

COMPARATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES

FACULTY HAPPENINGS

SHELLEY LEE, Associate Professor of Comparative American Studies and History.



Shelley Lee joined the editorial board of the Asian American History and Culture book series at Temple University Press. She is co-editing an anthology in Korean American Studies (forthcoming from Brill) and is writing a second edition of *A New History of Asian America* for Routledge. In August 2016 she published an op-ed with Magdalena Barrera of San Jose State University, "Renewing Alliances in Troubled Times," in *Inside Higher Ed*. In November, she delivered the 6th Annual President's Lecture at Oberlin, titled "American Dreams and the 'Black-Korean Conflict': Lessons from the End of the Twentieth Century." In Spring she will participate in a history symposium at Purdue titled "America's Newest History: The Nineties in Historical Perspective." In teaching, she offered a new course in Fall, HIST/CAST 382: Afro-Asian America.

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DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

Greetings from the Comparative American Studies Program!
Wendy Kozol, Professor and Program Director

I start with our most exciting news. After 10 years of effort, the College awarded CAS a new position in Native American and Indigenous Studies. We look forward to the arrival of our new faculty colleague in 2017-2018.

In 2016-2017, faculty and students in Comparative American Studies continue to be actively involved in designing new courses, planning events and long-term planning. Notably, we welcomed back Pawan Dhingra, a friend and former colleague in Sociology and CAST who is now Chair of the Sociology Department at Tufts University. This year, as in the past several years, CAS faculty continue to offer new courses including Shelley Lee's *Afro-Asian America*, Gina Perez's *Latina/o Oral Histories* and Evangeline Heiliger's *Feminist Science Studies* and *TransGender Studies*. Always seeking ways to update their pedagogy, the CAS faculty have all developed digital humanities projects for their courses (see more below), which can be viewed on our website.



Wendy Kozol

CAS faculty have also been active in campus-wide initiatives, including strategic planning, college governance and searches for administrative positions. Among the campus-wide initiatives, Gina Perez and Shelley Lee arranged for a lecture by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (Professor of Sociology at Duke and president-elect of the American Sociological Association), "The Diversity Blues: Reframing the Diversity Agenda at HWCUs." Professor Bonilla-Silva's groundbreaking work on contemporary colorblind racism, and more recent work on racism in institutions of higher learning (or what he calls HWCUs), has provided critical insights for navigating some of our own challenges at Oberlin. CAS faculty also organized pre- and post-talk discussions with faculty and students, providing participants with Prof. Bonilla-Silva's 2015 article, "The Structure of Racism in Color-Blind, 'Post-Racial' America."

To both students and alums: our website now has a link to internships so if you know of internship possibilities, please email me or Linda Pardee, our administrative assistant. And, as always, alums – we love to hear from you so send us your news.

Finally, this is my last year as Director of CAS. I would like to thank the CAS Program faculty, majors, student representatives, alumni and friends for your support over the past four years. In particular, Gina Perez, Shelley Lee and Vange Heiliger eased the way and made all of our achievements possible. While administrative work is never at the top of my list, you all made it a true pleasure and as always, I am so grateful to be a part of this wonderful program.

Warm wishes,

Wendy Kozol
Professor and Program Director

ALUMNI HAPPENINGS

BLUESTONE, Sarah '11

After graduation from Oberlin, I worked in various immigration defense settings, including policy work and direct representation of immigrants facing deportation. I worked with LGBT asylum seekers, individuals facing deportation due to contact with the criminal justice system, victims of domestic violence, and various other forms of relief. I am now a third year law student at UC Berkeley School of Law pursuing a career in Public Defense. I am currently involved in the Death Penalty Clinic where we assist in the representation of individuals who have been sentenced to death. Please feel free to reach out with any interest in pursuing a social justice legal career!

CASTRO, Alma '10

Labor Organizing, first in Santa Fe NM And now in Chicago, IL

Through the Chicago workers collaborative, we can offer a variety of internship opportunities. E-mail me at ACastro@chicagoworkerscollaborative.org if interested.

CERDERA, Pablo '15

I spent the 2015-2016 academic working in the Youth: Education, Advocacy, and Restorative Services program at the Legal Rights Center in Minneapolis, and have since moved back to my home town of Philadelphia, and am working in Museum education at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site.

COHEN, Kira '13

I am currently pursuing a masters degree in Social Studies Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, in preparation to teach history and politics to students in grades 7-12. Prior to this, I worked as a Student Advocate at a public transfer high school in Manhattan, and served for a year as part of Avodah: The Jewish Service Corps.

CORTES, Katrina '14

Worked two years for AmeriCorps Public Allies New York, doing housing organizing with GOLES Good Old Lower East Side (preventing people from being displaced in the Lower East Side, New York). I recently got a job doing direct services with the New York Public Library which I am extremely excited about. In my free time I am developing myself as a musician, performing at open mics, and have been organizing with various collectives. One is called Anakbayan New York, and they sent me on what is called an Exposure Trip to the Philippines during an international conference called the International League of Peoples Struggles, where organizers from all over the world came together to strategize how to combat the violence of imperialism. I also am part of the Jackson Heights Cop Watch team, also a collective organization in my hometown that educates people about their rights and documents police violence in the neighborhood. (2016)

Opportunities: Introduction to community organizing, leftist organizing, direct services, and anti-gentrification movements, international solidarity.

FORTUNATO, Amelia '10

After graduation, I moved to Chicago and worked as a union organizer with Unite Here Local 1, organizing food service and airport concession workers full-time for 3+ years. I left the union to pursue graduate school and after taking classes at the University of Chicago through the Graham School of Continuing Liberal and Professional Studies, I moved to NYC to start my PhD in Sociology. I am now a second year Doctoral Fellow at the CUNY Graduate Center studying the intersections of racial justice organizing, the criminal legal system, and the American Labor Movement and living in Brooklyn, NY. As part of my fellowship, I also teach undergraduate courses at John Jay College for Criminal

Justice. I use the teaching strategies I learned from the amazing CAS faculty at Oberlin in the classroom with my students everyday. Shout out to Professors Gina Perez and Meredith Raimondo!

HARDY-GERENA, Giordano '11

A few things have been occupying my time. Initially, I worked as a community organizer for non-profits in the DC area. Learning about the undocumented rights movement and fight for affordable housing was fantastic! While I enjoyed the work, I struggled with one aspect. These organizations felt more accountable to sponsors (i.e. foundations) than folks they purported to empower. I stepped away. Having never studied abroad (ignoring sage advice from Professor Gina Perez), I decided to teach English in South Korea. My students range from angelic to mischievous and ages 5 to 10. I have been here for a year and a half and plan to stay a while longer. Graduate school is calling me, but I am not sure which field. American Studies, perhaps?

HOFFMAN, Rick B. '05

I just completed a PhD in Sociology from the United Arab Emirates University and am currently a Senior Executive in the Employee Happiness Department at the Dubai Electricity & Water Authority. I also direct an all-adult cheerleading team called Cheer Dubai.

KERENSKY COODLEY, Scout '13

I'm working at the Brooklyn Botanical Garden as a science instructor. I'm an active member of the Crown Heights Tenant Union and the Maple Street Community Garden. I am considering a master's in forestry or ecology. I would to be in touch with other radical educators and folks with experience working in or learning science/outdoor Ed/STEM.

LEEMAN, Julia '09

6th Grade Math Teacher at a Middle School in Oakland, CA

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FACULTY HAPPENINGS CONTINUED

WENDY KOZOL, Professor, Director of Comparative American Studies.

Wendy Kozol taught a new first-year seminar this fall, *Justice in America?* This was a great opportunity to explore with students the question of justice through an interdisciplinary approach that put legal and philosophical concepts in dialogue with historical and sociological evidence as well as literary, visual, and other forms of expressive culture. She has also designed a digital humanities project for *Visible Bodies and the Politics of Sexuality* along with teaching *Introduction to CAST* and *Debating Citizenships*. Co-author Rebecca A. Adelman '01 and Wendy recently published "Ornamenting the Unthinkable: Visualizing Survival Under Occupation," *Women's Studies Quarterly* (Spring/Summer 2016): 171-187. This article considers the interweaving of survival, catastrophe, and ordinariness in the needlepoint artwork of Esther Nisenthal Krinitz, who lived through the Nazi occupation of Poland. Arresting both for its virtuosic level of detail and frank rendition of the occupation and attendant traumas, Krinitz's needlework ornaments the conjunction of the horrific and the quotidian. In 2016-2017, Wendy also served on the National Council of the American Studies Association.

EVANGELINE HEILIGER, Visiting Assistant Professor of Comparative American Studies.



Visiting Assistant Professor Vange Heiliger presented her research on pedagogy and decolonial feminist STS (science and technology studies) at the National Women's Studies Association conference in Montreal in November, 2016, and at the Association for

Environmental Studies and Society in Washington, DC in June, 2016. Professor Vange also presented a paper on postcolonial feminist STS approaches to tiny house building sciences and democratic engineering practices at the 4S/EASST international conference in Barcelona in Aug 31-Sept 4, 2016. Professor Vange received a Toni Morrison Society Teaching Grant to incorporate Morrison's works into CAS 447: Queer Positions; the spring 2017 cohort will

benefit from this enhancement to the syllabus. Professor Vange is also (slowly) building a tiny house on wheels, and is pleased to report that the tiny house now has a tiny roof.

RENEE ROMANO, Professor of History, Africana Studies, and Comparative American Studies



Renee Romano is serving her second year as chair of the History Department. Last spring she was elected to a three-year term on the Executive Board of Organization of American Historians and in July she was named the Robert S. Danforth Professor in History at Oberlin. She is hard at work on several new projects, including co-editing a collection about

Lin-Manuel Miranda's hit historical musical, *Hamilton*. *Historians On "Hamilton"* will feature fourteen essays by leading scholars exploring *Hamilton* as a historical product, a social and cultural phenomenon, and a representation of the past. The book, being published by Rutgers University Press, should be available sometime in 2017. Other current projects include an article about Rush Limbaugh's children's book series on Early American history and coordinating a public history project on Japanese-American students who attended Oberlin during World War II. In the spring, she will be offering the new class, "Repairing the Past: Readings on Historical Justice."

MEREDITH GADSBY, Associate Professor of Africana Studies.

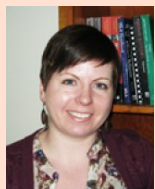


Meredith Gadsby is writing a new book on Caribbean speculative fiction entitled *Flying Forward: Caribbean Speculative and Fabulist Fiction*, which explores pathways for activism expressed via speculative fiction that engages Caribbean culture, folklore and politics in the future. Ms. Gadsby organized a panel

on this subject presented with two OC alums, Caitlin O'Neill '12 and Warren Harding '13 at the Caribbean Studies Association Annual Conference June 2016 in Port Au Price, Haiti. She is the mentor for Posse 10 and Faculty Liaison for the Toni Morrison Society.

CAS DIVES INTO DIGITAL HUMANITIES

[Digital humanities projects](#) encourage interdisciplinary work in which CAS students interact with people in various parts of the College including the Allen Art Museum, the Media Center, the Environmental Studies program and Mudd Library. These projects also reflect our program's commitment to developing and sustaining meaningful engagement with community partners in the town of Oberlin, Lorain, and throughout Northeast Ohio and are an important way to share and disseminate knowledge produced through these relationships.



Below are selections from an interview with **DANIELLE SKEEHAN**, Associate Professor of English and member of the CAS Program Committee Danielle Skeehan by CAS student assistant and major Tess Joseph.

How do you define digital humanities?

Defining the digital humanities is harder than it sounds! A recent article in the journal *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, for instance, offered over twenty-one possible answers to this question. Digital humanities is

interdisciplinary and is perhaps hardest to define because it breaks down boundaries between disciplines within the humanities as well as between the humanities and the sciences and social sciences. To make matters more difficult, DH can refer to a methodology as well as a mode of presenting research. In terms of method, scholars in, let's say English, might use digital tools to map, mine, or discover patterns or networks within and across different written texts in order to advance new arguments about those texts. In this sense, digital tools might also change the kinds of questions that scholars ask. In terms of presentation, a DH project might include digitizing and making accessible out-of-print texts and other materials, building databases, or presenting research in interactive online platforms. When it comes down to it, I tend to think that DH refers to the application of digital technology to humanities research.

What are the strengths and limitations of digital humanities?

DH invites us to ask different kinds of questions of the materials that serve as the primary sources of study in the humanities. I think that's a good thing. As a field (if we can call it a field), DH is also committed to open access and making information and technology free and available to everyone. In other words, it is challenging academic publishing practices both at the level of how we access research and sources as well as in the kinds of research that academic publishing machines tend to promote. But, of course, DH has limitations. It tends to promote positivist research agendas. It also, perhaps relatedly, tends to function in extractive and, we might even say, imperial ways. For instance, in my definition earlier I used language like "mapping," "mining," and "discovering" to describe DH methodologies. Moreover, university administrations often support DH projects because they seem to promise to translate humanities research into a language that has been coded as more authoritative and thus more valuable—that is, the language of the

social sciences and sciences. DH has a lot to offer but I think that people working in the humanities need to make sure we do not become belated, secondhand social scientists. Lastly, at many institutions it is unclear how DH projects will "count" toward one's tenure case. Are these the same as an article? A book? Until we understand how these projects count in promotion cases it might be difficult to convince faculty to pursue DH projects.

How do you use digital humanities within your work?

Most of my classes have a DH component that might range from using digital databases such as America's Historical Newspapers to conduct primary source research to building our own class archives and databases using Omeka. I see digital archiving as a student-driven means of interpretation. For instance, in "Nineteenth-Century New York: Writing the Modern City" we build our own digital archive in order to address the underrepresentation of canonical Black voices writing in/ about NYC in the nineteenth-century. For our "Archiving Black New York in the Nineteenth-Century" website, students sourced New York City-related news articles, editorials, poems, and short stories from the African American Newspapers and Periodicals databases and added them to collections on our Omeka site. Students in the class this Spring will add to these collections as well as further the project by building online exhibits that explore the relationships among race, place, and print in city life. In this sense, this is a project that continues and grows semester to semester. This is our site: <http://archivingblacknewyork.oberlincollege.org/>.

Living at a distance from the archives and research libraries that house the primary sources central to my research means that digital databases (such as those mentioned above) have become invaluable to my work. I also use DH tools when I'm in the archives to keep track of primary source materials. For instance, this past summer I secured a grant to travel to and conduct research

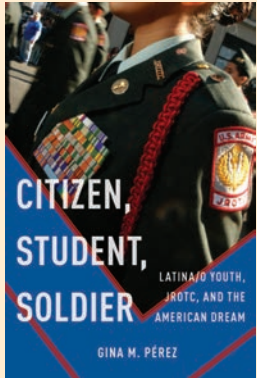
in Boston area-archives along with two Oberlin students—Sabina Sullivan and Amreen Ahmed—on a project titled "Haunted Subjects: Occult Practices and New Literary Traditions in Nineteenth Century America." With three researchers often at different archives scattered across the city, it was important to build a common database in order to store—in one place—all of the images of the rare books, objects, pamphlets, broadsides, etc. we were looking at as well as record the metadata that would make identifying these items easier as we move forward with our own projects at a later date. As of yet I do not have a digital project meant to present research but I imagine that future (post tenure!) projects might lean in that direction.

How does the use of digital humanities help students form connections within the College and the town?

Digital Humanities certainly fosters connections between different disciplines within and across the college and the conservatory—and connections to the town as well. For instance, in my First Year Seminar, "Soundscapes," students recorded "sounds" around Oberlin—the College, the Con, and the town—and uploaded them to the Oberlin Sound Map, making sure to include important metadata fields like latitude and longitude. Sounds included the riotous din of the Conservatory practice rooms, protests in Tappan, the buzz of an electric razor at the local barber shop, construction on the new hotel. By using sound and geographic location together we built a map that allowed us to think about how sound shapes different places within Oberlin and people's experiences of those spaces. It also showed us how sound might be a good medium for thinking about the fluidity of the boundaries between otherwise clearly demarcated spaces and buildings belonging to the College, the Con, and the town.

FACULTY PUBLICATION SPOTLIGHT

This past November, New York University Press published Professor Gina Pérez's second book, *Citizen, Student, Soldier: Latina/o Youth, JROTC, and the American Dream*.



Since the 1990s, Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) programs have experienced unprecedented expansion in American public schools. The program and its proliferation in poor, urban school districts with large numbers of Latina/o and African American students is not without controversy. Public support is often based on the belief that the program provides much-needed discipline for "at risk" youth. Meanwhile, critics of JROTC argue that the program is a recruiting tool for the U.S. military and is yet another example of an increasingly punitive climate that disproportionately affect youth of color in American public schools.

Citizen, Student, Soldier intervenes in these debates, providing critical ethnographic attention to understanding the motivations, aspirations, and experiences of students who participate in increasing numbers in JROTC programs. These students have complex reasons for their participation, reasons that challenge the reductive idea that they are either dangerous youths who need discipline or victims being exploited by a predatory program. Rather, their participation is informed by their marginal economic position in the local political economy, as well as their desire to be regarded as full citizens, both locally and nationally. Citizenship is one of the central concerns guiding the JROTC curriculum; this book explores ethnographically how students understand and enact different visions of citizenship and grounds these understandings in local and national political economic contexts. It also highlights the ideological, social and cultural conditions of Latina/o youth and their families who both participate in and are enmeshed in vigorous debates about citizenship, obligation, social opportunity, militarism and, ultimately, the American Dream.

INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR PÉREZ

Below are selections from an interview with Professor Pérez by CAS student assistant and major Tess Joseph.

TJ: What inspired you to write on this topic?

GP: After I completed fieldwork in Chicago for my dissertation and first book, I became re-aware of the large amount of kids in JROTC programs in Chicago. Chicago public schools have the largest JROTC program in the nation, and I wanted to try to understand the experiences of young people in the programs. When I came to Oberlin in 2003, I asked around and found out that there was a Lorain high school with large JROTC program.

TJ: What was the most surprising thing you learned while working on this project?

GP: How nuanced and complicated young peoples' reasons for joining were. Apart from just political-economic motivations, they joined because of family pride, military service, and adopted JROTC language in explaining why they were members.

TJ: Was there a specific moment in your research that particularly stuck with you?

GP: One moment [I describe in the introduction was] when one woman came up to me and asked, "Are you really here to learn or just to prove something that you want to know?" To me, ethical research means being willing to learn from other people.

TJ: What were other ways that you tried to make your research ethical?

GP: Humility is really important in research. I made sure that I was visible and honest. Ethnography is all about engagement, and I wanted those engagements to be transparent. There is an emotional dimension to research that complicates things, and I tried to stay conscious of that.

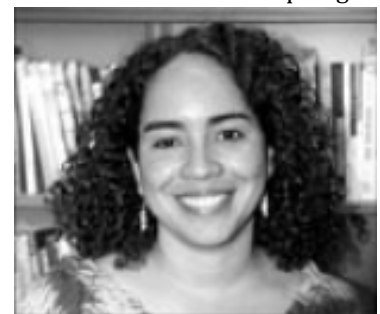
TJ: How has your research informed your CAS classes?

GP: I teach a class on militarism called "Militarization in Daily American Life", a class that I designed when I first came to Oberlin in 2003. It helped me to read the books that I thought were important for my eventual research project in 2006-2007. The class always challenges me to try to find a range of different texts to think about the

complexities of militarism. I try to assign books that get students to think in complicated ways to think about structure and power. A larger question I'm asking now is: how do you capture humanity in ethnography?

TJ: What response has the book received?

GP: The book has been very positively reviewed in anthropological journals and by my colleagues. I'll be giving a talk at Rutgers University this April, and I went to Duke University and others this past year to discuss the book. It received an honorable mention from the Association of Latina and Latino Anthropologists.



Gina Pérez

ALUMNI HAPPENINGS CONTINUED

MEINERT, Kim '07

After graduating from Oberlin in 2007, I:

--worked for two years at Free Clinic of Southwest Washington helping to develop and implement Project Access Clark County, which is a coordinated system of donated specialty health care services for low income uninsured people living in Clark County, Washington.
--worked for four years at Oregon Department of Human Services as a case manager for families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash assistance, which solidified my passion for public service and for the implementation of anti poverty measures to help low income families move towards socioeconomic mobility.

--served on the board of directors for three years at In Other Words Feminist Community Center, where I developed a love for Twitter and for intersectional feminist community organizing

--attend the Gerald R Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan, where I earned a Master of Public Policy degree, and where I became the proud owner of many pairs of long underwear.

--completed a graduate internship at the Office of Urban Affairs, Justice, and Opportunity which is housed in the Domestic Policy Council at the White House. It was during this time that I acquired and wore many pantsuits.

--am currently working at the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, where I serve as a Confidential Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families. I wear a pantsuit every day.

MEYER, Ilyssa '13

After Oberlin, I studied public policy and received my masters degree from NYU Wagner. I am a Public Policy Analyst at Etsy, and live in Brooklyn.

ROGERS, Mia '14

After graduating from Oberlin, I went to graduate school at the University of Maryland - College Park and received my Master's degree in Higher Education. I now work at Hamilton College in Upstate NY as an Assistant Dean of Admission and the Coordinator for Diversity Recruitment.

SAWYER, Charlotte '13

I am currently pursuing a Master of Public Health at Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health in Behavioral Sciences and Health Education. Prior to starting my master's program, I taught English in Spain and served as the mobile harm reduction services coordinator at a syringe exchange in Washington, D.C. through the Global Health Corps fellowship program.

SCHRAG, Sarah '11

Teaching high school English in Newark, NJ. About to begin year 6! I teach at a charter school in Newark, and if anyone is interested in learning more about this experience, I could see if my school could use a "teaching assistant" or another volunteer role so that a CAS major could gain experience in this field. Winter Term (January), could potentially have someone shadow me if they are interested in teaching. If interested please contact me at sarah.lerman.schrag@gmail.com

THOMAS, Syrea '11

Trauma informed therapy with juvenile offenders.

YAPALATER, Sophia '13

After returning from a Fulbright ETA in Turkey, I worked at the ACLU for two years as a paralegal with the Immigrants' Rights Project. Now, I am attending a post-bacc pre-med program at Goucher College.

MEET OUR STUDENT ASSISTANT

This year we are fortunate to have Tess Joseph as our program student assistant. Tess is a second year CAS major and a whiz with Google forms. We are so grateful for all the support she has provided.

On becoming a CAS major:

My experiences in high school and at Oberlin both pushed me in the direction of majoring in Comparative American Studies. I went to a great public school, but took few history and politics classes; the ones I did take were centered on white cis men and rarely criticized the United States. I came to Oberlin last year wanting to (re)learn through centering marginalized voices and focusing on social justice, and to me CAS is the most compelling way to do so.

Favorite CAS classes:

My first semester at Oberlin, I took Visible Bodies and the Politics of Sexuality with my advisor, Wendy Kozol. Unlike my high school textbooks, the texts assigned felt like reading for pleasure; unlike my high school's classes, the course used a wide variety of approaches, from visual analysis of pieces in the Allen Memorial Art Museum to re-curating an exhibit about the materiality and legibility of the human body. I read academic texts about digital whiteness, Grindr profiles, and reparations.

In my second semester, I took Intro to CAS with Professor Lee and Debating Citizenships with Professor Kozol, which ultimately led me to declare my major. Intro to CAS is a survey of the focuses of CAS, and felt like the history class I never received in high school, teaching me new information and critiquing my past assumptions about

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: ERIC OEUR, CLASS OF 2011

I graduated from Oberlin in 2011 with a major in Comparative American Studies and a minor in East Asian Studies. I currently work for the City of Austin as Constituent Liaison for District 2 Council Member Delia Garza. My journey to work for Austin's first Latina Council Member stems from my time volunteering and participating in Austin-area Asian American community organizations. Through my work in these organizations, I learned about the Asian American Resource Center (AARC), a joint non-profit and City of Austin effort to build community space and provide resources for Austin's growing Asian American population. This space would be the first hybrid city and non-profit organization for the Asian American community in the State of Texas. I was part of the initial team to open the facility to the public.

Building the foundations of the AARC was a very challenging yet rewarding task. My responsibilities included community outreach and marketing, building culturally competent programming, event planning, facility and building management, and organizing the Asian American community exhibits program. What informed my work at the AARC is critically thinking about identity, cultural competency, and inclusion concerning the Asian American population. Hiring an ethnically and linguistically diverse staff, for

example, was a crucial factor in the current success of the AARC.

My work in building community relations between city government, local non-profits, and ethnic-based community organizations led me into my current position with Council Member Garza. In this position, I serve as the Council Member's assistant, community liaison, and policy aide. Although transitioning from direct services for the Asian American community to working for an elected official was a big change for me, it is a rewarding experience to assist a Council Member who is dedicated to the working class families of Austin. I believe that the combination of my background in Comparative American Studies and my identity as a queer person of color born from Cambodian refugee parents provides unique insight to the work that is done in Austin City Council. My goal in this position: to break glass ceilings within institutions of power and government.

Has your perspective on your Oberlin education changed over the years?

I'm grateful to have gone to an institution where I am able to build relationships with my advisors and continue to have them a part of my life even after I have graduated.

How has your CAS major informed your work or larger engagement with the world in the years since graduation?

My CAS major has taught me to think critically and see the world through an intersectional lens. Working in government, I see how different aspects of race, class, gender, sexuality, and power play a role in the policies that get passed in the City of Austin. In CAS, we learn not to only read the text, but question it as well. I've learned how to read in-between the lines; which is very much needed when working with different policy makers to ensure the communities I serve are getting the resources they need to thrive here in Austin, Texas.

What are your fondest memories of Oberlin and CAS?

Some of my fondest memories of Oberlin was my time in Third World Co-op. I loved cooking with my crew, eating delicious home-cooked meals, and singing/dancing to Mariah Carey.

Do you have any advice or hopes for current students you'd like to share?

The work you do in CAS has an important place in this world; don't let anyone tell you different.



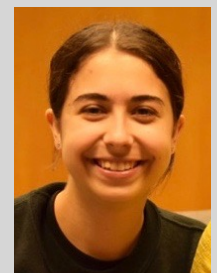
Eric Oeur '11

MEET OUR STUDENT ASSISTANT CONT.

the United States Debating Citzenships gave me a historical context of citizenship in the U.S. as well as a way to re-frame my perspective of my own citizenship as well as others' citizenships. In this class, citizenship is conceptualized not just as a form of documentation or a relationship to nation, but also as something situated not just in legal documents, but also in photographs, poems, and dance.

Why you should take a CAS class:

CAS classes are of potential interest to many students because they take the interests of other disciplines and put them in conversation with American studies. CAS is a major is supported by a commitment to interdisciplinary studies. CAS takes the philosophy of a liberal arts education and frames it into a major—many classes are cross-listed, exploration is encouraged—which has allowed me to take a large variety of classes and approaches while still under the specific focus of American studies. If you take a look at any CAS classes offered, chances are you'll find one that connects to one of your other academic interests!



TESSA JOSEPH '19
CAST and HISP major

MEET THE CAST MAJOR REPRESENTATIVES

This year, Frances Iadarola (Class of 2019) and Linda Diaz (Class of 2017) are serving as the CAS major representatives. Below they answer some questions about the program and their experience in it. Many thanks to Tess Joseph for conducting the interview.

TJ: What inspired you to become a CAS major?

FI: Coming to Oberlin I thought I was going to be an Environmental Studies major but after taking two really incredible CAS classes with Gina Perez and Evangeline Heiliger I realized that I was passionate about CAS.

LD: You could say that I came to CAS by accident. I came into my freshman year as a perspective Africana Studies major, but I ended up switching to CAS by my second semester.

In my first semester at Oberlin, I signed up for courses that I thought were interesting, disregarding all major and distributional requirements. I later found that three of those classes were CAS classes. I think what really got me thinking about switching to a CAS major were two professors, Wendy Kozol (also the head of the CAS department) and Maria Paz Esguerra, a visiting CAS professor who taught Asian American Studies. I enjoyed that both of their courses engaged with history in a way that was very present. By that I mean that we did not only learn the histories from multiple perspectives (not just that of the oppressor), but also spent a considerable amount of time recognizing how those histories manifest themselves today; how they are still significant today. Both of those courses gave me the vocabulary and methodology that allowed me to articulate many of my critiques of history in a way that I was never able to beforehand. While Africana Studies is still near and dear to my heart (I am minoring!), I like that CAS has a strong social science emphasis - both in the methodology and the opportunities for students in the department (this year I will be conducting field based research!).



TJ: Do you have another major/minor or academic interest?

FI: I love the dance department we have here and have taken a dance class every semester at Oberlin. I am also dedicated to studying Spanish and improving my fluency.

LD: Minor in Africana Studies, History, GSFS

TJ: What is your favorite CAS class that you've taken so far?

FI: I really have loved all the CAS classes I've taken so far, but my favorite would have to be Gina Perez's class, Latino/a Comparative Perspective. This was the first class that made me realize I wanted to be a CAS major.

LD: Asian Americans in Popular Culture

TJ: Have you completed any CAS-related winter-term projects?

FI: My first winter-term I interned at a non-profit in Los Angeles that builds curbside gardens in underserved communities. It was originally a winter-term project catered to my then-supposed Environmental Studies degree but I ended up learning a lot about gentrification and the ethnic isolation that plagues Los Angeles.

TJ: What are your non-academic involvements on campus?

FI: I work at the Allen art library and as a building monitor in Warner. I've honestly been very busy with work, my classes, and my co-op but when I have the time I would really like to get involved with SURF and other reproductive rights initiatives on campus.

LD: I'm belong to a chess club, La Alianza Latinx, and do a capella (NBT). I also work as an admissions intern and am a Questbridge scholar.

KEYWORDS PANEL

This year's annual CAST Keywords panel, held in October 2016, featured speakers on the subject of ACTIVISM. CAS major Linda Diaz, Assistant Professor Tamika Nunley, Associate Professor Meredith Gadsby, and MRC staff member Julio Reyes made up a dynamic panel of speakers, and after they shared their perspectives, a stimulating q&a followed. Below we have reproduced comments from Professor Gadsby, titled "Combat Breathing: Everyday Activism and Emotional Wellness." They have been edited for length.

A friend recently told me about a new app that is a cross between Pokémon Go and Call of Duty, in which you can be anywhere with an iPhone and receive notification of an opponent nearby. Players can then move around, find opponents to neutralize, point their phones at them and "shoot." While the other people in the room laughed and discussed the details of play, all I could think about was that my children would NEVER play that game because doing so could possibly result in him being shot and killed by police mistaking an iPhone for a gun. I shared my thoughts aloud.

This to me is a form of everyday activism, one of the seemingly small but important examples of the work I do every day. It meant holding my breath, thinking deeply about how and what I wanted to say, and exposing my raging fear and, for the

KEYWORDS PANEL CONTINUED

moment, quiet anger. This type of daily interaction from people who mean no harm yet have the privilege to not live without my daily fears reminds me of what in *A Dying Colonialism*, Frantz Fanon calls “combat breathing”:

There is not occupation of territory, on the one hand, and independence of persons on the other. It is the country as a whole, its history, its daily pulsation that are contested, disfigured, in the hope of a final destruction. Under these conditions, the individual’s breathing is an observed, an occupied breathing. It is a combat breathing. From this point on, the real values of the occupied quickly tend to acquire a clandestine form of existence. In the presence of the occupier, the occupied learns to dissemble, to resort to trickery. (Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, Grove Press, 1994.)

When Black Lives Matter activists use Eric Garner’s last words as a rallying cry to fight lethal violence against Black people, activists deeply engaged in a Black Radical Tradition, recognized that this incident is yet another example of what Franz Fanon described in *The Wretched of the Earth* 50 years ago: “When we revolt it’s not for a particular culture. We revolt simply because, for many reasons, we can no longer breathe” Fanon “Wretched of the Earth, 1st published in 1966.” (2008, 201)

My *work* is to look at the ways African and African Diasporic people have and continue to transform silence into language and action. I study and teach the radical Black Tradition in which writing is used as a weapon by people who realized how “to use their mouth to make a gun,” as novelist Paule Marshall’s Poets from the kitchen had learned was necessary for their survival. As a student I studied literature and social movements from an interdisciplinary perspective in order to gain a deep understanding of the contexts out of which this Black Radical Tradition emerged internationally among communities, activists and scholars. I learned about how activism for Black people across the globe, since the 18th century (and quite possibly before) uses multiple forms of literacy as a form of combat breathing. So when we read *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, and we see how he tricked little white children into teaching him to read after being introduced to reading by his master’s daughter, we understand that he was preparing for combat breathing, in a sense holding his breath until the opportunity arose to be free. Even though Harriet Tubman could not read, she was literate in other ways, reading landscape, territory and sky to wage battle on the Combahee River in Beaufort, South Carolina on June 2 1863, leading 150 Black Union Soldiers to steer union ships away from Rebel torpedoes planted there, and to deliver hundreds of enslaved people to freedom, stowing them away on those same ships.

This, a successful military operation, inspired the Combahee River Collective, a Boston Based Black Lesbian Feminist

Collected active from 1974-1980. In 1977 Beverly Smith, Barbara Smith, Demita Frasier (and others) wrote the Combahee River Collective



Linda Diaz, Meredith Gadsby, Tamika Nunley, Julio Reyes

Statement calling for a radical examination of the particular struggle against racism in the larger feminist movement, sexism/ misogyny from Black men activists, heteropatriarchy and challenge to structural inequalities in a capitalist economic system. If you read the Combahee River Collective statement alongside the Black Lives Matter Mission statement drafted by Alicia Garza, the language around the ongoing war against Black people is clear: It goes beyond the narrow nationalism that can be prevalent within Black communities, which merely call on Black people to love Black, live Black, and buy Black, keeping straight cis Black men in the front of the movement while our sisters, queer and trans and disabled folk take up roles in the background or not at all. Black Lives Matter affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. It centers those that have been marginalized within Black liberation movements. It is a tactic to (re)build the Black liberation movement.

Combat breathing, as an activist practice, takes multiple forms. The authors of the Combahee River Collective were engaged in actively writing and sharing their writings, picketing organizations/ businesses with unfair labor practices that targeted Black people and women, advocated for affordable and excellent child care for working Black men and women, and challenge homophobic practices of cis folks within and outside black communities. It can also take the form of self-care. As we know, emotional, spiritual and physical wellness is now being taken up as a form of Activism. Toni Cade Bambara’s novel *The Saltaters* addressed this issue in 1980, along with coalition politics among women of color. How do we care for ourselves while doing “the work”? At times, that care becomes really real, really specific, as in I need to get this degree so that I can help pull my family out of poverty, or I have younger siblings I need to get out of unsafe situations, or I have to create a new home for myself because the one I occupy is unlivable. Other times it means how can I infuse my political commitments into my scholarship? How can I make the work I do here matter, so that I can continue this work once I leave? How do I keep my mind right while I do all of these things? Combat breathing entails building an arsenal--psychic, intellectual, and activist-- in order to survive, whole to do the work, creatively.

STAFF

LINDA PARDEE is the program coordinator for several departments on campus, including Gender, Sexuality & Feminist Studies; Comparative American Studies; Rhetoric & Composition; and the Writing Associates Program. Linda is also a



trained mediator/facilitator for the Oberlin College Dialogue Center (OCDC). Using the social justice model of mediation, OCDC mediators are trained to help all parties recognize differences in power and privilege, and to address issues such as race, class, gender, and sexuality, so that all parties can be supported and have their voices heard. While employed at Oberlin College Linda has also served as the Second Vice President and Webmaster for O.C.O.P.E., the administrative assistants union on campus. She served on the Grievance Committee for several years where she helped develop resolutions to conflicts that had arisen between labor and management.

Linda is also an activist and is currently fighting for the rights of patients in Ohio to use medical marijuana. She serves on the Advisory Board for the Ohio Rights Group, the largest patient advocacy group in Ohio. In her spare time she is also a dog foster for two rescue groups, Dachshund Rescue of North America and Eskie Rescuers United.

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