

Oberlin

OBERLIN ALUMNI MAGAZINE

FALL/WINTER 2020

Apart & Together

A PHOTO ESSAY OF A
PANDEMIC AND A CAMPUS

PAGE 36







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COLD FRONT

While the King Building was once jokingly described as "radiator architecture," it only seems to reinforce—with concrete—the chill of the season's first big snow in December.

PHOTO BY TANYA ROSEN-JONES '97

ON THE COVER

Student Sarah Liberatore '23 in a de-densified classroom, an important component of Oberlin's strategy to stop the spread of COVID-19.

PHOTO BY YVONNE GAY



The Seeds of Equal or Greater Benefit

ON THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF WILDER BOWL STANDS A LARGE WHITE TENT, UNDER WHICH classes and cocurricular groups convene throughout the day. Tents dot the campus, providing safe, outdoor opportunities for learning while the weather holds. Students play instruments on the landing outside Kohl and sing outside under the patio of Mudd Center. Courses across campus are in-person, hybrid, and remote, with all of us becoming more adept at understanding our colleagues behind a mask.

In the late afternoons and early evenings, students eat a grab-and-go dinner on Wilder's grass, talk, and throw Frisbees. Everywhere I look on campus, Obies are propelling themselves forward and deriving the benefits of an Oberlin experience.

Oftentimes, when I am asked to speak to college students across the country, I include my list of "Top Ten Things I Wished I had Known in College," which encapsulates what I now wish I could have told myself as I entered college. Number four is one of my favorites: "In every adversity, there is a seed of equal or greater benefit." When I mention this truism to students, I typically tell them that the highest achieving, most resilient people I have met apply this principle when they face something particularly challenging. As the adversity presents itself, they almost instinctively and immediately look for the seed of equal or greater benefit.

As I reflect on what has transpired over the last several months, and as I watch our students, faculty, and staff on campus, I can assure you that our Obies are finding the seeds of greater benefit in the midst of this pandemic.

The conservatory and its students are applying technology in new and exciting ways to teach voice safely. Classrooms are filled with low-tech Plexiglas barriers as well as cutting-edge technology that facilitates musical performance and instruction between rooms, with essentially no lag time. We are calling them "real-time" studios.

Music still flows from Finney Chapel and theater from other venues. Technology ensures that people around the world can see Oberlin. Tappan Square hosts periodic jazz melodies in an atmosphere that is quintessentially Oberlin, and it allows the entire town to enjoy the talents of our students.

As for the juniors who were off campus this fall and participating in the Junior Practicum, they have helped develop one of our most significant seeds and accomplishments. Students participated in over 50 virtual workshops conducted mostly by Oberlin alums and engaged in micro-internships and research hosted by our faculty and fellow Obies. This semester-long experience provided these students with the ability to learn and apply the intangibles of a quality liberal arts education in a professional setting.

As an institution, we are also striving to nurture seeds of our own. The three-semester plan that allowed us to "de-densify" campus is an example of faculty and staff coming together in a truly remarkable effort. Many a local business owner has suggested to me that this shift, and the over 1,200 students who will be in Oberlin in the summer because of it, will mean a more robust financial foundation for the city of Oberlin. Given the economic burdens the pandemic has placed on the city, our community is eager for the benefits of hosting students in the summer.

Our campus this fall was home to nearly 2,000 students maneuvering through a once-in-a-century event. Every day, they and our nearly 900 students off campus donned their masks, undeterred in their search for the seeds that will help them achieve their dreams.

Their determination—displayed under a tent, in a traditional classroom updated with technology and Plexiglas, or out in the wider world—is an inspiration.

CARMEN TWILLIE AMBAR
President, Oberlin College

Oberlin

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Editor

Jeff Hagan '86

Senior Designer

Ryan Sprowl

Designer

Nicole Slatinsky

Photography Projects Manager

Yvonne Gay

.....
Director, Print and Publications

Kelly Viancourt

.....
Vice President for Communications

Ben Jones '96

.....
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EDITORIAL OFFICE

247 W. Lorain St., Suite C

Oberlin, OH 44074

PHONE: 440.775.8182

FAX: 440.775.6575

EMAIL: alum.mag@oberlin.edu

www.oberlin.edu/oam

OBELIN ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Dewy Ward '34 Alumni Center

65 E. College St., Suite 4

Oberlin, OH 44074

PHONE: 440.775.8692

FAX: 440.775.6748

EMAIL: alumni@oberlin.edu

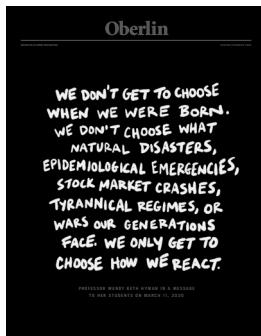
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POSTMASTER

Send changes to Oberlin College,

173 W. Lorain St., Oberlin, OH 44074





LIFE LESSONS FROM OSCA

On July 8, my eighth grandchild arrived in the world safely. However, my mind was blown by two other events that day: reading about Nova Spivack '91 ("Last Saved Copy," Spring/Summer 2020) and walking into a Costco store in Long Island to discover that organic has gone mainstream.

Being an active member of a co-op is part of my cherished Oberlin memories. Since I hung out at yoga ashrams in the '70s learning to cook for up to 300 and worked under a trained chef during the summer months, it was no surprise that I ended up at Harkness. I witnessed several students learn to become effective leaders by taking on various roles within Harkness and OSCA. Fundamentally, the co-op promoted ideas of discourse and consensus-building. If we cared enough about something and wanted to change it, we had to have numerous discussions to embrace the new. The values inherent in cooperative enterprise—commitment, collaboration, communication, and caring—all add up to a sense of community which seems to be sorely lacking in today's world.

The most important lesson from co-op life is about working together. One winter night, 25 or so gangly students lifted a discarded 18-foot steel I-beam with the letters "Bu ger Che" onto their shoulders and traipsed the length of town on a snowy street to hoist it miraculously above the Harkness threshold as a college prank. Sounds crazy, right? Well, some folks may think that Spivack's Arch Mission is crazy, while others may think it is not a bad idea. Why not put all the U.S. Patent Office data in there while you are at it? No matter your opinion, there is one thing we can agree on: it is not getting accomplished alone.

ANDREW BUCK '85
Little Neck, N.Y.

I concur most heartily with Ruthann Rudel's letter ("Net Value," Spring/Summer 2020). As the parent of an alum, I know that OSCA was the basis of her excitement about attending Oberlin. The supportive, positive, and constructive feedback given to the cook whose lunch she consumed on her overnight visit (as a prospective student) convinced her that OSCA would be a place where she could find *community* at the college she was anticipating attending. Joining OSCA proved to be one of the best decisions she made regarding her Oberlin experience. OSCA has grown to be the largest student cooperative association per capita in the country, in no small part because it embodies Oberlin's motto, "Learning and Labor," along with providing fiscal benefits for students. (For OSCA members attending Oberlin 2010-14, the average cost of 18 meals, home-baked bread, and snacks was \$27 per person, per week.)

In the same issue, President Ambar entitled her column, "What is Certain is Oberlin." The thrust of her letter was Oberlin's ability to survive challenges because as an institution that is the sum of its parts—students past and present, academics, and those things that contribute to Oberlin's uniqueness—Oberlin finds a way to overcome obstacles. OSCA must not be seen as "inequitable" or having a "negative impact" on "what is certain." The certainty here is that OSCA is an essential part of Oberlin and, as in the past, Oberlin must find the "determination, strength, and...best thoughts" needed to preserve this life-changing experience now and in the future. I hope that other members of the greater Oberlin community who value OSCA as my daughter and I do will "meet the challenge" by donating to OSCA (a 501(c)(3) organization) as a way to "affirm once again in the times of...uncertainty, what is certain is Oberlin."

SARA NERKEN P'14
Wynnewood, Pa.

SEW NICE

I was pleased to see that Heather Brown got a nice shout-out for her prodigious face mask making ("Oberlin Costume Shop Produces Face Masks," Spring/Summer 2020). I would just add the following: When my husband and I organized an Oberlin-wide mask giveaway in May, we reached out to

Heather to see if she might be interested in contributing some masks. She immediately agreed, even though she didn't know us at all, and gave us 116 of some of the best-made and most attractive face masks I've seen (and I make them, too!). We ended up giving away over 500 masks to Oberlin citizens, of which fully 20 percent came from Heather. We are so grateful for her generosity and superior sewing skills!

JANET GRAY '77 AND DOMINIQUE MICHAL
Oberlin, Ohio

REMEMBERING OLD FRIENDS

Thank you for the photo of Cox with the magnolia tree in bloom at the beginning of Around Tappan Square in the most recent alumni magazine. I grew up in northern Minnesota, where it's too cold for magnolias, and had only encountered them in books before I arrived at Oberlin. My first spring at Oberlin, I climbed into the lower branches of that tree to appreciate its blooms all around me. Thank you for transporting me back there for a moment. Hope you all are well and staying safe!

SARAH WILLIS '06
Detroit, Mich.

Last year I had a "remembrance" for my brother, Michael Magdoff '60, who died 60 years earlier. He died just before his 20th birthday, so it was also the occasion of the 80th anniversary of his birth. Friends of mine, most who never met Mike, attended, as did Mike's good friend Peter Kahn '60 and his, wife Kay Wagner. I have expanded the remarks I made at the remembrance and included the transcription of the few letters that I still had from Mike to me during his first year at Oberlin and photos of him and our family. For those who would like to see the document, it is available at: <http://www.uvm.edu/~fmagdoff/MichaelMagdoff.pdf>

FRED MAGDOFF '63
Burlington, Vt.

Send letters to *Oberlin Alumni Magazine*, 247 W. Lorain St., Suite C, Oberlin, OH 44074-1089; or send emails to alum.mag@oberlin.edu. The magazine reserves the right to determine the suitability of letters for publication and to edit them for accuracy and length.

Around Tappan Square



ATHLETICS

Black Student Athlete Group Stays in the Game Despite Canceled Seasons

BY AMANDA NAGY

Student-founded group focuses on community and mentoring

THIS FALL, THE BLACK STUDENT ATHLETE GROUP (BSAG) has re-energized and taken advantage of the unusual circumstances of the pandemic by working creatively to diversify the athletics department.

When third-year students Kofi Asare and Malaïka Djungu-Sungu took over as the group's cochairs this year, they recognized that the protests and uprising over the summer, combined with uncertainty about being able to compete, would require unconventional thinking about ways to support Black athletes and create change in the Department of Athletics.

The organization was founded in 2019 by graduates Naeisha McClain, Cheyenne Arthur, Jabree Hason, Jubreel Hason, and Devin White. Although their senior year on campus was cut short due to COVID-19, the students created a space where Black athletes could talk about the challenges they face within their sport, advocate for action against inequality, and foster support for Black students in athletics, as well as the overall well-being of Oberlin's Black community.

"It's really important that Black people have a space where they can celebrate themselves and have community, but also talk about their issues, advocate for themselves, and be supported and heard," says Djungu-Sungu, a member of the women's track and field team majoring in economics and Africana studies.

Asare, a biology major and member of the men's track and field team, says the events over the summer heightened the need for the group to elevate its presence on campus. "We approached this semester as an opportunity to step outside the box," Asare says. "We had to consider the areas we felt were most necessary. We thought



Asare



Djungu-Sungu

about the different Black alumni who used to be student-athletes. Part of the community-building aspect comes from networking. We wanted to bridge the gap between former and current Black student-athletes."

In October, the group coordinated a virtual panel discussion with 10 Black alumni who shared their experiences about being student-athletes, how they navigated the campus and team dynamics, and what they're doing after Oberlin.

The group meets monthly with the athletics department's diversity and equity working group to discuss ways to catalyze effective allyship among non-Black players and make the department more inclusive of Black voices and perspectives. They're also working with coaches to help recruit more Black student-athletes.

The group also developed a peer-to-peer mentorship program with Black student-athletes in Oberlin High School and hosted panel discussions with recruits "to let them know there is a group for them when they get here," says Djungu-Sungu, "so they know Oberlin is a place where they can thrive and be heard."

Chris Donaldson '89, assistant dean and director of Student Academic Success Programs, is advising the BSAG and helping to engage the group with Black alumni.

"Some of the most important influences on athletes of all ages come from those individuals who can share similar experiences and connect on familiar themes," says Donaldson, who played football and baseball at Oberlin. "I'm honored to be working with them, and I fully embrace their mission."

Although there's no competition at the moment, Asare and Djungu-Sungu have both discovered some bright spots.

"This semester has shown me how to be a better teammate," Asare says. "In the flow of the season, you're preoccupied and worried about a track meet; you're worried about a conference meet and wanting to win. To have that all stripped away, my priorities changed. Now, I need to find ways to be a better teammate from afar. I need to reach out to the first-years and let them know I'm around. I'm making sure I connect with the fourth-years and find out what they plan to do after they graduate."

Djungu-Sungu says the track and field team feels more like family.

"We know we can't look forward to that big conference meet or the smaller meets each Saturday, but we're still practicing and moving as if we are competing. We're working toward something big because there's still a future for us."

To read more about BSAG, visit oberlin.edu/news.

REASON TO BELIEVE A private reading in Christian mysticism and a little extra time in a printmaking class yielded this intaglio etching with watercolor. *Lady Reason*, by Eva Sturm-Gross '22, comes from a vision recorded by Hadewijch of Antwerp, a 13th-century Love Mystic, says Sturm-Gross, a double major in studio art and religion. For more of her work, see @sefirotic on Instagram. The print was included in a student art walk that took place online last spring and can be viewed at oberlin.edu/news/student-art-walk.



CAMPUS LIFE

Obies Staying Safe

AS COLLEGES ACROSS THE COUNTRY BEGAN their school year in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, each faced an array of complicated choices to best keep students, staff, and faculty safe. Working closely with public health officials and health care professionals at Cleveland Clinic, Oberlin developed a plan that allowed the school year to begin on time and, through a variety of strategies, manage risks as much as possible. This includes a three-term, year-round academic

year that accomplishes the vital goal of “de-densifying” the campus by having only two-thirds of the student body on campus at any time and all dorm rooms as singles; partnering with Mercy Health-Allen Hospital to administer monthly COVID-19 tests to all students, faculty, and staff; changes to campus life (no ’Sco as we know it, for instance, nor fall sports or the co-ops); and the launch of ObieSafe: Caring for Our Community, a program that consolidates resources and information about staying healthy and limiting the spread of COVID-19.

ObieSafe encompasses a robust website and a weekly campus email, from which this

illustration by *Boston Globe* illustrator (and parent of a recent Oberlin grad) Beth Wolfensberger Singer was taken. Oberlin students have done their part, pledging to follow guidelines and exercising a high degree of caution that has helped to keep infection rates low.

As an added measure of protection, in November the college announced it planned to delay the spring semester opening from early January to early February. For details on the plans and all of Oberlin’s COVID-related announcements and FAQs, visit www.oberlin.edu/obiesafe.

SCIENCE

Bat Lit Crazy

BY AMANDA NAGY

Watson winner hopes to correct perception of misunderstood mammal

SOME MAY FIND IT DIFFICULT TO LOVE BATS, especially at a time when they are considered a possible origin of COVID-19 and Ebola. But according to the CDC, scientists still can't definitively pinpoint exactly where these viruses come from.

Emily Stanford '17 thinks bats are one of the world's most misunderstood mammals. After receiving a Watson Scholarship in 2018, she started a year-long journey traveling to nine countries—Fiji, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Cambodia, India, Nepal, Malawi, and Madagascar—to explore how different cultural perceptions of bats influence their conservation.

"When the media write about how bats have so many diseases, they often take it out of context," Stanford said. "If you look into the studies where they found that bats carry more diseases and viruses than other animals, they actually sampled twice as many bats as all the other types of animals combined. Bats are easy to catch, which makes it quite easy to sample them in high numbers. Because of this kind of sampling bias, articles will take the conclusion out of context and say bats have more viruses than other animals."

Throughout her Watson year, Stanford lived with people who love bats and those who hate bats. She filmed the interviews on her

phone and put the clips together into a documentary that she later submitted for entry into the Wildlife Conservation Film Festival. It was accepted this year.

"The most serious threat to bats is failure to understand them," says a bat conservationist in the documentary. "Bats are of huge economic importance...it's been conservatively calculated that bats are saving American farmers almost \$23 billion a summer."

According to a wildlife rehabilitator in the film, bats eat a lot of pest insects. It is estimated that during the summer, half of a million bats at Congress Avenue Bridge, in Austin, Texas, eat about 10 tons of insects every night. This makes a vast difference in the number of pest insects that would otherwise cost agriculture billions of dollars every year.

"There are a lot of misconceptions about bats because they're out at night, and you often see them from far away," Stanford said. "Bats have a really gentle nature, and a lot of bat rehabbers I lived with told me that once they show people a bat up close, they immediately fall in love with it. They had no idea it could actually be adorable."

Stanford originally planned to attend graduate school to study disease ecology. However, her experience making the documentary has caused her to think more about exploring science communication, informing people with science knowledge and eliminating misconceptions.

For more information on Oberlin's fellowship and scholarship winners, visit the news center, oberlin.edu/news.



Presidential Initiative Strives to Match Mission to the Moment

Seeks to address issues of violence, police-community relationships, and racial injustices

In August, President Carmen Twillie Ambar and Oberlin College announced the launch of the Presidential Initiative on Racial Equity and Diversity in response to increasing injustice and racial tensions in America. The initiative will elevate and advance Oberlin's more than 180-year commitment to the education and rights of Blacks in America and will provide the framework for faculty and students to address issues of violence, police-community relationships, and racial injustices.

Shaun Harper, a noted expert on racial culture on college campuses, will work with the commission to assess and improve Oberlin's approach to campus diversity.

"The work of dismantling the vestiges of white supremacy, anti-Black policies, and gender inequality has long been embedded in the promise of Oberlin College," Ambar wrote in her charge to the commission of 21 faculty, staff, and students. "This work in the 21st century, however, looks different than it did in 1833."

Meredith Gadsby, associate professor of Africana studies and comparative American studies, and Bill Quillen, dean of the conservatory, cochair the commission. The group will evaluate Oberlin's programming in both the college and conservatory, review hiring, and examine divisional and departmental climates to identify methods to elevate Oberlin's commitment to equity.

The commission's work spans the 2020-21 academic year and will offer short-term and long-term strategic recommendations. It will also lead creation of meaningful antiracism education and professional development for the campus community and assess what a Center on Race and Equity on campus could look like.

"There are national moments that call upon all of us to gather our energies and take hold of moral missions, and this is one of those moments," Ambar says.

Updates on this work will appear in future issues of this magazine.



Gunnar Kwakye,
associate professor
of neuroscience, with
students in his lab.

ACADEMICS

Oberlin to Launch Integrative Concentration in Global Health

College aims to prepare the next generation of global health professionals for influential careers and leadership

OBERLIN WILL LAUNCH AN INTEGRATIVE concentration in global health in fall 2021, recognizing that worldwide threats to mental and physical wellness are most successfully addressed with the holistic, interdisciplinary approach that is the core of a liberal arts education.

“The world needs professionals who understand the multifaceted reality of

human well-being,” says Professor of Biology Mary Garvin, a lead architect of the new integrative concentration. “We need passionate, ethical, problem-solving minds, broadly trained students of the liberal arts who understand that solutions require collaboration, a sense of humility, empathy, and open-mindedness.

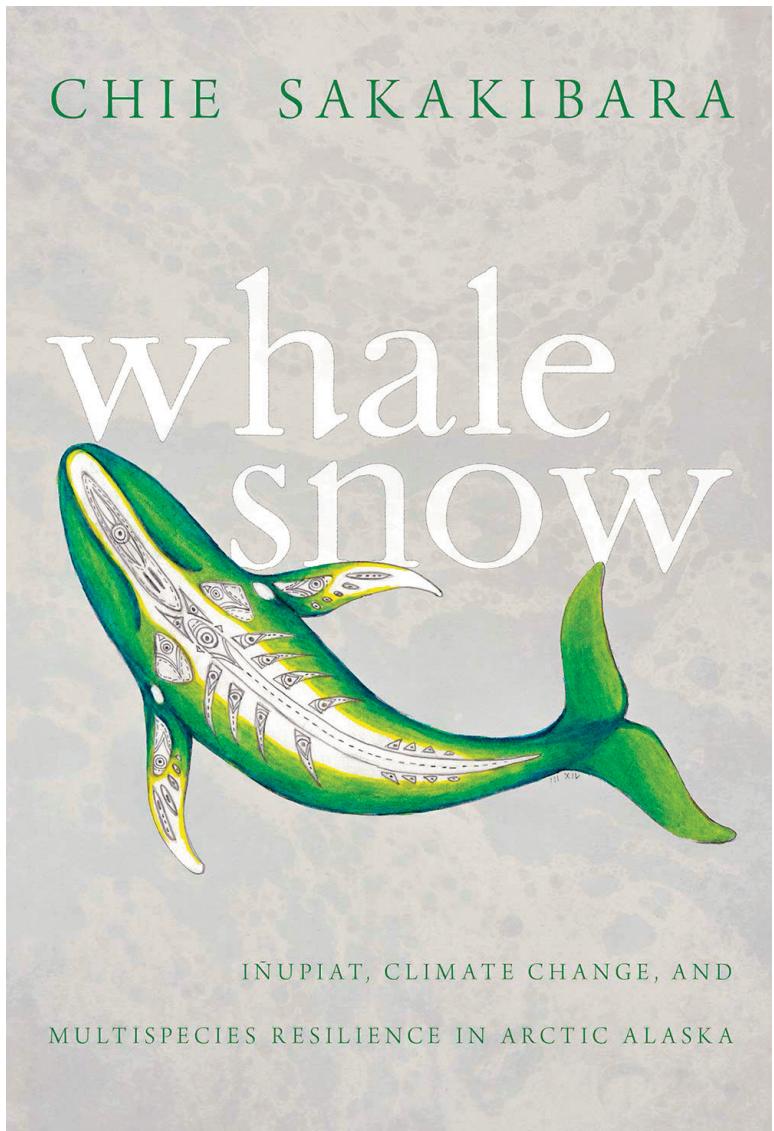
“Part of what I love about this concentration is that it gives students a strong sense of how we must break down the silos of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences and see knowledge as a continuum—a flow among these somewhat artificial divisions of knowledge,” she adds.

The integrative concentration is part of the college’s One Oberlin strategy, an ambitious plan to build on Oberlin’s legacy and ensure the institution’s reach and relevancy for its third century and beyond. The new concentration joins other new integrative programs in

journalism and arts administration; a business concentration is due to begin next fall.

“This integrative concentration will educate students on the ethics of global health and teach them to conceptualize the process of applying moral value to health issues,” says Associate Professor of Neuroscience Gunnar Kwakye. “They will address issues of colonialism and neocolonialism in order to promote the decolonization of global health. By highlighting the relevance of statistical reasoning and methods to address, analyze, and solve problems in global health through biostatistics, students will develop effective ways to address and overcome the inequities and racial barriers to global health parity. They also will learn the importance of developing cultural sensitivity as global health practitioners and volunteers.”

See oberlin.edu/news to learn more about the integrative concentration in global health.



The book's cover features the work *X-ray Whale* by Nasuġraq Rainey Hopson, an Iñupiaq artist and writer who was born and raised on the North Slope of Alaska. "Her creations eloquently tell many stories, and they often point to a positive reciprocal relationship that goes across the boundary of humans and nonhuman animals, which gets intensified in our times of global climate change," Sakakibara says. "This dynamism is the subject of *Whale Snow*." All royalties accruing from sale of the book go to the North Slope Borough Iñupiat History, Language, and Culture Commission.

Faculty News Online

Oberlin faculty members publish, present, teach, and more.
New notes originating from faculty across all disciplines in the college and conservatory are added on an almost daily basis, including new articles, chapters, books, and media appearances. To learn more about their work, visit www.oberlin.edu/news-and-events/faculty-and-staff-notes.

FACULTY FOCUS

Whale Snow: One Question for Chie Sakakibara

In *Whale Snow: Iñupiat, Climate Change, and Multispecies Resilience in Arctic Alaska*, author Chie Sakakibara, assistant professor of environmental studies, explores how the relatedness of the Iñupiat of Arctic Alaska and the bowhead whale forms and transforms "the human" through their encounters. Sakakibara is native to Japan and an adoptive member of the Iñupiaq whaling community. The book's publisher, University of Arizona Press, asked her five questions—here, we reprint one of them.

What do you hope people take away from your work?

Indigenous vulnerability to climate change has been discussed extensively in the fields of public policy, political science, anthropology, and geography, but comparatively few studies have actually shed light on the ways in which people emotionally invest themselves in their entanglements with animals and environments to nurture resilience.

In contrast, *Whale Snow* shares powerful and positive stories about Indigenous experiences coping with climate change. As climate change increases environmental and cultural uncertainties, it also intensifies Iñupiaq emotions and relatedness with the bowhead whale to seek out cultural activities that strengthen social identities and a politics of Indigenous sovereignty. In this sense, my narrative departs from studies that emphasize human vulnerability and instead serves as an ethnography of hope cultivated and entangled with interspecies relations.

This book lies at the intersection of my personal life and stories of America's northernmost Indigenous society. My narrative is steeped in a deep long-term relationship between a culturally adopted

Japanese woman in the two Iñupiaq villages and her adoptive family members, relatives, mentors, collaborators, colleagues, friends, and acquaintances. This is the story of the people and the bowhead whale, and at the same time, the story of my own life.

My fieldwork has become synonymous with my personal growth and fulfillment as an adopted member of whaling crews through participation in everyday life in contemporary rural Alaska. In many different ways and contexts, my adoptive families and kin taught me that the Iñupiaq-whale relationship is a force of innovation and adaptation that now serves as a way to cope with social stress and the unforeseeable future.

In other words, this book was germinated in my own process of becoming an Iñupiaq (meaning "a complete person") through building a relationship with Iñupiat and their nonhuman kin, and I present this book as a humble offering for the people and whales who are connected through emotive bonds, words, stories, and songs that they have so generously bestowed upon me.

For all five questions, see uapress.arizona.edu/2020/11/whale-snow-five-questions-with-author-chie-sakakibara.

CON FACULTY

Bluegrass Guitarist Chris Eldridge '04 Named Visiting Faculty at Oberlin

BY ERICH BURNETT

Punch Brothers founding member will teach college and conservatory students beginning in spring semester

GUITARIST CHRIS ELDRIDGE, A DRIVING FORCE behind the Grammy Award-winning bluegrass ensemble *Punch Brothers*, has been named visiting associate professor of contemporary American acoustic music at Oberlin.

The renewable appointment was made possible by actor-musician Ed Helms, a 1996 graduate and trustee of Oberlin College and an avid supporter of American roots music. It begins with Oberlin's spring semester in January 2021 and continues through fall of next year, encompassing three semesters in all.

Eldridge will teach courses on American string band music and conduct private lessons with guitarists and singer-songwriters selected via audition. All courses and lessons will be available to both conservatory and arts and sciences students.

Eldridge cofounded the Infamous Stringdusters in 2005 before moving on to help forge *Punch Brothers* later that same year. Since then, the band has served as a sort of creative home base for its five musicians, each of whom also thrives in a multitude of other collaborative settings. Eldridge is one-half of a guitar duo with Julian Lage, with whom he earned a Grammy nomination for the 2017 album *Mount Royal*. From 2016 to 2020, he was also a member of the house band on *Live from Here*, the public radio program hosted by fellow *Punch Brother* Chris Thile. Eldridge has collaborated with the likes of Paul Simon, T Bone Burnett, Renée Fleming, Justin Timberlake, Marcus Mumford, Elvis Costello, and John Paul Jones, among many others.

Punch Brothers' latest release, *All Ashore*, won the Grammy Award for Best Folk Album in 2019. That same year, Eldridge was named Instrumentalist of the Year by the Americana Music Association.

The band's members are no strangers to Oberlin: From 2013 through 2015, they served as



BROTHERS IN ARS Chris Eldridge '04 (second from left) and his *Punch Brothers* bandmates have taken the stage of Oberlin's Finney Chapel numerous times, including this September 2017 performance as part of the Artist Recital Series.

resident artists, interacting with students in a variety of settings and performing numerous times, from boisterous late-night jam sessions to gigs in a packed Finney Chapel. The residency was made possible through support from Helms.

Like his bandmates, Eldridge delights in the opportunity to share his knowledge and further explore an essential but relatively little-known facet of American music.

"There are a lot of people who don't really know what this kind of music is," he says. "You almost have to be an enthusiast to know about it. So that's one thing I want to do: Just sharing the joy and depth and richness of the music, and all its roots and branches, is something I'm really excited about. It's incredible stuff!"

The appointment is a return to Eldridge's roots in more ways than one: In addition to his college music major, he taught an Experimental College (ExCo) course on bluegrass as a student. His sophomore-year winter term project was a life-changing week of study with guitar legend Tony Rice—a dream-come-true experience he still sounds hard-pressed to believe actually happened. And his senior recital was a hoedown at the Cat in the Cream Coffeehouse for which he enlisted a lineup of accomplished guest musicians.

"Chris Eldridge is one of my favorite musicians on the planet," says guitar professor Bobby Ferrazza, Eldridge's Oberlin mentor. "His

accomplishments are fantastic as a guitarist, but he is also an amazing person. To have him here at Oberlin is such a thrill for me for so many reasons. Chris' presence makes us better as a conservatory, and he is the perfect example of how the conservatory can function for a great budding musician whose musical interests are many and varied."

"I'm really excited about coming back and mentoring young musicians, and of course I'm interested in learning from the students too," Eldridge says. "It's very much a two-way street. That was actually the biggest thing about me being a student at Oberlin, and that is something that has stuck with me to this day: I had truly amazing teachers, but the most important thing was being around other students who were so dedicated to whatever it was they were into."

Eldridge's appointment represents the latest step in Oberlin's ongoing commitment to making the resources of the conservatory available to students throughout the arts and sciences. All Oberlin students can pursue minors in the college as well as the conservatory—including five interdisciplinary courses of study that unite both facets of campus. These include minors in Arts and Creative Technologies, Music and Cognition, Music and Popular Culture, and Interdisciplinary Performance, as well as an integrated concentration in Arts Administration and Leadership.



STAGE LEFT: ON DEMAND BY POPULAR DEMAND Now you can catch up on past episodes of Stage Left, the online program featuring Oberlin's own faculty and students, as well as fascinating guests from around the globe. Oberlin Stage Left: On Demand includes appearances by Rhiannon Giddens '00, a physically distanced ensemble presented by contemporary music division director Tim Weiss, a series focused on Black music-making, and an explanation and demonstration of sound latency with conservatory faculty members. It's all at oberlin.edu/conservatory/stage-left/on-demand.



Alumni Office Picks New Pilot

TERRY KURTZ HAS BEEN NAMED assistant vice president for alumni engagement & annual giving.

Kurtz joins the advancement team after serving two years as a director of philanthropic gifts at Hathaway Brown School in Shaker Heights, Ohio. As a relationship manager with alumnae and friends, he supported the success of Hathaway Brown's Lighting the Way comprehensive campaign. In addition, he led gift-planning initiatives and participated in annual giving efforts.

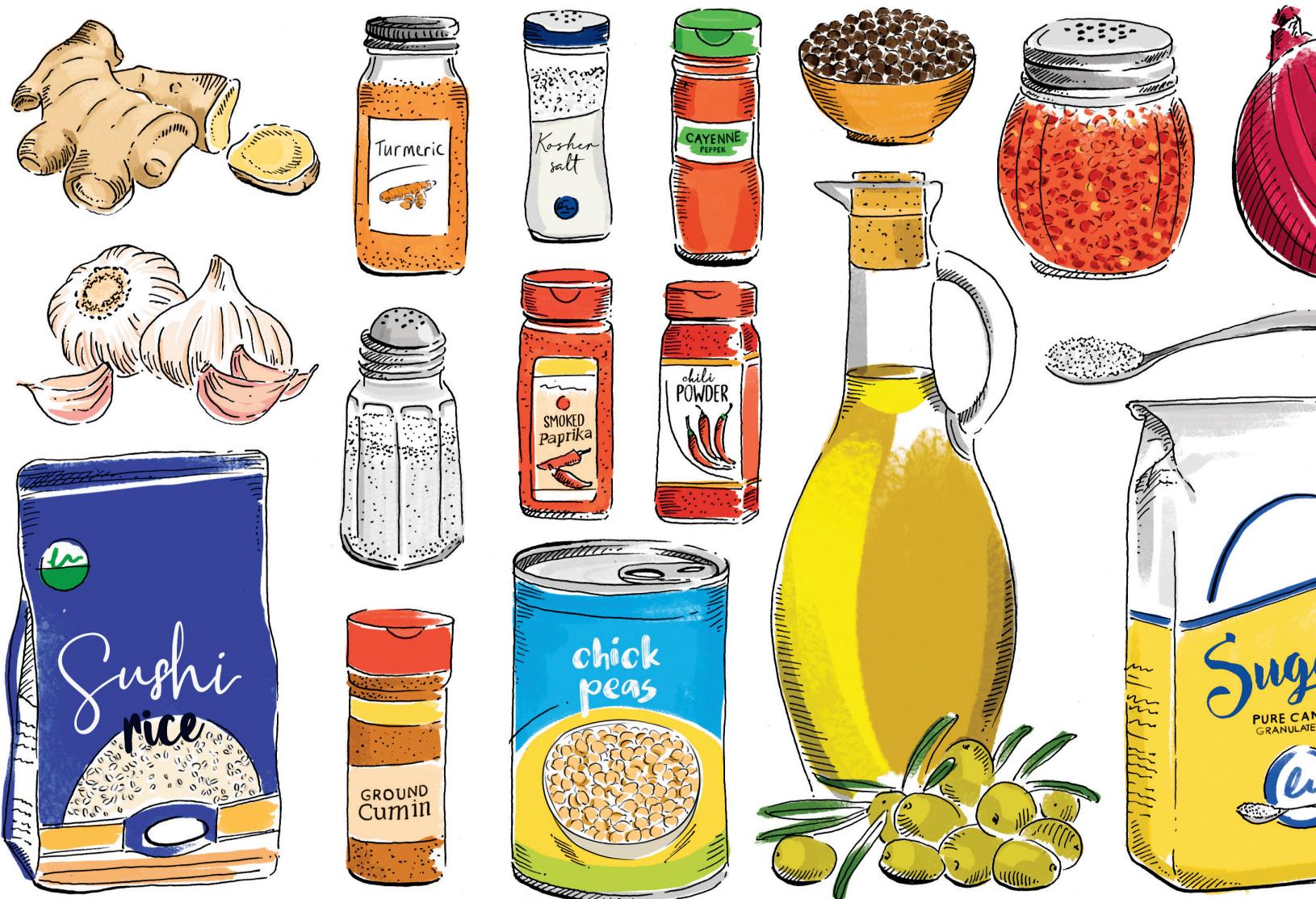
Prior to his work with Hathaway

Brown, Kurtz headed the alumni engagement team at Baldwin Wallace University for eight years after spending four years there as a development officer.

Kurtz earned a bachelor of arts degree at Baldwin Wallace University and a master of fine arts in performing arts management at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York (CUNY).

Before working in higher education, Kurtz's career path included work as an airline pilot for US Airways Express, general manager of the Cleveland Play House, and other fine arts organizations.

Thought Process



RECIPE

Borough of Agriculture

BY JEFF HAGAN '86

Chef, grower, and creator Raina Leora Robinson '16 is cofounder of the culinary nonprofit Cafe Forsaken, a worker-owner at Woke Foods, and assistant baker at Anti-Conquest Bread Co.—three enterprises that offer community food relief in the Bronx where she lives.

"I've always been a creative person who didn't have an outlet but felt a lot of creative energy,"

she says. She found that outlet in food, and more specifically in food justice.

At Oberlin, Robinson was a member of Third World Co-op (TWC) and during breaks held food industry jobs in New York. When she was 20, her father died from liver cancer. "When he was sick, I was working at this really bougie juice bar in Manhattan. It was a green juice, like a spinach, kale, cucumber kind of situation. It cost about \$12 for a 16-ounce juice. And I thought, 'That's interesting—who's buying this, and why have I never heard of it?' Whether the

health claims were true or not, it was just the idea.

"Thinking of what I didn't have access to at home, and then comparing that to being in a food co-op at Oberlin and all of the things I was learning there, some things became apparent to me."

When a family friend—pioneering food justice advocate Karen Washington—opened a farmer's market in the Bronx, Robinson jumped at the chance to work there. "Oh, wow—Black people in the Bronx farm! It opened my eyes," Robinson says. "She showed me community gardens

and stuff upstate that was not on my radar. It felt so far away, but it actually wasn't. Suddenly I had access to so many vegetables that I didn't know existed. That was really interesting to me."

With the COVID-19 pandemic making life even harder for those on the edge—including people like Robinson and her food industry colleagues who lost income sources—Robinson shifted her work to providing direct food relief. "As a member of TWC, the community and having fellowship in the kitchen with all of my friends—that was really



transformative for me. And I carry that energy with me when I cook for people now in New York," she says.

Beginning with the new year, Robinson will attend New York University for a master's degree in food studies to learn about food policy and food systems.

"I don't want to make meals for people forever. I don't want to be a Band-Aid. I want to actually solve the problem of food insecurity and food access. I don't have the answers right now. But it's my personal goal."

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [WOKEFOODS.COOP](#) AND [@CAFEFORSAKEN](#) ON INSTAGRAM.

Chickpeas and Turmeric Rice

YIELD: 4 servings

INGREDIENTS

Turmeric Ginger Garlic Rice

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1½ | cups short-grain sushi rice, rinsed three times (until water runs clear), and drained |
| 2 | tsp olive oil |
| 1-inch | knob of ginger, grated |
| 4 | cloves of garlic, grated |
| 1½ | tsp ground turmeric |
| ½ | tsp ground cumin |
| 1 | tsp salt |
| About 2 cups water | |

Baked Chickpeas

- | | |
|----|---|
| 2 | 15-oz cans chickpeas, low sodium. Drained, rinsed, and patted dry |
| 1½ | Tbsp olive oil |
| ½ | tsp smoked paprika |
| ½ | tsp chili powder |
| ¼ | tsp cayenne |
| ¼ | tsp kosher salt |

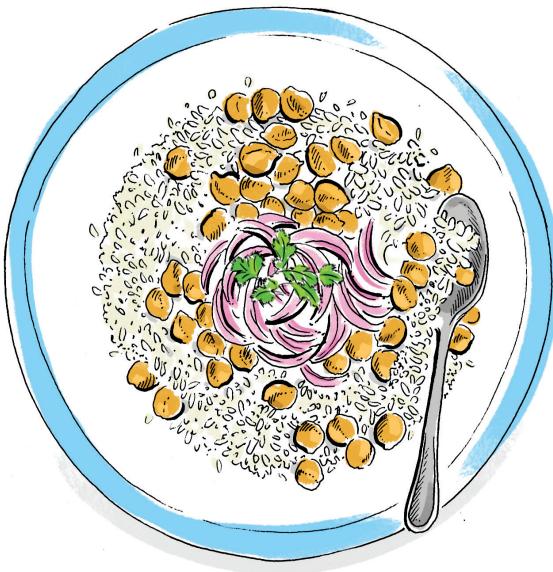
Easy Pickled Red Onions

"Quick pickles are something I always keep stocked in my kitchen," says Robinson. "They are simple to make and add brightness and a pleasant acidity to any meal."

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1 | medium red onion, thinly sliced |
| ½ | cup water |
| ½ | cup apple cider vinegar |
| 1 | tsp kosher salt |
| ½ | tsp sugar |
| ½ | tsp red pepper flakes |
| ½ | tsp whole black peppercorns |

Garnish + Toppings

A handful of any chopped green herbs plus scallion tops. "I like cilantro best for this recipe, but parsley, mint, dill, or torn basil leaves work great, too."



DIRECTIONS

Quick Pickled Onions

- Pack sliced onions into a mason jar or other heatproof container.
- In a small saucepan over medium heat, bring water, vinegar, salt, sugar, and spices to a boil.
- Remove from heat and allow brine to cool slightly, for about 5 minutes.
- Carefully pour brine over onions, cover, and refrigerate until ready to use. Quick pickled onions will last about three weeks in the fridge.

Rice

- In a medium-sized pot over low-medium heat, warm olive oil.
- Add grated ginger, garlic, turmeric, and cumin. Stir and toast until fragrant, about 1 minute.
- Add rinsed and drained sushi rice. Give it a stir to make sure the rice and spices are incorporated. Your rice should be a golden yellow.
- Tip for perfectly cooked rice that's not too wet or too dry: Level out your rice in the pot and place your index finger to the surface of the rice. Add enough water to reach your first knuckle. This should be about 2 cups of water.
- Add salt and stir to combine.
- Raise to high heat and allow rice to come to a boil.
- Cover and reduce heat to low for 20 minutes.
- Remove rice from heat and allow to sit covered for at least 10 minutes.

Chickpeas

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees F
- Toss drained chickpeas in olive oil, dry spices, and salt until evenly coated.
- Spread chickpeas in an even layer on a parchment-lined sheet tray.
- Bake on middle rack for 10 minutes. Toss chickpeas on the tray with a spoon and bake for another 5 minutes.
- Remove from oven and allow to cool slightly.

To serve:

Portion rice and chickpeas evenly among four plates. Top generously with pickled onions and chopped green herbs.



FALSE VIBRATO

High Notes and Misdemeanors

BY KATE MOONEY '08

Henry Bloomfield '11 crafts opera from the pages of the Mueller Report

By now, most Americans have heard of the Mueller Report, the massive tome detailing former Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election and President Trump's alleged obstructions of justice. But far fewer have actually read it, or know what to make of the nearly 500-page, heavily redacted historical document, which ultimately failed to provide evidence of crimes sufficient to indict Trump.

Instead of the political bombshell some had expected, the report became a cultural moment, inspiring memes and dramatic interpretations, including star-studded live readings from the likes of Larry David and Kevin Kline. Henry Bloomfield '11 also saw salvageable material among the ruins and wrote and recorded *Ongoing Matter*, a 29-minute operatic concept album using language culled from the text as lyrics and set to original composition, which he describes as a "hybrid of upbeat-offbeat pop and industrial funk."

"I just found it fascinating that there was this phrase 'The Mueller Report,' and that everyone has heard of this thing but no one has read it," the 31-year-old says. "I wanted to breathe life into it, with my own imagination but trying to let the words—the absurdity and the deceit and corruption—speak for themselves. It didn't need much of a nudge." Bloomfield was also looking for an artistic challenge, a prompt of

sorts that would force him to look outside of himself for inspiration, and found Mueller's text "ripe with content."

The Manhattan-based composer was immediately drawn to the "inherent drama" of the document, citing lines like Donald Trump Jr.'s email reply to a Russian intermediary promising dirt on Hillary Clinton, "If it's what you say I love it especially later in the summer," that struck Bloomfield as a wonderful pop lyric. The ready-made storyline and cast of characters screamed "operatic, in that 'Tommy,' the Who tradition," he says.

Bloomfield saw an opportunity to interpret the text thematically, rather than linearly. The final product is an eight song concept album; listeners play the 29-minute recording straight through, or listen episodically. Bloomfield vocalizes each "cast member" and includes vocal clips of the men themselves. He also plays keyboards, bass, and drums and is joined on a few tracks by guest string and horn players.

Bloomfield first read the book in November 2019, taking notes and looking for stand-out lines, and then again, a second time, to organize the language into emotional and contextual categories. The first track, "Honest Loyalty," plays like a catchy-synthy pop romp reminiscent of George Michael's "Faith," treating the Comey-Trump back and forth of "I need loyalty, honest loyalty" like a negotiation between lovers. "A Drunk/Drugged Up Loser" takes a darker dip, employing lawyer Robert Costello's disingenuous words to Cohen, "Sleep well tonight you have friends in high places," as a menacing chorus. "The Villain of His Story" plays like a time-out, spotlighting Michael Cohen's court testimony; listening, one can imagine a solo actor on stage, singing his tale.

While *Ongoing Matter* might sound like an ambitious quarantine project, Bloomfield actually wrapped recording in late February. While he's uncertain what next iterations the album might take, for now, he is just happy to have completed his take before the next Mueller Project visionary inevitably does. He likened his work to "The Black Clown," Langston Hughes' 1931 poem that included musical directions on the opposite side of the page, which didn't see a staged performance until 2018 at Lincoln Center.

"Somehow, it literally took [almost] 100 years for anyone to take the directions that literally were etched on the page," he jokes. "I'm not in any rush."

Until then, you can listen to it at ongoingmatter.com.

FOOT PATROL

Mister Rogers' Neighbor

BY KATE MOONEY '08

A memoir from Francois Clemons '67 recalls his time with the children's television icon

FRANCOIS S. CLEMONS '67, A GRAMMY-winning opera singer, founder of the Harlem Spiritual Ensemble, and the actor best known for portraying Officer Clemmons on *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, has now added memoirist to his list of accomplishments. He released his first book, *Officer Clemmons: A Memoir*, in early May, which he feels was very good timing.

"People are reading more—and this is a period of time when people want to know the truth," Clemons says on a call from Middlebury, Vermont. The former Alexander Twilight Artist in Residence and director of the Martin Luther King Spiritual Choir at Middlebury College, Clemons, now retired, has kept busy during quarantine. He is already working on his next manuscript, a book of nonfiction essays; participating in Black Lives Matter protests; and singing, always—even on the phone during interviews. Clemons breaks out into "Far Away Places," a favorite he sang with his mother while growing up and which inspired a love of travel, both literal and figurative, as he sought refuge in music and in the unconditional love he found in friendship with Fred Rogers.

Officer Clemmons chronicles a gay Black man's lifelong search for a sense of belonging. "It's a story of a young musician," he explains, and of a place "where a young black boy can go to learn to be gay," which Clemons felt was missing in his formative years. Growing up in Alabama, and then Youngstown, Ohio, with an abusive father and stepfather, and a mother who couldn't accept his sexual orientation, Clemons spent years holding in his pain and denying his true sense of self. But from an early age, he learned that music gave him an emotional refuge.

Clemons writes of his early bond with his grandfather, with whom he sang during his early childhood in Mississippi. His grandfather had a cane, which he convinced Clemons—then nicknamed Little Buttercup—was the



magic origin of music and tales of "Afrique." "You can imagine for a child, we had such a secret, and I got so much joy out of it," he recalls. Clemons recaptured this experience in his children's book, *The Saga of Little Buttercup & the Majic Cane*.

When his grandfather went missing during a flood, never to return, Clemons grieved and held onto the cane for comfort, until his family, concerned by the depth of sadness in such a young boy, took it away. "When they took the cane away from me, I burst into song. It was like a wound opened deep inside of me," he says. This formative experience taught Clemons "you do what you have to do to survive." For him, that has been enduring struggles through spiritual song.

"I have a calling to sing these songs and to be involved in the arts," Clemons says. From singing in church choirs in Youngstown, to traveling to St. Petersburg, Russia, with the Oberlin College Choir, to traveling the world with the Harlem Spiritual Ensemble, Clemons has honored the tradition of Negro African Spirituals.

During graduate school at Carnegie Mellon,

while singing in the Third Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, Clemons met Fred Rogers. Rogers was immediately impressed by Clemons' powerful voice and essentially recruited him for the role of Officer Clemmons on his show.

At first, Clemons shied away from the opportunity. "I didn't like those puppets, it seemed ridiculous to me, a grown man doing it," he recalls. But he couldn't pass up the chance to sing on one of America's most beloved television programs and to be recognized worldwide for his voice. While at first the prospect of playing a cop went against his every intuition as a Black man in America, he felt proud that his role on the show communicated a "powerful anti-racist message" to viewers. And the friendship and mentorship between Clemons and Rogers proved to be the great spiritual salvation of Clemons' life.

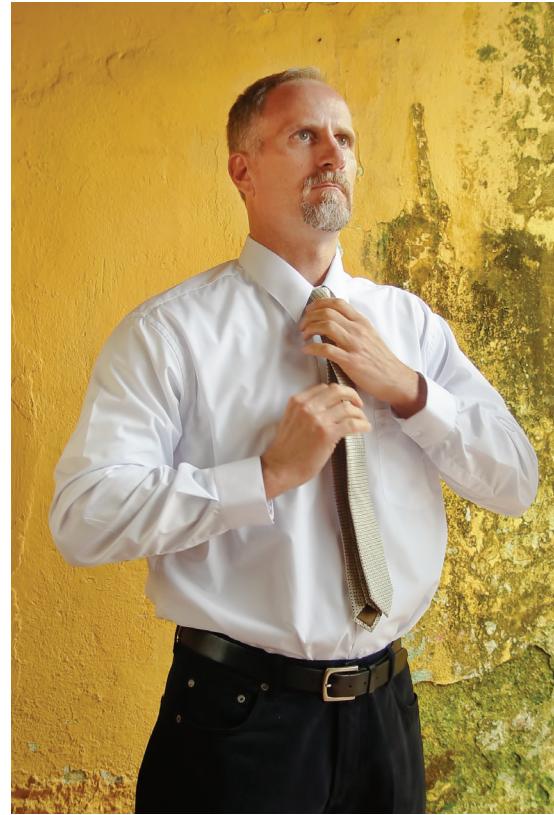
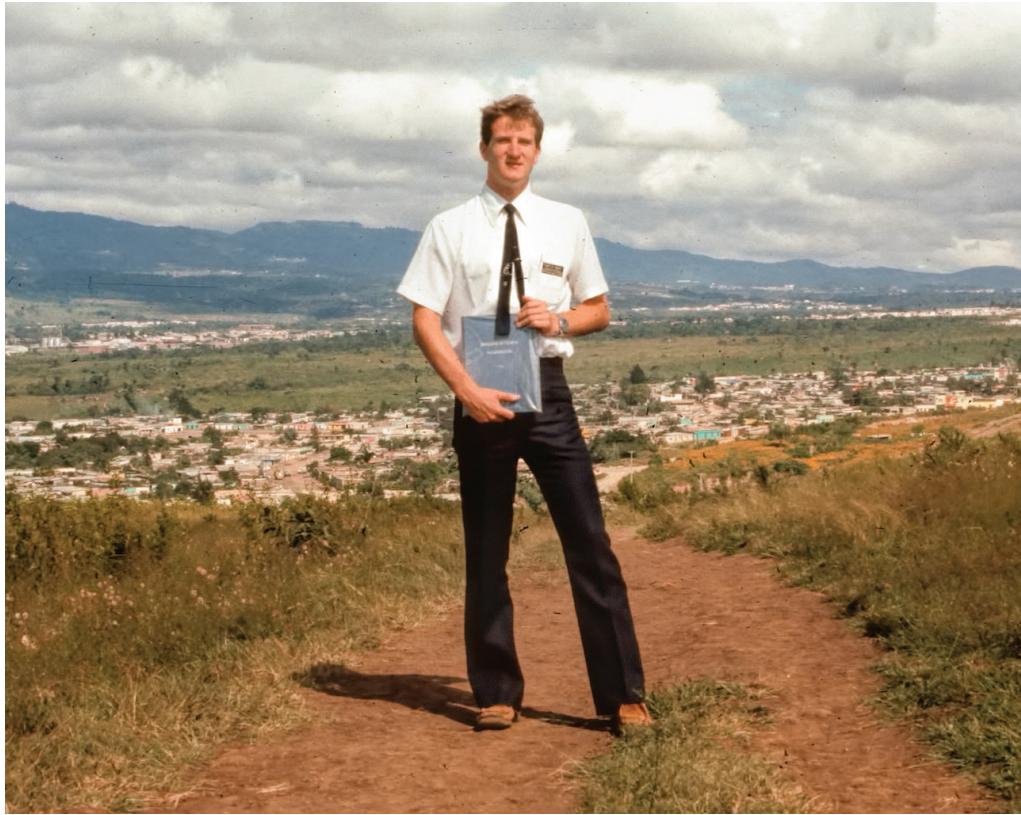
Clemons describes Rogers as a surrogate father, the first man to care for him unconditionally. "When you're loved, you become a person," he says. "Fred Rogers told

me he loved me, and it made all the difference. I stood up, I stopped bending over and hiding my face."

When Martin Luther King was murdered and the streets of Pittsburgh erupted with despair, Clemons was inconsolable. He remembers feeling "a deep sense of loss of something that could never be replaced." Rogers and his wife took him in. "You're going to come with us because we want you to be safe," Rogers told him. "It was a moment of acknowledgement that I needed to be cared for, the first time I really felt that a man stood up on my behalf and said, 'This is what you need.'"

In the end, the values of the *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* mirrored Clemons' own, an approach to living he hopes readers will take away from the memoir. "I wanted to be successful, hardworking, 'love your neighbor as yourself,'" he says. "Wasn't interested in anything that didn't belong to me, not robbing anything, and still have a full wholesome life."

And no matter what, always singing through it.



LEAP FROM FAITH

Latter Day Conversion

BY JOSHUA SPERLING

An Oberlin professor looks back at his elder self

THE PROBLEM OF THE PERSISTENCE OF
identity is one of those metaphysical puzzles that afflicts philosophers and non-philosophers alike. Why should it make sense to say that I am the same person today that I was 10 years ago, or that I will be 10 years from now? Behavioral economists routinely demonstrate how little any of us seems to value future wellbeing over present reward, while in our private lives it is common to marvel at the mysteries of our own past behavior and relationships. Religious converts often speak of rebirth, recovering addicts of going clean, political activists of getting woke. For Geoff Pingree, Oberlin professor of cinema studies and English, the metamorphosis at the heart of his youth has been more difficult to describe, a source of self-reflection, ambivalence, and, most recently, a moving new autobiographical film, *The Return of Elder Pingree—Memoir of a Departed Mormon*.

At 19, instead of going straight through college, Pingree spent two years on a Mormon mission in Guatemala. The experience was formative, though not in the way the church intended. On returning stateside, Pingree began to drift away from his faith, eventually leaving the church in his 20s (though he still maintains good relations with his largely Utah-based family). During the following years, he studied for a PhD at the University of Chicago, becoming a teacher and documentary filmmaker. Since 2001, he has taught at Oberlin, where he mentors film students and oversees StoryLens, a nonprofit documentary collective staffed by soon-to-be and recent graduates.

Pingree has already produced several well-received documentaries, including *The Foreigner's Home*, a lyrical portrait of Toni Morrison made with Oberlin colleague Rian Brown-Orso, but *The Return of Elder Pingree* is by far his most personal project to date, and took 15 years to finish. Initially reluctant to tell his own story, he was compelled by friends, colleagues, and a fateful trip to the Maine Media Workshops. In 2006, Pingree hired a small film crew to travel with him to Guatemala, where he hoped to reconnect with the people who were closest to him some 20 years earlier. The

resulting film is a series of remarkably candid reunions. We meet Miriam Sosa, a former friend and potential convert who was also the focus of secret romantic longings; Federico Obando, an older colleague and local schoolteacher; and Doña Amelia, an aging landlady who cares for missionaries and cannot bear to learn that the older Pingree has since fallen away from God. Though many of these encounters are uncomfortable, they are always heartfelt. “You have a special place in our hearts,” a former convert tells the older Pingree. “Whatever you might have done in that time you did it believing in it then, and that makes it valid.”

At times *The Return of Elder Pingree* can resemble the many personal quest documentaries that emerged in the early 2000s with the rise of digital video. What sets it apart from these films is its candor and complexity. Drawing on private journals, personal photographs, and voice-recorded “letters” sent to his twin brother, Pingree’s film is a window onto an experience—the two years countless young Mormons spend abroad—all but absent in contemporary cinema. What do these immaculately dressed, well-groomed teenagers actually think and feel about their work in distant lands? With echoes of James Joyce, Pingree’s documentary is a searching portrait of a

young man wrestling with his own relationship to god. “I feel so alone,” we read in one journal entry. “I’m still struggling to conform my lifestyle to what is required. The trouble is my too lackadaisical not-willing-to-give-100% attitude.”

Perhaps the most unsettling current running through *The Return of Elder Pingree* involves the politics of Guatemala: the long shadow of the civil war and the rising tide of a violent drug trade. A powerful scene in the film returns Pingree to a dirt village road where he once witnessed the murder of three civilians, while another observes a present-day vigil held for the disappeared.

“The two things that would get you sent home as a missionary were having sex and talking about politics,” Pingree remembers. Though he is no longer afraid to broach the political, the film is not a political tract. With no axe to grind, *The Return of Elder Pingree* allows for paradox and acknowledges that in some ways the Mormon church, at least in Guatemala, may be a positive force in the lives of its adherents, offering them community and haven. This is not a film about the finality of judgement, however, but the ongoing ambiguity of relationships. In scene after scene we watch former friends reckon with how they have changed while refusing to betray the fondness of shared memories.

The Return of Elder Pingree premiered at the Santa Cruz Film Festival, received last year’s Grand Jury Prize at the Lonely Seal Film, Screenwriting, and Music Festival, won both Best Director and Best Documentary Feature awards at Irvine, California’s Silent River Film Festival, and is now available for streaming on Amazon Prime and through Filmocracy. It also served as the closing film for Cinema and Change, the eight-week online summer course for incoming Oberlin students. Given the abiding focus on themes of ritual, identity, and coming-of-age, it is perhaps fitting that the last film in the series reveals that even Oberlin professors were once confused 19-year-olds. It also shows that however swift coming-of-age may or may not be, coming to terms with one’s youth can take years, even decades.

Joshua Sperling is visiting assistant professor of cinema studies and creative writing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT WWW.RETURNOFELDERPINGREE.COM. TO PURCHASE THE FILM, USE DISCOUNT CODE **Obies2021**.

POEM

The Goat

SUSANNA KITTREDGE '98

I thought a poem last night in bed,

something about a goat and an apple?

I just know it was brilliant.

I wanted to get up and write but the blankets

had me pinned down, whispering

“Shushhh. You’ll remember it

in the morning. How could you forget

a poem as beautiful as this?”

But now the words are gone

and all I can see is the rough field

of grass and thistle and the rough,

dumb goat standing there

with its rear toward me, its head

turned slightly to the right as it tries to remember why

it picked up the sweet, shiny, red thing in its mouth and what

it was going to do next.

“The Goat,” from Susanna Kittredge’s first full-length poetry collection, *The Future Has a Reputation*, published in 2020 by CW Books, Cincinnati, Ohio



POST-MODERN TIMES

Guendelsberger's *On the Clock:* The High Stakes of Low Wages

BY JO STEIGERWALD

Emily Guendelsberger '06 spent three years working in and living on low-wage jobs in America; jobs regimented to the nanosecond and permeated with invasive technological oversight. Immersion at an Amazon warehouse, a Covergys call center, and a McDonald's franchise inspired her 2019 book, *On the Clock: What Low-Wage Work Did to Me and How It Drives America Insane*. Before her "experiment," Guendelsberger's own job experiences ranged from working at Oberlin's Dascomb dining hall to copy shop employee, receptionist, and newspaper journalist.

On The Clock grew from her 2015 article about Uber drivers in Philadelphia, as Uber moved into unwelcoming cities with the claim of providing great jobs; to wit, that their drivers could make \$90,000 a year. The "baldness of that embarrassing lie" led her to talk to drivers, and then convince her editor into letting her work as a full-time Uber driver. Her subsequent article revealed that the Uber app favored the company, the best drivers (ex-cabbies) made only \$10 to \$11 an hour, and Guendelsberger's story went viral.

A few months later, her paper closed. Rising interest from agents and publishers in her Uber

story led Guendelsberger to examine that intersection of work, wages, and technology in a longer format. "I had always been interested in experiential journalism because sometimes we lose sight of how things feel. You can track the goodness or badness through numbers, but you cannot understand what a job was like until you experience it yourself."

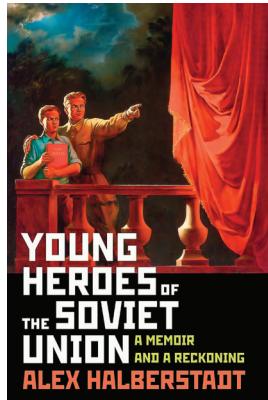
So she packed her car and took a job at a behemoth Amazon warehouse outside Louisville. A few months later found her at Covergys in North Carolina. It was here that she wrote a 90-page book proposal in a Barnes & Noble café, next to the Walmart parking lot where she lived. Yes, the parking lot. Guendelsberger lived out of her car while working for the largest call center in America. "I didn't realize a book proposal could change as you discovered more! I sold the book after stints at Amazon and Covergys; hard to do after working the day job." *Publisher's Weekly* describes *On the Clock* as a "spiritual successor" to Barbara Ehrenreich's 2011 book *Nickel and Dimed*.

Throughout *On the Clock*, Guendelsberger acknowledges that what sets her experience apart from many of her temporary colleagues is that she knows she gets to leave. The jobs she takes for research and experiential journalism purposes are finite for her, and she accepts conditions that would have otherwise driven her to quit: dizzying fatigue and painkiller-filled vending machines at Amazon; caustic customers and bathroom breaks termed "stealing company time" at Covergys; food thrown in her face at McDonald's. "What struck me was how much more people will tolerate in a non-white collar

job when all other options are lacking. My coworkers were persuaded that they did not deserve better than this. And *this* means having no dignity, no way to assert that you are a human being who has feelings. It grinds you down."

Guendelsberger was radicalized by the experience. "You cannot see someone you are living with doing dental surgery to herself with a safety pin and a bottle of isopropyl alcohol and not be changed. I haven't had to destroy myself to survive." Until she began her research, she looked at low wage jobs through the lens of summer jobs in high school or college—employment memories based on work before technology tracked every second. "I think that an honest day's work would pay enough for you to live without being terrified of eviction or hunger, with mental energy for yourself when the work day is over."

Despite the grueling peril it describes, *On the Clock* is leavened with humor, contextualized through economics, and informed by philosophy. And for many it touches a nerve. One reader, a former call center worker, told Guendelsberger that the description of a bad call at Covergys gave her a panic attack and she had to put the book down. "That means what I was trying to do, worked." Guendelsberger credits a class, Arnie Cox's Music and Embodied Cognition, at Oberlin as key to her effectiveness as a writer, especially for this project. "Learning why music works, how you hear music and feel a certain way, and trying to pass along what you are feeling to another...that's the basic function of empathy. And that understanding made me a better writer."

BOOKSHELF**Recent Releases**
Young Heroes of the Soviet Union: A Memoir and a Reckoning
Alex Halberstadt '92

RANDOM HOUSE

While the Great Men view of history—in which history can be explained as the large sweeping actions of heroic figures—still dominates Texas-approved textbooks, it has long been rejected by others, such as Marxists (including Marx) and the Russian literary icon Leo Tolstoy. In a way, Alex Halberstadt, a son of the Soviet Union, also rejects it—though not necessarily in favor of viewing class struggle as the engine of history. Rather he locates history closer to home: the story of his family, including his grandfather, who worked at the notorious Lubyanka prison in the Soviet Union before eventually becoming one of Stalin's bodyguards. Call it the not-so-great men theory. With this memoir, Halberstadt seeks to confront his family's personal and political past, by among other things, visiting the grandfather and spending time with his father who stayed behind when Alex came to the U.S. at age 10. "This, I understood finally, was history: not the ordered narrative of books but an affliction that spread from parent to child, sister to brother, husband to wife," he writes.


Tehrangoles Dreaming: Intimacy and Imagination in Southern California's Iranian Pop Music
Farzaneh Hemmasi '97

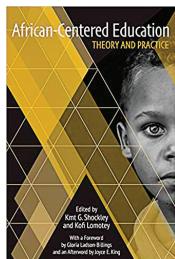
DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Los Angeles is the home to the largest concentration of Iranians outside of Iran, earning it the nickname Tehrangeles. According to Farzaneh Hemmasi, an associate professor of ethnomusicology at the University of Toronto, it's also the birthplace of a distinctive form of postrevolutionary pop music. Tehrangeles Dreaming explores how cultural products made in L.A. express "modes of Iranianness not possible in Iran."


Shoreline Recall
Freedom Baird '86

DRUMLIN

Freedom Baird set up an old military campaign desk with a pad of paper and writing implements at spots along Boston's various island shorelines and invited people to jot down or draw their memories and impressions of the locales. Though it appears as an exercise in looking back, the effort is actually geared toward looking forward: Without dramatic intervention, climate change will obliterate many of these waterfronts, which range from a fishing pier and a state park to a wastewater treatment site and a Civil War-era fort. It forces visitors to contemplate what future generations will look back on, and from where—"Anticipatory nostalgia for a place that will eventually be long gone."


African-Centered Education:
Theory and Practice
Edited by Kmt G. Shockley and Kofi Lomotey '74

MYERS EDUCATION PRESS

African-Centered Education brings together some of the top thinkers in the field, with contributors discussing the history, methods, successes, and challenges of African-centered education, discussions of the efforts made to counter the miseducation of Black children, and possible ways forward for Black children and Black communities. The authors address what African-centered education is, how it works, and why it is a critical imperative at this moment.


The Next Great Migration:
The Beauty and Terror of Life on the Move
Sonia Shah '90

BLOOMSBURY

If science journalist Sonia Shah can see around corners—her last book, *Pandemic: Tracking Contagions from Cholera to Ebola and Beyond*, appeared four years before COVID did—it's probably time to start paying attention to the topic of her new book. *The Next Great Migration* looks not only at the movement of great swaths of people expected by climate change, but also the natural history of movement of many living things, for whom terms such as native and non-native appear increasingly irrelevant. Worried this is a buzzkill? Well, spoiler alert: Shah concludes the good outweighs the bad.

After Minneapolis

Oberlin faculty members discuss
what happens next, and what could.

After the killing of George Floyd under the knee of a Minneapolis police officer, six members of the Oberlin College faculty came together in June 2020 for an online teach-in to discuss the event and its aftermath. That full conversation is available online, along with a transcript of their conversation; what follows here are excerpts from that discussion.



Gina Pérez

Professor and Interim Chair of Comparative American Studies, Teach-In Host

The grim reality of the recent police killing of George Floyd is sadly what brings us together today. And our goals with this teach-in are to provide a space for faculty to share their perspectives and insights about the recent events, as well as other important information and contexts for understanding the history of white supremacy in the United States, as well as the ongoing demands for justice that are taking place across the country today.

All of our panelists' comments today will demonstrate that systems of racial and social control are not new to this country. And while recent protests and organizing and responses reflect the incredible rage and frustration and anger that many of us feel, this moment is also an invitation to recognize what my colleague, Professor Meredith Gadsby, reminded me of this morning, which is Audre Lorde's important insights about the restorative power of anger.

It is this restorative power of anger that I would argue informs not only the work that we do and share with all of you today, but it also informs the sentiment shared by civil rights attorney and legal scholar Michelle Alexander, who recently observed on her reflections of the past two weeks that "Our only hope for our collective liberation is a politics of deep solidarity rooted in love." So, it is this restorative, righteous anger as well as hope that guide our conversations today.



Matthew Rarey

Assistant Professor of Art History who teaches and researches African and Black Atlantic visual culture and representations of enslavement from the 17th century through the present

In a photograph taken on the night of May 27, a participant in the uprising playfully poses in front of a burning AutoZone in Minneapolis. In the ensuing days, this image and others making use of the stark contrast of dark night skies, black skin, and burning buildings proliferated in social and mainstream media, where they documented the smoldering awesomeness of Black rage.

Three days after this photo was taken, activist Tamika Mallory castigated white Americans for their perceptions of the protests as unprecedented or unrestrained. "America has looted Black people," she said. "America looted the Native Americans when they first came here. Looting is what you do. We learned it from you. We learned violence from you, and if you want us to do better, then, dammit, you do better."

Images remain crucial to the project of erasing explicit anti-Black violence. This painting [*Brazilian Landscape with a Worker's House* by Frans Post] from 1655 depicts a group of enslaved Africans in northeastern Brazil. The artist's emphasis on the Africans' docility and merriment makes it seem as if their labor is natural, even beautiful. In so doing, this image obscures the violence committed by white slavers and erases indigenous claims to the land and its care. I submit that this is actually an image of explicit anti-Black violence precisely because it does not appear to be as such.

Over the coming months, experience tells us that white supremacists' ideologies will find a way to weaponize the stark and fiery images of so-called "property destruction" that resulted from protests. Indeed, they always have.

This engraving from 1796 depicts the early stages of the African revolt against the white planter regime in what is now Haiti [*Révolte des Nègres à St. Domingue* by G. Jacowick]. The cacophony of bodies and plumes of smoke served to confirm upper-class French viewers' perception of Blackness as inherently unrestrained in the absence of white surveillance. In the words of activist L.S. Pearce: "So when I hear people complain about the riots...or rather, the REVOLT...I hear people crying, 'But why would you burn down your own plantation?'"

We must be ready to call out the centuries of narratives carefully constructed by those in power, which urge us to interpret images like [this] as depictions of apolitical, generic, and baseless Black anger. Resist that urge, because actions by Black protesters and Black artists occur in the context of long, location-specific histories of colonial violence.



Charles Peterson

Associate Professor of Africana studies whose research and teaching interests include Africana philosophy, film, and Africana political and cultural theory

There's this media desire to show some image of a building burning and then quote Martin Luther King Jr., as if King would, from his resting place, look down in shame and disappointment at contemporary Black activists. Certainly, King was not an advocate of what we would call violence, but he certainly was an advocate of direct action, or civil disobedience. The media would have us believe that King did not believe in some sort of social disruption, and that's not the case. In that sense, I think the activists today are in line with him.

I want to speak and think about how this thing we call violence, or militant Black action, is a very real and a very long and enduring part of the struggle of African-descended peoples within the United States. And much of it is grounded in an understanding of the implacability of white supremacy, and the implacability of those institutions, and the failure of those institutions, say post-Civil War, post-Reconstruction, that were unwilling to deliver upon the promises of freedom. We can look at the earliest rebellions in the 17th century. We can think about the rebellions in the 18th century and about, who I believe, arguably, was the first theorist of militant action, David Walker, and his writings in 1827.

We also have...Ida B. Wells, who advocated for self-defense in the face of lynching. We certainly have to take very seriously within the Civil Rights movement not just the Black Panther Party, which most people know about, but also...the Deacons for Justice, a militant self-defense group in Louisiana. And I think most notably, and unheralded, Robert Williams of Monroe, North Carolina, who, as a member of the NAACP, armed and organized his followers.

What we have to realize is that these instances are assertions of an idea about Black humanity, which is going unrecognized by white supremacists' violence. Walker argues Black humanity in light of a Christian-based belief. Africans are the children of God, and inherently should be granted certain respect. Ida B. Wells is attempting to reclaim and fight for—literally fight for—the rights guaranteed by the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution. And El-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz, better known as Malcolm X, in his articulations for Black self-defense, stood upon the ground of the fundamental human rights that Black people have. And these are human rights as understood and established in the post-WWII period with the rise of the United Nations and its various doctrines. So, it's important to understand that in most cases, certain types of civil disobedience have been aligned with and interwoven with, complementary to, militant action, or what we call armed aspects or militant struggle.

There are very disciplined, very specific actions that can take place, but I encourage you not to fall into the idea that these are people wilding in the streets. Or that this is a sign of lack of control. Or this is some sort of action that is in complete contradiction to the ways in which African peoples in the United States have been fighting for their freedom over the past 400 years.



Renee Romano

Robert S. Danforth Professor of History and Professor of Comparative American Studies and Africana Studies who writes and teaches about white supremacy, racial violence, and the legacies of long-standing historical injustice

We have never effectively undermined or fully displaced the ideologies of racial difference or the stereotypes of Black criminology that developed as a result of the history of slavery.

Those ideologies still shape our political systems, our institutions, attitudes of both implicit and explicit bias. We have never offered meaningful reparations or economic compensation for slavery or Jim Crow, and instead, over and over again we have seen policies and practices that protect and augment the privileged economic position of whites.

When I see the video of Derek Chauvin looking straight into the camera while in the act of murdering George Floyd, I think of lynching photographs where crowds of white people stand looking into a camera, with a Black body hanging in the background. They could look straight into a camera because they had no fear they would be held legally accountable for their actions. They knew that in the United States there was widespread acceptance of racial violence to construct, maintain, and uphold white supremacy.

So, when I look at what is happening in the country today, I see familiar patterns of violence, but I also see a disruption of the capacity of people to remain ignorant and to deny the reality of systemic racism. In the past few weeks there've been protests in nearly every American state, in cities, small towns, suburbs, and rural areas. The number of Americans who say racism and discrimination is a big problem in the United States is up 26 points since 2015. The *Washington Post* reported that over two-thirds of Americans believe George Floyd's killing reflects broader problems in policing. After the killing of Michael Brown in 2014, two-thirds of whites insisted that his killing had nothing to do with race. And we're not just seeing a change in polls but momentum for political positions that until now had rarely been discussed in the mainstream, like the defunding of the police.

These changes are due to the incredible activism of the contemporary Black freedom struggle and especially the Black Lives Matter movement, which has been fighting to bring attention to systemic racism and to force Americans to reckon with the nation's history of racial violence.

So, it feels to me this could be a historical moment, and I urge you all to be part of this history and not to just watch it from the sidelines. Get involved in whatever way you can, because this is everyone's fight for justice and for a truly democratic country.



David Forrest

Assistant Professor of Politics who studies social movements and the politics of inequality in the United States

If you look beyond the headlines, you'll find that since the Great Recession, a growing collective of organizers have really broadened and radicalized progressive politics in Minneapolis.

These organizers have helped to dismantle popular acquiescence to the city's increasingly unequal and highly racialized political economy. They have developed a large and a diverse community of activists who possess the capacity to break rules and build majorities in support of egalitarian change.

By the time of Floyd's death, this community of activists were already among the nation's most engaged participants in protests against police brutality and other inequalitarian practices, such as exclusionary zoning, eviction, and wage theft. They also helped to elect and influence a new cohort of local officials, who have further stoked popular opposition to the status quo. People like city council members Steve Fletcher and Jeremiah Ellison, themselves former organizers, have led successful charges to eliminate single-family zoning, create inclusionary zoning, increase subsidies for affordable housing development, provide free legal assistance to renters, mandate paid sick leave, and most recently, begin the process of redesigning institutions of public safety.

On their own, these localized reforms are not enough to reverse growing and racialized

inequality or to save lives like George Floyd's. They do, however, further legitimate the aspirations for a better world witnessed in the events like the George Floyd uprising.

Organizers have accelerated and channeled the popular displeasure unleashed by these various crises.

How did they do it?

First, they have learned how to embrace and defend abolitionist demands, including, for example, demands for divestment from the police or the expansion of public housing.

Second, many organizers in Minneapolis have coached themselves to deploy instructive rhetoric, which clearly describes and politicizes the systems targeted by abolitionist demands. This rhetoric works not by shaming or guiltling regular people but by educating them.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, they've embraced a commitment to grassroots mobilization. That is, to the recruitment of a large majoritarian base, rather than a smaller group of already committed or professional activists. Over the long haul, this approach to mobilization both makes their efforts more democratic and lays a clear path to forging winnable conflicts around their demands.



Jennifer Garcia

Assistant Professor of Politics and Comparative American Studies whose research and teaching focus on American political institutions and race and ethnic politics

There's new work in political science that shows that emotions, in particular anger, are incredibly important when it comes to participating in politics. However, how Black and white Americans' anger influences their participation varies. Black Americans tend to report more resignation. And what we end up seeing is that when we have greater levels of political anger among white Americans, this tends to translate into greater voter turnout. In contrast, under certain circumstances when Black anger is evoked, it produces more participation in political protests and demonstrations—like what we're seeing right now.

The question really becomes, how do we then take this really strong and important momentum that we see happening all across

the country and translate it into sustained mobilization, mobilization that actually has the possibility to change these kinds of outcomes that we're seeing? And I think we have a few reasons for optimism.

First is that, among African Americans and whites, from age 30 and younger, the anger gap is insignificant. And what we're hoping this means is that there will be less disparity in political participation between Blacks and whites.

Second, new technologies continue to provide images of police brutality and racism directly to the people, and Trump et al. continue to invoke racial animus. This has the potential to help sustain political mobilization by, at least in part, continuing to fuel anger. And there are skilled Black political activists trying to catalyze this and use it to push forward a political momentum.

As a result, I think that there are some good opportunities for actually placing sustained pressure on the institutions themselves and elected officials. One of the ways that we need to do this is through the continuation of protests.

When we see this sustained effort, we see elected officials feeling more and more pressure. And while it certainly takes a lot of time and a lot of effort, what we do know is that elected officials do respond to pressure. If they feel their electoral livelihood is in jeopardy, they will respond. And we've seen instances where they will respond in significant ways, like really changing their attitudes and their previously stated positions.



Justin Emeka

Associate Professor of Africana Studies and Theater and a director, writer, and actor in Capoeirista who teaches courses in directing and writing

I hear there's a lot of people saying, "What can we do?" Black and white students. People of all backgrounds are asking, "What do we do in this moment? How can we feel like we're contributing?" Understand that when we're talking about systemic change, there's nothing that we're going to figure out in this forum or today that is going to make us feel like we're

doing right. And that's not even the goal. The goal is not to make ourselves feel good and feel like we're contributing, but to actually make systemic change, which unfortunately doesn't happen in one moment, but happens over the course of generations, and it happens by investing in certain principles and ideas.

Here at Oberlin, the first principle I would encourage is for us to continue to study the history of Black people, wherever you are, and whatever field you're in. If you're in the sciences, study the history of Black people in biology. Study the history of Black people in the classics. Study the history of Black people in philosophy.

We want to look at policies and make sure we have fair and equal and consistent policies that are in place, and demand that those policies are being promoted equally and enforced equally. And we have to not be afraid to dismantle policies that are inadequate.

We have to also invest in the principle of changing hearts and minds—provide education and help people learn and grow from new perspectives. We have to create new visions, hear new voices, that help reveal the imaginations and the experiences of all our diverse people in the country. We have to create efforts that encourage dialogue, that encourage communications.

We have to also just support Black people. Be articulate about your love of Black people, unapologetically articulate a love and support of Black people, so that we understand that we can love everyone and achieve universality by being very specific in loving and supporting Black people. Embrace the diversity of all the different kinds of Black people. There are so many different kinds of Black people. Find a Black community and support them, and uplift them, and affirm them. Help get resources to Black communities. Help provide services to Black organizations and Black communities.

Finally, find ways to impact your own life. Find ways to have conversations with aunts and uncles that you're sometimes too scared to have because it gets too ugly too quick. Have that conversation with that friend who said something ignorant, but find a way to go into that conversation.

I also want to encourage Oberlin people to be upset, to feel your anger, to be sad, but then also remind them that we don't have the luxury to just sit there and live in it. We are the people who are being trained to help reimagine our society. ■

TO WATCH A RECORDING OF THE TEACH-IN, VISIT WWW.oberlin.edu/news/oberlin-holds-teach-george-floyd-uprising



BLIGHT TO THE HEART



"College Day in the Picket Line" outside the White House in February 1917.

OBERLIN STUDENTS AND ALUMNI FOUGHT FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.
OBERLIN COLLEGE DIDN'T. | BY REBEKKAH RUBIN '13

On July 14, 1917, Doris Stevens, Oberlin Class of 1911, stood outside the White House holding a banner taller than herself. It read: “Mr. President, what will you do for women’s suffrage?”

This was not Stevens' first time picketing the White House. She had arrived in D.C. five years earlier to participate in protests but with no intention to stay in the city—until Alice Paul, a militant suffragist and founder of the National Woman's Party, convinced her otherwise. Stevens picketed alongside fellow Oberlin alumna Mary Church Terrell, Class of 1887, who often brought along her teenage daughter.

When the United States entered World War I, some suffragists paused their protests in what they saw as a sign of patriotism. Not Stevens. She believed it was arrogant for President Woodrow Wilson to fight for democracy abroad while women could not participate in democracy in their home country. Wilson, originally unbothered by the protestors, grew angry that the protests continued while the country was at war.

That day in July, Stevens, Paul, and 14 other women were charged with obstructing

the sidewalk. When they refused to pay a fine, they were sentenced to 60 days in jail. Stevens served three days in inhumane conditions before being pardoned by Wilson. She returned to the picket line the next day.

Stevens' participation in protests was a culmination of 70 years of Oberlin students and alumni fighting for women's rights and women's suffrage, often against the wishes of Oberlin's faculty and leadership.

“Oberlin, precisely because it was adventurous in coeducation and putting men and women together, was particularly sensitive about patrolling the borders of gender and needed to, at every moment, reaffirm that it was not undercutting masculinity or femininity,” says Carol Lasser, emerita professor of history at Oberlin.

Lasser calls this concern “gender panic.” It was acceptable for women to participate in reform movements as long as they did not seek reform through electoral politics. Despite

this, some Oberlin students did not adhere to what was societally acceptable, even if they were in the minority.

“Oberlin was involved [in the fight for suffrage] from the beginning, so you can track not just Oberlin's attitude, but also national attitudes,” says public historian Jen Graham '12.

In this early period, before the Civil War, advocates for women's suffrage argued that women deserved the vote because all people are created equal. Abolitionists employed this same philosophy to argue against slavery, and many of Oberlin's first suffragists were also abolitionists.

Among these early suffragists was Betsey Mix Cowles, who in 1840 completed Oberlin's “Ladies' Course,” which conferred a literary degree rather than a bachelor's degree.

Originally from Austinburg, Ohio, Cowles attained fame for publicly singing abolitionist songs alongside her sister, Cornelia. Cowles dedicated her life to abolitionism and public education. When Ohio women organized the first statewide women's suffrage convention in 1850, Cowles traveled to Salem, near Youngstown, to attend. The aim of the convention was to petition Ohio's government to enfranchise women by amending the state constitution. Elected by her fellow attendees, Cowles presided over the convention of about 500 people.

Oberlin's best-known suffragist, Lucy Stone, Class of 1847, had attempted to seek education at a number of institutions close to her home in Massachusetts, but only at Oberlin could she receive a bachelor's degree. Stone wrote to her brother in 1840, three years before enrolling at Oberlin: “Only let females be educated in the same manner and with the same advantages that males have, and, as everything in nature seeks its own level, I would risk that we would find out our ‘appropriate sphere.’”

Stone made no secret of the difficulties she faced while at Oberlin. “They hate [radical abolitionist William Lloyd] Garrison and women's rights,” Stone said of the college. “I love both, and often find myself at swords' points with them.”

Stone and her friend Antoinette Brown (later Blackwell), Ladies' Course 1847, spent much of their time fighting against an unmovable Oberlin administration. Stone wrote to Brown Blackwell that the members of the Ladies' Board, a group of faculty wives that



Left: Suffrage activist Mary Church Terrell, Class of 1887, with daughter Phylis in 1901.
Right: Lucy Stone, Class of 1847.



governed the female students, were “all lovely educated women, much more conservative than their husbands.”

Stone and Blackwell worked around the college’s strict edicts regarding women’s behavior. When prohibited from practicing public speaking alongside Oberlin’s male students, for example, they began their own women’s debating society. Stone, instead of allowing a male student to read a commencement address she was asked to write, refused the honor altogether.

Ironically, four decades later, Stone was invited to speak at the 1883 Oberlin Jubilee celebrating the 50th anniversary of the college and town’s founding. She used her platform to call for women’s suffrage.

“I should be no true daughter of Oberlin, still less should I be true to myself, if here today I failed to ask this younger Oberlin to take another and the next step in the great movement for the political equality of women,” she said.

Stone went on to found the American Woman’s Suffrage Association, an organization

that rivaled the National Woman’s Suffrage Association headed by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Stone’s organization supported the passage of the 15th Amendment, which would enfranchise Black men, while Stanton and Anthony did not.

Stone and Brown Blackwell continued to correspond throughout their lives. They supported each other, often from afar, as both fought for women’s suffrage. While students at Oberlin, Brown Blackwell wrote to Stone: “Mr. Fairchild had a long talk about woman’s rights. He was very kind and good natured about it, but it put me into such an agony as I never wish to feel again, and for once I did wish God had not made me a woman (I do not wish so now.)”

James Harris Fairchild at the time was a professor of languages and mathematics, as well as a graduate of the Class of 1838. Despite his anti-women’s rights sentiments, Stone and Brown Blackwell liked and respected him. He would go on to become president of the college in 1866 when Charles Grandison Finney resigned.

Doris Stevens, Class of 1911 (standing, center), and Alice Paul (standing, right) in Colorado Springs for the national conference of the Woman’s Party, August 1916.

In 1870, Fairchild made his opposition of women’s enfranchisement explicit by publishing a pamphlet titled *Woman’s Right to the Ballot*. In it, he discussed each argument in favor of women’s suffrage and then refuted them, one by one.

“I should regard [women’s suffrage] as a calamity, a turning back of the shadow on the dial of our civilization more than 10 degrees,” Fairchild wrote. “If a woman chooses to feel dishonored by the [current] arrangement, it is merely a matter of her own interpretation.”

Fairchild believed a woman’s role was incompatible with politics, and he was not empathetic to the plight of disenfranchised women.

That same year, Marianne Parker Dascomb, the longtime principal of Oberlin’s female department and a Ladies’ Board member, became one of 140 married women of Lorain

For the Kids

In *Give Us the Vote: Over 200 Years of Fighting for the Ballot* (Holiday House), children's author Susan Goldman Rubin '59 recounts 200 years of activists who have marched, protested, and risked their lives for the right to vote. Rubin, who has authored more than 35 children's books, makes history accessible for middle-grade readers but edifying for readers of all ages.

Rubin traces the history of American suffrage from the Constitutional Convention to women's suffrage protests to Civil Rights movement sit-ins, bringing history to life through oral histories and other firsthand accounts. She also details the history of voter suppression tactics such as gerrymandering and voter ID requirements, as well as the progression of voting rights through secret ballots and the 26th Amendment which lowered the voting age to 18.

Throughout, Rubin highlights ordinary individuals of all ages who are often omitted from textbooks alongside well-known historical figures. By spotlighting these individuals in history, Rubin shows that any individual can bring about change, no matter their age or ability to vote.

Give Us the Vote, released in the 100th anniversary year of the 19th Amendment, which gave white women the right to vote, is critical of revered heroes. Rubin notes suffrage leaders Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony's racist remarks and actions. She also includes lesser-known suffrage leaders, Oberlin alumnae Lucy Stone, Mary Church Terrell, and Doris Stevens.

A prolific author, Rubin also published *Sing and Shout: The Mighty Voice of Paul Robeson* (Calkins Creek/An Imprint of Boyds Mills & Kane) this year. —RR

County to petition Ohio's legislature in protest of efforts to grant women suffrage. This petition included many other members of the college's Ladies' Board.

"We acknowledge no inferiority to men," the petition read. "We claim to have no less ability to perform the duties which God has imposed upon us, than they to perform those imposed upon them... We feel our present duties fill the whole measure of our time and abilities; and that they are such as none but ourselves can perform."

Despite her anti-suffrage views, Dascomb did support women's participation in social causes such as moral reform, antislavery efforts, female education, and temperance—causes that were seen as appropriately feminine.

A resident of Oberlin, identified only as "An Enquirer" wrote to the *Lorain County News* in response to the petition:

"In other days we were wont to look to Oberlin for the 'breaking' of the morning... We have waited long and patiently for her advance in the cause of women suffrage... That 'protest' signed by the principal of the female department and the wives of the professors of Oberlin College carried blight to the hearts of many of its toiling daughters... to fit themselves for display in the parlor or labor in the kitchen, according to the arguments there stated."

Reflecting the spirit of that "Enquirer," also in 1870, 150 Oberlin citizens formed the Oberlin Woman's Suffrage Association.

In this era, a shift occurred in the national suffrage movement when reformers introduced the argument that it is because women are different from men that they

needed the vote. A woman's ability to manage the home depended on enfranchisement.

Women's suffrage slowly gained popularity at the college, but it was not a steady progression. In 1879, the *Oberlin Review* reported that only one of seven graduating women and six of 24 graduating men favored suffrage. Two years later, all of the female students polled by the *Review* opposed suffrage; only two men were in favor.

Mary Burnett Talbert was one student firmly in favor of suffrage. A native of Oberlin, Talbert received a literary degree in 1886, taught at Union High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, and later became assistant principal. By 1909, she had listed her occupation as "lecturer" and had become president of the Empire State Federation of Women's Clubs and vice president-at-large of the National Association of Colored Women. Talbert worked with other Black clubwomen to address pressing social problems, including women's disenfranchisement.

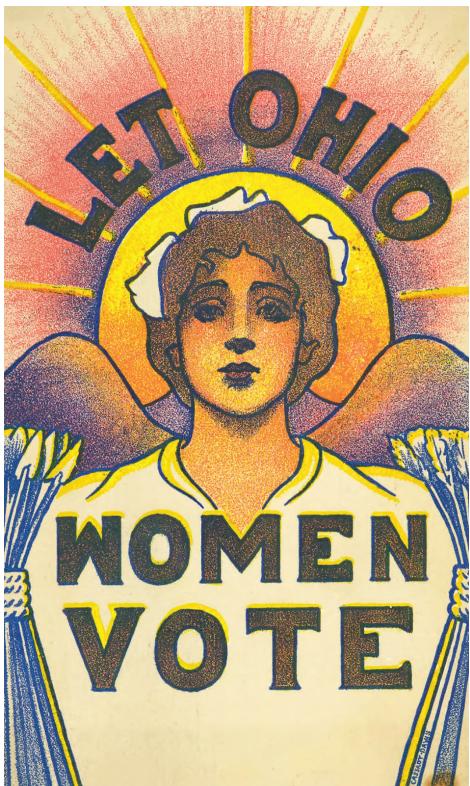
Classmates Mary Church Terrell and Anna Julia Cooper, who had graduated in 1887, a year after Talbert, also worked within Black women's clubs for social reform. Cooper established the Colored Women's League, while Terrell served as president of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs.

"Mary Church Terrell was a committed suffragist—she was one of the few women of color to march with the militant pickets at the White House," Lasser says.

While Terrell was on the picket line, Cooper wrote of the importance of suffrage

Below left: Anna Julia Cooper, Class of 1887, stressed the importance of suffrage for Black women. Below right: Oberlin native Mary Burnett Talbert, Class of 1886.





1915 postcard featuring an illustration by Cornelia Cassady-Davis of Cincinnati for the "Votes for Women" campaign.

for Black women and denounced the white women who led the suffrage movement.

"Let woman's claim be as broad in the concrete as in the abstract. We take our stand on the solidarity of humanity, the oneness of life, and the unnaturalness and injustice of all special favoritisms, whether of sex, race, country, or condition. If one link of the chain be broken, the chain is broken," Cooper said in an address to the World's Congress of Representative Women, held during the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.

In 1908, the Oberlin College chapter of the Equal Suffrage League was founded. The organization held open meetings and brought speakers to campus, including Sylvia Pankhurst, the daughter of British militant suffragist Emmeline Pankhurst.

Rowena Woodham Jelliffe, Class of 1914, was the league's president. As a student, she traveled throughout Ohio campaigning for women's suffrage, speaking from the back of a car or sometimes in public squares. In 1981, after dedicating her life to social work and founding Cleveland's Karamu House, an organization dedicated to African-American performing arts, Jelliffe returned to Oberlin to speak about her time as a student.

"Your audience would be those who happened to come together," Jelliffe said in

that conversation. "Sometimes it was arranged but other times [it was] completely spontaneous. And you always expect to be heckled, of course, and hoped you could withstand it."

College president Henry Churchill King did not support suffrage when Jelliffe was a student, but she was bolstered by the support of Clara Snell Wolfe, Class of 1909, and her husband, Albert Wolfe, a professor of economics.

Because the respected professor and his wife supported suffrage, it was easy for Jelliffe to obtain permission to attend off-campus suffrage events. Snell Wolfe often traveled to suffrage events with Jelliffe and went on to become the first vice chair of the National Woman's Party.

Despite President King's anti-suffrage stance, Jelliffe was "very fond" of him, and she left notices of upcoming suffrage meetings on his desk, hoping he would announce them in chapel.

"One day in winter," she recalled, "a terrific storm was going. I believe I weighed something around 80 pounds at the time, I didn't have much ballast, and along came these terrific winds with the snow beating upon us and I felt myself just lifted up and carried along, rolling, rolling, rolling, into the snowbanks. I realized someone was coming after me, when I can see, I realized it was President King. [I told him] I have just put a notice of a suffrage meeting on your desk and I trust you will make an announcement about it in chapel. He said no."

But Jelliffe would not be deterred in her fight for women's enfranchisement. She recalled that about 51 out of the 97 women in her class supported suffrage, but she was the only student to travel from town to town to speak on the topic. Jelliffe rode the interurban rail line to Cleveland to speak with Polish and Czech groups about suffrage.

However, Cleveland's ethnic communities had already been mobilized by Ohio's brewing industry. Brewers were concerned women's suffrage would lead to the passage of prohibition. Fairchild exhibited a similar concern in his anti-suffrage pamphlet over 40 years earlier.

"[The brewers] are a very major industry in Ohio at this point in time...[they] mobilized local ethnic communities saying women will take away your rights to socialize the way you want to. It's only with the passage of the 18th Amendment, Prohibition, that you really clear the way for the 19th Amendment," Lasser says.

Although the college and town overwhelmingly supported temperance,

"I should regard [women's suffrage] as a calamity, a turning back of the shadow on the dial of our civilization more than 10 degrees."

many local temperance leaders did not support women's suffrage. One exception was college librarian Azariah Smith Root, Class of 1884, who spoke publicly in support of women's suffrage and served as the faculty advisor for college's Equal Suffrage League.

"I don't believe Oberlin was outstanding in its support for suffrage at the time, but I think there was a steady growing community," Jelliffe said.

Once the 19th Amendment was passed by Congress in 1919 and ratified in 1920, many of the women of color who fought tirelessly for its passage remained disenfranchised.

"The 19th Amendment actually rests on a bargain with the southern states that the 15th Amendment not be enforced [and] Black disenfranchisement remain," Lasser says. "It's only later that Asian-American women get the vote, partly because of the prohibition on citizenship. It's only later that Native American women get the vote. Puerto Rican women, who are American citizens, still have no role in the [election] for president, so there are lots of women that the 19th Amendment does not enfranchise."

In this year, which marks 100 years since the ratification of the 19th Amendment, expanding and protecting the franchise remains a hot topic. Who gets to vote has an impact not only on the outcome of an election, it changes what political campaigns are about.

"Looking back at the history [of women's voting rights] may give us some ways of better mobilizing female voters," Lasser says.

"[When] you have a majority female electorate, what was once looked at as women's issues needs to be reframed as majority issues. If women care about family wages, about kitchen table issues, about childcare...[and] women are the majority of the electorate, it's a whole different moment." ■

REBEKKAH RUBIN '13 IS A PUBLIC HISTORIAN, WRITER, AND SPEAKER.

IS THERE LIFE ON MARS?

PATRICIA ANN
STRAAT '58
THOUGHT SO.

BY ROBERT NAEYE '85
ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN JAY CABUAY

Imagine you're a scientist, and you think you've made one of the greatest discoveries of all time. Working with a team of engineers, you have built an experiment, miniaturized it, automated it, and flown it to Mars. Against all odds, the instrument works as planned in a hostile, frigid environment and returns the first strong evidence for life on another planet.

But many of your scientific colleagues remain unconvinced, as does NASA. So you propose experiments to follow up this tantalizing finding, waiting for the next mission. And you wait, and wait, and wait...for 44 years. >



W

Welcome to the world of Patricia Ann Straat '58, who, at age 84, passed away from lung cancer on October 23, 2020, shortly before this article was prepared for publication. Straat played a pivotal role in developing the Labeled Release (LR) experiment aboard NASA's twin Viking landers, which touched down on Mars in 1976. Each lander's LR experiment tested Martian soil samples for metabolizing microbes and returned positive results, fulfilling all the pre-mission criteria for claiming the discovery of extraterrestrial life.

These results have remained front and center of a controversy that has lingered for four decades. And the unresolved question of life on Mars has major ramifications for the future. As Straat repeatedly pointed out in the later years of her life, NASA adopted a conservative approach to its multibillion-dollar Mars exploration program, refusing to fly any instruments that could detect living microorganisms. And she contended that bringing Mars samples back to Earth, without knowing if they contain dangerous pathogens, was a risk not worth taking. Yet NASA and its European counterpart are planning to do just that.

On this key point, the highly respected astrobiologist Christopher McKay of NASA's Ames Research Center concurs with Straat: "We cannot rule out that the LR experiment did detect life and that there are dormant life forms

in the Martian soil. This has implications beyond the science debate. Are we confident enough that the Martian soil is lifeless to send astronauts? And then to bring those astronauts back to Earth?"

AT OBERLIN

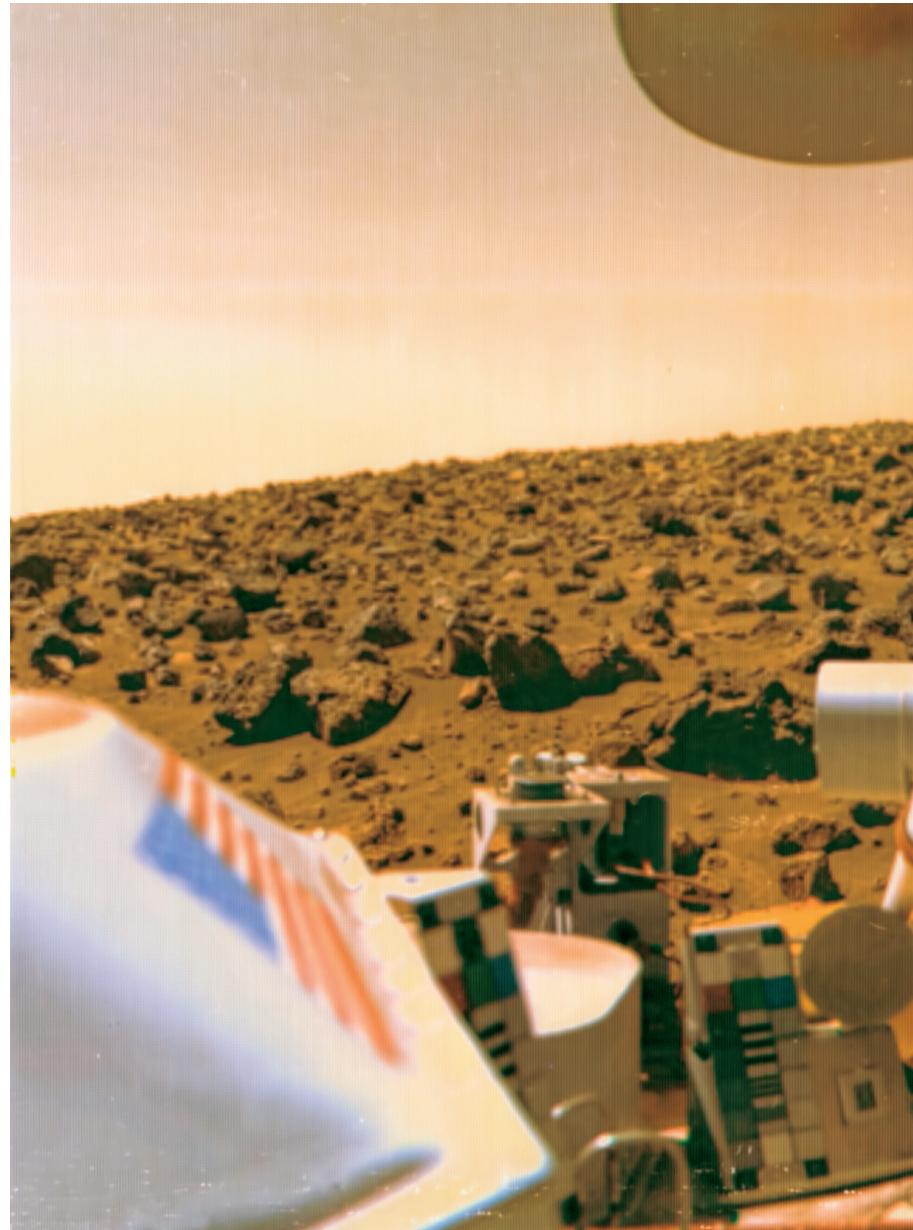
Straat (rhymes with Pat) grew up in Rochester, New York, where she developed a fondness for horses in very early childhood. Although Straat didn't have any specific interest in biology in her formative years, she wanted to move away from upstate New York and explore the world.

When she read Oberlin's brochure, it sounded like a fascinating place. She liked the idea of mock political conventions—a staple of campus

life at the time—along with the absence of cars and alcohol on campus. She enrolled as a freshman in 1954.

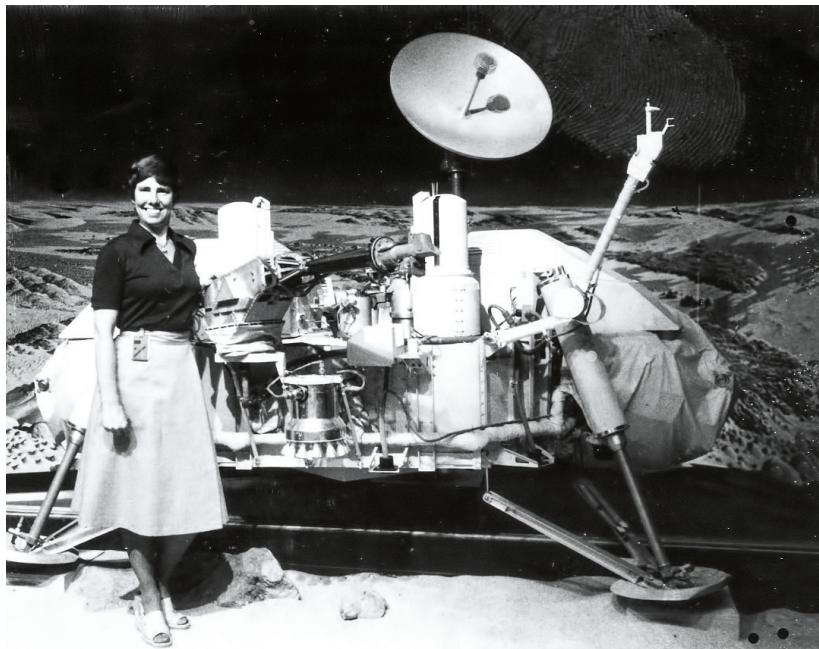
"I just loved my four years at Oberlin," Straat recalled in a summer 2020 interview. "I blossomed within the Oberlin environment. I was kind of shy before I went there, but it encouraged me to be myself. Oberlin appreciated individuality. I gained confidence that I could do anything."

Straat was known as the "horse woman" on campus. She bought a young mare for \$75 from a farm outside town, a horse she owned for 17 years. To her, riding a horse was a way of life. "I would often be seen galloping around Tappan Square," she said.





Left, Viking 2 on the surface of Mars. Below, Straat poses in front of the test lander at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.



Straat majored in psychology but came to realize it was not for her. But by then it was too late to change her major. She took an introductory course in chemistry her senior year, which she "absolutely loved." She also took several advanced biology courses, which she also loved. That set her on a career path to pursue biochemistry.

Straat had personal reasons to attend graduate school at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. She had a meeting with the director of the McCollum-Pratt Institute, where biochemistry was taught. He questioned Straat on whether a psychology major could pass graduate courses in biochemistry. "By now, I was pretty confident in myself, so I said, 'Sure,

why not.' He thought that was the funniest thing he ever heard," she recalled.

The director told his secretary that he would teach this young woman a lesson, but he also instructed the secretary to enroll Straat. The director made bets that Straat wouldn't last a semester, but she proved him wrong. "I studied like I had never studied before. It was really hard going," she said.

Straat earned her PhD in six years, completing a thesis on enzyme characterization and nitrogen metabolism. She moved into a postdoctoral fellowship at Johns Hopkins' medical complex, where she specialized in molecular biology, biophysics, and the use of radioactive isotopes as tracers. She later

accepted an assistant professorship, only the third woman to achieve that position at Hopkins. But after about two years, she decided she had been at Hopkins long enough and that it was time to "spread my wings."

It was at this moment that an opportunity arose that would change her life.

PREPARING FOR MARS

In the spring of 1970, Straat was offered a job with the Maryland firm Biospherics Inc. The company was owned by Gilbert Levin, an engineer who had developed an ingenious low-cost experiment that enabled municipalities to test water supplies for bacterial contaminants. Straat was not really thinking of going into

“
**AT THE TIME,
LOOKING FOR LIFE
ON MARS WAS AS
FAR OUT AS YOU
COULD GET... BUT
IT SOUNDED LIKE
SO MUCH FUN.**

private industry, but when she met Levin, she vividly recalled, “He very much inspired me.”

Levin needed a biochemist who worked with radioactive isotopes, which made Straat the perfect fit. He told her about his plan to send his experiment to Mars aboard a NASA spacecraft to look for signs of life. But as Straat remembers, “At the time, looking for life on Mars was as far out as you could get. I talked it over with colleagues, and they all thought I was insane. But it sounded like so much fun.”

Straat accepted the job offer, despite knowing it was a risky career move. But she never had regrets, noting that it led to “a wonderful career.”

Straat became Levin’s co-experimenter on the Labeled Release experiment. She worked directly with the engineers at TRW, the company in Redondo Beach, California, that built the biology instrument. Building an instrument that would operate autonomously in a hostile environment where temperatures were far below freezing and the atmospheric pressure was close to vacuum was no trivial feat.

The LR experiment is straightforward in concept. Each Viking lander carried a robotic arm that scooped up small soil samples and dropped them into a hopper, which would distribute them to the life-detection experiments and another instrument for detecting organic (carbon-based) molecules. The LR experiment added a nutrient of seven organic compounds to the sample. The nutrient’s carbon atoms were labeled with the radioactive isotope ^{14}C . Any living microbes in the sample would metabolize the nutrient and produce radioactive carbon dioxide gas, which would be monitored with a radiation detector.

As Straat describes in great detail in her book *To Mars With Love*, the LR experiment and the entire life-detection package encountered one technical difficulty after another. Straat spent long stretches of time living in Southern California as she worked with the TRW engineers to resolve problems. Early on, as troubles mounted and costs rose, it became clear that one of the original four life-detection experiments would have to go. Straat and Levin had to sweat it out until they found out that another experiment was given the axe.

Straat enjoyed working with the scientific and engineering teams even though they operated under intense pressure to meet stringent size, weight, budgetary, and schedule constraints. And despite being one of only two women on the project, she said the men treated her with respect, especially when they realized her high level of competence. She said Levin, in particular, treated her as an equal. They remained lifelong friends.

NASA launched Viking 1 on August 20, 1975,

and Viking 2 on September 9. Each spacecraft included an orbiter and lander. On July 20, 1976, Viking 1 made history by becoming the first spacecraft to land successfully on Mars. Viking 2 followed suit on September 3.

MY GOD, IT'S POSITIVE!

Before Viking 2 had even landed, Viking 1’s LR experiment had already produced spectacular results. For the first soil sample, the radiation detector registered a strong active response, with a long plateau of ^{14}C lasting several days. This was exactly the result the experiment produced in terrestrial soils with active microbes.

“My God, it’s positive!” Straat thought as the first results were radioed back from Mars.

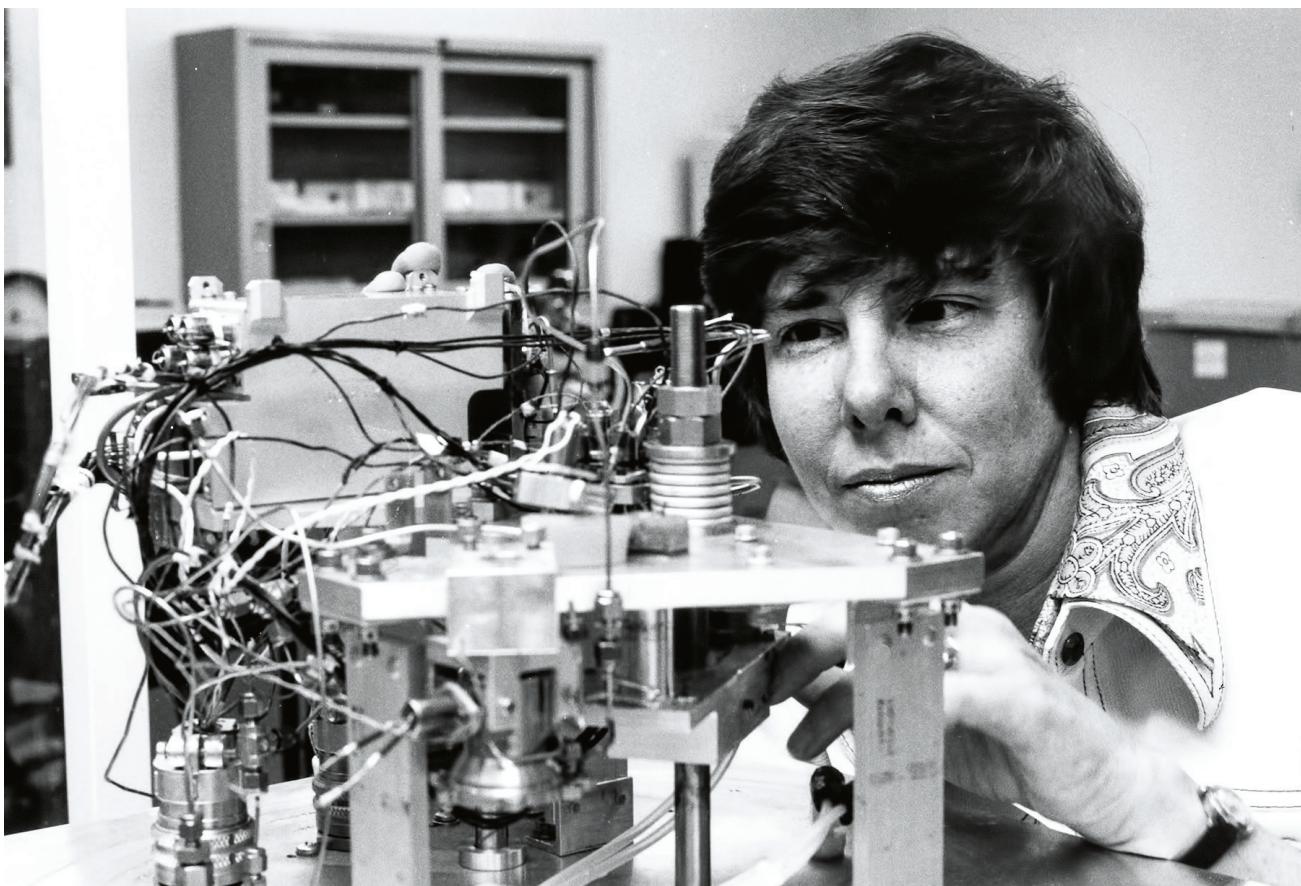
Better yet, when the team heated the next soil sample to 160 degrees C (320 degrees F), the test yielded a negative result—indicating that the high temperature had killed any microbes that might have been present. Taken together, the two tests fulfilled pre-mission criteria for Martian life.

Levin and Straat conducted five LR tests on Viking 1 and four on Viking 2, changing the temperature and other conditions in an effort to distinguish between biological and chemical responses. Overall, the results of the nine tests were fully consistent with biology.

Unfortunately, the other two life-detection experiments yielded negative results. And even more worrisome, the experiment designed to detect organic molecules came up empty. How could there be life without organics? To NASA officials and many scientists, these were signs that the LR experiment detected some kind of reactive chemical in the Martian soil rather than metabolizing microbes.

And yet Straat and Levin remained fairly confident that their LR experiment had found life on Mars, especially because NASA missions have since found water vapor in Mars’s thin atmosphere and trace amounts of liquid water. Straat insisted that the LR experiment “has never produced a false positive” on Earth. She favored the idea of cryptobiosis, in which microbes remain in a state of hibernation until revived with water. “Nobody knows how long something can survive in a cryptobiotic state, but it may be millions of years,” she said.

Straat pointed out that Viking’s other two life-detection experiments were designed to detect a different kind of metabolism, meaning their negative results had no bearing on LR’s positive outcome. Subsequent NASA rovers have found small amounts of water and complex organics in the Martian soil. No scientist has ever identified a chemical agent that could reproduce both the LR experiment’s positive results and temperature controls. And even more tantalizing, subsequent telescopic and spacecraft



Straat eyes the Viking Mission Labeled Release instrument.

observations have detected low levels of methane in Mars's thin atmosphere. On Earth, 95 percent of atmospheric methane is biogenic.

Straat and Levin proposed follow-up life-detection experiments to fly to Mars, but NASA did not send another lander to Mars until the Pathfinder mission in 1997. NASA has since flown a series of sophisticated landers and rovers to Mars. But none of them have carried instruments specifically designed to detect life, an oversight that mystified and frustrated both Levin and Straat. NASA is touting its upcoming Perseverance rover as a life-detection mission, an assertion that Straat called "misleading." The rover will collect samples and store them for return to Earth a decade from now, a process that Straat said might destroy any life. "That's hardly a good experiment for life detection," she explained.

In response, NASA's chief scientist James Green says that NASA and the scientific community don't want to repeat Viking's ambiguous life results. NASA has instead pursued a "follow the water" strategy, launching orbiters and landers that have revealed a trove of information about the planet's history. These intrepid robotic explorers have proven beyond

doubt that liquid water once flowed across the surface billions of years ago, meaning Mars in its distant past had conditions for supporting life.

This effort is scheduled to culminate in about a decade, when NASA and the European Space Agency will fly a joint mission to return Perseverance's rock and soil samples to Earth. The rover is landing in an ancient dried-up river delta thought conducive for preserving signs of life. By studying these samples in a lab on Earth, some scientists think they can resolve the life question.

But for Straat, that is now too late, and Levin is in his late 90s. The question of life was not resolved in her lifetime and it is extremely unlikely to be resolved in Levin's lifetime, either.

In what was probably her final interview, Straat expressed strong concern about bringing back Martian life without knowing anything about it. She always advocated sending life-detection experiments first to determine whether or not Mars has extant life before returning samples to Earth. "God help us if we bring back another pandemic," she said.

Straat left Biospherics after the Viking program ended and in 1980 became a scientist administrator at the National Institutes of

Health. For years, she worked on-and-off writing her book *To Mars With Love*. But after learning her cancer had returned, she accelerated her efforts, completing the book in 2017 and self-publishing it in 2019. It documents the behind-the-scenes story of the LR experiment, an important chapter in the history of space research.

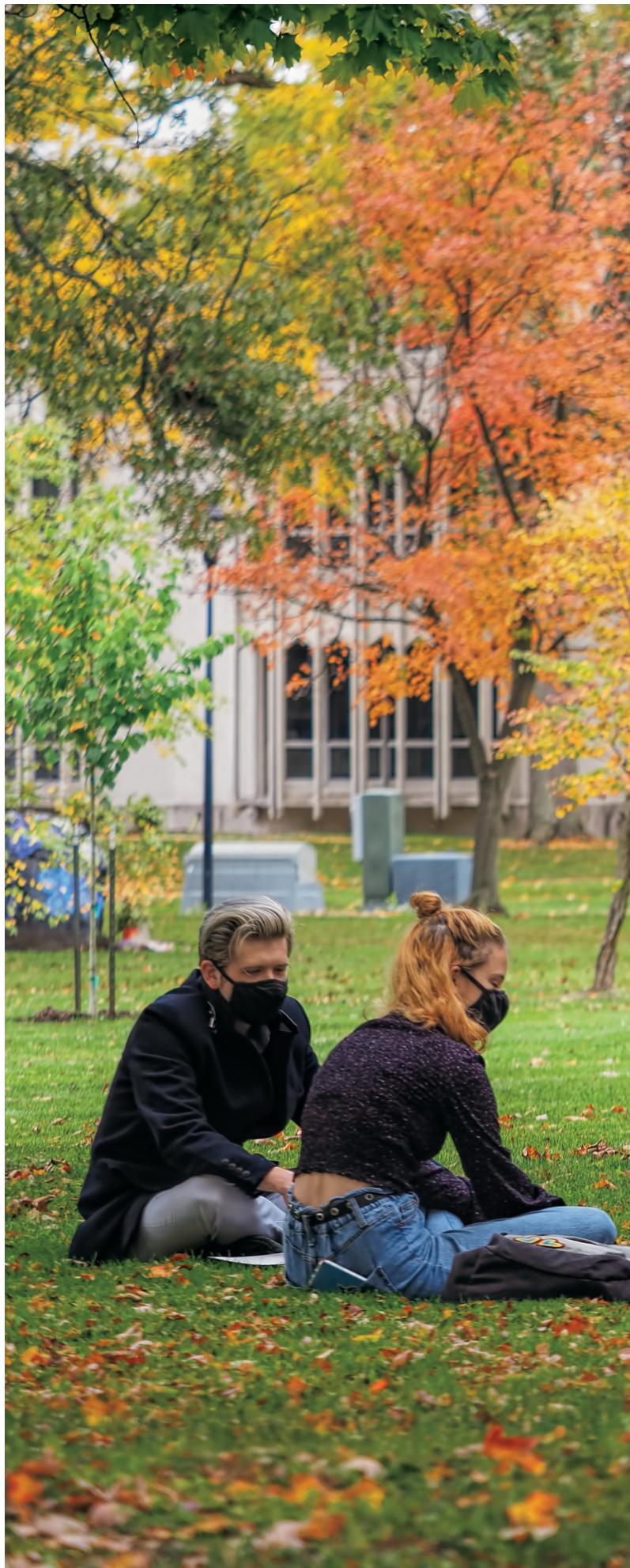
Straat lived her final years in retirement on a 10-acre horse farm near Sykesville, Maryland. Reflecting back on her heady days with the Viking project, she wrote in her book, "The whole was indeed greater than the sum of all its parts, and I felt like a key part of an enormously integrated body functioning as one to move forward. Never before or since have I felt such unity, such an amalgam of expertise and dedication, working together toward a common goal."

ROBERT NAEYE '85 IS A FREELANCE SCIENCE WRITER BASED IN HERSHY, PENNSYLVANIA. LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SEARCH FOR EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE BY READING HIS COVER STORY IN THE SEPTEMBER 2020 ISSUE OF ASTRONOMY MAGAZINE. HIS PROFESSIONAL WEBSITE IS WWW.ROBERTNAEYE.COM.

INTERESTED READERS CAN ORDER STRAAT'S BOOK BY VISITING WWW.TOMARSWITHLOVE.COM.

Keeping It Together

A student's life in any year is full of ups and downs, moments of exhaustion and stress mixed with moments of excitement and elation. Of course, 2020 wasn't just any year. The very phrase "in this unprecedented year" quickly became a cliché and then a punchline, but the COVID-19 pandemic took a toll. The essentials of campus life—curiosity, honest inquiry, academic rigor, a well-argued point countered by an equally well-argued point—all happened, but many important extras—the concerts at the 'Sco, the team and club sports, operas at Hall and movies at the Apollo—did not. But Oberlin students masked up, stayed safe, and kept others safe. They created music and theater and art, ran experiments in labs, learned scores and theories, trained and conditioned for challenges ahead, fell in and out of love, made lifelong friends, found moments of joy. No matter how far apart they had to stand, they always stood together, and that's what got—and will continue to get—Oberlin through. What they did *in this unprecedented year* actually has a precedent: It's what Oberlin students always do.

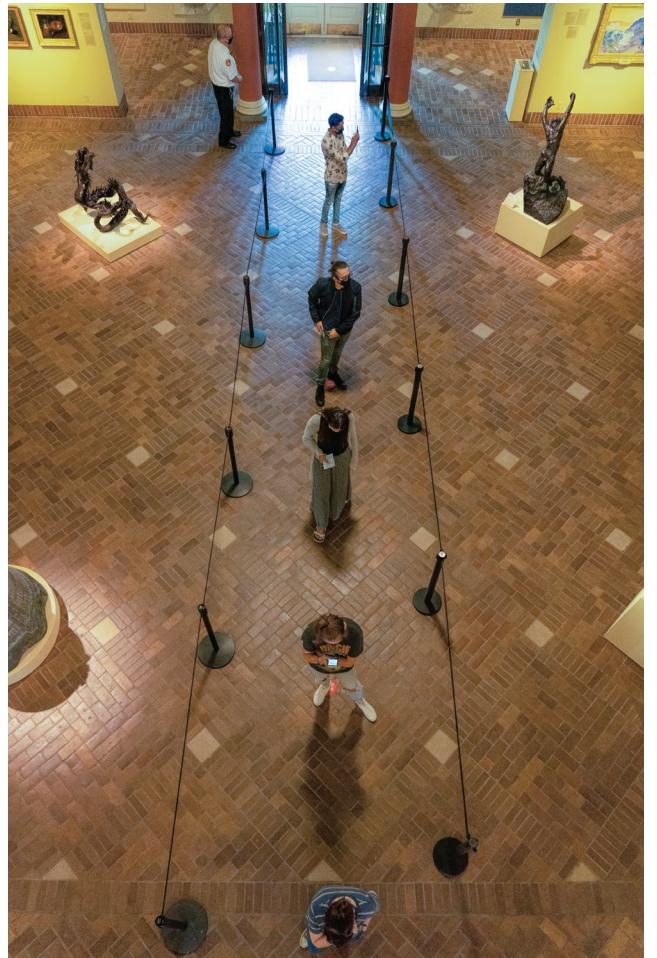




Keeping It Together



Fall semester brought changes, but many Oberlin traditions endured: faculty mentorship, TGIF on Wilder Bowl, art rental, and, of course, Oberlin style.



Keeping It Together



Performances sometimes took place in divided spaces indoors, but the pleasant fall weather made outdoor performances—along with move-in and studying—much easier.





Keeping It Together



Campus spaces, like Mudd and Philips Gym, were reimagined and reconfigured, and students created their own spaces to be separate but together.



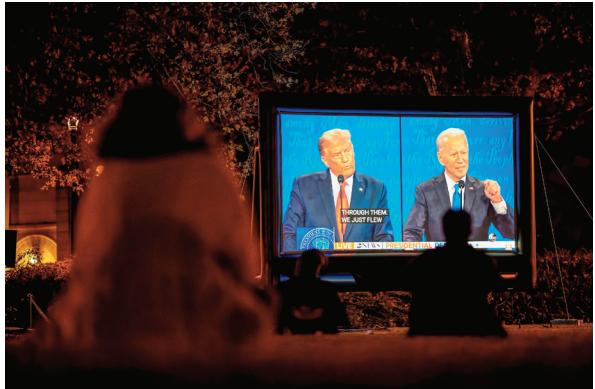
Keeping It Together





Things the ever-present masks could not prevent: athletes keeping in shape, faculty and students learning from and teaching each other, musicians finding a stage, and a smile evident in a student's eyes.

Keeping It Together

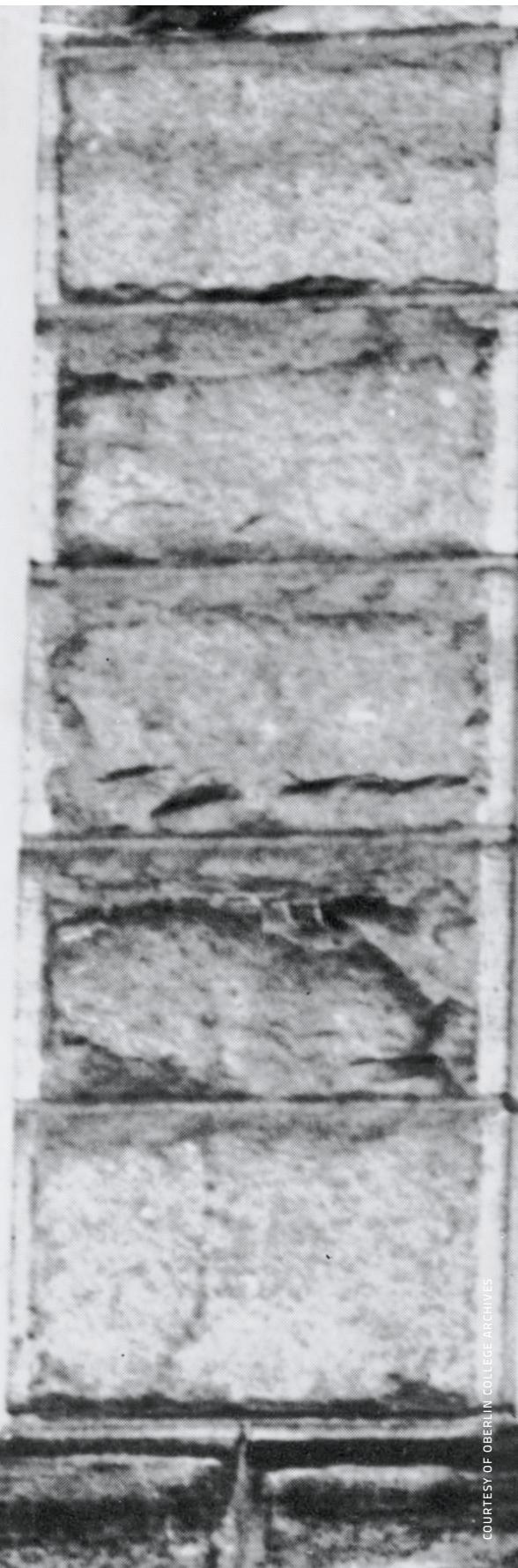


Students kept up with their studies and the election, while the arts—as the arts will—persevered through the challenges.



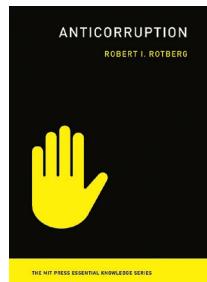
PHOTOS BY
Mike Crupi
Yvonne Gay
Yevhen Gulenko
Jack Lichtenstein '23
Vu Nguyen '23
Dale Preston '83
Tanya Rosen-Jones '97
John Seyfried

Class Notes



1950s

1955



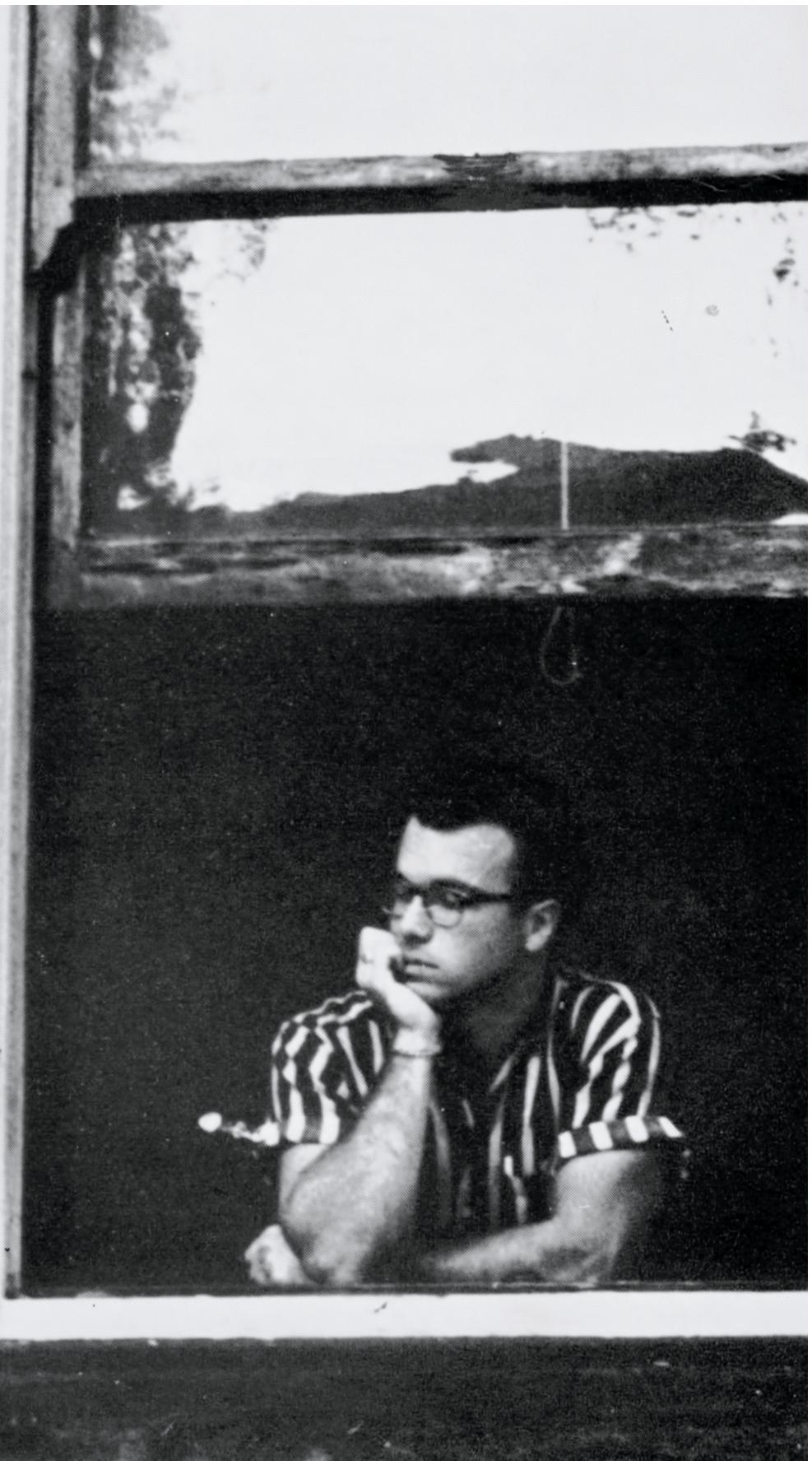
Rotberg '55

Ronald Kallen is a consultant in pediatric kidney disease at an affiliate hospital of the Northwestern Medicine network and teaches at Northwestern University's medical school near his home of Highland Park, Ill. He's a dedicated writer of letters-to-the-editor of major newspapers about politics, "especially Trump and the existential danger he poses." He looks forward to competing for the 13th time in the 333-mile sailing race from Chicago to Mackinac Island in his boat *M*A*S*H*. "A lifetime has passed since my time at Oberlin," Ronald writes, "but it remains a powerful influence in shaping the rest of my life, as it probably has done for other alumni." ■

Robert I. Rotberg completed a half-century as founding coeditor of the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* and has two new books out this year. *Anticorruption* (MIT Press, 2020) charts the evolution of corruption from Mesopotamia to modern day and posits a 13-step plan to reduce the spread of it worldwide. *Things Come Together: Africans Achieving Greatness in the Twenty-first Century* (Oxford University Press), looks at the success and challenges of African politics and society. Robert is a professor of governance and foreign affairs and the founding director of the Harvard Kennedy School's Program on Intrastate Conflict. He is a former senior fellow of the Centre for International Governance Innovation and president emeritus of the World Peace Foundation.

6 FEET APART, 60 YEARS AGO

The highly atmospheric 1960 *Hi-O-Hi* yearbook contained moody candid shots and sometimes equally moody text—but very few captions. This photo was accompanied by the following prose poem: "In the middle of a dream beyond Oberlin,/or during a thought in the sunlight under Tappan's elms,/brooding becomes reflective loneliness again—/as suddenly as it becomes depression—/and only the shadow of a private mood protects solitude."



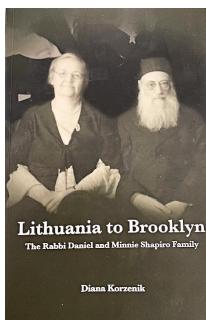
Class Notes

1956

After a stint in the U.S. Army and graduate school, **Joel Montague** enjoyed a long career in public health and continues to make regular visits to China. In December 2019 he was the only American to attend the First International Academic Conference on the History and Culture of Kouang-Tchéou-Wan, the French-leased coastal region, which is the subject of his recent writing. Joel provided the introduction, notes, commentary, and images for a translation of B. Marrot's *Notes and Memories of Cambodia*, Joel's sixth book.

1960s

1961



Diana Korzenik

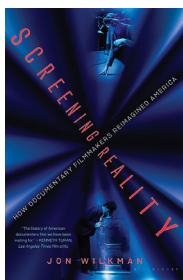
integrates the history of Lithuanian Jewry and the story of her maternal grandparents, who settled in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, in 1894, in her new book, *From Lithuania to Brooklyn: The Rabbi Daniel and*

Minnie Shapiro Family. Diana's book *Drawn to Art, a 19th Century American Dream*, won the Boston Globe's LL Winship Literary Award. Her second book, *Objects of American Art Education*, won the American Library Association's LEAB Award.

1963

Last year, **Fred Magdoff** held a memorial for his brother, Michael Magdoff, a member of Oberlin's Class of 1960 who died during his junior year, on what would have been Michael's 80th birthday. Fred also prepared a document about Michael that he thought his Oberlin friends might like. [w] uvm.edu/~fmagdoff/MichaelMagdoff.pdf

1964



Writer and documentary filmmaker **Jon Wilkman** wrote *Screening Reality: How Documentary Filmmakers Reimagined America*, which was published by Bloomsbury Press earlier in 2020. *Los Angeles Times* film critic

Kenneth Turan said the book is "(A)uthoritative, accessible, and elegantly written" and "the history of American documentary film we have been waiting for." Visit his website to learn more about his many multifaceted projects. [w] wilkman.com

1966

Photographer and painter **Marianne Barcellona** of Manhattan remained active in recent months under self-imposed quarantine that has kept her from her Long Island City studio. She is working on small-scale paintings from her home and taking her work outdoors when the weather and circumstances permit. Her solo show "What's Left: Tenuous Survivals," originally scheduled for spring at Chelsea's First Street Gallery, was rescheduled for September 2020. "During this terrible time, art and inspiration are more important than ever,"



she writes. [e] mb@mariannebarcellona.com [w] www.BarcelonaArt.com ■ **W. Logan Fry**'s Lone Buzzard Filmworks has been busy in production of its seventh film, a timely reboot of the horror/sci-fi classic *The Last Man on Earth* using social distancing and distance filming with actors in Canada, Mexico, Spain, Germany, and across America—including Logan's wife, ESL teacher **Joanne Fry** '69. "Master filmmakers Roger Corman and John Carpenter would not have been stopped dead in their tracks by coronavirus," writes Logan, a retired corporate lawyer in suburban Cleveland. "If they couldn't assemble a cast and crew, they would have cut up their old films and reassembled them into thrilling new productions, as they were often wont to do." Logan's film includes "cameos" from Vincent Price (star of the original *Last Man on Earth*) and Donald Trump, whose coronavirus press conferences have been spliced into the mix. "At 76 years of age, I may die of COVID-19 too, but first I will have one more film in the small catalog of Lone Buzzard Filmworks. It may be the one that defines my filmmaking career." [w] <https://vimeo.com/405282195>

1968

Daniel K. Miller continued his world travels to developing regions—most recently the nation of Georgia, where he devoted two weeks



Springer '70

helping a farm introduce protein-rich buffalo milk. The animals are not new to Georgia, though previously they had been used almost exclusively for labor. As always, Daniel's adventures included significant immersion in the culture, politics, and plight of his host nation, which has requested membership in NATO and harbors hopes of joining the EU despite increasing influence from Russia. Daniel notes that the country's main product is another beverage: red wine, the leftover mash from which is also used to make vodka. "I enjoyed the experience," he reports, "and I hope that I'm able to return sometime."

1970s

1970

A photograph by [Connie Springer](#) was selected as a winner from more than 16,000 entries in a contest held by Embracing Our Differences of Florida. Connie's photo, which depicts her husband blowing bubbles with their Korean-born son, was made into a banner displayed at Bayfront Park in Sarasota. The annual contest and exhibition is part of a year-round program to create awareness and promote diversity through art.

1972

[Lora Ching Deahl](#) retired from a 46-year career as professor of piano at Texas Tech University and moved from Lubbock to San Francisco to be closer to her daughter. Lora earned an award for teaching excellence from Texas Tech three years ago, one of numerous accolades over her career. She was married for many years to trombone professor Robert Deahl, who died in 2015. ■ The American Society of Anesthesiologists presented the 2019 Distinguished Service Award, its highest award, to [Patricia Kapur](#) in October of this year. Patricia held prominent positions at UCLA, including serving as chair of the Department of Anesthesiology of the David Geffen School of Medicine for 17 years and as president of the UCLA Faculty Practice Group. Patricia is chairing Oberlin's 50th Reunion Committee.

1973

[Rich Orloff](#)'s play *Days of Possibilities*, based on letters and interviews with Oberlin students during the Vietnam era, was adapted into a Zoom-friendly performance that was



live-streamed by five theaters on May 4, 2020—the 50th anniversary of the killings at Kent State University. The play was originally produced at Oberlin in 1989. [w] [www.richorloff.com/days-of-possibilities/](#)

1976

[Adam Rudolph](#) is a member of the Karuna Trio, which recently released *Imaginary Archipelago*, an improv-heavy recording that evokes the sounds and cultures of 11 distinct islands. "Although the environments are diverse, all these islands have a soil rich in inspirational nutrients," writes Adam, who handles membranophones, idiophones, chordophones, overtone singing, electronic processing, and arrangements. "When roots run deep, certain trees will even reach beyond the sky, towards the unknown." Adam also recently released the two-disc recording *Ragmala, A Garden of Ragas*, featuring his Go: Organic Orchestra with the Brooklyn Raga Massive—a project that involves some 40 musicians and which *DownBeat* magazine called "a gorgeously complex tapestry of sounds, hues, and sensations."

1977

[Jim Rokakis](#) cowrote *The Land Bank Revolution: How Ohio's Communities Fought Back Against the Foreclosure Crisis*, about the efforts he and other leaders and activists took to counteract the devastating effects of the large-scale foreclosures that hit Ohio cities

particularly hard. The book was released by Belt Publishing, where [Anne Trubek '88](#) is founder and publisher, and [Martha Bayne '90](#) a senior editor.

1980s

1980

Attorney [Laura Kingsley Hong](#), a specialist in product liability and mass torts for the law firm Tucker Ellis, was ranked in the Chambers USA guide for 2020.

1981

[Thylia Moss](#) contributed to the *New York Times* Tiny Love Stories feature with "Please Wear that Dress," which—briefly—recounts her experience as a young poet on the set of a documentary produced by Bob Holman. Years later, with Bob widowed and Thylia divorced, he reached out to reconnect with her, and a wonderful relationship blossomed. "We kissed all the way from O'Hare to the hotel!—best kisses of my life!" she recalls.

1982



[Claire Fontijn](#) edited the book *Uncovering Music by Early European Women (1250–1750)* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), which investigates aspects of female music-making and

Class Notes



VIRTUALLY YOURS

I GUESS WE'RE GETTING USED TO IT. WEARING A MASK, PICKING UP TAKE-OUT INSTEAD OF eating in, watching the news with our masks pulled up as a blindfold, totally rethinking how we do everything. I wouldn't say we've figured out the "new normal," but at the very least, we've embraced the absurdity in which we are living.

As we've all had to pivot, the Alumni Association has needed to pivot as well. You might not know that many of our various affiliate groups, regional clubs, and volunteer programs did, too. Our Alumni Association was just starting to expand virtually, and this sure gave us a kick in the pants.

We hosted our first national book club, thanks to the Colorado/Wyoming regional club, reading *Silent Gesture: The Autobiography of Tommie Smith*. The Washington, D.C. club worked with the Network of Oberlin Asian Alumni (NOAA) to host a virtual conversation with Alice Imamoto Takemoto '47, the last surviving Japanese American Oberlin graduate who came to the college from a WWII incarceration camp. Our new "Obiewood" community (it's Hollywood, but for Obies—get it?), has new virtual programming as well. Other regional clubs, career communities, and affiliate groups are doing the same, making virtual programs that would have been impossible even a year ago.

The COVID-19 lecture series that a variety of Oberlin faculty created for students during the spring and summer have been shared with alumni. The conservatory's new Stage Left series brings conservatory faculty to us. I think we will continue to have more and more opportunities to connect to on-campus happenings, lectures, and concerts once those return in earnest.

We alumni are on the front lines of the new Junior and Sophomore Practica, experiences built to help students for whom COVID-19 has made traditional internships impossible. In only a few months, Oberlin staff partnered with alumni and parents to provide remote experiences including 250-plus micro-internships for juniors; skills-based classes; keynote speakers on difficult topics like immigration and criminal justice reform; and panels on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Class ambassadors continue to play a crucial role in helping Oberlin remain fiscally strong and in maintaining the extraordinary resources that make an Oberlin education so unique. Class ambassadors work to encourage annual giving and to increase giving participation among the alumni community. It's a meaningful way to engage and connect with your classmates in the digital space while supporting Oberlin.

Admissions recruiting is totally new, with alumni helping with virtual interviews and college fairs. Even at a time when prospective Obies can't visit Oberlin in person or do the usual things we do to help them learn to love Oberlin as much as we do, we are working on building connections to recruit the next generation to help us change the world.

We're also looking to create new and exciting virtual programs to support alumni who are looking for work or changing careers, so look out for remote speed networking, speakers, and panels. We are working hard to expand WISR and build even more connections among ourselves and with current students.

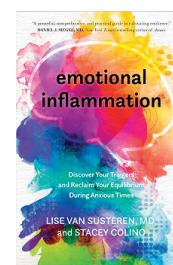
We are using our central Facebook group more directly for communication, and it has over 7,500 alumni members. We are trying to share information here, while also connecting with more than 100 smaller Facebook groups and other social media outlets.

Of course, our amazing staff has done a fantastic job helping all these things come to happen, so keep thinking of new ways that we can connect with each other and with campus. If any of these connections sound awesome, please visit oberlin.edu/alumni or contact us at alumni@oberlin.edu so that we can help you get connected in a new way.

Scott Alberts '95
President, Oberlin Alumni Association

musical experience in the medieval and early modern period. Claire is the Phyllis Henderson Carey Professor of Music at Wellesley College.

1985



Stacey Colino, a writer specializing in health and psychology and a certified health coach who lives in Maryland, cowrote *Emotional Inflammation: Discover Your Triggers and Reclaim Your*

Equilibrium During Anxious Times. The book offers a way to deal with emotional inflammation which, the authors explain, is not unlike post-traumatic stress, "but stems from simply living in a world that feels increasingly out of control." Stacey's work appears in *U.S. News & World Report*, *Prevention*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Parade*, *Parents*, and other national magazines. [w] emotionalinflammationbook.com

1986

Poet and now novelist **Peter Money** joined classmate **Amy Steingart** for a virtual reading in June. Peter read from his book of poems, *American Drone*, and his coming-of-age novel, *Oh When the Saints*. Amy read from *I Am Where You Have Put Your Eggs*, her first book of poetry, published last year. The two were flatmates in the Oberlin-in-Dublin program in 1984. Search their names on YouTube for a recording of the reading. ■ **Josh Shuman** met up with Oberlin Associate Professor of Music Theory **Jan Miyake '96** and her husband, Oberlin College Associate Director of Admissions **Josh Levy '94**, in Jerusalem in November 2019. "Anyone coming to Jerusalem can have the same dessert (not pictured) that pushed us all to smile," says Josh S.—just let him know you're coming, and he'll arrange it.

1988



David Diepenbrock joined the Weintraub Tobin firm of California and is based in its Sacramento office. His specialties include real estate, agribusiness,



Shuman '86



Mattison '89

energy, transportation, health care, finance, and manufacturing. David earned a JD from the University of California, Davis, and an MA in U.S. history from San Francisco State University. ■ **Sharon Goldfarb**, a nurse educator in California, was featured in a *New York Times* story about how COVID-19 was preventing nursing students from completing clinical rotations necessary to graduate. “We’re looking at 14,000 nursing students not graduating in the time of most dire need I’ve seen in my years as a professional nurse,” she told the *Times*. Sharon’s work in crisis care has included a Harlem HIV clinic during the AIDS epidemic, Ground Zero after 9/11, and in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. “I can only do this work because of Oberlin,” she writes in a note to this magazine.

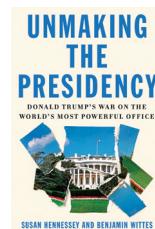
1989

Matthew Crago earned local acclaim during the coronavirus pandemic for offering parking-lot patient visits at his family medical practice in Pennsylvania. “I said, ‘People are afraid to come in,’ and my wife said, ‘Why don’t you go to them?’” he told the *Sharon Herald* in April 2020. “And I said, ‘What are you crazy? I guess that’s actually a good idea. We could try that.’” Matthew’s efforts—and his wife’s suggestion—were praised in a feature story published by the *Herald*. ■ Actor, filmmaker, and teacher **Ted Mattison** is also now a certified California naturalist and professional hiking guide known as Ranger Ted. His podcast “Wonder Outside” launched on Earth Day, April 22, 2020, featuring conversations with actress

Annabeth Gish and best-selling author Tim Johnston. “My mission is to help people of all ages and abilities get outside more easily, more often, and more confidently,” Ted writes. “Going outside (safely) has never been more important for our physical and mental health.” In 2004, his documentary *Nothing Without You* won several film festival awards and was screened during Oberlin’s 2008 reunion weekend. [w] www.wonderoutside.org

1990s

1990



In between prolific tweeting, **Benjamin Witter** (@BenjaminWitter), legal journalist and senior fellow in governance studies at the Brookings Institution, cowrote *Unmaking the Presidency: Donald Trump's War on the World's Most Powerful Office* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux), which was published in January 2020.

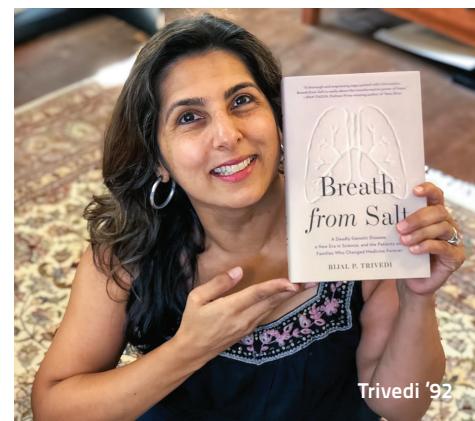
1991

Cellist **Rebecca Arons** of the Minnesota Opera Orchestra teamed up with Oberlin violinist Laurie Petruconis '90 for a socially distanced performance of music from the Dvořák opera *Rusalka*, which Rebecca coproduced and which also features her orchestra colleagues. In other news, Rebecca’s company STRINGenius arranged string and horn tracks for rock legend Prince for four years prior to his death.

One song they worked on was “Baltimore,” which takes on renewed meaning following the murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police. The resulting video was recently released by Prince’s estate. [w] www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=84&v=hM_LI7LFf84w&feature=emb_logo ■ **Irvin Ashford Jr.**, chief community officer for Comerica Bank, was named one of 2020’s Most Influential Black Executives in Corporate America by *Savoy Magazine*. Irvin manages Comerica’s community reinvestment efforts as well as its diversity business resource groups, financial education, and external affairs initiatives.

1992

Science writer **Bijal Trivedi** reports that after eight years of work, her new book, *Breath from Salt*, has been published by BenBella Books (which was founded by Glenn Yeffeth '83). The book “is the story of how parents, patients, scientists, and entrepreneurs collaborated to create lifesaving treatments for children with



Trivedi '92

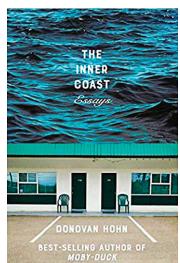
Class Notes

cystic fibrosis, a deadly inherited lung disease. It is a powerful example of what can happen when people work together. It is a story that has given me hope in these challenging times.” [w] www.bijaltrivedi.com

1993

A recent video made by [Katie Green Beilfuss](#) of Madison, Wis., was selected for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Film Festival, which is making the rounds in venues across the country. Katie’s video explains the role of wetlands in water management. It was produced by the Wisconsin Wetlands Association, where she is director of outreach. ■ [Hsiao Bi-khim](#) was named Taiwan’s de facto ambassador to the United States. A National Security Council advisor and former legislator for the Democratic Progressive Party, Bi-khim is the first woman ever to hold the position. “The United States is Taiwan’s most important international partner, and President Tsai Ing-wen expects Hsiao to contribute her expertise and continue to strengthen relations between Taiwan and the U.S.,” read a statement from the office of the Taiwanese president. Bi-Khim was born in Japan and came to the U.S. to study, eventually earning degrees from Oberlin and Columbia University. Her first job was as chief executive of the DPP’s office in Washington, D.C.

1994

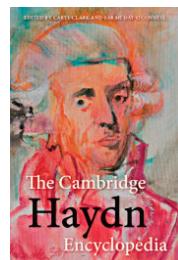


Hohn '94

After more than 12 years in Massachusetts state government, [Carrie Conaway](#) recently joined the faculty of the Harvard Graduate School of Education as a senior lecturer, teaching courses on research and data use in education policy contexts. She also coauthored the book *Common-Sense Evidence* (Harvard Education Press), which demonstrates how education leaders can better employ evidence in their work. ■ Author [Donovan Hohn](#) has followed up his 2011 bestseller *Moby-Duck*—about the international journey of a capsized cache of rubber ducks—with *The Inner Coast* (W.W. Norton & Co.), a collection of 10 prize-winning essays about “physical, historical, and emotional journeys into the American landscape and through our own personal geographies.” The

New York Times calls him an “adventurous, inquisitive, and brightly illuminating writer.” Donovan is a former editor at *GQ* and *Harper’s*.

1995



Sarah Day-O’Connell coedited *The Cambridge Haydn Encyclopedia* (Cambridge University Press), which presents new perspectives on the composer and his complicated life and includes the contributions of 67 scholars and performers. *BBC Music* magazine calls it “A paradise for ‘dipping in’ at random and seeing where the journey takes you.” Sarah studied piano performance and music history at Oberlin.

1999



Rumaan Alam '99

Leave the World Behind, the new novel from [Rumaan Alam](#), was a finalist for the National Book Award. The book was also bought by Netflix to be made into a film starring Julia Roberts and Denzel Washington, who is also the film’s coproducer. ■ [Aimee Lee](#) was designated an Ohio Arts Council Heritage Fellow for 2019 in recognition of her work with Korean papermaking traditions. Her essay about toolmakers was published in *Papermaker’s Tears* (Legacy Press), and another essay will follow in the second volume. She was awarded a Fulbright Senior scholarship to return to Korea for further hanji and toolmaking research for the 2020-21



Riccio '99

academic year. Aimee teaches book arts at the Cleveland Institute of Art and paper- and book-making on campus for Oberlin’s winter term. [w] [aimeelee.net](#) ■ [Jon Riccio](#) earned his PhD from the University of Southern Mississippi’s Center for Writers. His first poetry collection, *Agoreography*, is forthcoming from 3: A Taos Press.

2000s

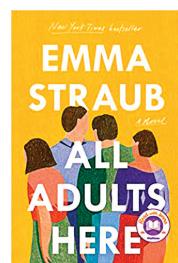
2000

“My bff ([Chris Boehm Carlson](#) ’98) and I worked together and won the Google.org Minnesota Impact Challenge for my nonprofit,” writes [Aileen Kasper](#). Aileen and Chris met during orientation in 1994 when Aileen was hypnotized on stage and Chris, who thought it was so funny, found her afterward. They have remained close friends throughout their lives, both raising families in Minneapolis. Chris left her environmental consulting role—at which she had successfully won multiple government contracts—to become an Episcopal priest (official in June 2020), and Aileen serves as director of development and communications for Genesys Works Twin Cities, a career success program for high school students in underserved communities. At Aileen’s request, Chris joined Genesys Works’ effort to transform its fundraising efforts, earning multiple government grants as well as the Google challenge.

2002



Simmons '02



Straub '02

Walter “Hudie” Thomas Broughton IV, a private wealth advisor for Merrill in St. Paul, Minn., was named to *Forbes*’ Best-in-State Wealth Advisors for 2020. Hudie is managing director at the Broughton Group. ■ [Simon Nussbaum](#) was named a 2020 Maker of Tomorrow by *Signs of the Times* magazine. Simon’s company, Green Dot Sign, specializes in ADA-compliant signage. He developed patent-pending technology that reduces



Nussbaum '02

plastic use in ADA signage by roughly 99 percent. Green Dot Sign was also named Most Innovative Vendor at the 2019 Greenbuild International Conference and Expo. Simon and his family live in St. Paul, Minn. ■ **Andrew Simmons** wrote *Love Hurts, Lit Helps* (Rowman & Littlefield), a book for educators that illustrates how an academically rigorous English class can also heal, empower, and provide wisdom for teens weathering storms in their friendships, relationships, and communities. “It’s essentially a book about how English class is a course in personal health with public health benefits,” writes Andrew, who has devoted a decade to teaching in diverse urban and suburban school districts.

■ **Emma Straub** published her fourth novel, *All Adults Here* (Riverhead Books). “It’s a credit to Straub’s gifts of wit and observation that she’s made such a loving book so alive. Reading *All Adults Here*, you feel like maybe your life isn’t so small, that its minor joys and pitfalls are worthy of literature. If only Straub could be the one to document it.” NPR says the novel “confirms (Straub’s) reign as a patron saint of delayed adolescence.” The book is available in bookstores, including Straub’s own, Books are Magic, in the Cobble Hill neighborhood of Brooklyn, NYC.

2005

Freddie Effinger, a survivor of Stage IV Hodgkin’s lymphoma whose father died from cancer, was nominated for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society’s Man of the Year for 2020 by the Birmingham-area chapter of Alabama. Freddie hopes to raise money that will fund the search for cutting-edge cancer treatments supported by LLS. “Cancer is a part of my story,” he writes. “But now so is my fight.” [w] https://youtu.be/msTrwRxS_rw

“The students are as bright as ever, energetic, interested in learning, and have a wealth of talent.”

MARCIAS ZVARA '64



CLYDE OWAN '79

Andy '63 and Marcia '64 Zvara

Andy and Marcia’s years at Oberlin were the defining time of their lives. After receiving an excellent liberal arts education and creating long-lasting friendships with their classmates, they remain closely connected to Oberlin.

As alumni, they give to Oberlin with the hope it will in some small way make it possible for students in need to attend. They know that modest contributions can come together to provide a scholarship for a student or help faculty enhance their teaching.

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Class Notes

2006

Sean Gill's short story "Dignity and Urgency in Edinburgh and London" won the University of Michigan's 2019 Lawrence Prize, awarded annually to the best story published in *Michigan Quarterly Review* that year.

2009

Tiffany Chang, Oberlin's visiting assistant professor of conducting, is one of 19 winners of a Solti Foundation Career Assistance Award for 2020. Tiffany serves as director of the Arts and Sciences Orchestra, whose membership includes avid musicians from the college and community. **Maurice Cohn '17** is also among the winners of the Solti Award. ■ **Ben Dorfan** began studies toward an MA in music composition at the University of California, Santa Cruz. ■ **Daniel Tam-Claiborne '09** (center) married Meghan Lewis in 2019. In attendance at their Seattle wedding were (from left): Jason Fields '12, Christina James '10, Yitka Winn '08, Peter Kim, Aishe Suarez Chan '06, Daniel Domaguin '06, Marianne Tassone '06, Margaret Kent '10, Kim Meinert '07, and David Petrick '10.

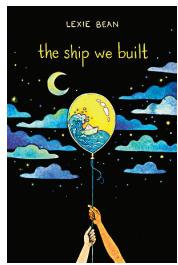


2010s

2011

Opera singer **Julia Dawson** endured the spring 2020 COVID-19 quarantine in Alsace, France, where she created a video of the trio "Soave sia il vento" from Mozart's *Così fan tutte* with colleagues from orchestras across Europe and North America. Among them was clarinetist **Sacha Rattle '05**. [w] www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNza3zrOF44&feature=youtu.be

2013



Bean '13

Lexie Bean, a queer and trans multimedia artist, has a new book, this one their debut novel for middle grade readers, called *The Ship We Built* (Dial Books). Despite its category, Lexie says the book is "secretly also for adults." In a starred review, *Kirkus Reviews* writes, "Everyone should read this remarkable, affecting novel." ■

Pianist **Lishan Xue**, who earned an artist diploma at Oberlin, won numerous prizes from national and international competitions,



including the 2019 On Stage International Classical Music Competition. Among recent performances were recitals at Palazzo Albrizzi in Venice, and Capella del Mercanti in Turin, Italy. In 2019 she coauthored *Learn to Improvise Jazz* (Shanghai Music Publishing House), which has sold more than 2,700 copies as of mid-summer. The Chinese-language book contains exercises, a list of select jazz classics, mini jazz theory, piano voicing, and sheets for Bb and Eb instruments. It also comes with audio recordings, including exercise demonstrations, play-along tracks, and tunes from the author. Lishan is pursuing DMA studies in piano performance and

literature at the University of Illinois and was named associate professor of piano at the Guangxi Arts University in China.

2016

Saxophonist and composer **Max Bessesen** teamed up with bassist Ethan Philion '14, drummer **Nathan Friedman '12**, and keyboardist **Eric Krouse** for his debut album, *Trouble*, on Ropeadope Records. A resident of Chicago, Max returned to his native Denver to cut the record, which also features veteran cornetist Ron Miles, one of Max's mentors. *Trouble* was inspired in part by the 2018 suicide of Zac Nunnery, who had



Da Camera of Houston before moving to New York City to live with Ally.

2017

Maurice Cohn joins **Tiffany Chang '09** as one of 19 recipients of the 2020 Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistance Award. Maurice is music director of the New Horizons Orchestra and assistant conductor of the Eastman School Symphony Orchestra. His recent engagements include conducting Oberlin Conservatory's Contemporary Music Ensemble and serving as cover conductor for the Atlanta Symphony, assisting Music Director **Robert Spano '84**. Maurice also regularly conducts the Chicago-based contemporary ensemble Zafa Collective.

2018

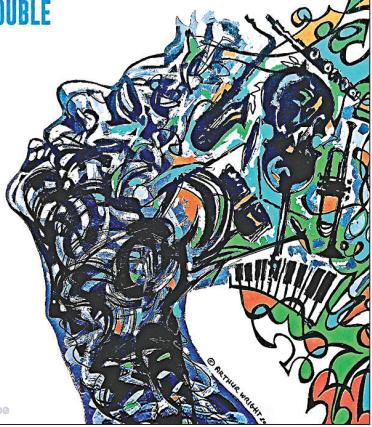
Jenny Xin Luan, **Cecilia Lang Xu '16**, and **Joanna Yinyu Zhan '16** are among a group that organizes events to bring together Obies in China. "The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many of us back home to China from school and work overseas," she writes. Their first two gatherings, held in Beijing and Shanghai in June 2020, drew some 50 participants. "We want to build a friendly environment where everyone can learn from each other, especially about career development in China," says Jenny. "We are also trying to host events for Chinese international alumni on career development in the U.S., as well as connect with the Asian American and broader alumni community. There are endless possibilities, and we are dedicated!" Pictured is a group that includes 25 Obies from the Classes of 2015 to 2021, gathered for a June lunch in Shanghai.

2019

Soprano **Diana Schwam** starred in Bard College Conservatory of Music's original production of *Rest in Pieces—In Memory* in early March 2020. It's based on characters from five well-known operas, with Schwam's Zerlina derived from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. A former student of Salvatore Champagne, she now studies with Lorraine Nubar in Bard's Graduate Vocal Arts Program.



MAX BESSESSEN TROUBLE



Bessesen '16

played guitar with Bessesen's band. Max earned a fellowship from the Frank Huntington Beebe Fund in 2016 that led to a year-long trek to India, Ghana, and Cuba and vastly expanded his horizons musically and culturally. "It was some of the most lonely, meaningful, and educational time in my life so far," he says. [w] maxbessesen.com ■ Double bassist **Austin Lewellen** married Alexandra Smither in Houston in January 2020. The wedding party included Obies **Rachel Halvorson**, **Judy Jackson '18**, **Sarah Jane Kerwin '15**, **Rob Moreton**, and **Ben Roidl-Ward '15**. Austin is finishing a two-year stint as a Young Artist Fellow with

CLASS NOTES are prepared from a variety of sources, including news media reports, press releases, and other material sent to us. Send your news—and high-resolution images—to alum.mag@oberlin.edu.

“I felt like I could do whatever I set my mind to.”

REGINA WILSON '81

LUCIANA SARMENTO PHOTOGRAPHY



That's how Regina Wilson '81 describes her mindset after graduating from Oberlin. And she's lived by that approach ever since.

A first-generation college student, Regina came to Oberlin from the Cleveland public schools. Her parents expected her to attend a local state college, but Regina "wanted to see the world beyond my neighborhood."

Oberlin was her introduction to new people and new worlds. Graduating with a degree in economics, Regina spent more than 20 years in the financial services industry before deciding it was time for a career change. She returned to school to

study nursing and is now an RN at a major health system in Georgia. Not one to stop her studies ("I consider myself a lifelong learner"), Regina is learning Spanish and enjoys spending time with her dog, Margo.

Regina is also an active member of OA4, the Oberlin Alumni Association of African Ancestry. After attending an OA4 event several years ago, she considered leaving a legacy to her alma mater. "I said, why not?" she reflects. A generous gift from her estate will allow future Obies to study economics, as she did. Regina's own path shows that an Oberlin education can take you anywhere you want to go.

Many alumni like Regina choose to support Oberlin with an estate gift. It is an attractive option, as you can make a substantial impact on the college without affecting your lifestyle or giving up funds you might need later in life. An estate gift is also easy to set up and will keep the Oberlin experience available for future students.

To learn more, contact the Office of Gift Planning at (440) 775-8599 or at gift.planning@oberlin.edu.

Losses

Faculty, Staff, and Friends

Dr. Stuart Friebert was a poet, translator, and professor. He earned a BA at Wisconsin State College/Milwaukee and an MA and PhD at the University of Wisconsin/Madison in German language and literature. Dr. Friebert taught German at Mt. Holyoke and Harvard before arriving at Oberlin in 1961. In 1975, he founded Oberlin's Creative Writing Program, which he directed until his retirement in 1997. Dr. Friebert also cofounded the poetry periodical *FIELD*, the *FIELD* Translation Series, and Oberlin College Press. During his career, he published 15 books of poems, 16 volumes of translations, and four books of prose. He died on June 23, 2020, survived by his wife, the writer and emerita creative writing faculty member Diane Vreuls, two children, and one grandchild. A Memorial Minute for Dr. Friebert will appear in a future issue of this magazine. ■ **Dr. Joanna Frueh** was a prolific author and professor of art history at Oberlin and numerous other institutions, most notably the University of Nevada, to which she devoted 20 years, as well as the Rochester Institute of Technology and the University of Arizona. She earned a bachelor's degree from Sarah Lawrence College, followed by a master's in history of culture and a PhD in art history from the University of Chicago. In the 1970s, she was director of Chicago's Artemesia Gallery, one of the first women's galleries. Her first published work appeared in *The Feminist Art Journal* in 1976, and she went on to forge a trailblazing career that addressed issues of sexuality and eroticism head-on; at the heart of all her writing was the notion that the mind and soul are one with the body. Her latest book, *Unapologetic Beauty* (University of Minnesota Press, 2019), examined the beauty, sensuality, and wisdom of aging women. She received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Women's Caucus for Art in 2008. Dr. Frueh died February 20, 2020. She is survived by her spouse, Kathleen Williamson. ■ **Laura Marie Gobbi '91** earned a master's degree in art history from New York University and enjoyed a wide-ranging career in the arts, the environment, and higher education, including serving as executive director of the Oberlin Alumni Association. She was

assistant vice president of alumnae relations and institutional giving for Mills College, a museum scientist at the University of California, Berkeley; director of donor relations and events at the Smithsonian Institution; and most recently director of donor engagement at the Nature Conservancy. Ms. Gobbi studied and spoke Italian and French, played the flute, wrote poetry, painted with watercolors, and was an adept student of the natural world, especially birds and butterflies. She served as the president of the board of directors for the Golden Gate Audubon Society, the San Francisco Bay Area chapter of the National Audubon Society, earning the designation of Master Birder through the California Academy of Sciences. She died June 13, 2020, survived by her wife, Victoria Clarke. ■ **Bob Jones** was the college's director of security between 2000 and 2008. A graduate of Lorain County Community College, the National FBI Academy in Quantico, Va., and the Southern Police Academy in Louisville, Ky., Mr. Jones began his pioneering career in law enforcement as a dispatcher for the city of Oberlin. He became a patrol officer in 1967 and was named Oberlin's chief of police in 1980, a position he held for two decades before retiring. Mr. Jones served on the Community Foundation of Lorain County board, was past president of the Oberlin NAACP, past president of the Oberlin American Legion, and was involved in Leadership Lorain County. He was also a member of the 100 Men of Lorain County program, helping to mentor boys at General Johnnie Wilson Middle School in Lorain. He died on May 5, 2020, and is survived by his wife, Claudia, four children, and seven grandchildren. ■ **Dr. Fredrick Davis Shults '54** was an Oberlin professor and athletics coach for whom the college's soccer field is named. As a student at Oberlin, he participated in soccer, baseball, and basketball, serving as captain of the soccer and baseball teams as a senior and earning All-America honors in soccer. He followed his Oberlin education with a doctorate of physical education from Indiana University before returning to Oberlin in 1960 as assistant professor in the Physical Education Department for Men. He obtained tenure status in 1964 and became a full professor in 1981. Dr. Shults made the case that the physical education major was a vital part of a liberal arts curriculum. In

campus debate over whether physical education should continue at Oberlin, he strongly urged policies to upgrade the quality of the program. He was a pioneer in his emphasis on ethics in sports, and he developed the nation's first course in sports sociology. As a coach, he led Oberlin's varsity soccer, junior varsity basketball, and varsity lacrosse programs. His achievements as an Oberlin student athlete and coach were acknowledged by his induction into the Oberlin Heisman Club Hall of Fame in 1992. Dr. Shults retired from Oberlin in 1994. He died June 8, 2020, leaving his daughter, Jennifer, son Jeffrey, and two grandchildren. He was collaborating on a book about the history and importance of Oberlin athletics at the time of his death. A Memorial Minute for Dr. Shults will appear in a future issue of this magazine. ■ **Dr. Edith Evans Swan** advised Oberlin students on independent courses of study and taught a class on Native American literature as associate dean for student academic affairs. In addition to her work at Oberlin, she served as a professor of anthropology at Grand Valley State College in Michigan and as an administrative fellow at Evergreen State College in Washington. She earned a BA from Bennington College, a master's degree from the University of Arizona, and a PhD in cultural anthropology from the University of Massachusetts. She retired in 1996 and settled in Durango, in her native Colorado. There she reunited with Alta Begay Ellsworth, a friend who had served as her Navajo/Diné interpreter for an undergraduate field study in 1959. Together they recorded 70 extensive interviews, and Dr. Swan told the story of Ms. Ellsworth's life in the 2018 book *Making Selves Women: Life and Times of a Navajo Woman* (Ellsworth & Swan). Dr. Swan died May 3, 2020. She leaves her husband, Jerry Muth; two children; four grandchildren; and five step-grandchildren.

1945

Edith Shakin Katz had a distinguished, multifaceted career. Before her retirement, she was a program consultant involved with international business programming for the Council on International Educational Exchange. Ms. Katz was a lifelong learner and was known for her parties, where the price of admission was often a poem or story. She threw her last soirée in the first week of March before the pandemic made in-person

Losses

socializing impossible. She died April 9, 2020, leaving her two daughters, including Jane Kleinberg Lebowitz '75, and four grandchildren.

1946

Carolyn "Kelly" Slingland Truitt was a lifelong volunteer who coordinated an R&R program in Australia for servicemen stationed in Vietnam and later served as chair of the board of Contact Teleministries, for which she managed the efforts of 3,600 suicide hotline volunteers and launched the Wilmington, Del., chapter. In 1982 she was awarded the President's Volunteer Action Award by Ronald Reagan. Ms. Truitt met James William Truitt '47 at Oberlin, and they were married in 1946. The family moved numerous times: to Ohio, Delaware, Texas, Nebraska, Kansas, Georgia, California, Australia, and eventually back to Delaware. Ms. Truitt was active with the Aldersgate United Methodist Church for 51 years, serving as a choir member, soloist, accompanist, and youth program leader, among numerous other roles. She and Mr. Truitt remained close to Oberlin throughout their lives, and both served in volunteer roles as alumni. Ms. Truitt died February 21, 2020. She was predeceased by her husband and leaves three children and numerous grandchildren.

1947

Charlotte Kessler Briggs was a dedicated mother and devout member of her church community, which she served in a variety of ways. She earned a degree in mathematics from Oberlin, graduating as valedictorian at age 19. She was celebrated by loved ones for her skills in sewing, gardening, and cooking. Ms. Briggs died April 24, 2020, following the death of her husband, Charles, eight years earlier. She is survived by six children, 23 grandchildren, and 46 great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by one great-grandchild. ■ **Virginia Sherwood Van Horn**

Taub was a social service worker, director of camp services for the Girl Scouts of America, and director of the Christopher Columbus Community Center for at-risk youths in Boston. She enjoyed tennis, golf, reading, and gardening and was passionate about environmental causes. Ms. Taub died May 12, 2020. She leaves six children, including Russell Taub '72, 10 grandchildren, and five

great-grandchildren, as well as her ex-husband, Donald Taub '47, with whom she remained friends for 75 years.

1949

Born in Germany and raised near Detroit, **Sieglinde Sauskojus Isham** was a standout pianist who performed frequently in duos, as accompanist, and in chamber music settings. She earned a master's degree in piano performance from the University of Michigan, studying under the legendary Arthur Schnabel, and taught lessons privately and as a faculty member at San Francisco City College. She had two children with her first husband, Henry Onderdonk. Ms. Isham died December 23, 2019. ■ **Patricia Cobb Tarnow** lived for three decades in Seneca Falls, N.Y. She was an avid volunteer for numerous causes, including the Girl Scouts of America, the Women's League, and the Conservancy in Naples, Fla., where she served as a docent for school groups. She married Robert Laurence Tarnow '49 in 1950, and together they raised eight children. Ms. Tarnow was a dedicated supporter of the Oberlin Alumni Association for 60 years. She died March 17, 2020, leaving seven children, 16 grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband and one child.

1950

Florence Conover Simpkins returned to college in the late 1960s to earn her teaching certification after raising four daughters with her husband, Robert E. Simpkins '50. She taught in South Jersey and at Grafton Center Elementary School in Massachusetts until her retirement in 1993. She enjoyed volunteering for the Cooperative Extension Service in Maine, playing bridge, and spending time with her daughter and family in Arizona. Ms. Simpkins died February 20, 2020. She was predeceased by her husband and is survived by their four daughters, eight grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

1951

Helen Muriel Tingley Ganopole earned teacher certification in 1969 followed by an MA in special education, and she began a career as a teacher in Anchorage after raising three children. She was married first to Charles McClintock '51, then Richard Exner, and finally to Gerald Ganopole, with whom she

continued her lifelong love of travel, visiting Asia, Australia, Europe, and other locales. In retirement, Ms. Ganopole took up the study of Braille. She died April 22, 2020, leaving three children, four stepchildren, and two grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her second husband.

1953

Rev. Boyd Albert Granzow served in the U.S. Navy and earned three bachelor's degrees and two master's degrees, eventually settling into a career as a minister in Minnesota, Ohio, and Washington. He later relocated to Melbourne, Australia, and transitioned into a career as a psychologist. Rev. Granzow died November 7, 2019, leaving his wife, Marjorie; three children; and four grandchildren.

1954

A native of New Jersey, **Mary Ann Wallace** lived most of her life in the town of Cranbury, where she and husband Roy Lee Wallace Jr. took up the cause of supporting minorities and migrant workers. An accomplished cellist and pianist, she began her career as an elementary school teacher before taking up a role with Mothers Against Drunk Driving. She was active in the Quaker community and was quick to assist those in need. Ms. Wallace died May 30, 2020. She leaves a daughter, a son, and five grandchildren. She was predeceased by her husband, who died 19 days earlier, as well as a son.

1955

Dr. Reinhard Graetzer was a professor of physics for 33 years at Pennsylvania State University, where he focused first on nuclear structure and later on biophysics and DNA damage and repair in yeast cells. He earned a PhD from the University of Wisconsin at Madison and was a Ford Foundation postdoctoral fellow at the Niels Bohr Institute in Copenhagen, Denmark. He enjoyed providing tax assistance to international students and seniors, and he served as treasurer for the Center for Alternatives in Community Justice. Dr. Graetzer died September 29, 2019. He leaves his wife, Mary Alice Carroll '58, and two daughters.

1956

Carol Hofmann Boltz studied with Leo Holden at Oberlin and was elected into membership in the Pi Kappa Lambda

MEMORIAL MINUTE

David S. Boe, 1936-2020



Real friendships, Ralph Waldo Emerson suggests, "are not glass threads or frost work, but the solidest things we can know." And with that in mind, it is easy to see that in David Stephen Boe, Oberlin most surely had a real friend, a friend devoted, generous, and long beloved. His Oberlin career spanned 46 years, closely rivaling the longevity of another Oberlin organ icon, George Whitfield Andrews, and his decades here saw him rise through the ranks as an organ professor and dean of the Conservatory of Music.

Early on, David's musical path was shaped by growing up the son of a Lutheran pastor and later attending Minnesota's St. Olaf College, influences that found a resonant echo in his long tenure as organist and music director of the First Lutheran Church in Lorain. His advanced study was with Arthur Poister at Syracuse University and as a Fulbright Scholar with the renowned Bach organist, Helmut Walcha. Later, he would also study with the legendary Dutch harpsichordist and organist Gustav Leonhardt.

As an organist and teacher, David was well-attuned to historically informed performance, and this became an important foundation for his playing and his pedagogy. His early promotion of organ builder John Brombaugh, the pioneering master of historical organ building in North America, was notably forward-looking, helping to set the stage for Oberlin to emerge as the unrivaled center of historically based organs in the world. With his insightful and caring guidance, decades of Oberlin organ students developed not only a remarkable fluency of techniques and styles, but also the sensitivity of expression and grace under fire that characterized his own playing. David was indeed an elegant player. Even in the most spirited and powerful of passages, he seemed to maintain an inner calm, an unruffledness, that gave the music a foundational confidence and the room for it to be what it needed to be. And in more intimately scaled works, his calm translated easily into expressive grace.

Showing his deep love of teaching, he continued to maintain a studio even during the demanding years of being dean of the conservatory. It is easy to imagine that David learned some of the craft of deanship from his predecessor, Emil Danenberg, with whom he had worked closely as an associate dean. But is also clear that David's deanship from 1976 to 1990 was a time in which he exercised a leadership distinctly his own. We tend to mark administrations by their achievements, and his were notable, including a major renovation of Warner Concert Hall, the sizable expansion of the Conservatory

Library, and his shepherding of the American-Soviet Youth Orchestra. His leadership grew outside of Oberlin, as well, serving as national president of the music honorary society Pi Kappa Lambda and as secretary of the National Association of Schools of Music. But administrative legacies also take other forms. As dean, David had the gift of being a caring friend whose advice was wise, whose door was open, and whose smile and quiet laugh sustained the years with welcome grace.

David's retirement from the faculty in 2008 felt much like the end of an era. It was an era, however that Oberlin has sought to honor in diverse ways, notably with the establishment of the David S. Boe Chair in Organ Studies in 2011 and the naming of the Bozeman "Silbermann" organ in Oberlin's Peace Church as the "David and Sigrid Boe Organ," also in 2011. With characteristic generosity, David donated his beautiful house organ by John Brombaugh to the college, and it now graces the nave of Fairchild Chapel.

In retirement, David and his wife, Sigrid, moved to Chicago to be close to family. And while the last years of his life were marked by Parkinson's disease, music, former students, and colleagues, Oberlin itself always remained close to his heart.

A quiet man with a gentle laugh and a warm smile, a sensitive musician of uncommon grace and elegance, a dedicated teacher, and a devoted leader, David Boe died on April 28 in Chicago of COVID-19. The college mourns the loss of a real friend.

Steven Plank, Andrew B. Meldrum Professor and Chair, Department of Musicology

National Music Honor Society. She began her music career when she joined the faculty of Vassar College as Chapel Organist in 1956. She was subsequently organist and director of music at a Buffalo, N.Y., Presbyterian church and organist at a Methodist church in Fredonia, a position she held for 23 years, at which she inaugurated the Organ Recital Series. She earned a master's degree from SUNY Fredonia, where she also had two stints as organ instructor. Among her volunteer

leadership roles, Ms. Boltz was president of the Buffalo Chapter of the Oberlin Alumni Association. She died November 25, 2019 and is survived by her husband, James; a daughter; two sons; and seven grandchildren. Her first husband, John Hofmann '56, predeceased her. ■ **Dr. Jerry Worsham** was an ear, nose, and throat surgeon at Group Health Hospital. He married Nancy Rogers Green '56, his former comparative anatomy lab instructor, in Oberlin's Fairchild Chapel. They attended

Albany Medical College together and settled in Bellevue, Wash., where they raised three children. In retirement, Dr. Worsham built and repaired homes with Habitat for Humanity and worked for East Shore Unitarian Church. He was a proud alumnus of Oberlin, where an endowed scholarship was established in his name. Dr. Worsham died February 2, 2020, leaving his wife; three children, including Amy Carroll '90; and five grandchildren.

Losses

1957

Jean E. Renjilian cofounded the Counseling Center in Danbury, Conn., in 1976 and was principal of Collaborative Consulting in Newtown, where she lived since 1970. She earned an MS from the University of Bridgeport and later taught at Bridgeport, Dominican College, Norwalk Community College, and Quinnipiac College. Ms. Renjilian died May 1, 2020, leaving two sons and four grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband of 56 years, Jeremiah H. Renjilian.

1958

Katherine Baker died January 21, 2020. She is remembered as a proud Oberlin alumna and an exceptional musician. ■ **Paul James Nagy** was a chemistry major and a musician who found that Oberlin fed both of these loves. He was an early co-oper as a member of Pyle Inn and he met his future wife in Grey Gables. Mr. Nagy was a groundbreaking photographic chemist with Polaroid in Cambridge, Mass. He was also an accomplished classical pianist who enjoyed playing the works of Bartók, Ravel, and Debussy; at age 17, he performed as a soloist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, where his father was a violinist. Mr. Nagy died May 3, 2020. He is survived by his former wife, Martha Bicking Nagy '57; two sons, including Eric Nagy '85; and two grandchildren, including Hazel Pamet Nagy Galloway '17. ■ **Rev. Nancy L. Moore Roth** was an Episcopal priest, author, and spiritual director as well as an avid dancer. A native of New York City, she settled with her husband, Robert, in Scarsdale, N.Y., where they raised their two sons before relocating to Oberlin in 1991. Rev. Roth served on the staffs of Trinity Church in New York and later at Christ Church in Oberlin, as well as the Credo Music program, which operates a faith-based summer camp at the conservatory. An Affiliate Scholar at Oberlin College, she authored 13 books about spirituality, meditation, music, the Earth, and children, including *Grounded in Love* (2008), *A New Christian Yoga* (1989), and *We Sing of God: A Hymnal for Children* (1989), which she coauthored with her husband. She earned an MDiv and was awarded an honorary doctorate from General Theological Seminary, in addition to earlier studies in piano at the Juilliard School. Rev. Roth died

May 9, 2020, leaving her husband; two sons, including Michael '87; and two grandchildren.

1959

Marjory Anne Harper was an architect, therapist, artist, and teacher who worked for many years with incarcerated, gang-affiliated youths and other children in need. Raised by her grandmother following the death of her father, Ms. Harper became the fourth generation of women in her family to attend Oberlin. She earned a master's degree in education from Lesley College in 1975 and added an MS in architecture from the University of Massachusetts 14 years later. Ms. Harper died February 22, 2020. She leaves many loved ones.

1961

Dr. Richard Baker was a professor of family medicine for more than 30 years at the University of Washington; the University of California, San Diego; and the University of North Carolina. A prolific author for medical publications, he focused his research and writing on medical education, health promotion, and disease prevention. He was an All-American on the Oberlin lacrosse team and attended medical school at Case Western Reserve University. He began his career as a physician at Highland Hospital and was an instructor of family medicine at the University of Rochester. He later served in the U.S. Air Force as deputy hospital commander in Grand Forks, N.D., where he was also a member of the medicine and psychiatry faculty at the University of North Dakota. He concluded his military career treating Vietnam casualties for one year in Thailand. Dr. Baker died July 14, 2018. He is survived by his wife, Jeannette Franks. ■ **Betsy Samuelson Greer** was a self-described "troublemaker" who volunteered full time for the National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI) at the local and national level and was a lifelong advocate for sufferers of mental illness. Her 30-year involvement with NAMI began when she and her husband, Richard T. Greer, sought support for their son, who lives with schizophrenia. They went on to found the NAMI chapter in Arlington, Va. Ms. Greer was awarded the Oberlin Alumni Association's Distinguished Service Award in 2011 for her commitment to improving the quality of life for humanity. Five years earlier, she received the James B. Hunter III

Community Hero Award for Lifetime Achievement in Arlington County. Prior to her career with NAMI, she worked as a reporter in Vermont and Philadelphia before becoming a congressional aide to U.S. Senators George Aiken and Paul Leahy of Vermont. She also served as a legal affairs representative for the American Bankers Association. Ms. Greer died November 3, 2019, leaving many loved ones. ■ **Dr. David Clemmons Pinnix** was a member of the piano faculty at Greensboro College and also taught at Guilford College and Bennett College, where he was named Teacher of the Year and honored with the creation of an endowed scholarship. He served as organist and choir director for Guilford Park (N.C.) Presbyterian Church for 40 years and was a frequent accompanist and soloist in a variety of settings. Dr. Pinnix followed his Oberlin studies with an MM, DMA, and performance diploma in piano from the Eastman School of Music. He also won a Fulbright scholarship to study at the Santa Cecilia Academy in Rome. He died June 14, 2020. Survivors include his twin sons, two grandsons, and the mother of his children, Judith Howle.

1962

Linda Wolf Bromund worked for many years at the College of Wooster Writing Center. She married Martin Baskin in 2000 and enjoyed volunteering with the Wooster Public Library in retirement. Ms. Bromund died May 25, 2020, following the death of her husband. She is survived by two children and a granddaughter, as well as her first husband, Richard Bromund '62. ■ **Rev. Vergil A. Herzberger** began his career with the Steubenville, Ohio, *Herald Star* and worked as a carpenter before transitioning into a life of ministry with degrees from Heidelberg College and Oberlin. He served six United Methodist churches for the next 32 years. His ministry included developing a range of youth programs with his wife, Anita Tempia Williams, and he employed his carpentry skills to remodel the churches where he served. As a young man, Rev. Herzberger enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserve in response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and completed a stint in the U.S. Army Air Corps. He died February 15, 2020, following the death of his wife. He is survived by two sons, a daughter, nine grandchildren, and 17 great-grandchildren.

1964

Dr. Divakar Masilamani began his teaching career on the chemistry faculty of American College in Madurai, India, where he learned about Oberlin from Shansi representatives. He took up studies at Oberlin in 1962 on a Fulbright scholarship. He later completed his PhD in organic chemistry at the University of Notre Dame and taught for several additional years at American College before relocating to the U.S. to be a researcher at Allied Signal Corporation (now Honeywell), for which he secured numerous patents. Dr. Masilamani remained close to Oberlin and Shansi throughout his life. In retirement, he enjoyed studies of philosophy, history, and religion, eventually authoring the book *The Sacred in the Mundane* (2019), an exploration of his life in the context of Western and Indian history. He died January 18, 2020, leaving his wife of 48 years, Mary Pluckhahn Masilamani, as well as two daughters and a grandson.

1965

Lawrence Gladieux was a highly-respected expert in higher education policy. He earned a master's degree in international affairs from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University and was a legislative assistant to U.S. Representative John Brademas, staffed a task force on international cultural exchange programs chaired by Senator Jacob Javits, and worked in government relations for the Association of American Universities. He then began a nearly three-decade career with the College Board as director of its Washington office and director of policy analysis, conducting policy research on higher education access. After 2000, he continued to work independently for federal and state governments on education policy and finance. From 2001 to 2004 he served as a member of Oberlin's Board of Trustees. A lifelong athlete, in his 40s he found a new passion in white-water kayaking, and he traveled the mid-Atlantic, the west, and Costa Rica to run rivers. He also enjoyed gardening, traveling, and spending time with his children and then grandchildren. In 2008, suffering from Alzheimer's, he moved to Oregon to be closer to his daughter, Michele. Mr. Gladieux died April 29, 2020, leaving his former wife, Paula Gladieux '65, and his daughter. A son predeceased him. ■ **Dr. Thomas M. Liggett** devoted 42 years to the mathematics department at UCLA, where his research

focused on probability. He earned a PhD from Stanford University and began his research in functional analysis, later transitioning to interacting particle systems. A mathematician of international renown, he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1997 and was a member of the National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Dr. Liggett died May 12, 2020, leaving his wife and two children.

1974

Nancy Stark Smith was a pivotal figure in the dance world and a cofounder of the contemporary dance form known as "contact improvisation." An athlete and gymnast since childhood, she expressed no interest in dance until she encountered renowned choreographer Twyla Tharp in residence at Oberlin. It was during another Oberlin residency, of the New York improvisational dance company Grand Union, that she met dancer and choreographer Steve Paxton. Together they pioneered contact improvisation, which explores one body's relationship to another through weight sharing, touch, and movement awareness. Ms. Stark Smith took part in the first performance of the form in 1972, while still a student at Oberlin. She continued to perform and teach worldwide throughout her life, including numerous return visits to teach at Oberlin. An avid writer, she cofounded the international dance and improvisation journal *Contact Quarterly* in 1975 and continued to edit it with her friend and colleague, fellow artist Lisa Nelson, until January 2020. In 2008 she coauthored the book *Caught Falling: The Confluence of Contact Improvisation, Nancy Stark Smith, and Other Moving Ideas*. She died May 1, 2020, survived by her partner of 22 years, composer and musician Mike Vargas, as well as his daughter and granddaughter.

1977

Filmmaker and playwright **James Vculek** was the director of Partizan Pictures and Partizan Theater. His film *Two Harbors* was screened at 25 festivals worldwide, earning five Best Feature awards and appearing on New York Public Television. Another film, *The Quietest Sound*, featured one 70-minute take of a mother talking to off-screen detectives about her missing daughter; it resulted in a Best Actress Award for Catherine Johnson Justice at the Fargo Film Festival. Partizan Theater

produced seven of Mr. Vculek's plays, several of which were performed at the New York City Fringe Festival. He began his studies at Macalester College before transferring to Oberlin, where he started a popular film series. He earned a JD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison—where he once again founded a film series—then attended UCLA's American Film Institute, earning an MFA in producing and screenwriting. He worked for 27 years as an attorney editor at Thomson Reuters in Minneapolis and was a founder of the klezmer band Prague 24. He is survived by many loved ones.

1988

Dr. Martha "Marty" Oppegard Rahmeier practiced internal medicine at Valley View Hospital in Colorado for 22 years. In her youth she played the violin, worked as a lifeguard, and was a member of a synchronized swim team. She attended the University of Colorado Medical School where she established close bonds with many colleagues who continue to practice in the Roaring Fork Valley. Dr. Rahmeier enjoyed mountain biking, peanut butter cups, bluebird ski days, adventurous family vacations, Eddie Vedder, and a good book with a cup of tea. She died February 19, 2020, leaving her husband, Tim, and two daughters.

1993

Martha "Marcy" Webb worked in HIV research at the University of California, San Francisco, and San Francisco General Hospital. She earned a master's degree in public health from the University of California, Berkeley. In 2004 she relocated to Napa Valley, where she became a winemaker at Ballentine Vineyards and produced wine with her husband, Matt Reid '91, as the People's Wine Revolution. She was active as a volunteer in local schools and served on the board of the Calistoga Art Center. Ms. Webb died April 27, 2019. She is survived by her husband and their daughter.

1994

Eileen Rohmer was a high school teacher in Rye, N.Y., and Piedmont, Calif. After Oberlin, she studied at Wake Forest University Graduate School. She had been living with her husband in Oakland at the time of her death on September 16, 2012. She leaves many loved ones.

"I am not against this flag. This flag is my flag like it is yours. My people died to build this country, just like most of your parents did. I am part of a system that needs help. It needs an injection of love against hate. So we brought that forward."

Athlete, activist, and former Oberlin coach **Tommie Smith**, explaining his military-style stance during his protest at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, at the webinar "The Fist is Still Raised: A Conversation with Dr. Tommie Smith," presented by the Heisman Club and the Presidential Initiative on Racial Equity and Diversity, November 17, 2020

"They were terrible books. The worst books anyone ever wrote. What terrible trashy books. There were four of them."

Novelist **Alan Furst '62** on the books he wrote before he turned to the historical spy genre that made him a wildly successful bestselling author, on the September 30, 2020, podcast *Who's Here in the Hamptons*

"Racism, as an institution, is interwoven into the fabric of American culture, even when people don't realize that they are reenacting institutional inequality; it has become so normalized in policy and practice that it is difficult to avoid even with legislative advances, even with changes to policy; we breathe in the air of social injustice and inequality."

Meredith Gadsby, Oberlin associate professor of Africana studies and comparative American studies, in the essay "Here's Why Juneteenth Matters," published June 19, 2020, on the website of *Essence* magazine

"One key lesson from Latin America is that democracy rarely breaks down suddenly. Countries slide gradually into authoritarianism as leaders curtail civil rights, demonize opposition groups, and muzzle the press."

Kristina Mani, Oberlin associate professor of politics and chair of Latin American studies, in *The Conversation*, a nonprofit news outlet written by academics and edited by journalists for the general public, June 8, 2020

"If you came to my show and fell asleep, that's great. If that's what happens, that's flattering."

Ami Dang '06, a producer and sitarist who studied electronic composition at the conservatory, in an October 26, 2020, *New York Times* article on a new wave of new age music

"At Oberlin College in the U.S., poet and translator [now emeritus professor of English and creative writing] David Young taught me to think about the sound and shape of language beyond its content, which in turn made me think of its origin—not only in thought, but also in culture, place, and time."

Roland Kelts '90, a contributing editor to the English-language Japanese literary magazine *Monkey*, in the October 22, 2020, issue of the magazine *NikkeiAsia*

Finding Strength in Community

Photo by Dale Preston



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