50,000 for each honoree, praised *Temple Folk* by noting that it “invites readers into a world whose complexity has been often overlooked, informing her explorations with a prickling specificity and psychological insight.” ■ At a January 2024 Harvard Medical School conference, School Mental Health: Treating Students K-12, **Jessica Chock-Goldman** and **Peggy Orenstein '83** made presentations back-to-back. Jessica presented “Managing Long-Term Suicidal Ideation in Diverse School



Unger '08

Settings,” and Peggy presented “Girls, Boys and Sex.” ■ **Lauren Haynes** was appointed head curator and vice president of arts and culture for the Trust for Governors Island, a 172-acre island in New York Harbor.

2007

Award-winning pianist and educator **Anastasia Dedik** says her transformative experience at Oberlin as a female Russian immigrant inspired the creation of the



Dedik '07

Prima Music Foundation (PMF), a nonprofit dedicated to nurturing and showcasing talented pianists and providing scholarships to those in need. Through PMF, Anastasia offers performance opportunities and educational guidance to foster the growth of young artists, including master classes and the annual Rising Stars Piano Camp in the Berkshires. As artistic director of the Summer Concert Series at Ventfort Hall in Lenox, Mass., Anastasia showcases established and emerging talents; ticket proceeds support scholarships for the camp. For more details and to support the mission, visit www.PrimaMusicFoundation.com. ■

Hannah Godlove married Mark Guinn in New York with 18 Obies present, spanning graduation years from 1975 to 2010. ■ **Matt Kaplan** and his wife, Sari, welcomed Maisie Juliette Kaplan in January. Maisie was born in San Francisco and joins big sisters Mackenzie, 3.5 and Maya, 2. ■ President Joe Biden nominated **Matthew Kaplan** as federal co-chair of the Great Lakes Authority. He is a senior attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council, where he coordinates federal strategy on regenerative agriculture. A graduate of the University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law, Matthew formerly served on the staff of U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur of Ohio and formerly taught at Oberlin.

2008

Rachel (Kelly) Unger and **David Unger '07** welcomed a daughter, Irene Hildegard, in May 2023. She joins older siblings Rosemary and Michael.

2009

Jenna Lindeke Heavenrich was awarded the Council on Foreign Relations' International Affairs Fellowship to Japan, sponsored by Hitachi. Hosted by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation's Pacific Island Nations team in Tokyo, Jenna is researching international cooperation dynamics of Pacific island states, beginning with Palau. To that end, she is building a stakeholder map of actors and their connections, including business, educational exchange, security, development, and diplomacy. This map, which will be publicly available, aspires to support governments, embassies, and other actors to streamline cooperation and promote understanding.



2010s

2010

Arden Surdam's third Swiss-based show, the solo exhibition *Hysterical Material*, opened in early April at Juraplatz in Biel, Switzerland. According to a release, the included works “turn away from the digital and return to her early practice of analog photography,” and the exhibition “underscores the inherently unstable process of darkroom color printing and the incalculable effects of light leaks, color casts, and pesky dust particles.”

2011

Claire Petras was the head of social media for the climate conference COP28, where nearly 200 countries committed to moving away from fossil fuels by 2030. Claire and her colleagues at COP28 and the Edelman public relations agency brought the monumental pledges and commitments of the climate conference to the world through live social content. She adds that she’s proud to have played a small part in the historic

conference—and owes much of her passion for climate justice to her time at Oberlin.

2014

Max Cohn cowrote and codirected a short film, *Proof of Concept*, available online via the *New Yorker*. Starring Richard Kind, the film—which the magazine notes “offers a humorous meta-riff on the movie business and a tour of the Upper West Side”—premiered in June 2023 at the Tribeca Festival.

2015

Elizabeth Dobbins and **Michael Clifford** ’16 were married in July 2023 in Sharon, Mass. Obies in attendance included **Katie Hirabayashi**, **Damien Kirk**, **Esther Min**, **Annika Nelson**, and **Steph Szarmach**. ■ **Stephen Lezak**, a researcher at the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford who studies the politics of climate change, published an opinion essay in the *New York Times*, “Scientists Just Gave Humanity an Overdue Reality Check. The World Will Be Better for It.”

2016

Moez Ali Syed and **Yuran Pan** ’15 were married in a beachside ceremony in Tulum, Mexico, in February 2024.

2017

Jacob Baron was the director of photography and editor of “Psychics,” the second episode of the Manhattan Neighborhood Network TV show *Don’t Mind If I Don’t*. ■ **Haley Jones** earned her doctorate in art history from Emory University, writing a dissertation titled “Constructions of Value through Primitivism and Authenticity in African Art Auction Catalogues, 2000-2020.”

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Class Notes are prepared from a variety of sources but are drawn mainly from personal and professional news submitted by college and conservatory alums. What makes a good class note? When you’re proud to share something, we want to hear about it!

Good news! You can now submit your class note (along with a photo) online: go.oberlin.edu/submit-class-notes

The Art of Giving

Dominique H. Vasseur '73

is a second-generation Obie, following in the path of his mother, the late Mary Burmeister Vasseur '43.

After a long career as a museum curator, he retired to Oberlin, where he especially enjoys living close to the Allen Memorial Art Museum.

His love for art and for the museum motivated him to create two funds to support acquisitions and conservation. He has already established one fund in memory of his parents, and will set up a second through a generous estate gift.

Dominique has also donated a significant number of artworks from his personal collection to the museum. "These objects and my financial gifts will carry on my deep connection to the college and the museum in perpetuity," he says. "That is extremely important and gratifying to me."

Leaving a legacy is a meaningful and lasting way to recognize and celebrate your commitment to Oberlin.

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Losses

Alumni

1938 Jean Moore November 2021	Mary Francis Dann Little February 17, 2023
1942 Ellen MacDaniels Speers January 21, 2024	1955 Jerrold Ehrlich April 22, 2024 Albert Hirsch no date given
1943 Amy Hauss January 17, 2024	1958 Dr. Henry Lawrence Danaceau August 5, 2023 Kathy Kendall February 17, 2024 Sally Miller March 13, 2024
1948 Caroline (Miller) Erney April 18, 2024	1960 Mary Lee Owens February 5, 2023 Constance Pipok May 29, 2019
1949 Howard Y.C. Hew 2018 Elizabeth A. Lichtwardt March 4, 2024 Barbara C. Wightman Wieseman February 22, 2024	1961 Guerrri Finnigan March 30, 2024
1950 Frances Berting February 23, 2024	1962 Richard H. Bromund March 15, 2024
1951 Rexford Francis Tucker March 28, 2024 Thomas West September 20, 2019	1963 Larry Culp no date given Lawrence David Kenney November 15, 2023
1952 Georgene Allen April 19, 2024	

Faculty, Staff, and Friends

Marcia Colish, a professor of history at Oberlin from 1963 to 2001—including 17 years as the Frederick B. Artz Professor of History—died April 9 in New Haven, Conn. Born in Brooklyn, N.Y., she graduated from Smith College in 1958 and earned a PhD from Yale University in 1965, two years after she began teaching at Oberlin. She became an internationally recognized voice in medieval European intellectual history and the author of nine books, including two-volume studies of the Stoic tradition and of Italian theologian Peter Lombard, and *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition* (1997), which synthesizes her teaching and research. In the 1960s, Marcia led the campaign to abolish Oberlin’s nepotism rule, which prevented both members of a couple from serving on the faculty. In the early 1990s, she was a leading voice in the campaign to reform an antiquated sexual harassment policy. Leonard V. Smith, Colish’s successor as Frederick B. Artz Professor of History, said, “In all my years in academia, I have never met a more formidable intellect or a more supportive colleague.” ■ **Tom Sherman ’56**, who returned to his alma mater to teach biology for 30 years, died April 9. He was 89. A Rhodes Scholar, Tom earned a DPhil from Oxford University in 1960 and began teaching at Oberlin six years later. He authored two books published by Oxford University Press: *A Place on the Glacial Till: Time, Land, and Nature within an American Town*, an affectionate chronicle of the natural history and life around his longtime home of Oberlin; and *Energy, Entropy, and the Flow of Nature*, an exploration of the principles of thermodynamics delivered in easy-to-follow language. “Tom brought careful preparation and considerable thought to his lectures,” says Dennis Luck, an emeritus professor of biology and 24-year colleague of Sherman who bonded with the elder professor over their shared studies in Oxford’s doctoral program in biochemistry. “He encouraged his students to forge cross-connections and to think independently. He stressed attention to accuracy and detail in written work. He will be remembered with affection by many Oberlin students and faculty as an accomplished, considerate, and gentle scholar.”

Our alumni have asked Oberlin to share news of classmates passing in a more timely way, a request that can’t often be accommodated in *OAM*, which publishes three times a year. Moving forward, we will add submitted death notices to a new *OAM* webpage at www.oberlin.edu/alumni/losses that will link to online obituaries published by a newspaper, funeral home, or legacy website. This will offer readers a more timely announcement and a more complete picture of the lives and accomplishments of our deceased community members. Please submit death notices by emailing alum.mag@oberlin.edu with “Losses” in the subject line and a link to a published online obituary or a letter confirming the date of death and the class year of the deceased. You can also mail a printed obituary to **Oberlin Alumni Magazine, 247 W. Lorain St., Suite C, Oberlin, OH 44074**.

MEMORIAL MINUTE

Hirschel Kasper, 1935-2024



Hirschel Kasper, professor of economics, died April 4, 2024. He was 89 years old.

Born in Providence, Rhode Island, he was the first child born to Russian immigrants who arrived in the U.S. before World War I. He earned a bachelor's degree from Boston University in 1956 and a master's degree and a doctorate from the University of Minnesota in 1959 and 1963, respectively. Hirschel's dissertation focused on the relationship between the asking price of labor and unemployment duration, challenging accepted notions about the willingness of unemployed workers to accept wage reductions in response to long-term unemployment. While finishing his doctoral thesis, he taught for a year at Iowa State University.

In 1963, Hirschel accepted a position at Oberlin College, arriving with his wife and children. He remained employed at Oberlin until his 2017 retirement, a 54-year stay briefly interrupted only by teaching and research appointments at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (1966-67), the University of Glasgow (1970-71 and 1975), Cornell University (1977-78), and Princeton University (1985-86).

At Oberlin, Hirschel was a popular

but exceptionally challenging teacher. The economics department estimated that more than 4,000 Oberlin students took his introductory course, while his intermediate and advanced courses covered labor economics, labor-management relationships, and the public policy of poverty and affluence. Hirschel is remembered for the rigor of his lectures and assignments, as well as his encouragement, kindness, and humanity. He was an inspiration for the many Oberlin graduates who went on to teach. Several former students who are now professors of economics emphasized their desire to "be like Hirschel" or that they are "trying to do a Hirschel Kasper imitation when they teach."

Hirschel's research also reflects his 54-year commitment to teaching and learning. His coauthors include many Oberlin faculty and graduates, in addition to colleagues from his visiting appointments. Of his more than three dozen publications, a majority focus on teaching. In particular, Hirschel's research emphasized the education of economists, placing specific emphasis on the impact of liberal arts education on future doctoral candidates; faculty turnover; the dynamic aspects of academic careers; the evolution of tenure-track appointments; and the role of collective bargaining in higher education. Beyond the academy, his publications on labor economics considered multiple topics, including the effects of journey-to-work costs on wages, the effectiveness of final-offer arbitration, unemployment rates for newer entrants into the labor force, right-to-work laws, and the effects of the size of the bargaining unit on labor-management relationships.

Hirschel's last book, *Incentives and Choice in Health Care* (MIT Press), edited with Frank Sloan '68, was a

compilation of papers presented in Oberlin at a conference he organized that brought a dozen health care professionals and scholars to campus. Often invited to evaluate economics departments at other universities, Hirschel reflected on this work and Oberlin's own experience with such evaluations in *The Journal of Economic Education* article "Peer to Peer: Right and Wrong Lessons for Department Reviews." He was an associate editor of that journal for almost 20 years and served on the Board of Editors for the *Quarterly Review of Economics and Business*. Hirschel served for many years as a labor arbitrator under the auspices of the American Arbitration Association (AAA) and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. He was on permanent panels to hear labor disputes in mining, local government, and law enforcement. In 2003, Hirschel received the Golden Gavel Award from the AAA for his "decades of service and wise counsel."

Above all, Hirschel Kasper was a respected, generous colleague with amazing clarity of thought and purpose who was always available to consult about teaching and research and to mentor new professors. Indeed, former students and colleagues comment fondly on Hirschel's "open door" policy that found many people stopping in after hours for conversation, support, understanding, and guidance. One of Hirschel's Oberlin coauthors said, "An important measure of a professor's contribution is the impact on his or her students, and especially in this regard, Hirschel excelled. He was a model professor and moreover an outstanding example of what liberal arts colleges have to offer."

James E. Zinser
Emeritus Professor of Economics

“They are attracted to all grates or sewer drains. I mean you could just see them making a run for it every time they fall out.”

Associate Professor of Recording Arts and Production **Andrew Garver**, describing the slippery nature of AirPods to Sherwood News

“[At Harlem’s Studio Museum] you didn’t have to prove to anyone that artists of color deserve to be in museums and have exhibitions, it was a given. I want to continue that here, where I can have the most impact and where I can help tell those stories, to bring artists in and bring people from all five boroughs.”

Lauren Haynes ’04, quoted in the *New York Times* after being named head curator and vice president of arts and culture at Governors Island

“Very early on in my career, I developed an interest, which I’m not sure that all editors have, to continue to use a magazine as a canvas to try new things. I was always interested in new story forms—always.”

Adam Moss ’79, discussing his boundary-busting book *The Work of Art* with *Vanity Fair*

“It’s a way to capture who has had the right to be patriotic in a certain type of way, who has a right to be proud of having an American identity. Country music has been so successful the last few years of becoming the staging ground for a certain type of white grievance and conservatism in politics. I like that she’s saying, ‘You’re not the only people who can love this country in particular sort of ways.’”

Africana Studies chair **Charles F. Peterson**, speaking to NBC’s *Today* about Beyoncé’s use of the colors red, white, and blue in the *Cowboy Carter* art

“Administrators handed out Oberlin-branded eclipse glasses. A jazz trio swung gently by the concessions stand. Yeobie, the school’s mascot, an albino squirrel wearing Birkenstocks, wore [their] own gigantic shades. A professor of astronomy made periodic declarations about the eclipse and invited people to look at his Oclipsinator.”

Dan Kois P’27, describing the eclipse atmosphere April 8 at Oberlin in a *Slate* column

“I recommend a garden journal. You don’t need to be a gardener. Your ‘garden’ could be the things you cook for dinner. It could be the squirrels, pigeons, and skunks you see on morning jogs. ... Focus a small thing that doesn’t feel like a story—until you have seven years of it, and it is. Your children will thank you.”

Fiona Warnick ’22, whose novel *The Skunks* was published in May, writing in *LitHub*

“We need to remember the importance of helping the next generation of brilliant young scientists. Through providing equal opportunities and access to resources for all kids, we can guarantee the success of the next generation of scientists.”

Dr. Joseph L. Graves Jr. ’77, the first African American to receive a PhD in evolutionary biology, accepting the Genius Award from the Liberty Science Center in Jersey City, N.J.

“It was life-changing for me to be able to study with someone of his caliber.”

Tenor **Limmie Pulliam ’98**, telling *Miami New Times* about studying with the late Richard Miller at the conservatory



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Tina is a third-generation Oberlin College alum and a second-generation Kendal at Oberlin resident. Her decision to return to Oberlin was heavily influenced by conversations with residents. One 99-year-old resident had stated that living at Kendal was like being in graduate school; others wished they had moved sooner to this robust, stimulating community. Now embracing a busy, varied schedule reminiscent of her college days, Tina did not just return to Oberlin—she came home.

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“The [Seeley G. Mudd Center] design was generated principally by seeking to fulfill a wish of the librarians: to know whether thesis students actually entered the study spaces assigned to them. Hence the bridges with spaces in the front of the building to make their occupancy obvious I’m pleased to know that many have enjoyed [Mudd] over the past half century.”

— MUDD CENTER PROJECT DESIGNER M. ROSARIA PIOMELLI