



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

INTERSECTIONS

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



TWENTY

19

20



Left: Erin Graham's Introduction to Women's & Gender Studies (WS 201) students pose for a class photo in fall 2019. Aaron Applebey

Below: GenCen intern, Aaron Applebey, poses for the camera while cleaning after the 2020 Annual Reception. TimeFrame Photography



Above: Noleen Chikowore (right), one of three 2019-2020 GJEC Dissertation Research Fellows, discusses her research at the 2020 GenCen Annual Reception. TimeFrame Photography

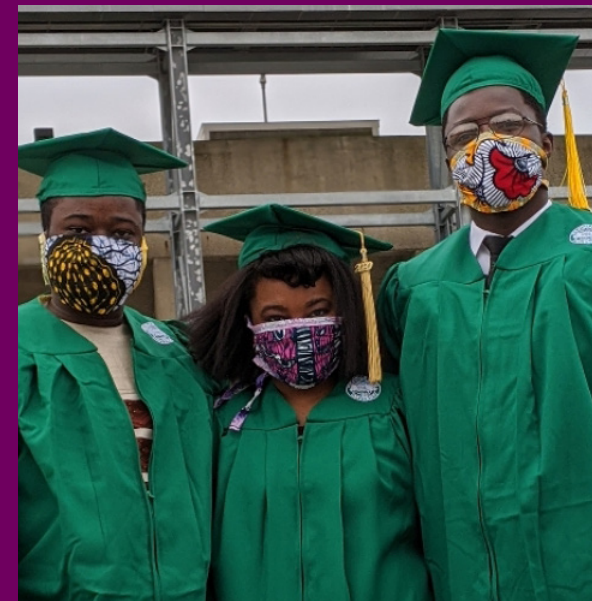
Below: Rashida Harrison (left), chair of the 2019 Mary Anderson Paper Award Committee, congratulates two of her former students on their 2019 GenCen Paper Awards: Allie Pail (center, RCGV awardee) and Georgia Artzberger (right, Anderson awardee). TimeFrame Photography



Above: The Department of State Professional Fellows Program, *Advancing Young Women Agribusiness Entrepreneurs and Innovators: A Tanzania-Kenya-Uganda-United States Partnership*, welcomed twelve fellows in fall 2019. Daisy Ndunge of Kenya is pictured with her resulting project proposal. Emily Khan

ON THE COVER

In March 2020, just a few days after returning from spring break, Michigan State University moved classes online due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The Center for Gender in Global Context (GenCen) closed its physical office the following week, moving to remote work. In partnership with other International Studies & Programs employees and units, members of GenCen staff used their skills to sew and donate masks to the MSU and mid-Michigan communities, including MasterCard Foundation scholars. The cover photo is a collection of a fraction of the masks created by the GenCen team. COVID-19 has forever changed the world, but it has also brought us together as a GenCen community.



A group of MasterCard Foundation scholars poses for a graduation photo in their COVID-19 masks, donated by International Studies & Programs staff.

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SUSTAINING CONTINUOUS CHANGE


Stephanie Nawn
Co-Director for Academic Programs,
Outreach, and Engagement




Wenda Bauchspies
Co-Director for Global Research
and Engagement

It has only been a year since we last wrote our Co-Directors' Message for *Intersections*, and yet it feels like a decade's worth of change has happened in the interim. What started as concerning news about a novel coronavirus infecting people in China in December and January quickly turned into a global pandemic that led to MSU shutting down face-to-face instruction on March 11, 2020. In-person interactions on campus were halted shortly thereafter—including our awards honoring inspiring members of our MSU and Mid-Michigan community. The cancellation of our fully-enrolled summer Education Abroad programs in the United Kingdom, Netherlands, and Malawi were heartbreaking for us and our students. It was a new challenge to support our faculty teaching courses and conducting research under these conditions.

As we write this message today, the world is even more upended. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to demand that we do nearly every aspect of our work differently. In response to the deaths of Black Americans under police control in multiple cities, protestors have taken to the streets all over the U.S. Climate change has created conditions where massive fires have engulfed the West Coast of the U.S. and hurricane activity is above normal with more storms named than in an average year. Political and social upheaval seems to be happening all over the globe. It has become cliché, but these are indeed unprecedented times.

While the GenCen now faces significant challenges in serving our community on- and off-campus, we also see reasons for optimism and hope. Our students, faculty, and staff have come together to demonstrate care for one another from increased sensitivity around work-life balance to ensuring resources are equitably shared. We are observing tremendous commitment from our community to continuing our important work of educating students, supporting research, and working with our partners. We are innovating how we teach and learn, how we conduct research and collaborate across countries and time zones, and how we accomplish the kind of informal exchange of ideas that often leads to some of the best new initiatives.

We are seeing new opportunities for equity work. The current social conditions bring into stark relief the inequalities that have always existed—motivating new conversations and opportunities for change. MSU, like many institutions of higher education, is undergoing a long-overdue reckoning of how sexism, racism, homophobia, xenophobia, ableism, and other forms of oppression are baked into its everyday practices. This is an opportunity for the GenCen to create transformative change through role modeling, innovating in the classroom, expanding engagements, and modifying our work for new spaces and times. During this time of crisis, we are finding ourselves thinking about innovative ways to create sustainable transformations and to contribute to equity in ways that meet the changing circumstances.

Some of the changes we have already been able to accomplish include:

- Creating new opportunities for virtual internships so that our Women's & Gender Studies undergraduate students can still gain valuable work experience and new skills that are relevant in the current labor market;
- Innovating our colloquia, workshops, and other events using engaging virtual formats to reach new audiences;
- Contributing our expertise to diversity, inclusion, and equity initiatives all over campus;
- Changing the format of our Gender, Women's Suffrage, and Political Power: Past, Present, and Future conference to make it more available to the public, and at a much lower cost;
- Revisiting and revising our social media presence with a new set of GenCen interns; and,
- Exploring strategies to strengthen partnerships and sponsoring opportunities that benefit our community while ensuring the equitable use of resources.

There are many more efforts in process, and we anticipate being able to share the fruits of those efforts with you in the next issue of *Intersections*. We would like to end with a note of gratitude to our MSU family composed of committed faculty, staff, students, and administrators who support and enrich the mission of the GenCen, as well as our community partners who are always ready to explore new ideas for enhancing our common vision.

A YEAR OF FIRSTS & NEW FACES

Patrick Arnold *he/him/his or they/them/their*

Patrick Arnold joined GenCen in August 2019 as the Advisor for students in GenCen's academic programs. In addition to advising students and teaching Women's & Gender Studies courses, he has helped grow GenCen enrollment to 450 students, including over 100 graduate students. Patrick works with Stephanie and GenCen Associated Faculty/Staff on curriculum design and will be launching an introductory course on gender and sexuality in everyday life this fall.



Wenda Bauchspies, Ph.D. *she/her/hers*

Wenda Bauchspies is the Co-Director for Global Research and Engagement. In addition to directing the GJEC and GSID specializations, Wenda serves as Editor of the *Gendered Perspectives in International Development (GPID) Journal*. Together, she and Stephanie develop programmatic activities to advance the mission of GenCen. Working closely with Rebecca, GenCen's Associated Faculty/Staff, and external partners, she advances gender and sexuality research and engagement at a global scale.



Lucy Thompson, Ph.D. *she/her/hers*

As Senior Research Fellow, Lucy Thompson supported several GenCen research and consultancy projects during 2019-2020. In addition to her work on GenCen's partnership with Plan International, she secured multiple grants to support new feminist research collaborations across campus. Moving into next year, Lucy's goals include supporting GenCen's external collaborations, facilitating feminist research in the context of global crisis, and completing her book on institutional trauma.

Stephanie Nawyn, Ph.D. *she/her/hers*

Stephanie Nawyn is the Co-Director of Academic Programs, Outreach, and Engagement. She directs the GenCen Faculty Fellows Program, as well as both the undergraduate and graduate Women's & Gender Studies (WGS) academic programs. She and Wenda engage with GenCen's Community Board members, alumni, and donors. Stephanie is excited to continue working with a variety of GenCen constituents to develop innovative new curriculum and activities next year.



Dessie Clark, Ph.D. *she/her/hers*

Dessie Clark served as Managing Editor for *Gendered Perspectives in International Development (GPID)* during the 2019-2020 year. Under her management, the journal re-branded with a fresh look for all materials, leading to 2019 being the most productive year *GPID* has had in recent history. In the spring of 2020, Dessie left GenCen after accepting a position at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst as the Research Collaboration Coordinator for the ADVANCE program.



Rebecca Irvine, Ph.D. *she/her/hers*

In her role as Assistant Director, Rebecca Irvine supports the GenCen constituency on research development, particularly focusing on grant assistance. She cultivates relationships across GenCen Associated Faculty/Staff, educational institutions, entrepreneurs in the Department of State Professional Fellows program, and NGOs. In 2019, Rebecca led the GenCen Research Team in producing the Gender & Inclusion Review for Plan International, an NGO active in 77 countries.



Aaron Applebey *they/them/their or he/him/his*

Aaron Applebey spent their senior year as GenCen's first Social Media and Events Intern. They completed a variety of projects beneficial to the Center, including securing sponsorships for the 2020 Inspirational Woman of the Year Awards, co-creating this edition of *Intersections*, and designing a successful social media campaign for Give Green Day 2019. Post-graduation, Aaron intends to pursue an artistic path in writing and comedy while advocating for various progressive causes.

Emily Khan *she/her/hers*

Emily Khan is the Communications Coordinator at GenCen. In her multi-faceted role, she manages the day-to-day operations of the Center, including writing and designing all marketing materials, planning events, and working with other staff on a variety of projects. Emily is pursuing her MBA at Colorado State University, and is using skills learned in the program to refocus GenCen's momentum into a comprehensive strategic plan with concentrated efforts in marketing.



Katie Paulot *she/her/hers*

Katie Paulot was GenCen's first Research Intern, working closely with Rebecca and Lucy on a variety of projects for GenCen during the 2019-2020 year. In the coming year, Katie will be finishing all three of her undergraduate majors (Comparative Cultures & Politics, Women's & Gender Studies, and Anthropology) while working on applications for master's programs related to gender and activism in the United Kingdom/Ireland and volunteering with the SACI Team.



Mae Crowell *she/her/hers*

Having held a variety of staff and administration roles across campus, Mae Crowell has been a proud employee of MSU for 20 years. She joined GenCen in April 2020 as the part-time Fiscal Officer, in addition to her position with several other centers in International Studies & Programs. Mae enjoys the variety of programs and people she gets to work with and is looking forward to updating GenCen accounting processes and assisting with projects and events.



Samantha Turner *she/her/hers*

As GenCen's Editorial Intern for 2019-2020, senior Samantha Turner assisted with *GPID*, co-created this edition of *Intersections* with Aaron and Emily, and worked with Patrick and the other interns on the GenCen February 2020 student activism panel. After graduation, Samantha and her parents launched a non-profit, community-based health care service (God's Path) that will serve the low-income families who live in the city of Detroit during COVID-19 and beyond.

UNDERSTANDING REFUGEE AID DURING COVID-19

Providing humanitarian assistance to refugees is challenging under the best of circumstances, but during a pandemic, it can be overwhelming. To understand where humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are facing challenges in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 infection, GenCen Co-Director Stephanie Nawyn is working with global partners on a research study entitled *Using Humanitarian Engineering to Solve Social Distancing Barriers in Refugee Humanitarian Interventions*.

The United Nations Refugee Agency estimates that Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon together host nearly 8 million refugees, placing them each among the top 10 refugee-hosting countries in the world. The team is exploring how humanitarian NGOs in these countries attempt to limit the spread of infection while assisting these refugees, what barriers exist to limiting the spread, in which services are those barriers most intractable, and which refugee populations are most impacted. As a gender scholar, Stephanie is particularly interested in how services focusing on refugee women are affected by COVID-19.

Besides Stephanie, there are two other U.S. partners: Stephen Gasteyer of MSU Sociology and Adnan Hammad, the founder and executive director of Global Health Research, Management, and Solutions. These three partners are coordinating efforts with Ali Ghassani (Amel Association in Lebanon), Rania Mansour (National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training in Lebanon), Mahmoud Durid (Safa for Development in Turkey), and Ayat

Nashwan (Altkafal Charity Association and Jordanian Pioneering Center in Jordan). Additionally, 15 data collectors are on-location to conduct interviews with NGO service providers and observe service provision in 13 different locations around the three countries.

The project is one of 15 funded by Elrha, a U.K.-based foundation that funds research on humanitarian interventions. Co-designed with field partners, this project focuses on how NGO staff work in their day-to-day jobs, paying particular attention to the habitual practices that could have tremendous effects on their abilities to keep themselves and their refugee clients safe. Stephanie says she drew this aspect from feminist theory, which conceptualizes the taken-for-granted practices of daily life as the focus of theory building. She stated, “Often the key to understanding how refugee assistance can be improved is to understand what barriers service providers face in everyday work, and what innovations they develop in response. By comparing a range of contexts, we hope to produce recommendations for sustainable best practices that come from the ground up.”



ADDRESSING THE GENDER GAP IN AFGHANISTAN'S WHEAT INDUSTRY

GRAIN is a five-year Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL) program funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). It aims to build effective human and institutional capacity for agricultural research that provides wheat producers with the knowledge, inputs and technologies they need to increase yields, reduce post-harvest losses, enhance grain nutritional and milling quality, reduce susceptibility to disease, drought and pests, minimize financial risks, and manage and sustain limited natural resources.

Gender and wheat production are an unlikely combination of research topics—unless you’re at Michigan State University. Brought together by the USAID-funded project, *Grain Research and Innovation in Afghanistan* (GRAIN), MSU’s Global Center for Food System Information (project lead), GenCen, and Afghan partners are conducting gender-responsive research to empower women in Afghanistan’s agricultural sector.

A five-year project launched in the spring of 2017, GRAIN aims to bolster the ability of the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock to identify innovations for improving wheat production, a crop critical to food security. Given the often overlooked roles of women in the sector, GRAIN programs emphasize women’s empowerment.

GenCen’s research team of Wenda Bauchspies, Rebecca Irvine, Lucy Thompson, and Katie Paulot—along with Associated Faculty/Staff (AFS) members Chelsea Wentworth and Abou Traore of the Department of Community Sustainability—are lending their interdisciplinary gender expertise to GRAIN across two activities. “This project exemplifies the collaborative nature of research at the GenCen, where our AFS can work across global and disciplinary contexts,” said Wenda.

First, to gain a better understanding of gender roles along the wheat value chain, GRAIN and its Afghan university partners are conducting a gender mapping exercise. Gender mapping draws on mixed

research methods (e.g. focus groups, interviews, and participatory mapping) to understand gendered power dynamics, identify opportunities for women, and pinpoint impacts of barriers to technology adoption caused by gender inequality. Results of this study will inform future research and extension efforts. This collaborative study also creates opportunities for Afghan university students, most of whom are women, to gain unique field research experience.

The second activity is designing a rubric for assessing the gender-responsiveness of research. GenCen and the GRAIN team are working together to produce the culturally-sensitive rubric, which will be piloted in one of the project’s partnering Afghan organizations.



A GRAIN research intern collects field data. GRAIN supports internships and other programs to encourage youth and women’s participation in research and extension.

GRAIN Photobank

HIGHLIGHTING INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES

Inspired by her own lived experiences, Christie Poitra—a Core member of GenCen’s Associated Faculty/Staff—connects Michigan State University (MSU) to Indigenous issues and communities. Starting as an elementary school teacher in the Navajo Nation, Christie has long pursued a career focused on Indigenous education. She holds her Bachelor of Arts degree from



Christie Poitra, Interim Director of MSU’s Native American Institute. © Autumn Luciano

UC Berkeley, a Master of Arts in American Indian Studies from UCLA, and a Ph.D. in Education Policy from MSU. Shortly after receiving her Ph.D., Christie joined the Native American Institute (NAI) at MSU, where she now serves as Interim Director.

The mission of the NAI has always been to support the needs of tribes, communities, and Native organizations, although the execution of this mission may change based on the needs of the community, or in response to a global pandemic. In response to COVID-19, the Institute is looking to retool campus and community outreach efforts to ensure safe engagement, while keeping their mission the same. “I’m Ojibwa, Latina, and a first-generation college graduate,” states Christie. “My father was engaged in tribal community outreach, so my relationship to the type of work I do at NAI comes naturally.” Given Christie’s background in education, the current mission of the NAI involves education sovereignty.

ADDING CULTURE TO THE CLASSROOM

Education sovereignty describes how Indigenous communities encourage their students to learn in a way that promotes their own cultures, identities, knowledge, and histories by shifting away from Western-centric education models and experiences. It allows students to see themselves reflected in their

lessons and ensures that new generations take pride in their tribal backgrounds. Christie and the NAI integrate this type of education into MSU’s curriculum with Indigenous-focused programs, projects, education research, and course development.

Christie collaborated on an NSF-funded workshop, entitled *Honoring the Whole Student*, designed to support STEM faculty in becoming better mentors to Native students. The scientists and students who participated in the initial workshops had the opportunity to learn from one another and the result of this collaboration is a very useful resource.

“The project was really about bringing together science faculty to learn about better supporting Native students,” said Christie. “NAI co-hosted a workshop in a remote area in Alaska. Over the course of about a week, faculty engaged in critical discussions about diversity and micro-field experiences to learn about local resource management practices. After the workshop, a team of academics and myself developed a workbook for science faculty to learn how to better mentor Native students, now available on our website.”¹



Inspecting the plants at Giitigan Anishinaabe Community Garden—a project co-supported by NAI, dedicated to providing land as a place of learning for MSU students, Indigenous youth, and the Greater Lansing community.

© Christie Poitra



Shannon Martin, Director of the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways, shows attendees of the *Indigenous and Gender Issues Speaker Series* cultural objects. © Christie Poitra

Another initiative NAI is co-supporting is the Collaborative of Tribal and Higher Education in Michigan (C-THEM). C-THEM’s mission is to “build relationships, foster collaboration, share resources, and create new partnerships to better support Native students at all phases of their education journey.”² NAI collaborates with University of Michigan and several education departments across federally recognized tribes in Michigan.

I’m Ojibwa, Latina, and a first-generation college graduate. My relationship to the type of work I do at NAI comes naturally.

A FOCUS ON GENDER INCLUSION

NAI also works to integrate Indigenous issues and perspectives outside the classroom. In 2018, NAI, GenCen, and the American Indian and Indigenous Studies program partnered on a Creating Inclusive Excellence Grant, funded by the Office for Inclusion & Intercultural Initiatives. This resulted in an ongoing partnership between the three units, known as the *Indigenous and Gender Issues Speaker Series*.

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¹ https://www.canr.msu.edu/nai/projects/Honoring_the_Whole_Student_workbook.pdf

² <https://www.canr.msu.edu/nai/projects/>

EMPOWERING WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY



As part of the *Indigenous & Gender Issues Speaker Series*, attendees at the Black Ash Basket Making Workshop with Kelly Church create their own baskets. Christie Poitra

The series features Native people (particularly women, nonbinary, and Two-Spirit people) who engage in activism, art, or education that focuses on Native cultures and the issues that affect their communities. “The *Indigenous and Gender Issues Speaker Series* has allowed us to showcase the brilliant work of Indigenous women leaders and artists on campus,” Christie remarked. In the 2019-2020 academic year, the series hosted two events.

The first event was a Black Ash Basket Making Workshop with Kelly Church (Potawatomi, Odawa, Ojibwe, and black ash basket maker and educator). In addition to coaching attendees through the steps of weaving their own black ash baskets, Kelly gave context to the style of basket making and explained the impacts climate change is having on black ash trees. The second event was a lecture focused on Anishinabe women’s traditional and evolving contemporary roles, the Three Fire’s Prophecy, what it means to be Two-Spirited, how to push back against the heteronormative patriarchy, and the allyship of non-Natives. This event featured the Director of the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways,

Shannon Martin (Lynx Clan; Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians, Gun Lake Tribe; and descendant of the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians).

The Indigenous & Gender Issues Speaker Series has allowed us to showcase the brilliant work of Indigenous women leaders and artists on campus.

In the nearly 40 years since its founding by George Cornell, NAI has stood as a dynamic organization for Native communities at MSU, incorporating Indigenous thought and culture across campus. The future of NAI is bright and full of opportunities, with Christie focused on continuing to engage the Institute in gender-focused work: “Moving forward, I would like to further explore the intersections of gender identity and the lived experiences of Native people.” ■



Building on years of work, Shannon Garrett co-founded Vote Run Lead in 2014, designing the organization to equip women with the power and knowledge to become politically active.

Vote Run Lead—a nonpartisan, national organization that educates and empowers women without influencing their values and individual beliefs—first began as part of the White House Project: an organization that had a similar goal of promoting female leadership in businesses, government, and media. When the White House Project ended in 2013, the co-founders of Vote Run Lead revisited their program plan to continue the mission of making politics accessible to all. “In part, we continued the legacy of the organization because we had so many people working around the country who had been building this momentum for women running for office,” said Shannon. “We needed to continue doing work in the field to continue their momentum.”

Currently Shannon serves as a board member for Vote Run Lead, and in this role, she establishes strategic plans for the organization, ensures fulfillment of its mission, and manages its financial health. Her role doesn’t end there. Shannon also helps plan events (such as the National Town Hall), presents gender and politics workshops at various conferences, and assists Vote Run Lead members with their own political ambitions. With a passion for empowering women through political involvement, Shannon also founded her own consulting firm, SMG Strategies.

Shannon was first introduced to the GenCen through one of SMG Strategies’ interns. Shannon felt that the missions of the two organizations were closely aligned, resulting in Vote Run Lead joining GenCen’s Community Board in 2019.

“The mission of Vote Run Lead is to have unprecedented numbers of women running for office,” she elaborated. “We would love to see women not just represented equally to men in state legislatures, but we are looking to possibly achieve some women majorities in politics. The bottom line is that we don’t want representation just for the sake of representation; we believe that the only way to solve many of this country’s policy related issues is by bringing different minds to the table. If we don’t involve everyone’s experiences in decision making, we will never address our problems.”

Vote Run Lead’s level of public involvement remains dependent upon the current political and cultural environment. Shannon cited the United States’ 2016 presidential election as a major event that has inspired women from all demographics to become more involved in their political futures. Within a few hours of the election’s conclusion, Vote Run Lead saw an exponential increase in its webinar registration and program enrollment. Shannon acknowledges the election’s influence on the organization, stating: “Following the election, a lot of women thought ‘maybe I’m the one I’ve been waiting for to run for government.’”

Shannon also examines the disparities that exist within most women’s movements and organizations. “It’s important to celebrate milestones like the suffrage anniversary, while also acknowledging that this wasn’t necessarily a date that gave the right to vote to all women,” Shannon stated. “The struggle continued for many women and it still continues today, so we need to use this time to reflect back on the work that still needs to be done.” ■



GENDER & SEXUALITY IN THE CLASSROOM

APPLYING AN INTERSECTIONAL LENS

The focus of Hillery Glasby's research and her passion for activism both derive from her own identity and experiences as a member of the LGBTQ community. Her projects intend to give voice to those in society's margins, including an award-winning digital activism piece written during her time as a graduate student and her recent work on the co-edited collection *Storytelling in Queer Appalachia: Imagining and Writing the "Unspeakable" Other*.

An Assistant Professor in the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, & American Cultures, Hillery engages students in curriculum focused on diverse perspectives, including her own. "I was a junior in college when I had my first queer teacher and it had a profound effect on me. I think it's really important for students to have those role models and to have visibility. I see teaching as a form of activism—it's what I was called to do. The classroom is a great place to learn about who we are and how that impacts the issues that we care about."

Hillery joined the GenCen Faculty Fellows Program in 2019, which provides faculty members with funding to build upon their gender and sexuality expertise in exchange for teaching courses for the Women's & Gender Studies program. During spring

2020—her first spring semester as a Faculty Fellow—Hillery taught Intro to LGBTQ+ and Sexuality Studies (WS 304), focusing on historical perspectives, intersectional frameworks, and community building.



Hillery Glasby tutoring a student.

Hillery's WS 304 class covered topics such as race, citizenship, activism, and white privilege. Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* and Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility* are fundamental texts in her curriculum, teaching her students to understand the viewpoints of people from various backgrounds. Her curriculum also focuses on Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality,¹ which recognizes the

connections between gender, race, class, sexuality, and other identities in conjunction with societal systems of oppression and power.

"One of the first texts we read in WS 304 is *Stone Butch Blues* because I wanted that to set the tone," she stated. "It's a heartbreaking story set in the '90s about a young trans person who is trying to find their place in the world. I don't think my students realized how much risk LGBTQ people face with assault and police brutality, so this really helps them understand these issues."

I see teaching as a form of activism—it's what I was called to do. The classroom is a great place to learn about who we are and how that impacts the issues that we care about.

Following *Stone Butch Blues*, the class read *White Fragility* to understand the connection of white supremacy to one of its byproducts: compulsive heterosexuality. Both of these systems uplift people who fit into their narrow standards while dehumanizing individuals who do not. By educating her students about the effects of colonization on

societal norms, Hillery allows them to address their own privileges while instructing them on how to advocate for others. "Although these systems are not exactly the same and have different ramifications, these are two institutions that they've been socialized into," she explained.

To reinforce the concepts learned throughout the course, students were asked to create a zine for their final project. The zine takes the students' work one step further by having them synthesize the information into one cohesive product.

Hillery hopes that upon graduating from MSU, her students are able to apply the lessons from her classroom to their everyday lives. "The biggest thing that I want students to understand is that moving forward, discussions about LGBTQ experiences have to be merged with discussions about race and citizenship," she said. "Most MSU students are from similar backgrounds, so hopefully this class is exposing them to a wider view of how other factors significantly impact LGBTQ people who do not have all of their privileges." Additionally, Hillery wants her students to interrogate cis-heteronormativity and challenges them to think more "queerly." She believes that in order to see change in our society, this generation needs to think radically rather than comfortably and has to be collectivist rather than individualist. ■

Engaging Students in Documenting COVID-19

Erin Graham, an Assistant Professor in the Department of History and Core Associated Faculty/Staff member of the GenCen, has taught many Women's & Gender Studies courses during her time at MSU. When COVID-19 unexpectedly moved MSU courses online in March 2020, Erin was quick to adapt the final project of her Introduction to Contemporary Feminisms (WS 202) course. The new project was a collaborative assignment among the students to create a website that would document the history of feminism in conjunction with COVID-19. The website, *Together in Isolation*,² compiles student experiences through vlogs and journals, as well as their feminist perspective on COVID-19 news articles. "What we are living through today, both in the United States and around the world, is unique," Erin told the *State News*³ in April. "It's really critical...that students are using the lenses and theories we've learned about in class and applying those to make sense of this unique moment in history." ■



The *Together in Isolation* homepage created by Erin's spring WS 202 students.

SPARTAN RESEARCH CHANGING THE WORLD

GenCen is committed to supporting and promoting the impactful and diverse gender research of our 350+ Associated Faculty/Staff members and 400+ graduate and undergraduate students. Both here in Michigan and across the globe, MSU scholars are undertaking research that raises awareness about gender, sexuality, and related social issues, pushes the boundaries of gender scholarship, and makes a difference in lives and communities around the world.

A Collaboration Centuries in the Making

Kristin Mahoney, Associate Professor
Dept. of English
GenCen Faculty Fellow, 2017-2020

Lucy Thompson, Assistant Professor
Dept. of Psychology
GenCen Senior Research Fellow

Kristin Mahoney and Lucy Thompson, both Core GenCen Associated Faculty/Staff members, facilitate interactive learning opportunities that take their students back in time. Their program, beginning as two separate initiatives, works to combine the fields of feminist psychology and 19th century literature

The original goal of Kristin's application to the GenCen Strategic Partnership Grant program was to provide funding for an international network that would bring together academics researching queer writers and organizers who were part of the Aesthetic and Decadent Movement. The late-Victorian Aesthetic and Decadent Movement¹ advocated for the liberation of the art from moral didacticism, opening up a space for literature and painting to represent forms of sexual and gender dissidence. As Kristin envisioned, a network uniting Aestheticism and Decadence scholars could lead to further collaboration across global academic communities, and through facilitating an annual conference, new information and ideas would be circulated quickly.

Wenda Bauchspies, GenCen's Co-Director of International Outreach and Engagement, connected Kristin and Lucy as a way to bridge the network to MSU. As part of Lucy's role at GenCen, she organizes and leads the Gender, Sex, and Feminism in the U.K. Education Abroad program. "I was very interested in collaborating with the Aestheticism and Decadence Network because I teach the psychology of women in London as a feminist psychology class," said Lucy. "Part of the class deals with the history of sexuality, so when I heard from Kristin about the specialization of the conference and that the timing and location would work, I thought that it would be a really great addition to the students' experiences."

In addition to participating in the Aestheticism and Decadence Network conference, the London program students received a guest lecture from Kristin and had the opportunity to visit historically significant locations, such as Bloomsbury, following



Kristin Mahoney (left) and Lucy Thompson (right) meet with GenCen staff to discuss their 2019 Strategic Partnership and future plans. © Aaron Applebey

in the footsteps of some of the most influential literary activists and writers of the 19th and early 20th centuries. "The classes and content that Kristin brought to the program were reinforcing," said Lucy. "The students were able to contextualize the theoretical knowledge that I taught by relating it to a real-world place and period of history."

Kristin added, "While the content that I was talking about had a lot to do with literary history, a lot of the people who were within this literary movement were in conversation with people of the period who we would now consider to be gay activists or sexologists."

Kristin and Lucy use interdisciplinary and feminist approaches when creating curricula. These modes are refreshing and a welcome change from what used to be the very rigid standard of academia. "I started teaching in 2009," began Lucy, "and as a new academic who was teaching preexisting courses, I didn't have much control over the construction of those courses. As my academic career has gone on, I feel that I have more control and I'm able to introduce a feminist pedagogical approach."

Self-advocacy and the diminishment of silence culture have progressed the ways in which academics like Kristin and Lucy approach college culture. "The difference that I see is the extent to which students' voices are heard within the university," said Kristin. "When I was in my graduate program, there were a lot of issues that students did not feel comfortable talking about, but now I see there is a sense of student organization and push for needed change."

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/art/Aestheticism>

Empowering Uganda through Research

Judith Namanya, Graduate Student
Dept. of Geography, Environment, & Spatial Sciences
GJEC Fellowship Recipient, 2018-2020

Judith Namanya's journey of self-empowerment and advocacy for women began when she was a young girl in Uganda. With fierce determination, Judith defied her community's gendered expectations. Now, she shares her resources and knowledge with young girls in her village to ensure they have a choice in determining their own futures. "I tell young women to not give up on their dreams," says Judith. "Focus on your career, take charge of your life and don't fall victim to shaming, marginalization, and cultural norms."

Judith's professional academic journey took off after she completed her master's degree in public health and health promotion in the United Kingdom. Then, after finishing years of HIV research, Judith arrived at MSU, where in 2020 she earned her Ph.D. in Geography. Applying her background in public health to geography has given her a better understanding of how socioeconomics is related to the resources made available in a particular region.

Judith emphasizes the importance of education. Since many areas in Uganda lack the medical facilities and trained personnel to treat their populations, she suggests that communities should be taught to manage their health from home.

"How do we promote health from home, rather than going to health centers that are already overloaded? I was interested in how we can work with and empower communities to maintain good hygiene, ensuring that everyone is eating well. In many developing countries, we don't have developed health care systems, so you can't expect those health systems to take care of all the people we have. I wanted to think of ways that we can treat people who are sick, without overloading the already struggling health care system."

Her approaches for improving community health, rooted in prevention and holistic care, are pertinent as we collectively struggle towards wellness in the



Judith Namanya

wake of a global pandemic and national unrest. Cooperative effort and special consideration for the most vulnerable populations in our communities are effective solutions to the challenge we face together.

Judith's current work involves informing her community members about gender equity, advocating for women's reproductive rights, and educating people about consent and safe sex practices. By humanizing the data released from research conducted around people from remote and under-served areas, a better understanding of the issues they face in their communities can be reached.

"One of the things we don't get from surveys is context," she says. "We tend not to understand how the factors that put women in vulnerable situations are based on issues that are social, historical, and political." Judith uses the qualitative data she collects from first-person narratives, along with the quantitative data from statistical tests, to influence Ugandan policymakers and cultural leaders about making changes.

Centering Chicanx Voices through Feminist and Queer Theories

Catalina Bartlett, Assistant Professor
Writing, Rhetoric, & American Cultures
GenCen Faculty Fellow, 2018-2021

Catalina Bartlett is a writer committed to social justice and her Chicana community. As an Assistant Professor in the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, & American Cultures (WRAC) and a GenCen Faculty Fellow, Catalina shifts between various modes of art, theory, and praxis to offer a unique experience for undergraduate students.

Catalina's primary research focus in creative writing is crafted through the lenses of social justice and decolonized storytelling. By centering on womxn¹ of color narratives, Catalina is able to interpose Chicana identity within her creative writings. She sees these topics, passions, and identities as being intertwined. "I am a writer, a person committed to social justice, and a Chicana," said Catalina. "My understanding of the world, my communities, and myself derives from those positionalities."

Catalina's love of language and literature developed at an early age, instilled by her father's own passion and the Chicana stories passed down from her mother. Catalina used these passions to shape her own academic trajectory. Before becoming an assistant professor, Catalina was a student in the WRAC program herself, and was influenced by the co-chair of her dissertation committee, Qwu-Li Driskell. "We were familia from scratch, the people you choose to be



Catalina Bartlett

part of your family. They encouraged me to speak my voice into existence and helped me situate my work within a cultural rhetorics, creative writing, Chicana, and Indigenous Studies interdisciplinary framework."

I am a writer, a person committed to social justice, and a Chicana. My understanding of the world, my communities, and myself derives from those positionalities.

As a non-tenure track assistant professor wishing to continue her own research and professional development, Catalina is encouraged by the professional development funds offered through GenCen Faculty Fellows Program. "GenCen has afforded me opportunities to teach Women's & Gender Studies courses and to hopefully have a positive impact on the rising feminists of this generation," said Catalina. "They are committed, passionate, and excellent scholars who believe in the power of feminisms."

As part of the Faculty Fellows Program, Catalina taught Introductions to Contemporary Feminisms (WS 202) during fall 2019. Her curriculum—which centered the voices of womxn of color, including both scholars and activists—addressed the most pressing issues within and beyond contemporary feminist thought and activism. Her motivation was rooted in demystifying the concept of theory. "We did this through in-class discussions about theory, projects, and writings that underscored the students' own trajectories—both academic and lived—as embodied theorists," she stated.

Currently, Catalina is developing a novel about the separation of a mother and daughter. Slowly, the novel is finding its way to the page having been nestled within Catalina's heart for many years. With this narrative and others like it, Catalina remains eager to find and tell the untold stories of the Chicana community, giving representation to its rich culture.

¹ The term "womxn" is used in place of "women" to indicate a foregrounding of the voices of transgender, nonbinary, and other marginalized voices. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Womxn>

Utilizing an Intersectional Approach in Research, Support, and Healing

Tonée Epperson, Undergraduate Student
Women's & Gender Studies Minor
Community Research Scholarship Recipient, 2020

In the summer of 2019, just before starting her senior year, Tonée Epperson was embarking down a path that would bring her passions into a global context. Not only did Tonée leave East Lansing in July to participate in the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Sexual Politics in Amsterdam Education Abroad program, but upon her return she began her community-engaged research internship with the Firecracker Foundation.

Tonée, a Social Relations & Policy major with a Women's & Gender Studies (WGS) minor, is making her dreams of becoming a community-involved lawyer a reality. Leveraging her MSU experiences—in East Lansing and abroad—she hopes to approach issues facing Black women from an intersectional standpoint. “The rigorous coursework I’ve taken allows me to think more critically, and challenges me to think differently from how I used to in order to solve problems,” Tonée says.

She reflects on her Amsterdam Education Abroad experience as one of her favorite—and most enriching—aspects of the WGS program. “Sex work is legal in Amsterdam and more socially acceptable,” explains Tonée when asked why she chose this program. “I wanted to understand why there is generally a negative narrative around sex work, and why it is so stigmatized, in the United States.”

Upon returning from Amsterdam, Tonée jumped right into her year-long internship with the Firecracker Foundation, a GenCen Community Board organization that was founded by activist and survivor Tashmica Torok in 2013. The mission



Tonée (right) with Laverne Cox, LGBTQ+ advocate, at MSU's Fall 2019 It's On Us Week of Action, a field trip with the *Sisters in Strength* program.

of the Firecracker Foundation is to provide holistic healing services, community support, and resources to survivors of childhood sexual abuse who are under the age of 18.

The rigorous coursework I've taken allows me to think more critically and challenges me to think differently.

Having experience working within communities that focus on uplifting and protecting survivors of sexual assault allowed Tonée to seamlessly transition into her role at Firecracker. Tonée's role is as co-facilitator in the *Sisters in Strength* group, where she creates engaging questions for the participating teenage girls. Together they form a support circle and work through assigned readings. “There’s a small group of girls who come together every week to learn more about different topics and techniques that they can apply to their lives outside of the group,” she says. “They want to learn about tools for self-care and self-love that they can apply to themselves and to the other people in their lives.” Following her experience with *Sisters in Strength*, Tonée plans to write a paper demonstrating how supportive communities can lead to healing. ■

ALUMNI

CONGRATS SPRING 2020 GRADUATES

UNDERGRADUATE WGS Majors

Heba Afaneh
Allison Choi
Rebecca Cox
Ariel Jones-Calhoun
Shanna Lee
Dommenique Travis
Alisha Ungkuldee
Jonathan Walkotten

LGBTQ Minors

Aaron Applebey
Linnea Byl
Rebecca Cox
Christina Craig
Kaelin Hopson
Ariel Jones-Calhoun

Shanna Lee
Trevor Puuri
Austin Rademacher
Mary Rooney
Jacob Shaver
Jonathan Walkotten

WGS Minors

Fadumo Ali
Bisan Ashhab
Audrey Bakos
Briana Beeman
Kaelan Camp
Janelle Clark
Grace Colarossi
Rachel Cortez
Olivia Cusumano
Kimberly Driksna

Tonee Epperson
Sarra Holliday
Dyiamond James
Calli Jansen
Abby Jaroszewicz
Aislinn Langley
Teagan Leyanna
Kathryn Linehan
Sami Luke
Emily Martell
Katie Martin
Carsen McDonald
Emily McHarg
Katie McInnes
Tiffany McIntye
Katherine Muczynski
Angelle Pine
Gabby Rosen Harvey

Haylee Sieg
Carolina Sucher
Garland Swenor
Anna Tomlanovitch
Audrey Von-Maszewski
Chloe Whalen
Gabrielle White
Chandler Whitted
Kayla Wiitala

GRADUATE GJEC

Dessie Clark
Erika Kraus

WGS

Sara Bano
Dessie Clark



Alisha Ungkuldee

I double-majored in Women's & Gender Studies and Human Biology, with a minor in Bioethics. I volunteered with the MSU Center for Survivors and was an intern with the St. Vincent Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program. Next, I will be attending the MSU College of Osteopathic Medicine. I'm so thankful for the WGS program and all that it taught me!



Allison Choi

At MSU, I served as public relations representative for SACI, partook in Alternative Spring Breaks, and volunteered with Crossing Water, a non-profit that provides relief to Flint residents. My internship was at the Women's Center of Greater Lansing, working to empower womxn through personal and economic growth. Currently, I work at the Office for International Students and Scholars and have applied for AmeriCorps programs.



Heba Afaneh

I graduated with a degree in Psychology and an additional major in Women's & Gender Studies. I also had the opportunity to represent the undergraduate population on the GenCen Advisory Committee from 2018 to 2020. In the fall, I will attend Oakland University for a Masters program in Psychology, in a lab that specializes in trauma, sexual assault, aggression, and sexual health.



Jonathan Walkotten

I've spent the last four years at MSU gaining incredible experiences in leadership, advocacy, and learning. I am just finishing my Senior Honors Thesis, “Gender-Affirming: Trans Organizing and the Opportunities of Community Health,” and hope to pursue a career in public health and policy analysis related to LGBTQ health care. I intend to pursue a Masters in Public Affairs and Public Health.

UNDERGRAD ALUMNA

OLIVIA VADEN

BA, Public Policy, with a Women's & Gender Studies Minor (2018)



Olivia Vaden
Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation Philanthropy Fellow
Council of Michigan Foundations
<https://www.michiganfoundations.org/directory-contact/olivia-vaden>

When Olivia Vaden arrived at Michigan State in the fall of 2014, she was thrilled about joining a community where she could engage in conversations about the concepts of gender, equality, and activism. As a first-generation college student, Olivia was passionate about rooting out inequalities and helping others; however, when she started at MSU her career ambitions originally laid elsewhere—specifically, in sports marketing.

“When I arrived at MSU I knew I needed to find a space that not only allowed me to navigate my beliefs, but also encouraged me to learn more,” said Olivia. “That’s what eventually led me to the Women’s & Gender Studies (WGS) program and GenCen. I changed my major to Public Policy and picked up the WGS minor because I wanted to help people have a fighting chance in this world; specifically, people like me: low-income, first-gen, women of color. I believe that is still my biggest goal.”

During her time in the WGS program, Olivia’s favorite course was the Intro to LGBTQ+ and Sexuality Studies (WS 304) course, taught by GenCen Core Associated Faculty/Staff member, Tim Retzloff. Tim structured the curriculum around addressing topics such as self and identity. The class allowed her to evaluate the importance of individuality and reinforced the idea that one should not allow an oppressive society to define their story.

When I arrived at MSU I knew I needed to find a space that not only allowed me to navigate my beliefs, but also encouraged me to learn more. That’s what led me to the WGS program and GenCen.

In order to acquire a better understanding of how concepts such as race, gender, and sexuality intersect with one another, Olivia became an intern at GenCen

at the beginning of her junior year. Throughout her internship with the Center, Olivia took on tasks such as social media management, graphic design, and event planning. The knowledge, skills, and community she gained at GenCen served as a catalyst for both personal and professional growth for Olivia, and offered support through difficult situations, in both school and life. During her time at MSU, Olivia had an abortion. It was an important decision she made for herself while dealing with the complexities of early adulthood, miles away from home. “This was a trying time in my life,” began Olivia. “Life was hard at 20 years old and GenCen gave me a reason to get up in the morning. Even though the staff didn’t know, they always made me feel safe, accepted, and loved.” With the support of her GenCen community, Olivia went on to finish her undergraduate program, graduating in May 2018.

The work I do now, and even personal conversations I have with friends and family, is rooted in the education I received through the WGS program.

Olivia now uses her MSU experiences—academic, professional, and personal—to help marginalized communities, particularly focused in the Detroit area. At the tail-end of her senior year, Olivia began working with MSU’s InnovateGov summer program as an outreach assistant, leveraging her public policy background and her natural skills in community engagement. She then transitioned to working in the realm of philanthropy, as a philanthropic services assistant for the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan. Currently, Olivia serves as a Council of Michigan Foundations Philanthropy Fellow at the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation. The Council of Michigan Foundations



Olivia poses for a picture with Sparty during a Michigan State University Homecoming Parade.

is an organization that aids communities in receiving funding and resources by assisting government sectors and local business partners with their philanthropic efforts.

While she did not always envision herself in this field, Olivia is excited to be in her current position and says that there’s a lot of work that needs to be done in this area. After completing her fellowship, Olivia hopes to return to Michigan State for graduate studies, utilizing valuable insight from her work in Detroit and her previous experience at MSU in approaching her coursework. “The work I do now, and even personal conversations I have with friends and family, is rooted in the education I received through the WGS program.”

GRADUATE ALUMNA

KRISTIN ROWE

Ph.D., African American & African Studies, with a Women's & Gender Studies Specialization (2019)



Kristin Rowe
Assistant Professor of American Studies
California State University, Fullerton

Before beginning her career at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) as an Assistant Professor in American Studies, Kristin Rowe earned both her Master's and Ph.D. from Michigan State University in African American and African Studies (AAAS), with a specialization in Women's & Gender Studies. Kristin's studies focused on concepts such as Black Feminism, beauty culture, and popular culture in the United States.

Kristin's dissertation addresses the issue of how modern-day representations of Black women's natural hair affects their narratives and representation in

society. Her research analyzes how Black women's bodies are concurrently erased and politicized within—and outside—their communities. She also observes how Black women's hair acts as an extension of their identity, making it an important piece of their personhood.

"I'm using these cultural representations to understand the narratives and embodied experiences of Black women as they negotiate hegemonic standards of beauty," Rowe began. "I argue that a lot of literature centers whiteness and is one-sided. When Black women's hair is discussed, the narrative is either that they hate themselves—which is why they straighten their hair and wear weaves—or they went 'natural' so they must love themselves and are liberated. My work discusses how there's nuance and complexity involved with these issues."

I'm using these cultural representations to understand the narratives and embodied experiences of Black women as they negotiate hegemonic standards of beauty... My work discusses how there's nuance and complexity involved with these issues.

During Kristin's time at MSU, the Women's and Gender Studies class that had the largest impact on her studies was *Queer Oral Histories*, taught by Tim

A lot of my work has been grounded in my own embodiment and when I speak at engagements, a lot of the girls are excited about the work I do and can relate to what I'm talking about.

Retzliff, a Core member of GenCen's Associated Faculty/Staff. "*Queer Oral Histories* really pushed me outside of my comfort zone," said Kristin. "Up until then, I had written about race, gender, Black women, and queerness, but this course taught me so many fascinating things about queer history."

According to Kristin, *Queer Oral Histories* offered a historical analysis of society through an intersectional lens, examining queer organizers from various gender, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, the course highlighted how the LGBTQ community from each era approached queer politics and engaged with mainstream, cis-heteronormative society. While some individuals chose to publicly protest and engage with socioeconomic issues in order to counter-state sanctioned violence, others chose more passive forms of resistance, such as facilitating safe spaces and making art.

In addition to the interdisciplinary coursework, GenCen and the Department of AAAS provided Kristin the opportunity as a student to cultivate friendships and find support networks with other Black women. Through teaching and learning, Kristin met other academics who were pursuing degrees in fields that, on the surface, didn't appear to have very much relation to the concepts of gender and race. Living and working at MSU allowed her to be a mentor and facilitator of an undergraduate student organization, which is an experience that she will use to bolster her teaching at CSUF.

When asked about her plans moving forward as a faculty member at CSUF, Kristin described her ideal course to teach: *Black women in society*. The



Kristin in her office at California State University, Fullerton.

curriculum would cover everything from body politics and sexual violence to beauty culture and aestheticism. She argues that courses like this are important because they present an opportunity for minority women to form communities that welcome growth and connection. "A lot of my work has been grounded in my own embodiment and when I speak at engagements, a lot of the girls are excited about the work I do and can relate to what I'm talking about," Kristin reflected. ■

SHAPING OUR OWN FUTURES

Ariel Jones-Calhoun

Women's & Gender Studies Major
WS 201 Learning Assistant Intern, 2020

Between her internship as a Learning Assistant (LA) and working through her now-digital final classes as a Spartan, Women's & Gender Studies (WGS) major Ariel Jones-Calhoun is wrapping up her time at Michigan State the same way she began: busy, determined, and inspired. Ariel is a double major in both WGS and Interdisciplinary Humanities, with three minors: LGBTQ & Sexuality Studies, African American and African Studies, and History, all fostering her interest in Black studies and women's issues. "The summer before freshman year, I became more aware of my Blackness and what it means to exist in a predominately White space," said Ariel. "The more I learned about my history, the more I understood where I'm going, where I came from, and why things are the way they are."

Ariel's plan has long aspired to become a teacher in some capacity, so she took on an internship as the Learning Assistant for Intro to Women's Studies (WS 201). She assists GenCen's student advisor, Patrick Arnold, in facilitating open discussions, helping students with understanding material, and creating a lesson plan of her own. Her topic of choice? How the carceral position of the United States targets and abuses Black women and girls.

The more I learned about my history, the more I understood where I'm going, where I came from, and why things are the way they are.

"My experience in this internship has been really enjoyable. The students are more aware of social issues than I thought they would be before I began my position," explains Ariel. "However, I feel like when we talk about certain topics, I am able to add a more intersectional perspective to the lessons that most of the students would not have initially considered."

Ariel went on to say that her internship has also helped her focus her career goals. She plans to pursue her Ph.D. to become a university lecturer. Learning from the experience of three GenCen Associated Faculty/Staff members and her training from WS 201, Ariel's future teaching will focus on group work and discussions that facilitate intersectional learning. She hopes to teach special topics courses on race, ethnicity, and intersectional identities. Ariel argues: "It's important to study these topics because women and people within the LGBTQ+ spectrum have never really been at the foreground of history. After being omitted from so much of what has been written, it's time that we construct narratives about ourselves."

Kristin Mertz

Women's & Gender Studies Major
Amsterdam Education Abroad Participant, 2019

There are many different paths that lead students to join one of the degree programs that are offered through GenCen. For Kristin Mertz, her experience abroad in Amsterdam was the motivating factor in her decision to become a Women's & Gender Studies (WGS) major. Kristin is now a dual major in WGS and Comparative Cultures and Politics, with a minor of Philosophy in Law. The information Mertz is learning in her courses has strengthened her long-held interest in concepts that relate to gender and sexuality.

The Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity & Sexual Politics in Amsterdam Education Abroad Program, co-sponsored by GenCen and James Madison College, is a unique experience. Students are immersed in a culture that promotes marriage equality and provides legal protection for those who engage in sex work. The program leaders take undergraduate students to numerous historic landmarks as part of its rigorous curriculum. "I don't think I would have been exposed to all of these diverse issues if I didn't participate in the program and take the classes required for my dual major," Kristin reflected. "It is a lot of coursework, but I think it's really important to educate myself on all of this because these are issues that affect me and a lot of people who are important to me. It's also important to understand which routes one needs to take to become an ally for different communities."

It's really important to educate myself on ... issues that affect me and a lot of people who are important to me. It's also important to understand which routes one needs to take to become an ally for different communities.

Program students are also given the opportunity to speak with members of Amsterdam's sex work and LGBTQ+ communities about how their identities affect the experiences they've had while living in Dutch



Kristin Mertz

society. Kristin recalled the story of a woman who traveled, as a refugee, to Amsterdam in order to escape homophobic persecution that was occurring in her community back home, stating: "Her story really affected me and even after I went home, I wanted to know more about the lives of people who go through this and the asylum-seeking process."

In Amsterdam, Kristin recognized the importance of intimate communities and local activism to the lives of people who are members of marginalized groups. Squatters' networks, grassroots organizations, and small businesses create spaces for people to be themselves and give refuge to individuals who may not find a place in mainstream society. "What's behind the veil of what everyone sees as 'Amsterdam' is complex networks of activism that draw from different sources," she remarked. "Everyone was very welcoming, which allowed me to see the real experiences of real people."

The experiences of the speakers featured in the Amsterdam program, as well as similar stories that are held by countless numbers of people from around the world, have inspired Kristin to pursue a career in human rights law. Before following this new path, Kristin hopes to volunteer with the Peace Corps, which will allow her to connect with people from disparate communities on an intimate level. "I want to pursue a master's program after I graduate that focuses on inclusion and diversity," says Kristin. "I then want to work with an NGO that advocates for women, children, and families." ■

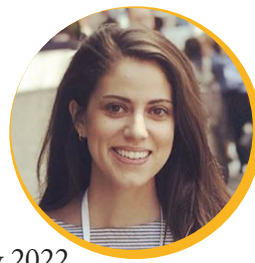
CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE

PAPER & ACTIVISM AWARDS

GenCen offers multiple student paper and activism awards. In 2019, we awarded the Rita S. Gallin (graduate paper), RCGV, Mary Anderson (undergraduate papers), and Tracy Dobson (undergraduate activism) Awards.

Inna Mirzoyan

Rita S. Gallin Paper Awardee
Ph.D. student in the Department of Sociology, with a Specialization in Women's & Gender Studies and pursuing a Certification in College Teaching



Expected Graduation Date: May 2022

Paper Title: "To Intersectionality & Beyond: A Review on Queering Intersectional Approaches"

Career Goals: My career goal is to be a professor at a university and teach in a way that allows students to make connections between their social worlds and sociological concepts we learn in the classroom, particularly on topics such as immigration and gender.

Georgia Artzberger

Mary Anderson Paper Awardee
Double major in Comparative Cultures & Politics and Biomedical Laboratory Science, with a minor in Chinese



Graduation Date: May 2020

Paper Title: "The 2015-2016 Latin American Zika Epidemic and the Intersection of Reproductive Laws"

Career Goals: I plan on further studying global health and infectious diseases, with a special focus on marginalized populations. After graduation, I will be attending an internship at the Mayo Clinic to gain more clinical laboratory experience, then I hope to achieve a masters in public health and to do more field work.

Allie Pail

RCGV Paper Awardee
Double major in Comparative Cultures & Politics and History



Graduation Date: May 2020

Paper Title: "The Influence of Gender in Refugee Camp Safety: A Case Study of Moria, Lesvos"

Career Goals: I will be attending the University of Oxford in the fall to complete a Masters in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies. I aim to continue the research I began in the paper about Lesvos in my masters thesis by conducting a more thorough analysis of women's safety in already-existing refugee camps. After completing my education, I plan on working more directly in camps to promote beneficiary-driven programming to empower women experiencing displacement.

Katie Paulot

Tracy Dobson Activism Awardee
Triple major in Anthropology, Comparative Cultures & Politics, and Women's & Gender Studies



Expected Graduation Date: May 2021

Areas of Activism: Gender-based violence; reproductive rights; fat acceptance

Career Goals: I plan to continue my education and eventually make gender-related activism a full-time job. In fall 2021, I hope to pursue a master's degree related to gender and activism in the United Kingdom/Ireland and then work in grassroots organizing. In the long term, I'll work towards a Ph.D. in anthropology with the aim of becoming a cultural/medical anthropologist.

GJEC FELLOWSHIPS

MSU's Graduate School provides generous funding that allows the Gender, Justice, and Environmental Change (GJEC) program to offer annual fellowships. Below are the 2019-2020 funding recipients.

DISSERTATION RESEARCH

Noleen Chikowore

Community Sustainability

Graduation Date: Fall 2020

Research Interests: Urban livelihoods; informality, urban inequality, and social difference; urban sustainability; waste governance; gender and community development

Dissertation Title: "Informal Recycling Livelihoods, Role of Place and Social Identities in Lansing, Michigan"



Eric Kesse

History

Graduation Date: Spring 2022

Research Interests: African environmental history; gender & women's history/studies; interconnectedness of gender, environment, and culture; water history/studies

Dissertation Title: "Living with Water: Culture, Ecology, and Gender in a West African Stilt-House Community—Nzulezo, c. 1848-2000"



Judith Namanya

Geography, Environment, & Spatial Sciences

Graduation Date: Fall 2020

Research Interests: Health disparities; women's studies; infectious diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS; human-environment interactions

Dissertation Title: "Gender and HIV/AIDS: Investigating Uganda's High HIV Infections among Young Women in an Era of Widespread Gains in HIV Prevention and Treatment"



DISSERTATION COMPLETION

Abubakar Idris

Educational Administration

Graduation Date: Fall 2019

Research Interests: Education policy; gender studies; comparative and international education

Dissertation Title: "Rural Migrant Hausa Girls, a Community Faith-Based School, and Environmental Change in Sokoto, Northwest Nigeria"



Jessica Ott

Anthropology

Graduation Date: Spring 2020

Research Interests: Women's rights organizing; gender-based violence; East Africa; human rights; transnational networks

Dissertation Title: "Women's Rights in Repetition: Nation Building, Solidarity, and Islam in Zanzibar"



Qiong Zhang

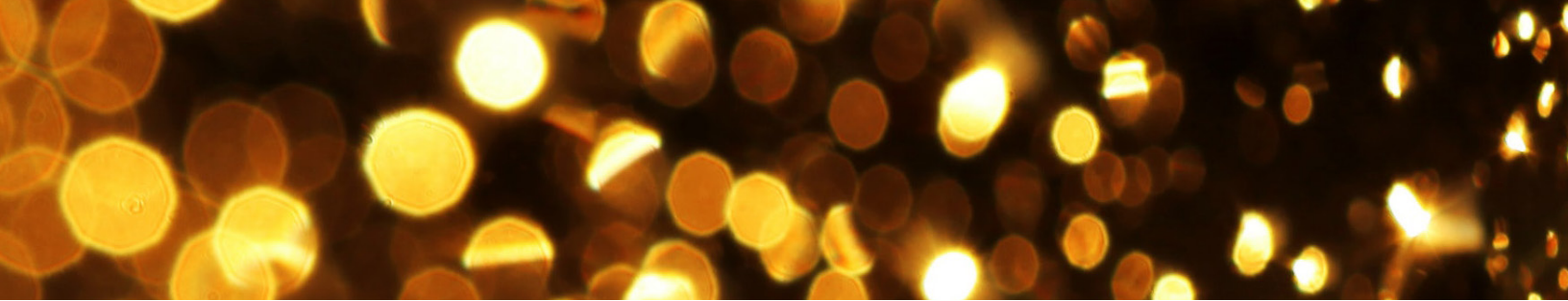
Geography, Environment, & Spatial Sciences and Environmental Science & Policy Program (ESPP)

Graduation Date: Fall 2020

Research Interests: Health and medical geography; human-environment interaction; maternal and infant health and air pollution

Dissertation Title: "Haze Air Pollution Impacts on Maternal and Infant Health in Xianyang, China: A Medical Geography Study"





INSPIRATIONAL WOMEN OF THE YEAR

The Inspirational Woman of the Year Award was established in 2014 by Lydia Weiss and the former MSU Women’s Resource Center, to honor female-identified MSU employees. In 2019, the GenCen expanded this award to include a Greater Lansing award in recognition of the impact of women’s inspirational work reaching far beyond the walls of MSU. In 2020, this expansion continued with the replacement of the Greater Lansing award with two Mid-Michigan categories: Culture of Empowerment

and Community Engagement. MSU’s Women’s Student Services also joined the effort to highlight women who demonstrate integrity, influence, and inclusive action by creating the Woman Student Leader of the Year Award in 2020. Together, the Inspirational Woman of the Year and Woman Student Leader of the Year Awards offer an opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments and dedication of women leaders across campus and in mid-Michigan.

Nwando Achebe

MSU Professional Achievement

Jack and Margaret Sweet Endowed Professor of History, MSU Department of History

Bio: Nwando Achebe, the Jack and Margaret Sweet Endowed Professor of History, is a multi-award-winning historian and teacher at Michigan State University. She is founding editor-in-chief of the Journal of West African History, and co-director of the Christie and Chinua Achebe Foundation. Nwando received her Ph.D. from UCLA in 2000. Her research interests involve the use of oral history in the study of women, gender, and sexuality in Nigeria and Africa. She is the author of six books, and has received prestigious grants from Rockefeller Foundation, Wenner-Gren, Woodrow Wilson, Fulbright-Hays, Ford Foundation, World Health Organization, and National Endowment for the Humanities.

Inspirational Quote: “Privilege, you see, is one of the great adversaries of the imagination; it spreads a thick layer of adipose tissue over our sensitivity.” –*Chinua Achebe*



Kadie Alpers

Undergraduate Student Leader of the Year

MSU Marketing Major

Bio: Kadie Alpers is a Senior at Michigan State University studying marketing. She has been a director for the University Activities Board for three years and is currently in the role of chairperson for the department. In the last year, she has been involved in the planning of the Wild Women Leadership Conference, Mental Health Awareness Week, and It’s On Us Week. In addition, Kadie has done intern work for MSU Live On, the MSU Union, and is a member of the Wharton Center Student Marketing Organization.

Inspirational Quote: “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” –*Maya Angelou*



Katie Brewer

Mid-Michigan Community Engagement

President, Laingsburg High School Drama Club

Bio: Katie Brewer is a community volunteer who has spent her life serving the women and children of mid-Michigan. Today she focuses her efforts empowering youth in mid-Michigan, dividing time between fostering dramatic arts and empowering young women through Girl Scouting. Katie recognized the need to rekindle the arts in her small community. She is currently president of the Laingsburg High School Drama Club. Katie works hands-on with students as props crew leader. Katie is also a Girl Scout Leader and a Gold Award Mentor. She has volunteered with Girl Scouting for over 13 years.

Inspirational Quote: “Success isn’t about how much money you make, it’s about the difference you make in people’s lives.” –*Michelle Obama*



Rebecca Campbell

MSU Culture of Empowerment

Professor, MSU Department of Psychology

Bio: Rebecca Campbell is a Professor of Psychology and Presidential Advisor on Relationship Violence & Sexual Misconduct. Rebecca studies how contact with the legal and medical systems affects sexual assault survivors’ victims’ psychological health. Her research has been funded by National Institute of Justice, the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Science Foundation, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. She was the lead researcher for the NIJ-funded Detroit Sexual Assault Kit Action Research Project to study Detroit’s rape kit backlog, which was designated an Exemplary Project by the Association of Public & Land Grant Universities.

Inspirational Quote: “When you know better, you do better.” –*Maya Angelou*



Ashley Lathrop

MSU Community Engagement

Research Administrator, MSU Department of Plant, Soil and Microbial Sciences

Bio: Ashley Lathrop currently serves as chair on the Board of Directors for the Women’s Center of Greater Lansing, providing support to the executive director and the Center. She’s also the vice chair of the MSU Women’s Advisory Committee for Support Staff which advises the MSU President on support staff concerns. She’s passionate about empowering women and building stronger communities through diversity, equity, and inclusion. Ashley and her husband, Jacob, are both alumni and employed at MSU. They love spending time up north with their daughters, Victoria and Madelyn. Ashley loves her dog Gunner and dreams of opening her own bookstore when she retires.

Inspirational Quote: “We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.” –*Martin Luther King, Jr.*



Polly Mallory

Mid-Michigan Culture of Empowerment
Former Chief Operating Officer, LACASA

Bio: Polly Mallory graduated from Michigan State with a master's degree in Educational Psychology Counseling. Her bachelor's degree is from the University of Utah with additional post-graduate work in infant mental health from the University of Michigan School of Social Work. In 1996, Polly launched Healthy Families Livingston as its first program manager.

Recently retired as Chief Operating Officer of LACASA, she previously served as Executive Director of the Women's Resource Center. In 2012, she co-facilitated the merger of those two organizations, resulting in a non-profit with a staff of 75 employees committed to prevention of and treatment for domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse in Livingston County.

Inspirational Quote: "I will always listen to you, especially when we disagree." —Barack Obama



Morgan PettyJohn

Graduate Student Leader of the Year
President, Laingsburg High School Drama Club

Bio: Morgan E. PettyJohn is a doctoral candidate in the Couple and Family Therapy program at Michigan State University, and currently serves as the graduate assistant for the Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct Expert Advisory Workgroup. Clinically, her work has focused on treating sexual trauma across the lifetime and providing relational therapy with couples in the LGBTQIA+ community. Morgan's research on engaging males in sexual assault prevention has been published in an APA journal and presented nationally. Her current research focuses on understanding how female survivors are impacted by exposure to sexual assault related content on social media.

Inspirational Quote: "I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept." —Angela Davis



Estrella Torrez

MSU Community Engagement
Associate Professor, MSU Residential College in the Arts & Humanities

Bio: Estrella Torrez is an Associate Professor in the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities at Michigan State University. Her research centers on language politics and the importance of community-based knowledge, particularly among rural Latino families and urban Indigenous youth. Estrella is a Gates Millennium Scholar, being awarded the prestigious award during its inaugural year. In 2009, Estrella co-founded the Indigenous Youth Empowerment Program (IYEP), a program serving urban Native youth and families in Michigan. She presently serves as IYEP's co-director and facilitates an after-school program for youth in Kindergarten through twelfth grades, as well as organizes a summer cultural camp for 65 urban Indigenous youth.

Inspirational Quote: "Walking, I am listening in a deeper way. Suddenly, all my ancestors are behind me. Be still, they say. Watch and listen. You are the result of the love of thousands." —Linda Hogan



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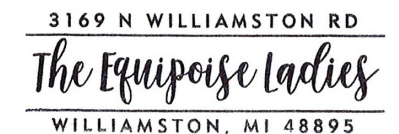


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COMMUNITY BOARD FALL 2019 - SUMMER 2020

Thank you to our Community Board for the valuable role they play in achieving our mission. We look forward to continuing our collaboration moving into the future.

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