



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

# INTERSECTIONS

A PUBLICATION OF THE CENTER FOR GENDER IN GLOBAL CONTEXT (GENCEN)



TWENTY

21  
—  
22

REPRESENTATION

# A year in review



GenCen and MSU alumna Marie Rose—owner of Shoreline Wild Salmon and star of one of the episodes of EMPOWERED: Women Shaping The Future, a six-part documentary on young women making a major impact serving in leadership positions in underrepresented industries—talks about her experience as an entrepreneur in the salmon fishing industry in Alaska.



GenCen Director Stephanie Nawyn and Rob Smith, MSU alumnus and founder of The Phluid Project. Smith started his own line of retail clothing promoting gender and sexuality inclusion, including the shirt that Nawyn is wearing in this photo.



GenCen faculty Sara Prior, Stephanie Nawyn, Isabel Ayala and Jennifer Carrera celebrate the spring 2022 commencement.



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## On the cover

The cover art is inspired by a familiar depiction of equity—an image of different sized boxes for a variety of people to stand on, all at the same fence. In getting people what they each need to see over the fence, no one gets left behind. Stair and ramp imagery is used to illustrate the struggles and strengths of different people and collaborative motion toward a common goal.

Cover art by  
Kelly Edgecomb  
& Earlene Ling

## Director's Message

# HANDING OFF THE BATON IN THE WORK TOWARDS EQUITY & JUSTICE



*When I first discussed* creating an annual magazine for our center with then GenCen Interim Co-Director Amy Jamison, I had a vague idea about what it might look like. I wanted a publication that communicated the big impacts of our center to a broad audience, but I was not quite sure how it would be put together, what resources we might have available to produce it, and I certainly had no clue about how much work it would entail. Looking back at the three previous editions and this one that is currently in your hands, I am so impressed with what this magazine has become through the many talents of our center staff and our communications office in International Studies and Programs. But mostly I am in awe of the work that everyone associated with the GenCen does every day that makes it easy to write wonderful articles about that work, albeit making it difficult to choose which stories to include.

*“It was a privilege to be in a community with so many people in and outside of MSU working for a more just and equitable world.”*

*- Stephanie Nawyn*

This latest issue is close to my heart as it is the last issue I will oversee as GenCen director. This coming January I will be stepping down from the directorship, passing the baton to new passionate and talented co-directors. I am confident that whomever those people end up being, they will

take the GenCen into new directions that further our mission of connecting scholars, students and community stakeholders with feminist knowledge to advance social change. I have this confidence because the community from which our new co-directors will come is full of smart, compassionate, dedicated people who commit themselves every day to equity and justice. So, while I sometimes feel a little sad thinking about my time as GenCen director ending, I am not at all worried about its future.

In this issue you will see just some of the fruits of that commitment. We have articles on gender equity in the wheat value chain in Afghanistan; women’s representation in Michigan elected offices; research on the effects of the Affordable Care Act on Indigenous women’s health care access; and advocacy work at the ACLU. I even share some of my wistful musings about the last six years at the GenCen, looking back at how I have been able to participate in the arc of MSU’s moral universe bending towards justice. It was a privilege to be in a community with so many people in and outside of MSU working for a more just and equitable world, and I intend to continue to contribute to that community from a different institutional location.

**STEPHANIE J. NAWYN**  
*Director*

Welcome

# RAJALAKSHMI NADADUR



**Rajalakshmi Nadadur** joined the team in August 2021 as the GenCen's assistant director of research. At the GenCen, she manages the research team while maintaining and building the existing network of interdisciplinary scholars, various MSU departments and units, external partners, and providing program management support for gender transformative research.

Nadadur is a gender expert with specializations in political history, religion and migration in South Southeast Asia. Her publications focus on gender politics, state sanctioned gender-based violence, trauma, and migration. She has co-edited *The Critical Religion Reader* (with Melanie Barbato, Cameron Montgomery), a special edition on museum collections and anthropology with the journal *Anthropos* and published a book chapter on migration and conversion under Cambridge University Press with Peter Berger and Sarbeswar Sahoo. Her current research focuses on gender and religion as points of analysis in international development.

Since 2007, Nadadur has taught in various capacities at universities in the U.S., U.K. and Thailand. More recently, she was a project assistant professor at the University of Tokyo, Japan, where she taught research and writing for STEM studies, and an introductory course in Anthropology of Religion in the Japan in East Asia program. In 2015 through 2019, she was the co-editor for the Critical Religion Association based at the University of Stirling. She was also an affiliated researcher at the Centre for the Study of Religion and Culture in Asia, University of Groningen, the Netherlands. Currently, she is the associate editor for *Culture & Religion* (Taylor & Francis). Outside academia, she has worked in media and public policy research in India and the U.K. She has also worked extensively with urban refugee communities in Thailand for various refugee rights organizations including as a researcher for UN-ACT.

## Q&A

**Q:** What's your favorite thing to talk about?

**A:** *Gender theories and the news.*

**Q:** If you were to have a career other than your current/planned one, what would it be?

**A:** *Librarian or a museum curator. They are some of the coolest people on earth.*

**Q:** Do you have any pets?

**A:** *Yes! We have two cats — a gray tabby boy named Tora who talks a lot, and an orange tabby girl named Yuki who is quite a diva.*



# The GenCen Team



## Stephanie Nawyn *(she/her)*

Stephanie Nawyn is the outgoing director of GenCen. In this role, she is responsible for overseeing all activities at the GenCen, developing and managing the academic programs, leading research initiatives, and facilitating outreach and engagement across campus and with the off-campus community. Stephanie also does advancement and development for GenCen, working with fundraising offices in International Studies and Programs, the College of Arts and Letters, and MSU's central administration. She joined Michigan State University in 2006 and is an associate professor of sociology. Stephanie is a core faculty member at the GenCen and is also affiliate faculty for the Center for Forced Migration Studies at Northwestern University. Her research and teaching areas of expertise are in gender and migration, with a focus on forced migration and the ways that structural inequalities inhibit incorporation. She holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Southern



## Rajalakshmi Nadadur *(she/her)*

Rajalakshmi Nadadur serves as GenCen's assistant director. In this role, she manages the research team, maintains and builds the existing network of interdisciplinary scholars, various MSU departments and units, external partners, and provides program management support for gender transformative research.

Rajalakshmi holds a Ph.D. in Religion and Gender from the University of Stirling, U.K. Her research is in intersectional feminism and social justice with a specific interest in migration. Before joining GenCen, she was a project assistant professor at the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Tokyo, where she taught research and writing, and a course in the Japan in East Asia program. Since 2007, Rajalakshmi has taught in various capacities at universities in the U.S., U.K., and Thailand. Between 2015 and 2019, she was also an affiliated researcher at the Centre for the Study of Religion and Culture in Asia, University of Groningen, the Netherlands. Outside academia, she has worked in media and public policy research in India, U.K., and Thailand, where she has also held voluntary positions for organizations, including the United Nations Action for Cooperation Against Trafficking in Persons, working with



### **Pat Arnold** *(they/them)*

Pat Arnold is an academic specialist in GenCen entering their fourth year with the center and the Women's and Gender Studies program. Pat serves as the academic advisor for all undergraduate and graduate students in GenCen programs, and also coordinates student internships, assists in curriculum development, and teaches WGS courses. Their passions are to facilitate student success at every level of the college experience, and to advocate for gender and racial equity in MSU policies, curriculum and culture.

Pat came to GenCen from the University of Nebraska-Kearney, where they taught in the Women's and Gender Studies program. They hold a B.S. in Philosophy and English from Northern Michigan University and an M.A. in Philosophy from the University of Michigan. Pat worked on a Ph.D. in ethics at the University of Nebraska but is now pursuing a master of public health degree at MSU.



### **Edwin Serrano** *(he/him)*

Edwin Serrano is the GenCen office manager and communications coordinator. He is responsible for the day-to-day office operations as well as digital and print communications for the center. A new Michigan resident with a varied history of working in media, education and public service, Edwin now brings his experiences to MSU. He enjoys photography, woodworking and being outdoors. Having recently moved from California, Edwin is excited to see everything Michigan has to offer!



### **Caitlyn Vader** *(she/her)*

Caitlyn Vader served as the GenCen's former office manager until July 2022 and was responsible for the day-to-day office operations and communications. In this role, Caitlyn worked with the GenCen co-directors and ISP communications on planning, designing and implementing GenCen's communications strategy. She also assisted the GenCen team with a wide range of office management tasks, including preparing reports, developing a budget tracking system, and supervising student employees.



### **Mae Crowell** *(she/her)*

Mae Crowell is the fiscal officer for the GenCen (and several other units within International Studies and Programs). In her role, she is responsible for managing all financial accounts and coordinating human resources. Having held a variety of staff and administration roles across campus, Mae has been a proud employee of MSU for 22 years. She enjoys the variety of programs and people she gets to work with at the GenCen.



### Mary Anne Walker *(she/her)*

Mary Anne Walker serves as a senior international research specialist in the GenCen in International Studies and Programs and the Institute for Global Health in the College of Osteopathic Medicine. She has led administrative programs in the Office of Research and Innovation and the University Research Organization at Michigan State University over the past three years. As a global leader developing research with an emphasis on gender and intersectionality in STEM disciplines for more than 23 years, she established and directed MSU's first international research office in 2000, then directed MSUGlobal's research and development which was MSU's first platform for innovations in online teaching and learning. Most recently, Mary Anne served as the director of Global Engineering. In 2017, she was selected by German Academic Exchange Service to advance research cooperation with German, Canadian and U.S. global STEM leaders. For two decades, she has engaged with the Association of International Education Administrators and the Association of Public Land Grant Universities Commission on International Initiatives in national senior advisory roles to lead internationalization of higher education. Mary Anne joined MSU after serving as a senior democracy officer with USAID in eastern Europe. She attended Northeastern University in Boston, studying comparative politics. Her graduate work was in U.S. foreign policy at Tufts Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and in international law at the American University School of International Service. Mary Anne's Ph.D. work is focused on mental health and well-being, studying psychosocial aspects of kinesiology at Michigan State University.



### Ezgi Karaoglu *(she/her)*

Ezgi Karaoglu serves as the research assistant at the GenCen. Born and raised in Istanbul, Turkey, Ezgi is a fourth-year Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology at MSU. Before joining MSU, she worked in the humanitarian field with refugees in Turkey for the UN Refugee Agency and implementing partners of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for six years. This challenging experience allowed her to develop a critical approach to migration research and humanitarianism in general. Therefore, her research in MSU focuses on the macro-structural forces that drive international migration and humanitarianism. Some questions that she seeks answers to are the way paternalism and power relations operate in humanitarian interventions and the placemaking strategies of the migrants in the city through multiple exclusion and inclusion patterns in urban spaces. Her academic guilty pleasure is thinking, observing and writing on street animals and interspecies interaction.





### **Steven Brooks** *(he/him)*

Steven Brooks is a senior majoring in History, Women's & Gender Studies, and Psychology and serves as GenCen's research intern. Steven contributes to GenCen's mission by developing concept notes for local partnerships and writing literature reviews for ongoing research projects. He also has conducted research for the Global Gender Policy Database Project in collaboration with the Alliance for African Partnership at MSU.



### **Mackenzie Lovell** *(she/her)*

Mackenzie Lovell is a communications intern working closely with the office manager on various projects including outreach and engagement through social media. She is a junior majoring in Social Relations and Policy and Comparative Cultures and Politics, with minors in Women's and Gender Studies and Peace and Justice Studies.



### **Kara Mackenzie** *(she/her)*

Kara Mackenzie is a communications intern working closely with the office manager on various outreach and engagement projects. She is a senior studying Professional and Public Writing and Women's & Gender Studies. Professionally, she is interested in the intersections between rhetoric and social justice, and hopes to one day use her communications skills to benefit a nonprofit organization.



### **Lauren Dauber** *(she/her/they/them)*

Lauren Dauber was an academic programs intern for GenCen. She triple-majored in Social Relations and Policy, Women's and Gender Studies, and Comparative Cultures and Politics. Lauren contributed to many GenCen projects, including the creation of podcast episodes with current students and cultivating a student focused jobs/internship listing that highlights social justice, women's and gender studies and DEI work opportunities across the nation.



### **Sophie Christensen** *(she/her)*

Sophie Christensen was a communications intern. She majored in Social Relations and Policy with a minor in Women's and Gender Studies. Sophie spent her time at GenCen crafting social media campaigns, designing digital and print content, managing the website, and coordinating the 2021-22 edition of Intersections.

# A SIX-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE

*When reflecting on her tenure* at the GenCen as director, Stephanie Nawyn says the theme throughout would be “change.” She started as the co-director of academic programs in 2016. Now as the sole director, she works with administrators, oversees staff, meets with donors, supports faculty and much more. Within these six years—whether administrative changes, a pandemic, the Trump presidency and more—Nawyn has seen the GenCen community through it all. What stays with her is the power of the collective and that the GenCen is integral to this collective.

2016 was a turning point in American history. Nawyn was in her first year at the time and recalls some of her first conversations with the GenCen community revolved around finding ways to push back on the rhetoric of the alarming Trump campaign, which was filled with racism, misogyny and xenophobia. The fallout from Trump’s campaign and subsequent election as president took a lot

of the community’s energy. Less than a year after Trump’s election, the Nassar scandal broke at MSU. Despite the chaos that ensued, Nawyn remains grateful to the people who spoke out with their stories and exposed the abuse and corruption of university leadership at the time.

Two important questions arose for Nawyn: how would the GenCen, as the hub for research and academic programs on gender and sexuality and an important part of the MSU community, respond? What support could the GenCen provide to a community that was devastated by the abuse, the cover up and the lack of accountability? “It was hard to know what to do; it was not a situation I was prepared to lead the GenCen through, and I struggled to identify what role the GenCen and I should play in creating change on campus,” said Nawyn. In this challenging environment, Nawyn found comfort in a community that really wanted to make a change—like the group of women administrators she and the then co-director of international research, Wenda Bauchspies, met with weekly to discuss plans for

creating institutional change. Though these plans did not come to fruition, the university found ways to move in a better direction. By 2019, there were new leaders and new sexual assault prevention services. “We had a long way to go but I felt like we were making progress,” said Nawyn. This progress, coupled with administrative changes brought more optimism to both the GenCen and the wider MSU community. “New policies were put in place that, while not perfect, were at least indicating that abuse was being taken more seriously,” said Nawyn.

As a more stable MSU administration settled in, early 2020 brought more uncertainties—this time in the form of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Nawyn found herself tracking the numbers of an emerging virus to monitor how education abroad programs might be affected. As we now know, it was just the beginning of the pandemic. Soon enough, MSU pulled its education abroad programs and shut down on-campus activity. From spring 2020 to fall 2021, almost everything took place online for the GenCen. Nawyn reminisces about the time when staff and interns debated the possibilities for ethical consumption under capitalism with one another in the office, and the times when the office served as a space for socializing, support or even just a fresh pot of coffee. For such a lively, discursive and supportive space, moving completely online was a serious challenge. Nawyn remarked that the GenCen is still figuring out how to remain a space for people to have important discussions and have a sense of community within the pandemic context. She sees this as just another way that the GenCen can change. These times of change and uncertainty,

*The GenCen community has risen to various challenges, particularly in its expanded reach on campus which has led to some much-needed collaborative relationships that have been instrumental for GenCen's growth.*



Stephanie Nawyn at a GenCen event.



Stephanie Nawyn and Chantal Tetreault discuss mentorship in international fieldwork.

Nawyn said, have shown the important role the GenCen plays at MSU. The GenCen community has risen to various challenges, particularly in its expanded reach on campus which has led to some much-needed collaborative relationships that have been instrumental for GenCen's growth.

Trump, Nassar and COVID are not the only challenges and traumas that have happened in the last six years, and there will undoubtedly be more in the future. The pandemic has been a time for many people to reflect on their relationship to the world around them. Longstanding systemic issues have had a bright light shined on them, exposing just how much work there is left to do for those who fight for social justice. Globally, this has meant an increased focus on gender-based violence, racial violence, and environmental challenges, and there is still

much institutional change needed to make MSU a university where leadership, from the Board of Trustees on down, is supportive and transparent, and everyone has the opportunity to

thrive. Nawyn is grateful for a job which allows her to have a role in working toward progress in all these areas.

Nawyn is stepping down as director at the end of 2022, and she looks forward to seeing how new leadership will build on the progress that she and the GenCen community have made. She's sure that, no matter what comes our way, the GenCen will have amazing community members dedicated to making the world a better place. ■

### *The 30th Anniversary of Moving Forward:*

## A reflection on

# LGBTQIA2S+

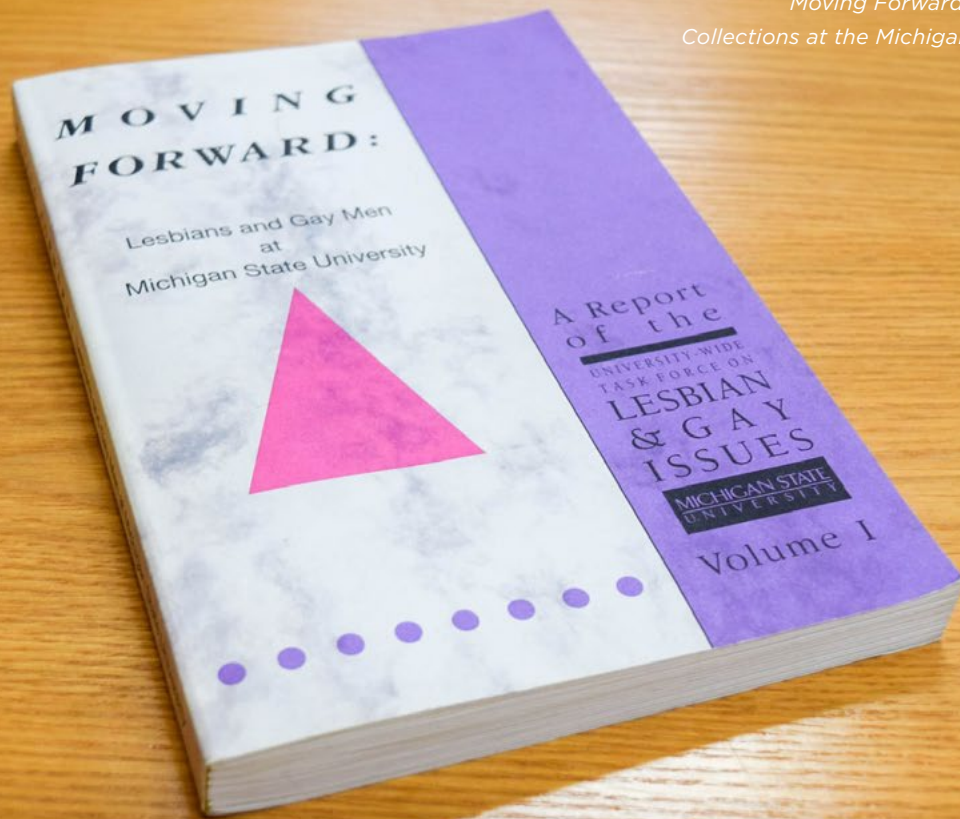
## history at MSU

**Thirty years ago**, a path-breaking report entitled *Moving Forward: Lesbians and Gay Men at Michigan State University* was published. The report became a milestone for gay and lesbian rights organizations on MSU's campus. This year, we celebrate another milestone by marking the anniversary of the publication and asking the question: what has changed in these 30 years?

Spearheaded by a task force co-chaired by professors Anita Skeen and Terry Stein, the report provided insight into the lived experiences of the gay, lesbian and bisexual people within the MSU community. It also marked one of the first efforts to chart the history of the community's presence at MSU. In order to better understand the report's significance, we need to consider the stigma faced by gender and sexual minorities when openly sharing their lived experiences. This poses a challenge for historians looking to document these lived experiences.

To overcome this, the authors used oral histories as a way to enrich the story they wanted to tell. The historical report contained stories from those who were involved at MSU in the 1930s through 1950s providing a rich tapestry of gay, lesbian and bisexual experiences and rights on MSU's campus.

To complete the picture, the report also served as an evaluation of the policies or lack thereof at MSU. Authors identified gaps in support provided to the community and made recommendations to the campus officials to make MSU a more inclusive, equal and safe space. For example, the report recommended that employment be extended to same-sex partners; that first-year students receive education about gay, lesbian and bisexual issues during orientation; and that an office to support the concerns of the community be created.



*To carry forward the spirit of the original report, we need to continue fighting for equity, inclusion and justice for queer communities at MSU.*

Thirty years later, where are we now? In many ways, so much has changed since the study. MSU now has multiple resources for LGBTQIA2S+ students including the Gender and Sexuality Campus Center, the Center for Gender in Global Context, and various student organizations. At the national level, it was the Supreme Court's decision to legalize same-sex marriage.

While this 30th anniversary provides an opportunity to reflect on the past, we also realize that we continue to face challenges in different forms. Florida's so-called "Don't Say Gay Bill," for example, feels like a giant leap backward for the LGBTQIA2S+ community. But, to carry forward the spirit of the original report, we need to continue fighting for equity, inclusion and justice for queer communities at MSU. Reviewing the study allows us to reflect on how much has changed in the last thirty years on MSU's campus and how much still needs to be done for a more equitable future. ■

### *Assessing Michigan Women's Representation in Local Politics:*

# THE MICHIGAN ELECTORAL DATABASE INITIATIVE

*Women continue to be* underrepresented in political offices across the country. According to the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, women currently only make up 27.1% of Congress, 31.2% of state legislatures and 18% of governors. But when Cheryl Bergman and Shannon Garrett of the Michigan Women's Commission (MWC) wanted to gain a deeper understanding of women's engagement in politics in Michigan, they quickly learned that, in addition to women being underrepresented in local politics, there was also very limited data available on this issue. Thus began their partnership with MSU to learn more about women in politics.

The lack of data on women in local politics has a huge impact not only on such representation but also on lawmaking in general. "The number of women in state offices has been reported, showing that women occupy roughly one-third

*The lack of data on women in local politics has a huge impact not only on such representation but also on lawmaking in general.*

of those seats. However, the Michigan Women's Commission wasn't able to find any information on the number of women in county commissions, which is a direct pipeline for women occupying higher legislative positions in the political sphere," said Bergman.

Through the partnership between MWC and the GenCen, Stephanie Nawyn, Eric Gonzalez Juenke, and MSU honors student Mikayla Stokes joined Bergman and Garrett on their mission to learn more about Michigan women's engagement in politics and created the Michigan Electoral Database Initiative. Juenke, an associate professor of American politics at MSU, lent particular expertise to the project. "I have been coding the demographics of candidates for state legislative office for more than 10 years now and developed the process for doing that in my own work," said Juenke. Juenke and his research assistant Mikayla Stokes were able to use this process to code local Michigan candidates to reflect how voters most likely perceived their gender identities. After this step, the team was able to get a sense of how many women were engaging in electoral politics.

However, the data collection process was extremely challenging. "The most difficult part of this process is just getting the names of candidates and office holders into a single dataset. Local elections are controlled by local officials using vastly different reporting systems, so we have to go to each county or each local government and download and clean the data in a variety of different formats, and that is incredibly time consuming. The next step is to go to the local board website and online news and biographies to code the gender of the candidates and officeholders as expressed by these online sources," said Juenke. While the team could have tried surveying each individual candidate, they

# WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN POLITICAL OFFICE: BY THE NUMBERS

*"The data show that women are occupying roughly one-third of the political sphere, which is simply not enough."*

*- Cheryl Bergman*

still would not have gotten full coverage of the state and it would have been incredibly costly for much less data. As a result of this hard work, the Michigan Electoral Database Initiative found that Michigan follows the national trend of underrepresentation for women in political office. "The Michigan Electoral Database Initiative found that women hold only 27% of county commission seats in Michigan's 83 counties. It also found that 90% of the county boards are majority men. In addition, the study also found that roughly one in six of Michigan's county commissions had no women members in 2021. The data show that women are occupying roughly one-third of the political sphere, which is simply not enough," said Bergman.

This year, we have seen numerous political battles related to reproductive rights and gender identity unfold throughout the country. In March, Florida passed the "Don't Say Gay Bill," which bans public school teachers from discussing gender identity or sexual orientation with their students. The law has since inspired similar legislation in other states. In June, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, a decision that ensured women the choice to have an abortion. Laws and decisions like these affect everyone—especially women—and yet women are still vastly underrepresented in the spaces where these decisions are made. ■

## MICHIGAN



### Michigan county commissioners

27% women

73% men

### Michigan county commissions

1 in 6  
NO women

90%  
MAJORITY men

Source: Michigan Electoral Database Initiative

## U.S.



### Governors

18% women

82% men

### Congress

27% women

73% men

### State legislatures

31% women

69% men

Source:

Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University



Cheryl Bergman



Eric Gonzalez  
Juenke



Shannon Garrett

## *Unlearning and Relearning Feminisms:* THE NEW COURSE ON WOMEN OF COLOR FEMINISMS



Denise Troutman

*“WS 307 functioned as one implement to educate and to challenge/ resist hegemonic frames, broadening students’ knowledge, perspectives, and sensibilities.”*

*- Denise Troutman*

***Feminism and intersectionality*** are increasingly present in our collective consciousness. The past two years of the pandemic and racial reckoning have emphasized the importance of equity and justice. Understanding intersectionality provides us with a contextual understanding of equity, inclusion and justice. To build this critical awareness among the MSU student body, the GenCen launched its new WS 307: Women of Color Feminisms course in fall 2021, with the aim to provide precisely such a wider knowledge.

*“Understanding intersectionality provides us with a contextual understanding of equity, inclusion and justice.”*

*- Denise Troutman*

The first iteration of this course, offered by the Women’s and Gender Studies program, was taught by Denise Troutman, an associate professor in the Departments of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures, and Linguistics. “Based on my experiences in previous courses that entailed historical trajectories, many students lack sufficient breadth of the historicity and lived experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, including women of color. Those students, then, have been exposed to partial truths and exclusionary politics, which has fed into hegemonic constructions of feminism,” said Troutman.



# WS 307

While other courses like WS 202: Contemporary Feminisms and Gender Theories give students a broad foundation in feminist theory, there are many rich traditions of feminism championed by diverse groups of women of color who deserve coverage in their own dedicated upper-level course. Thus, WS 307 gives students the opportunity to unlearn some of the partial truths found in our histories of mainstream women's movements, and to work towards a fuller understanding of the invaluable contributions women of color have made to feminist theory and organizing, specifically to deepen students' understanding of feminisms from BIPOC perspectives. "WS 307 functioned as one implement to educate and to challenge/resist hegemonic frames, broadening students' knowledge, perspectives, and sensibilities. Particularly, WS 307 allowed students to immerse themselves in different vestiges of Black feminism historically, especially theoretical underpinnings and goals to produce more egalitarian/humanistic impacts within society," said Troutman. The course provides students with an understanding of the historical developments of women of color feminisms, analyzes the concept of intersectionality, and explores adjacent fields of study, such as critical race theories, decolonial feminisms, and transnational and transcultural feminisms.

This is the first class offered in the Women's and Gender Studies program with a dedicated focus on women of color feminisms. Students can look forward to taking WS 307 every fall semester and during spring semesters that fall on odd years. ■



## **WS307** **WOMEN OF COLOR** **FEMINISMS** **WITH DR. DENISE TROUTMAN** **FALL 2021 | M/W 12:40-2PM**

In WS307, students will explore advanced topics in women of color feminisms. In-depth analysis of some major topics and developments in women of color feminisms, intersectionality, critical race theories, decolonial feminisms, and transnational and transcultural feminisms (honed down to key foci).

*WS 307 promotional materials*

## Gender and Health Equity: ON TRANSGENDER MEDICINE

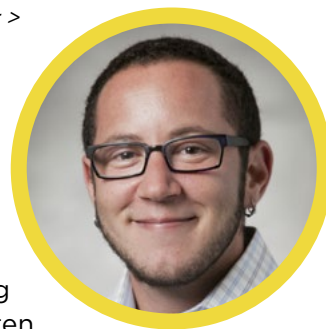
**Assessing the systemic issues** faced by minoritized groups such as the experiences and health outcomes of transgender people as they navigate the medical field and seek gender-affirming care is a daunting task. Underrepresentation, and the resulting lack of adequate research, causes serious harm to the diverse needs of the transgender community. Assistant professor at Lyman Briggs and GenCen affiliate, stef shuster, explores this in their 2021 book, *Trans Medicine: The Emergence and Practice of Treating Gender* (NYU Press), by exploring how stigma and medical uncertainty have shaped the health care experiences of the trans community since the 1950s to today. Published during the pandemic, shuster credits the MSU Office of Research and Innovation, colleagues, mentors, and their cat, Sketch, for their support.

Using interviews, archives and observations, shuster examines how medical providers perpetuate inequities that harm transgender people due to a lack of evidence, clinical training, research and more. This gap in knowledge of what it means to provide gender-affirming care has meant that medical providers make decisions that are ultimately grounded in what schuster calls “gut instinct, values and social norms.” This creates a fusion between social ideas about gender and legitimate medical practices, allowing medical providers to establish authority over the legitimacy of the needs of trans patients.

The central thesis of *Trans Medicine* is that in working with transgender patients, providers have operated with a great degree of uncertainty and have had to make judgements about gender, authority and legitimacy that drastically impact the care transgender people receive. While they are

trained to treat illnesses and injuries, these techniques are too standardized and do not cater to the specific gendered needs of transgender patients. Instead of relying on training or evidence, providers often take a paternalistic approach, drawing on gut instincts which are based on social standards about gender expression. All these issues stem largely from the lack of awareness about gender identities in the medical field and result in barriers for transgender patients.

stef shuster >



*Underrepresentation, and the resulting lack of adequate research, causes serious harm to the diverse needs of the transgender community.*

Many of the steps to receive gender-affirming care—treatments which support someone in their gender transition—are restrictive, forcing patients to attend therapy sessions, requiring endocrinology visits, and more. shuster highlights how these extra steps are comforting to some providers because it allows them to feel confident about providing care, but it gatekeeps essential care from some transgender people that do not have the ability to complete those grueling first steps. Furthermore, insurance coverage for gender-affirming care depends on the location and the employer. These barriers are just those which are easily identifiable; trans people suffer discrimination and harassment in all aspects of the medical field.

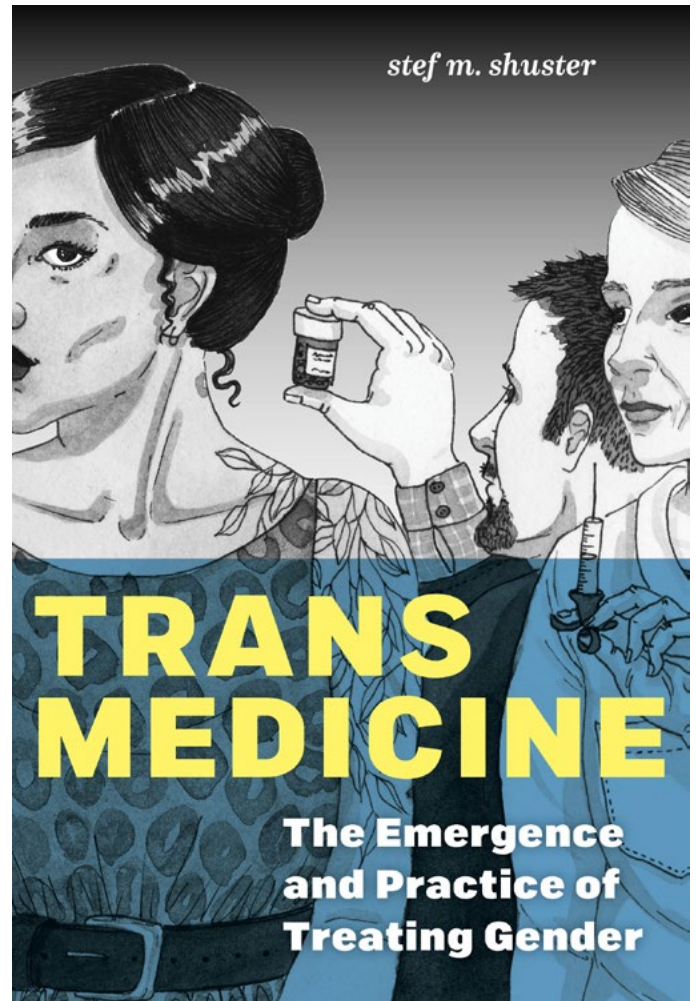
Much of that discrimination comes as a result of what shuster has called the “worthy patient model.” Created in the mid-20th century, this model describes an ideal transgender patient and is used by doctors to determine who is worthy of receiving gender-affirming care. The problem is that any patient outside the white, middle class, able-bodied and heterosexual norm is at higher risk of being denied essential care. shuster argues that this model is not confined to the past. With new medical jargon used to describe an un-worthy patient, like “elevated risk,” providers still adhere to these archaic boundaries of transness.

In fact, shuster describes a recent development that triggers the contemporary use of the worthy patient model: non-binary people are increasingly seeking gender-affirming care and facing new barriers. According to the model, a “worthy” patient is someone who is transitioning from one binary to another. Often, people may be forced to choose a binary they don’t identify with to be considered worthy of the care they are seeking, which is a cause for concern according to shuster.

*Trans Medicine* has applications beyond transgender issues. In fact, shuster aims to use their studies in trans medicine to expose issues within the broader field of medicine. Medical decision-making can be problematic in any area, especially where doctors are forced to rely on gut instinct. shuster writes about how this reliance on instinct puts medical providers in a position of unearned authority over someone’s gender identity. shuster is also clear about the fact that this situation is not completely dire. There is hope to be found in shuster’s book through interviews with those in the medical field who bring joy, empathy and genuine concern to trans patients, as well as from the sustained advocacy the transgender community has brought to the medical field



Sketch provided support while shuster navigated the publishing process during the pandemic.



Cover of *Trans Medicine*

to improve and expand gender-affirming care. Increasingly, medical providers take extra steps to ensure they’re honoring their patients’ identities and providing them with the best care.

These providers make shuster hopeful for the future of trans medicine. Since their data collection, shuster has noticed a positive change in the way some providers view gender-affirming care. There is more of an understanding in the field that trans youth need gender-affirming care in order to thrive, as opposed to the “wait-and-see” method, which puts young people at risk. This patient-centered approach to treating trans youth is growing in popularity. *Trans Medicine* offers a term for such medical providers who prioritize the needs of their patients. These “uncertain experts” are doctors who acknowledge the lack of proper evidence and clinical training for transgender patients and lean into it. They are keenly aware that new medical fields are challenging to navigate, and do their best with the resources they do have. They are challenging the very foundation of expertise and providing a glimmer of hope for those looking for solutions in the field of trans medicine. ■

## A Cultural and Scientific Approach to Research: GENDER ROLES IN THE WHEAT VALUE CHAIN IN AFGHANISTAN



Three GRAIN scholars collect wheat yield data at a research plot outside of Kabul, Afghanistan. Photo credit: GRAIN staff

**There are myriad ways** gender impacts food production and livelihood. In Afghanistan, where wheat makes up 60% of the daily calories consumed in the form of flat bread, the question of how gender influences the production of the dietary staple and the livelihood of the nation is the central focus for Kurt Richter, an associate professor at Michigan State University. With the support of the GenCen through its strategic partnership grant, Richter and his team are looking at the wheat value chain in Northern Afghanistan and mapping gender roles within it.

Like many aspects of livelihood, the importance of wheat to the daily lives of Afghan people means that it's intertwined with gender relations. Realizing the importance of having gender scholars on his

international teams, Richter engages with gender researchers on his projects. Particularly, he says that his research outcomes are more impactful when a gender-based perspective is implemented. This is why gender is a key part of the research on food systems and capacity building that Richter and his team are pursuing.

The extreme importance of wheat in Afghanistan is upheld by a complex system called the wheat value chain. Rather than being conceptualized as linear, it is more helpful to imagine this system as a web with various institutions and individuals that participate in the production of wheat—everything that is needed to convert every seed into bread. Richter explains, for example, that we might wonder what MSU has to do with the wheat value chain in Afghanistan, but by contributing to research, MSU plays a role in this intricate system. The goal of Richter's team is to gain a greater understanding of what role gender plays along the wheat value chain by listening to people's lived experiences. In order to document these lived experiences of people in Afghanistan, Richter's research consists of focus group discussions, interviews and participatory mapping.

According to Richter, Afghanistan is unique in its strong family and village structure, and the country operates the best at this level whereas larger structures such as local and national governments often lag in their functionality in serving the people. However, a stronger family and village structure also means rigidity in gender hierarchy. When such a hierarchy is embedded within the intricate wheat value chain, any small changes can impact the entire

agricultural economy. Richter strongly believes that empowering women by actively involving them will lead to overall improved economic conditions. Gender experts' contribution in these situations become invaluable.

Research in Afghanistan inevitably brings other questions on sustained research, barriers and research ethics to the surface, especially in the context of the Taliban's return to power in 2021. Richter says that while funding is necessary, it has been hard to secure. Currently, donors are not allowing many projects outside of humanitarian aid, citing concerns about being perceived as supporting the Taliban. Richter observed that when conducting international research, one can never expect to do things the same way one would domestically. Thus, Richter does not see these evolving scenarios as barriers. Rather, he says that researchers must be adaptable to the environment in which they are working.

When discussing the ethics of doing research as a researcher from the Global North working in the Global South, Richter sees this as a balance between what needs to be done scientifically

*...empowering women by actively involving them will lead to overall improved economic conditions.*

with what can be done culturally. He has found it important to listen to and understand the institutions and individuals he's working with. In fact, while this might be challenging to some, he prefers to view it as a fun and necessary endeavor, something that adds value to his work. For example, while his team might prefer to do things a certain way for the best results, they sometimes must change their plans out of respect for what can be done culturally in Afghanistan.

Understanding the relationship between gender and the wheat value chain is important because it exemplifies the complexity of the world in which we live—one where small changes in the system reverberate around the world and disproportionately affect the Global South. This research, conducted at a crucial point in Afghanistan's history, helps us to reflect not only on how gender is embedded in every aspect of a society but also the ethics of engaging in research itself. ■



Kurt Richter visits GRAIN staff and scholars evacuated from Kabul while in Shengjin, Albania, awaiting immigration to the U.S.  
Photo credit: Kurt Richter

# INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE UNDER THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

*The Affordable Care Act* (ACA) was signed into law on March 23, 2010, under the Obama Administration. The ACA expanded health insurance coverage for Americans and reformed the health care delivery system. According to a report published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, an estimated 7 to 16.4 million previously uninsured people gained insurance five years after it passed. But the question remains: have all Americans benefited equally from the ACA?

Researchers Claire Margerison and Danielle Gartner at MSU are interested in answering part of that question. Through their mixed-methods research project, which involves qualitative interviews and analyzing large national data sets, Margerison and Gartner are assessing whether and how the ACA has impacted access to and utilization of health care for Indigenous women of reproductive age.

There is an ongoing crisis related to equity in Indigenous women's health across the world. According to a fact sheet published in 2018 by UNICEF, "The lack of data on the health of Indigenous women and adolescent girls is masking huge disparities between populations, preventing effective action to address it." Indigenous women have historically experienced unequal access to the right medical treatment because of the long-standing effects of colonialism,

racism and discrimination. Other factors—social, economic, political, cultural and geographical—also affect Indigenous women's access to health care. Margerison and Gartner's project is a direct attempt to reveal these disparities to work towards ameliorating them.

*"The lack of data on the health of Indigenous women and adolescent girls is masking huge disparities between populations, preventing effective action to address it."*

- UNICEF

The Affordable Care Act is an especially interesting piece of legislation for Indigenous people because of the unique historical circumstances from which it emerges. The United States government signed treaties with Native American tribes after forcibly removing them from their land. In exchange for their lands, the government promised to provide health care, education and support the economic prosperity of Native Americans in perpetuity. This is known as the Federal Trust Responsibility. Despite that promise, the United States has failed to provide Indigenous communities with the provisions of the Federal Trust Responsibility—one of the many failures by the U.S. government to ensure equitable living for Indigenous populations. If the

*Only after we reveal existing health disparities can we work towards equity and change.*

Affordable Care Act continues to leave Indigenous communities without support, it would be part of a broader historical pattern.

Margerison and Gartner are both population health scientists whose interests in reproductive health disparities brought them together to work on this project. Their team is comprised of an interdisciplinary group of epidemiology and anthropology scholars. Because of this, team members are able to draw upon their own field-specific expertise, while also having the opportunity to collaborate. The interdisciplinary nature of the project “only makes the research process better,” said Gartner.

The study is still in its early phases, but preliminary results indicate that the number of insured Indigenous peoples in the United States has increased following the ACA. “After the Affordable Care Act—and particularly the Medicaid expansion—there was an increase in insurance coverage both of private and public insurance among Native folks and a decrease in those who are uninsured. Whether or not that translates into people accessing care, or using more services, or experiencing better health because of it—that’s a thing we don’t know as much about,” said Gartner.

Part of the challenge of this project is the complexity of working through the diversity of Indigenous communities in the United States. For example, the U.S. has many federally recognized tribes, making it difficult to get a sense of how the ACA interacts with each local government. “The ACA is this broad sweeping federal policy, but the way it impacts Indian country is really complicated. The U.S. has 574 federally recognized tribes. That is 574 sovereign nations within this nation, and each of those nations has the ability to define who its citizens are, has the ability to provide health care to its people—just like any other government does—provide general services for its people, education, and so on,” said Gartner. It is difficult to capture data from “the large number of federally recognized tribes in the U.S. and the uniqueness of those contexts,” said Margerison.

Only after we reveal existing health disparities can we work towards equity and change. After the study is completed, Margerison and Gartner hope to share the results of their work with Indigenous communities and to identify actionable ways that federal health policy can work better for Indigenous women and birthing people. ■



Claire Margerison



Danielle Gartner

# ACTIVISM BEYOND THE GENCEN

**Senior Taylor Belyea** has been an active member of the GenCen community throughout her undergraduate experience.

“The GenCen knows who I am. It is an intimate community, full of understanding, where transformational—not transactional—work takes place,” said Belyea.

Belyea, who majored in Social Relations and Policy and Women’s and Gender Studies with a minor in Graphic Design, served as the academic programs intern and was also GenCen’s Undergraduate Advisory Board representative in 2021-2022.

Alongside her academics, Belyea is the president of two campus organizations: Planned Parenthood Generation Action and the Roosevelt Institute, a progressive policy-writing and advocacy club. These organizations and her involvement with the GenCen have allowed Belyea to sum up her undergraduate experience and goals for the future in one word: community.

After seeing the solidarity, communication and collectivity that defines social justice communities like the GenCen across campus, Belyea was inspired and motivated to pursue activism and advocacy work on a larger scale. She immersed herself in the Women’s & Gender Studies major, and discovered a passion for reproductive health and justice. Belyea sought out opportunities that allowed her to combine that passion for community with her interest in reproductive justice, and has since served in a variety of activism, advocacy and organizing roles.

During her first year at MSU, she worked as a community organizing intern for Planned Parenthood of Michigan. Soon after, she became involved on a national scale, interning for multiple semesters as a campaigns and organizing intern for NARAL Pro-Choice America. This issue-based advocacy experience during the 2020 election led to working for the American Civil Liberties Union in the Affiliate Support and Nationwide

*“The GenCen knows who I am. It is an intimate community, full of understanding, where transformational—not transactional—work takes place.”*

*- Taylor Belyea*





Taylor Belyea

Initiatives Department, where she, among other administrative responsibilities, supports and maintains the mentorship program for the newly hired ACLU-affiliate staff and assists in planning and execution of electoral advocacy efforts at both state and federal levels.

Fittingly, Belyea was the recipient of GenCen's Tracy Dobson Award for Undergraduate Student Feminist Activism in 2020, and the MSU Student Leader of the Year recipient in 2022, recognizing the impact her activism and leadership has made on campus in the last four years.

Those working to ensure freedom and equity across the nation understand the old adage "with great power comes great responsibility." But that responsibility can become overwhelming. With such immersive involvement in activism—both at campus and national levels—Belyea is no stranger to burnout.

Her advice to students wanting to pursue a career in social justice and advocacy work? "Identify something you value and what matters to you as a student—not to anyone else—and make sure you uphold that every single day, and in every moment of the work you're doing," said Belyea. "It sounds squishy and cheesy, but the activism you do is not going to mean anything, and you won't do it well, if it's not something you truly care about." Her experience in reproductive justice has embodied this sentiment: though the work has been hard,

*"Identify something you value and what matters to you as a student—not to anyone else—and make sure you uphold that every single day, and in every moment of the work you're doing."*

*- Taylor Belyea*

pursuing a passion that she deeply cares about has allowed her to overcome burnout and continue to work toward equity and justice.

Guiding oneself with passion and thinking with your heart (before you think with your resume) is Belyea's essential advice to combat feeling overwhelmed, hopeless and stressed. For her, this passion comes from community: building it, observing it and seeking solace in the many communities she takes part in on campus, like the GenCen and its Women's & Gender Studies major.

Indeed, Belyea's role within the GenCen community is reflective of her appreciation for its core principles that she has adopted and cultivated during her time at Michigan State. As she began her job search following her graduation in May 2022, she was sure to carry this appreciation for community, advocacy and activism with her, no matter where she ends up. ■

### *Mainstreaming Gender:*

# SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES IN RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS

*Hydropower is one of the world's major* sources of renewable energy. As a clean source of energy, hydropower has a good reputation and rightly so. However, hydroelectric dams can have detrimental effects on the environment and the communities near them. While the move towards renewable energy is much needed, what is damaging about these hydroelectric dams, how are they damaging, and how this impacts gender relations are the central questions of the research by Laura Castro-Diaz, Ph.D. student in the Department of Community Sustainability as well as member of the Gender, Justice, and Environmental Change program administered by GenCen.

Castro-Diaz has spent her time as a graduate student researching hydroelectric power dams and their effects in the Global South. During her graduate work, Castro-Diaz explored the ways in which the Belo Monte Dam impacts communities of fishers in Brazil. Now, as a 2020-2021 awardee of the GJEC Dissertation Fellowship, Castro-Diaz is working to deepen her research and complete her dissertation.

Depending on their size and location, large-scale hydroelectric dams can bring an array of negative effects to the communities who house them. Dams can generate greenhouse gases, increase deforestation rates, and cause biodiversity loss. This



*Fish landing—young fishers organize the gear and select the fish they will take to the middlemen.*



Laura Castro-Diaz

kind of environmental degradation is devastating. It also affects the way community members make a living. According to Castro-Diaz, those in favor of the construction of the dams “promote clean energy and energy independence but overlook all of the social aspects of these energy sources.” Investors are often lured by the promise of clean energy, but do not think about what happens after the dam is constructed. One such impact is that it prevents fish from migrating, which in turn affects the livelihoods of local fishers.

*“We needed to understand how people who do the same activities were impacted differently based on their gender.”*

*- Laura Castro-Diaz*

In her research, Castro-Diaz looks at the ways in which hydroelectric dams uniquely affect peoples’ ways of life and these effects are gendered. “We needed to understand how people who do the same activities were impacted differently based on their gender,” said Castro-Diaz. Drawing upon the work of other sustainability scholars, Castro-Diaz employs an energy justice framework to guide her research. This framework looks at energy through multiple social lenses so that scholars can understand the varied dimensions of energy injustice around the world.

The preliminary results of Castro-Diaz’s research give insight into the ways in which men and women interpret and manage these impacts differently. For example, after the construction of a dam, communities had to grapple with a growing scarcity of fish. Castro-Diaz found that men were primarily

concerned about not being able to provide for their families, while women were more concerned about the food shortages. She also looks at how communities have managed these impacts over time, which allows her to look at the cumulative effects in men and women’s lives.

After conducting her research in South America, Castro-Diaz was able to return to the communities she researched to share her results. She stresses how important it is for researchers to do this, “they really appreciated it, and I think we need to do that more often,” she said.

Castro-Diaz underscores the need to listen to those that have been affected by the hydroelectric dams. Big businesses often ignore the needs and desires of community members, leaving them struggling in the aftermath of environmental changes. By listening to those affected by change, we can work towards providing support and preventing further harm. ■



*Fisherwomen clean the fish their male counterparts catch for a family event.*

*Madeline Van Eck and Rosalind Arch:*

# DIRECTING LANSING'S C.A.R.E. PROGRAM

*When asked to reflect* on her time with the GenCen, 2019 WGS graduate Madeline Van Eck reminisces about community.

“The community that’s built within GenCen, as well as those who share that same passion, is huge. It’s a very close community, and there are individuals—who were either in the Women’s and Gender Studies major or in GenCen—who I see at other agencies similar to mine and we still talk about our time at MSU. It really has become its own separate community where we can do outreach and prevention, which I really appreciate.”

Van Eck still sings the praises of her time at the GenCen, as well as her WGS studies, which have greatly impacted her career today. These influences during her undergraduate experience cultivated her strong passion for advocacy work supporting women who have experienced violence.

Van Eck serves as director of Lansing’s C.A.R.E. Program, where she advocates for those who have experienced domestic and sexual violence. Capital Area Response Effort, or C.A.R.E., is a post-arrest response unit for victims of intimate partner violence in and around Lansing, Michigan. C.A.R.E. collaborates with six local law enforcement agencies, as well as hospitals in the Greater Lansing area to provide immediate, substantial and empathetic care for survivors following the arrest of their intimate violence offenders. C.A.R.E. employees serve as mobile advocates who support survivors on-site by providing information on the legal processes, resources and services they offer.

While there are a few other emergency response teams similar to C.A.R.E., it is truly the first program of its kind in the state. Its services are invaluable, as are its employees and the support they provide.

Van Eck, who started as a volunteer at C.A.R.E. while completing her undergraduate degree, now oversees the program, where she handles grant management, provides training, and assists staff working one-on-one with clients. She also directly works with survivors, serving as their central support system—she attends court hearings, assists with housing and community resources, files Personal Protection Orders, and does anything else she can to advocate for survivors.

*“The community that’s built within GenCen, as well as those who share that same passion, is huge.”*

*– Madeline Van Eck*

Her favorite part about working at C.A.R.E. is seeing the resiliency of survivors and being a part of their healing journeys. “While I can offer support, I’m not the one doing the healing. Seeing someone realize they have support and someone who believes them is amazing and supporting them is an honor,” Van Eck said.

Other alumni from the Women’s and Gender Studies major echo sentiments of its impact on their passion for gender equity, advocacy work and community involvement. Rosalind Arch, who served as the director of C.A.R.E. prior to Van Eck, is also a graduate of the Women’s and Gender Studies

program. Heavily involved with the GenCen during her undergraduate experience, Arch states that Women's and Gender Studies changed who she was, teaching her that she wanted nothing more than to make a difference in someone's life every day when going to work.

During her time as C.A.R.E. director, Arch not only established an emergency hotel program that provides shelter for survivors, she also secured a \$100,000 grant. The grant helps fund the emergency hotel shelter program and provides necessary door and window repairs, lock changes, new phones, security deposits, relocation services, and many other services to survivors that ensure their safety under C.A.R.E.'s protection.

*"Victim advocacy is the most powerful, yet gentle social service out there."*

*- Madeline Van Eck*

Arch now runs a domestic abuse response service similar to C.A.R.E. in Seattle, Washington, where she moved in 2021. In Seattle, Arch is able to bring all she learned through her work at C.A.R.E. to a new community. While she hasn't had the position for long, she plans to work closely with Seattle police departments to better address survivors who battle homelessness in their response efforts. Excited to shift the narrative of interactions between police and homeless populations in her new city, Arch says that her experience with marginalized populations—initially sparked through education within Women's and Gender Studies and later cultivated at C.A.R.E.—has taught her that as an advocate, it is critical to take the time to listen to what people need.

Both Van Eck and Arch attribute their passion for activism and advocacy to their educational experience at the GenCen. The interdisciplinary nature of the Women's & Gender Studies major offered a space for them to explore women and gender in a variety of capacities: comparatively, transnationally, historically, and globally. This deep dive into identity allowed them both, as undergraduate students, to recognize the urgency and necessity of victim advocacy.

"Working in domestic violence is the most meaningful thing I've ever done in my entire life," said Van Eck. "Victim advocacy is the most powerful, yet gentle social service out there." Madeline Van Eck and Rosalind Arch serve as influential, inspirational figures in domestic violence advocacy, both having made substantial strides in their work through intersectional, trauma-informed approaches when supporting survivors. As Michigan State alumni, their passion is empowering and inspiring, especially for those they impacted at the Center for Gender in Global Context. ■



Rosalind Arch

## What's Salmon Got To Do With It:

# GENDER EQUITY IN SUSTAINABLE FISHING



Michigan State alumna, Marie Rose

*While most people* would not associate gender equity with fresh Alaskan salmon, for Michigan State alumna Marie Rose, it just makes sense.

A 2015 graduate of the MSU Social Work and Women's and Gender Studies programs, Rose was highly involved with the GenCen during her undergraduate experience. While on campus, she worked hard to cultivate her passion for gender equity and intersectionality, advocating for reproductive justice, domestic violence awareness and women's empowerment.

So where does the salmon come in? The summer before graduation, Rose and a friend visited Alaska, where she landed an unexpected summer job at a nonprofit focusing on salmon conservation across the state. That summer, Rose handled organizing and outreach work for salmon campaigns across the state, soon bridging the gap between her passion for grassroots community work and a newfound love for Alaskan wildlife.

After doing hands-on work with the salmon campaigns, Rose fell in love with the culture of salmon conservation and its role in Alaskan communities. She explains that in Alaska, salmon is more than just food: it is a pillar of Alaskan culture, unifying the entire population around its importance as an industry and role in Alaska's ecosystem.

Right after her graduation from MSU, Rose moved to Alaska and continued her work. From there, she worked on a fishing boat for a season, where she met Keith Heller, her current business partner. Together, the two started Shoreline Wild Salmon in 2016, where Rose was able to actualize her dream of distributing wild caught, sustainably fished Alaskan salmon and seafood to many cities throughout Michigan, Ohio, Alaska and New Mexico.

*“The work in the seafood industry and business actually has a lot of intersectionality with the things that I learned back in college. That’s the biggest point I want to get across to people.”*

– Marie Rose

“I’m a Michigan State graduate who was really involved in GenCen and the Women’s and Gender Studies program, and I’ve gone on to found an Alaskan salmon and seafood company,” said Rose. “The work in the seafood industry and business actually has a lot of intersectionality with the things that I learned back in college. That’s the biggest point I want to get across to people.”

Indeed, that intersectionality is palpable. Their business model emphasizes equitable living for fishermen, a commitment to sustainability and fresh food, and recognition of the role that salmon plays in Alaska’s economy and culture. This commitment to justice carries beyond business, however, with Rose paving the way in an underrepresented industry. Not many women are present in fishing industries, especially salmon fishing, and Rose’s work in the seafood industry allows her to help shift this narrative and make space for other women.

Rose, who started out fishing on the boat while offloading and processing the salmon, now manages all of Shoreline Wild Salmon’s sales, business operations, logistics and marketing. With experience in nearly every role possible at the

company, she says her favorite part about owning Shoreline Wild Salmon is being able to connect with people who have the same integrity, values and passion for increasing access to high quality foods.

She credits this passion to her time with the GenCen, describing how her studies within Women’s and Gender Studies empowered her to “go out in the world and make a difference.” Now that Rose is working in an industry where women are underrepresented, this passion helps her “value relationships with other women trying to shake things up in underrepresented careers,” as well as fuel her passion for advocating for what’s important to people.

For now, Rose’s future plans include continuing to grow Shoreline Wild Salmon by supplying more fresh Alaskan seafood to grocery stores and small business partners. Her experience in Alaska, while unconventional, is the embodiment of a deep and genuine commitment to equity. Working on the frontlines of salmon conservation has offered her a unique outlet to cultivate the passions she developed as an undergraduate student, and as her work continues, she will undoubtedly continue to reform salmon conservation and advocacy. ■



# INSPIRATION AWARDS



### **stef m. shuster • Professional Achievement Award**

*Assistant Professor, Lyman Briggs College and the Department of Sociology*

stef m. shuster is an assistant professor in Lyman Briggs College and the Department of Sociology. Their current research in gender, medicine, and feminist science and technology studies considers how evidence is constructed, mobilized, and weaponized, which is the subject of their book, *Trans Medicine: The Emergence and Practice of Treating Gender* (NYU Press). In *Trans Medicine*, shuster traces the development of this medical field from the 1950s to modern medicine to show how providers create and use scientific and medical evidence to quell uncertainty, “treat” a gender identity, and uphold their authority. shuster currently serves on the editorial boards for *Social Science & Medicine*, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, and *Contemporary Sociology*.



### **Monica Villarreal • Community Engagement Award**

*Coordinator, Flint Community Initiative Program and Faculty, School of Social Work*

Monica Villarreal is the coordinator of MSU’s Flint Community Initiative program and serves as faculty in the School of Social Work. Villarreal is a Flint resident and advocate for justice. She is a member of the Greater Flint Coronavirus Taskforce on Racial Inequities and co-chairs the Faith Subcommittee. She developed community organizing and advocacy skills during the Flint water crisis as she led community-wide interventions to address water quality, infrastructure and basic needs. Her current work focuses on addressing public health and environmental justice as a community organizer with Michigan United. Villarreal is a graduate of MSU’s Master of Social Work Flint program (2017). She also holds degrees in anthropology (2007) from MSU and Master of Divinity (2011) from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.





**Damaris Choti • Culture of Empowerment Award**

*Coordinator, Student and Alumni Programs, African Studies Center*

Damaris Choti is the coordinator of student and alumni programs at the African Studies Center at Michigan State University. She holds Ph.D. and MA degrees in Educational Administration from MSU. Choti oversees alumni and student engagement initiatives and activities for the center. She is a co-founder of MSU's African Female Students Empowerment Program; advisory board member at the Greater Lansing African Female Empowerment Program; and advises Africa-oriented student organizations at MSU. Her areas of interest include educational leadership; women's leadership; girls' education and empowerment; and student advising and mentorship.



**Lexie Hampton • Undergraduate Student Inspiration Award  
(Student Leader Award)**

*Public Policy and Pre-Med*

Lexie Hampton is a senior at MSU studying public policy, on the pre-med track, and minoring in Cities: Environment, Design, and Society. She is the vice president for Women\*s Council and served as a co-chair for the Women\*s Initiative for Leadership Development Conference for two years. In her free time, she volunteers for the Center for Survivors Sexual Assault Crisis Intervention team, as well as works as a barista and an emergency room medical scribe. In the coming year, she hopes to continue her advocacy for women\*s rights and help make MSU a safe and inclusive space for all.

# GENDER, JUSTICE, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE FELLOWSHIPS



**Sudha Kannan • GJEC Dissertation Research**  
*Department of Community Sustainability*

**“Does Increasing Electricity Access Lead to Women’s Empowerment in Zambia?”**

Kannan’s research focuses on understanding how electricity access contributes to women’s empowerment in Zambia. She conducted semi-structured interviews with women in households with and without electricity to understand their narratives.



**Sandy Burnley • Dissertation Completion Awards**  
*Department of English*

**“Critical Entanglements: Animals in Victorian Fiction”**

Burnley’s research for the chapter the fellowship helped her complete argues that Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) offers proto-ecofeminist critiques of two leading 19th century frameworks—transcendentalism and liberalism—to illustrate their underlying androcentric and Eurocentric components, inhibiting any marginalized identity from achieving their own bildungsroman.



**Vanessa Rickenbrode • GJEC Dissertation Research**  
*Department of Sociology*

**“Framing, Implementing, and Evaluating Gender Empowerment in Development using Mixed-Methods”**

Rickenbrode uses frame analysis, semi-structured interviews, and structural equation modeling to evaluate measures of gender empowerment in development and how different frames of gender empowerment lead to varying solutions and outcomes.



**Maria Alejandra Garcia • GJEC Dissertation Research**  
*Department of Community Sustainability*

**“Women’s agency and the negative side of power in agriculture and rural development: Two case studies in Colombia and Honduras”**

Garcia’s research seeks to understand rural women’s empowerment in Colombia for women who participate in small entrepreneurship projects.



**Lauren Cooper • GJEC Dissertation Research**  
*Department of Forestry*

**“Good for forests, good for people? Enabling conditions for scalable success in Peru’s Conditional Direct Transfers (CDT) program”**

In this study, Cooper explores individual preferences and impact of Peru’s Conditional Direct Transfer program to incentivize conservation in indigenous forest communities, with emphasis on understanding the gendered implications of the activities and the distribution of the incentives.



**Eric Kesse • Dissertation Completion Awards**  
*Department of History*

**“Living with Water: Environment, Slavery, and Spirituality in a West African Stilt-House Community—Nzulezo, c. mid-1700 - 1870s”**

“Living with Water” is a comprehensive social and environmental history of Nzulezo—a community on stilts in the middle of the Amanzule River in southwestern Ghana—that seeks to broaden understandings of how human relations around water over time resulted in the formation of complex relationships between culture and ecology. It also examines how such relationships shaped ideas about gender, spirituality, and human adaptation to slavery and physically challenging environments.

# WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES FELLOWSHIPS



### **Lalaki Awudu • WGS Dissertation Research**

*Department of Sociology*

#### **“Excluding Migrant Laborers: Social Identity And Natural Resource Struggles In Agricultural Intensification Programs In Ghana”**

Awudu draws on feminist standpoint methodologies, including in-depth interviews and participant observation to focus on how changes in agricultural production through agricultural intensification programs impact social relationships for migrant laborers in Ghana.



### **Kyla Cary • WGS Dissertation Research**

*Department of Human Development and Family Studies*

#### **“Women’s Online Experiences of Sexual Objectification: Measurement Development and Associations with Behavior and Mental Health”**

Women disproportionately experience sexual objectification, effectively being reduced to objects to be observed and evaluated by others, resulting in a multitude of negative outcomes, yet research has not considered how women experience objectification within online spaces. With the support of the WGS fellowship, Cary’s dissertation research explores women’s online sexual objectification experiences and will assess for associations with body image and mental health. Her research will inform targeted sexual health and media literacy programming to empower women and reduce harmful effects of gender-based harassment.



### **Nerli Paredes Ruvalcaba • WGS Dissertation Research**

*Department of Anthropology*

#### **“An intersectional approach to motherhood and infant development in Mexico: The role of biomedicine, infant feeding, and human milk”**

This project examines infant growth and development in relation to infant feeding practices, immune response, and human milk. The goal of this project is to construct an interdisciplinary framework that links the structural, sociocultural context of infant feeding practices to infant growth and development. This research comes at a critical time and place as the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to a rise in maternal mortality, halting of some health services previously provided to pregnant people. Moreover, Mexico has high rates of maternal mortality and gender-based violence resulting in wide-scale protests demanding an end to the violence.



**Edith Gondwe • WGS Dissertation Research**

*Department of Fisheries and Wildlife*

**“Women Empowerment, Capital Assets, and Small-Scale Fish Food Systems: Contribution to Food and Nutrition Security”**

Gondwe is a fourth-year Ph.D. student in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, and her dissertation focuses on the intersections of work-life histories, livelihood strategies, and intrahousehold decision-making and how they interplay to produce food security outcomes in households engaged in small-scale fisheries in Malawi.



**Cara Jacob • WGS Dissertation Research**

*Department of Anthropology*

**“Water Security Down the Drain: Shifting Understandings of Water In/Security Among Women in a Rustbelt City”**

Using an intersectional approach grounded in feminist political ecology, Jacob’s research examines the perceptions and everyday lived experience of urban water insecurity resulting from lead contamination in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This includes examining the ways in which this issue has become gendered and racialized due to the history of infrastructural violence in deindustrialized cities of the American Rust Belt.



**Rebekah Gordon • WGS Dissertation Completion**

*Department of Teacher Education*

**“Laboring for the Motherland: A Mother-Artist-Researcher-Teacher’s Reconfiguration of the State-Sponsored Transnational Teacher”**

Thanks to this generous dissertation completion fellowship, Gordon has been able to embrace and leverage her multifaceted identities of mother, artist, researcher, and teacher to explore her past and current experiences. More specifically, Gordon grapples with the gendering and racialization of both motherhood and the profession of teaching throughout U.S. history in hopes of re-imagining more humanizing pedagogies, especially in transnational contexts.

# Thank you

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# A year in review



Stephanie Nawyn giving a talk on women's leadership in the academy with a visiting cohort from Pakistan as a part of the Department of State's partnership with the College of Education to train women to lead academic institutions.



Rajalakshmi Nadadur met with visiting Pakistani women ulemas to discuss the intersections between religion and gender in international contexts.



Stephanie Nawyn with Rachel Bailey (top), Taylor Belyea (middle) and Adrienne Puryear (bottom) at commencement



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