

# AMERICAN STUDIES *Studies*

## AMERICAN STUDIES NEWSLETTER

Vol. 9 Issue 2

### In this issue

New Director!	1
Graduated Students	1
Awards	
– Eisinger Prizes	1
– Other Awards	6, 7
State of the Union	2
Program Transitions	2
New Faculty	
– Laura Zanotti	3
– Elizabeth Hoffman	5
Asian Pacific American Caucus	4
2012 ASA Meeting	6
Faculty Books	8
Faculty News	9
New Students	10
Current Students	10
Alumni News	11
Chester E. Eisinger Research Award	12

## MEET THE NEW DIRECTOR

### Nancy Gabin

In January 2014, Rayvon Fouché will join us as the new director of the American Studies program. Professor Fouché will come to Purdue from the University of Illinois, where he is Associate Professor of History, Associate Dean of the Graduate College, and Associate Professor in the Information Trust Institute. He earned his B.A. from the University of Illinois and his M.A. and Ph.D. from Cornell University. Professor Fouché previously taught African American Studies, American Studies, History, and Science & Technology Studies at Purdue University, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and Washington University in St. Louis.



As a cultural historian of technological invention and innovation, Rayvon Fouché explores the multiple intersections and relationships between cultural representation, racial identification, and technological design. His first book, *Black Inventors in the Age of Segregation* (Johns Hopkins University Press) filled the large void in scholarly writing on black inventors and their experiences and created a broader textured understanding of black inventive experiences. He also has co-edited *Vernacular Science and Social Power* (University of Minnesota Press) which attempts to understand how groups outside centers of scientific and technological power defy the notion that they are merely passive recipients of technological products and scientific knowledge. He most recently edited *Technology Studies* (Sage Publications). [Continued >>](#)

### EISINGER PRIZES:

#### Chester E. Eisinger Prize:

- ★ Kera Lovell

#### Chester E. Eisinger Research Award:

- ★ Michelle Carreon
  - Read what Michelle has to say [HERE](#)
- ★ Jehan Mullin
- ★ Chelsea Stripe

### RECENTLY GRADUATED STUDENTS:

#### December 2012

- MA:**  
Jolivette Anderson-Douoning
- PhD:**  
Christopher A. Warren

#### May 2013

- MA:**  
Chelsea M. Frazier, Nicholas D. Krebs, Arielle C. McKee, Virginia F. Pleasant

PROGRAM  
TRANSITIONS

Nancy Gabin



Susan Curtis stepped down as director of the American Studies program in December 2012. She served with skill, grace, and passion, enhancing and advancing the program and striving always for the benefit of all of us associated with it. Ever dedicated to the program's center, Susan expressed her gratitude "to all students, past and present, who have always inspired me" before moving to Missouri for the spring 2013 semester and wished us well in the search for a new director.



Bill Mullen chaired the search for the new director. In announcing the appointment of Rayvon Fouché, Bill thanked the Search Committee members (Stephanie Allen, Michelle Carreon, Shannon McMullen, Venetria Patton, Yvonne Pitts, Ryan Schneider, Kevin Stainback, Laura Zanotti) who worked extremely hard in helping to identify and recruit candidates for the position, and Delayne Graham, who has always anchored our work.

## MEET THE NEW DIRECTOR, CONT'D

These four volumes trace the intellectual, scholarly, and public evolution of technology studies and ultimately question whether technologies are truly autonomous within the societies they inhabit and whether or not technological changes drive social changes. His current book project—*Game Changer: Technology and the Fate of Athletic Competition* (under contract with Johns Hopkins University Press)—examines how sport governing bodies use technoscientific power and authority to authenticate athletic performances.

"An interdisciplinary scholar to the core," Rayvon Fouché views himself as a Science & Technology Studies and American Studies informed historian of technology. Asked what attracted him to the directorship of the American Studies program at Purdue University, Professor Fouché cites "the vibrant history and tradition of American Studies at Purdue. The focused commitments of past and present American Studies' faculty and students have built the program's strong reputation, and I am very pleased to become an active member of this extended community. The opportunity to take a leadership role directing an interdisciplinary program in the next chapter of its evolution is an exciting opportunity. As the questions we ask about the world become exceedingly complex, scholars with interdisciplinary training will possess a unique set of skills allowing them to be at the forefront of the critical dialogues and debates of our times. American Studies always has taken a prominent role in this work and I see Purdue's program continuing its contribution to this intellectual trajectory."

## AMST STATE OF THE UNION

## Stephanie A. Allen, Ph.D. Candidate

During the 2012-2013, ASGSO did well under the leadership of president, Stephanie A. Allen; treasurer, Hana Lee; social chair, Chelsea Stripe; secretary, Melissa Esh; and PGSG representative, Arielle McKee. Together, these women carried out ASGSO's function as a representative for American Studies graduate students, managing a number of programs, activities, and incentives for the American Studies community to enjoy.

We started this year by creating mentor "families" for our incoming students. We thought it might be a good idea to create mini-communities with mentoring "co-parents" that our students would have more than one point of contact for questions, support, and of course, a little fun. While these mentor families were successful, one thing we realized is that by mid-semester, most students have started to form other support networks, and start to need their mentors less and less. We think this is marker of success, since it indicates that our new students have begun to find their way at Purdue and that is a good thing.

The 2012-2013 school year marked the return of the ASGSO Film Festival. This year, with the help of American Studies master's student Christopher Munt, we are able to partner with the DiversiKeys program and show four films over the course of the fall semester. While our first screening was sparsely attended, by the time we showed our final film, *Pariah*, our venue was filled to capacity and we had students sitting in the aisles. Part of our success was due to the diverse films that showcased the global, local, and personal issues that impact us as humans living in the United States. Our films included *The Black Power Mixtape, 1967-1975*; *Saving Face*; *Arranged*; and *Pariah*. We hope that we can continue the ASGSO Film Festival, as it is a wonderful way to garner interest in American Studies at Purdue and to discuss films that reflect the types of research that we do.

## STATE OF THE UNION, CONT'D

ASGSO hosted its traditional biannual book sales in the Fall and Spring semesters. With the help of volunteers, the organization was able to raise funds allocated to graduate students presenting at conferences. An award of \$50 for each recipient went toward travel expenses at various conferences, including the National Association for Graduate Admissions Professionals and the American Culture/Popular Culture Association National Conference.

At the joint Awards Reception/Faculty Appreciation Reception, ASGSO took a moment to recognize those members of the faculty, staff, and American Studies program who help make our program the success that it is. We gave tokens of our gratitude to American Studies' tireless Interim Director, Nancy Gabin; professors Bill Mullen and Shannon McMullen; administrative assistant, Delayne Graham; and ASGSO's gracious helper, Lilly Marsh.

ASGSO isn't all work and no play, however. The group organized a number of successful social events throughout the year. The year started off with a Welcome Mixer where attendees enjoyed delicious food, delightful drinks, and pleasant company at Lilly Marsh's house. Then, we spent the rest of the Fall semester winding down from the workweek and welcoming the weekend at the much-needed Friday Night Flights. At our annual Winter Social, ASGSO commissioned artist/academic Lilly Marsh to help create a going away present for our former program director, Susan Curtis. And finally, the Semester's End Social took place on a sunny day in May—perfect for the picnic-style gathering at Squirrel Park.

In the coming year, ASGSO looks forward to its traditional activities. In addition, we've also created a new position (and committee) to add to our executive board. Most of you are aware of the bi-annual ASGSO book sale, but have you ever wondered what we do with all of those books during the year? Well, not much, but we wanted to change that. We decided that we needed to organize the myriad of books stored in the basement and start working on an American Studies library. At this point, we don't have a space for the library, but we hope to set aside some of our more valuable texts for display in years to come. We also wanted to catalog the sale books so that it's easier to organize the book sale. Finally, we thought it might be time to start an archive of ASGSO/American Studies events. Over the years, we've had memorable guest speakers, dozens of symposia, countless celebrations, and other events that can provide a living history of American Studies at Purdue. This new committee is tasked with starting and maintaining that archive as well.

## NEW FACULTY



**Professor Laura Zanotti**

Department of Anthropology, College of Liberal Arts

Professor Zanotti received her Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Washington in 2008 and joined the Purdue University faculty in 2009. She is a cultural anthropologist whose research program focuses on partnering with indigenous communities to better understand how local livelihoods and wellbeing can be sustained for future generations. In this effort, she is interested in the impact that extralocal politics, ideologies, and markets have on livelihood strategies as well as the creative and empowering ways in which local communities are responding to these challenges. Professor Zanotti's specializations include feminist political ecology, anthropology of space and place, indigenous rights, Amazonian anthropology, and communities and conservation. She has conducted fieldwork in the Brazilian Amazon among the Kayapó and in Alaska with the Iñupiaq. In upcoming research projects Professor Zanotti will further explore the entanglements between nature, place, identity, and space.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE IN AMERICAN STUDIES: Asian Pacific American Caucus



**Pictured:** From left to right: Annagul Yaryeva, Michelle Carreon, Peter Dy-Liacco, Arthur Banton, Josephine Lee, Cliff Chang, Pamela Sari, Yuhan Huang, Tin Truong, Hana Leem, Monica Trieu, Nusta Carranza Ko, Victoria Loong  
**Hana Lee, Ph.D. Student; Pamela Sari, Ph.D. Candidate**

No one can deny that Purdue's American Studies program excels in interdisciplinary scholarship while also being invested in social justice and activism across multiple sectors of society. As the members of Asian Pacific American Caucus (APAC) and graduate students in American Studies, we are proud to carry on this tradition. As of 2012, half of the executive board was made up of American Studies graduate students: Arthur Banton (Undergraduate Liaison), Hana Lee (President), and Pamela Sari (Secretary). APAC began as an Asian and Asian American faculty and staff caucus at Purdue in 2010, and eventually evolved into an officially recognized graduate student organization (with the continued support and participation of faculty and staff). As an organization, APAC is now principally concerned with meeting the various needs, concerns, and interests of the international Asian and domestic Asian American student, staff, and faculty populations on campus.

During the past spring, APAC had a successful semester with events aimed at increasing the awareness of the Asian and Asian American populations with the help of Purdue Graduate Student Government, the Student Organization Grant Allocation Board, Center for Research on Diversity and Inclusion, Confucius Institute at Purdue, Comparative Literature program, and many others. One of our most successful and reoccurring events is our thematic film series, in which we screen a film followed by a moderated Q & A session. Just this past spring, our theme was "Asian American Journeys: Perseverance through Crises." The films screened were *A Thousand Years of Good Prayers* and *A Dream in Doubt*. These movies highlight how Asian American families and communities actively respond to crises (family crises in *A Thousand Years* and hate crimes against Sikh American communities in *A Dream*) through dialogues and activism that ensure respect to diversity. Film has been an effective medium by which our audiences have engaged with concepts and themes they are unfamiliar with or unable to explore on their own.

In addition to our film screenings, in February 2013, we organized a series of events themed, "Purdue Asian and Asian American Voices: Engaging, Empowering, Enabling." The first event was a panel discussion entitled, "Being Asian and Asian American at Purdue: A Roundtable," featuring faculty members Dr. Ei-ichi Negishi, Dr. Song No, Dr. Wei Hong, Dr. Patrocínio Schweickart, staff member Dr. Rebecca Wong, graduate student Adlina Maulod, and undergraduate student Victoria Loong. APAC's goals for this panel discussion were to illuminate the multiplicity of identities within the Asian and Asian American population, and move beyond stereotypical and dichotomous dimensions of Asians as perpetual foreigners and model minorities. Moreover, we sought to provide the campus community with the opportunity to hear the various personal histories (of immigration, interracial relationships, intergenerational distinctions, etc) from members of our very own Purdue community.

The second event, entitled "College Racism: Racist vs Racial Humor," was a discussion-based presentation led by American Studies students. This event was organized in direct response to the alarming and growing issue of racism found on college campuses. At Purdue, we found several racist Twitter accounts directly targeting the Asian and Asian American populations on campus (with the hashtag #PurdueAsians). This event was organized to educate the community on eradicating such racist humor. Specifically, our goals were to bring awareness to these injustices, clarify and distinguish between racial and racist humor, create a narrative on how this type of humor affects college campuses including our own, and most importantly, educate individuals on how they can productively and effectively respond when witnessing racist humor.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE IN AMST, CONT'D:

Finally, our event series ended with two presentations by our keynote speaker, Dr. Josephine Lee, professor of English and Asian American Studies at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Dr. Lee's first presentation, "Reflections on Asian American Performance Onstage and Off-stage," discussed how Asian American performativity stems from the roots of Orientalism, and how Asian American identity itself has become a sort of performance. Dr. Lee's second presentation, "Building Asian American Studies from the 'Frozen' Ground Up: Motivation, Machination, Maintenance" spoke about her experience founding Asian American Studies at a fellow Midwestern university, and also her past role as president of the Association for Asian American Studies. This last presentation not only spoke about the politics of academic spaces but also the constant struggle of ethnic studies to first exist, and then flourish.

The last event organized by APAC in the spring was an "Art Voice Exhibit: Expressions of Asian and Asian American Identity at Purdue." This exhibit had the theme "The Languages and Politics of Inclusion," and was featured in Purdue Memorial Union and in collaboration with the Comparative Literature program in Yue-Kong Pao Hall. Our aim in organizing this exhibit was to bring further visibility to our Asian and Asian American communities on campus, and utilize art (in multiple forms) to give agency to this population to share who they are with the rest of Purdue, with their own voices. These art pieces expressed how it is the artists identify, what intersectional identities they have, the stereotypes they face daily, how they believe they are perceived, how they want to be perceived, and what being a Boilermaker means to them. The exhibit included an interactive piece asking viewers to share their identities in six words, a comic book in three different languages (Malay, Japanese, and English) about an international student experience, a collection of photographs sharing the various manifestations of Indian culture at Purdue, and many others. The success of this exhibit was dependent upon the transparency of the artists in choosing to share a piece of themselves with the rest of us.

The goals of APAC are being achieved step by step, and we will continue to fight for our constituents and supporters. For us, APAC is a place where our intellectual values, personal identities, and care for others intersects and thrives. We are invested in creating spaces of comfort, intellect, and social justice. We are grateful that American Studies has given us full support in this endeavor. Thank you to our fellow scholars in American Studies for your support, encouragement, and collective commitment to change.

## NEW FACULTY



**Professor Elizabeth Hoffmann**

Department of Sociology, College of Liberal Arts

Professor Hoffmann received her Ph.D. and J.D. from the University of Wisconsin and joined the faculty at Purdue University in 2001. Her research interests include sociology of law, legal consciousness, sociology of organizations, workplace dispute resolution, sociology of work and occupations, and gender and employment. Professor Hoffmann's work has been recognized with honors from a variety of institutions, including the American Bar Foundation, the Law and Society Association, the Midwest Sociologists for Women in Society, the Industrial Relations Research Association, and the Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. Her research has received funding both from internal grants as well as from external sponsors, including the National Science Foundation and the Clifford Kinley Trust. Professor Hoffmann recently published *Co-operative Workplace Dispute Resolution: Organizational Structure, Ownership, and Ideology* (Gower/Ashgate Publishing, 2012).

# 2012 ASA ANNUAL MEETING IN WASHINGTON, DC



**Pictured:** Alumnus Dr. Erik Wade, Dr. Bill Mullen, and Antonio Lewis

## Bill Mullen:

Purdue was well-represented as always at the American Studies Association annual meeting in 2012.

Purdue alumni Lee Bebout, Sujey Vega, Heidi Lewis and Erik Wade were all attendees at the conference, which was held in the U.S. territory of San Juan. The conference was held for the first time in Puerto Rico. Several sessions at the conference were dedicated to the U.S.'s colonial relationship to the host site.

Purdue faculty presenting at ASA included Robert Marzec, English, and Bill Mullen, American Studies and English.

Below are reflections on the conference from Purdue Alum Lee Bebout and Heidi Lewis:

Lee Bebout (Assistant Professor Arizona State University):

“Puerto Rico was a blast. It was nice catching up with other Purdue folk. I presented a paper on the depiction of Mexico as a timeless space for US adventurism and how some Chicano works resist such "Orientalist" logics. I think it might be a part of my new book or an article that grows out of this bigger project. As for the trip to PR, it's really great seeing the ASA move toward and engage US imperialism in a more direct way. Also, going to PR allowed me to reconnect with Purdue folk like Heidi. Thus, I was able to get her on a panel with some friends at other universities for the DC conference”the panel deals with the recent attacks on ethnic studies.

”

## OTHER AWARDS:

### 2012 Dean Knudsen Dissertation Award from the Department of Sociology:

- ★ Michelle Carreon

### 2013 Berenice A. Carroll Feminism, Peace & Social Justice Graduate Student Awards:

- ★ Kera Lovell, Honorable Mention;
- ★ Lisa Young, Honorable Mention

### Office of Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs 2013 Spring Reception Awards

#### *Most Outstanding Interdisciplinary Project Award, Honorable Mention:*

- ★ Lisa Young, “After the Debris Clears: Tracing Purdue’s Early Black Student Experiences with Housing Segregation in West Lafayette”

#### *Certificate of Excellence Award:*

- ★ Kera Lovell and Jaime Hough, “Beyond Interdisciplinarity: Social Media and the New University”
- ★ Arielle McKee, “The Kind of Movie Everybody Thneeds: Ecocriticism, Class and The Lorax”

#### *Interdisciplinary Audience Choice Award:*

- ★ Kera Lovell and Jaime Hough, “Beyond Interdisciplinarity: Social Media and the New University”

## 2012 ASA ANNUAL MEETING, CONT'D

Heidi Lewis (Assistant Professor Colorado College):

“The 2012 American Studies Association (ASA) meeting was special to me for a number of reasons, and most of them are more personal than professional. Seeing fellow Purdue AMST graduates was especially sentimental, because I hadn't seen some of them in such a long time. Jamie Hickner looked so different to me when I first saw her that I didn't even recognize her. I don't think I told her this then, but I was thinking about the first class we took together in 2006—AMST 601. During discussion one day, Jamie commented, in true feminist form, “How can you run in high-heeled shoes?” In my head, I was thinking, “Traditional femininity isn't always already oppressive, and there are many ways for women to battle in the struggle.” I wasn't as articulate then as I am now, and will never forget the looks on Jamie and Bill's faces when I snapped back, still struggling with feminism, “Who says that women always have to be running?” or something to that effect. Now, Jamie's a mom, and we're both doctors. I think I knew we'd be in this place back then, but it didn't resonate with me until the moment we reconnected. We have come such a long way.

Speaking of parental doctors, I was also able to reconnect with Lee Bebout, Sujey Vega, and their adorable son Jaden. It warmed my heart to see him running around the conference center rubbing elbows with such esteemed scholars, artists, and activists. I'm so proud that we're able to provide our children with experiences that many of us never had growing up. I also reconnected with Erik Wade and Bill. Usually moments of reconnection entail a lot of reminiscing, but in our case, we spent a lot of time talking about our present situations and ruminating about our future possibilities.

It's really no surprise that Purdue AMST alumni are almost always forward-thinking, continuously imagining new and exciting ways to affect change. That said, one of the best experiences I have at ASA is connecting, for the first time, with scholars, artists, and activists that I have been admiring from afar for a long time. This year, that list included David J. Leonard, Stephanie Troutman, Theresa Runstedtler, John Jennings, and Lisa Guerrero. These experiences have allowed me to build and nurture some of the most fruitful professional and personal lifelong relationships. For all of these reasons, I am anxiously anticipating the 2013 annual meeting in Washington, DC. I suspect that this conference will yield as many, if not more, surprises as the last!

”

Office of Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs 2013 Spring Reception Awards, Cont'd

*Committee for the Education of Teaching Assistants Excellence in Teaching Award:*

- ★ Heather Moore, American Studies and African American Studies

*PRF Research Grants 2013-2014:*

- ★ Michelle Carreon, “Maternalism, Economic Citizenship, and Care in Expressions of a Solidarity Economy in El Paso, Texas”
- ★ Lilly Marsh, “‘Becoming the Boss’: Elizabeth Zimmerman and the Emergence of Knitting as Agency in the Late Twentieth Century”
- ★ Emma Bertolaet, “Hard Labor: Pursuing Economic Citizenship and Legal Recognition of Certified Professional Midwives in Alabama”

*Bilsland Dissertation Fellowship:*

- ★ Ping Qiu, “Contested Chineseness: Transnational Narratives in Post-1979 New Chinese-American Immigrant Literature”

*American Studies Excellence in Teaching Award:*

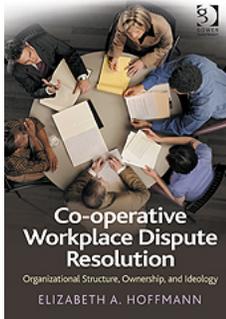
- ★ Ping Qiu

*American Studies Paul and Eslanda Robeson International Studies Award:*

- ★ Ping Qiu

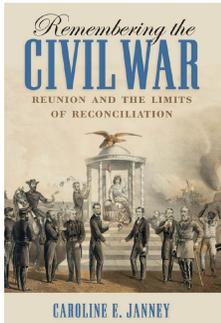
## FACULTY BOOKS: JUST OUT!

Elizabeth Hoffman



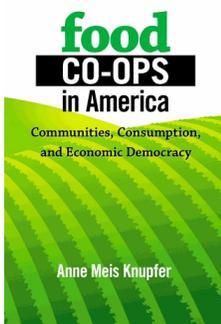
**Co-operative Workplace Dispute Resolution: Organizational Structure, Ownership, and Ideology.** Burlington, VT: Gower / Ashgate. Pp. xii + 195. \$99.95 cloth. Hoffmann compares how workplace disputes are raised in matched pairs of conventional businesses and worker co-operatives—mutually owned businesses with egalitarian ideologies and flattened management structures. Drawing on over 200 interviews from three industries (coal mining, taxicab driving, and wholefood distribution), she concludes that co-op workers use on a wider array of dispute-resolution strategies—enabling them better to avoid unpleasant working conditions—but finds that even in co-operatives, women and working-class members sometimes face the same kinds of difficulties pursuing their grievances that they face in the larger society.

Caroline Janney



**Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation.** University of North Carolina Press, 2013. Caroline E. Janney examines how the war generation—men and women, black and white, Unionists and Confederates—crafted and protected their memories of the nation's greatest conflict. Janney maintains that the participants never fully embraced the reconciliation so famously represented in handshakes across stone walls. Instead, both Union and Confederate veterans, and most especially their respective women's organizations, clung tenaciously to their own causes well into the twentieth century. Janney explores the subtle yet important differences between reunion and reconciliation and argues that the Unionist and Emancipationist memories of the war never completely gave way to the story Confederates told. She challenges the idea that white northerners and southerners salved their war wounds through shared ideas about race and shows that debates about slavery often proved to be among the most powerful obstacles to reconciliation.

Anne Meis Knupfer

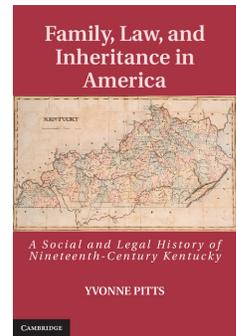


**Food Co-ops in America. Communities, Consumption, and Economic Democracy,** Cornell University Press. In *Food Co-ops in America*, Anne Meis Knupfer examines the economic and democratic ideals of food cooperatives. She shows readers what the histories of food co-ops can tell us about our rights as consumers, how we can practice democracy and community, and how we might do business differently. In the first history of food co-ops in the United States, Knupfer draws on newsletters, correspondence, newspaper coverage, and board meeting minutes, as well as visits to food co-ops around the country, where she listened to managers, board members, workers, and members.

## FACULTY BOOKS CONT'D

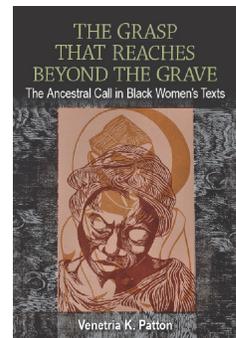
Yvonne Pitts

**Family, Law, and Inheritance in America: A Social and Legal History of Nineteenth-Century Kentucky.** Cambridge University Press, 2013. Yvonne Pitts explores inheritance practices by focusing on nineteenth-century testamentary capacity trials in Kentucky in which disinherited family members challenged relatives' wills. These disappointed heirs claimed that their departed relative lacked the capacity required to write a valid will. These inheritance disputes criss-crossed a variety of legal and cultural terrains, including ordinary people's understandings of what constituted insanity and justice, medical experts' attempts to infuse law with science, and the independence claims of women. Pitts uncovers the contradictions in the body of law that explicitly protected free will while simultaneously reinforcing the primacy of blood in mediating claims to inherited property. By anchoring the study in local communities and the texts of elite jurists, Pitts demonstrates that 'capacity' was a term laden with legal meaning and competing communal values about family, race relations and rationality. These concepts evolved as Kentucky transitioned from a conflicted border state with slaves to a developing free-labor, industrializing economy.



Venetria Patton

**The Grasp That Reaches beyond the Grave** investigates the treatment of the ancestor figure in Toni Cade Bambara's *The Salt Eaters*, Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow*, Phyllis Alesia Perry's *Stigmata and A Sunday in June*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Tananarive Due's *The Between*, and Julie Dash's film, *Daughters of the Dust* in order to understand how they draw on African cosmology and the interrelationship of ancestors, elders, and children to promote healing within the African American community. Venetria K. Patton suggests that the experience of slavery with its concomitant view of black women as "natally dead" has impacted African American women writers' emphasis on elders and ancestors as they seek means to counteract notions of black women as somehow disconnected from the progeny of their wombs. This misperception is in part addressed via a rich kinship system, which includes the living and the dead. Patton notes an uncanny connection between depictions of elder, ancestor, and child figures in these texts and Kongo cosmology. These references suggest that these works are examples of Africanisms or African retentions, which continue to impact African American culture.



## FACULTY NEWS

**Yvonne Pitts** received a Teaching for Tomorrow Fellowship Award for 2013-2014 from the Office of the Provost, Purdue University.

**Caroline Janney** was named a University Faculty Scholar by the Office of the Provost, Purdue University.

**Venetria Patton** presented papers at the conferences of the College Language Association and the National Council for Black Studies. At the latter conference, she was honored with the President's Award for Outstanding Service.

## NEW STUDENTS: 2013

**Laura Blackburn** comes to American Studies as a master's student. She earned her bachelor's degree from Purdue University in History and Political Science. Laura is the recipient of a Lynn Fellowship.

**Kapri Crowley** will begin the M.A. program after completing her bachelor's from the University of Florida in Anthropology. Kapri is the recipient of a David M. Knox Fellowship.

**Jingyi Liu** will be a Master's student after completing her bachelor's in China from National University of Defense Technology in English.

**Arielle McKee** will continue to the Ph.D. after earning her Master's from our program in May 2013. Arielle received her bachelor's in Psychology from the University of Texas at Austin.

**Joseph Morrison** enters our Ph.D. program after completing his Master's degree in Ethnic Studies from Colorado State University. He received his bachelor's degree from Le Moyne College in Political Science. Joseph is the recipient of a Lynn Fellowship.

**Virginia Pleasant**, after earning her Master's from our program in May 2013, will continue to the Ph.D.. Virginia earned her bachelor's degree in Anthropology from Ball State University.

**Keturah Nix** comes to our Master's program as a transfer student from the Department of English here at Purdue. She earned her bachelor's degree from Tuskegee University in English.

**Kadari Taylor-Watson** will join our Ph.D. program and comes to us after receiving the Master's degree from Department of Sociology here at Purdue. Kadari earned her baccalaureate in Sociology from Hampton University. She is the recipient of a Lynn Fellowship.

**Jeffrey Wimble** will enter the Ph.D. program in American Studies. He received a Master's degree from Indiana University-South Bend in English and also a Master's from the University of Southern Mississippi in Library and Information Science. Jeffrey took his bachelor's degree in Jazz Performance from Indiana University. He is the recipient of a Lynn Fellowship.

## CURRENT STUDENTS

**Stephanie A. Allen**

Stephanie A. Allen (current Ph.D. candidate) participated in the Gender Matters: Continuities and Instabilities conference held this spring in Chicago and presented a portion of her dissertation work entitled "Black Lesbians, Contemporary American Culture, and the Politics of Representation." Stephanie has also written two articles for the Encyclopedia of Human Sexuality, due to be published this summer. She was also asked to be on the advisory board of the film *A Persistent Desire: The Evolution of Butch Femme*, directed and produced by Lenn Keller, which is currently in production. She is also a contributing writer and member of the Blackwood Research Group, where other Purdue graduate students and faculty write and discuss issues of race, gender, sexuality, and identity. This fall, Stephanie will present her paper "On Black Lesbian Femme Invisibility," at the annual National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) meeting in November.

**ALUMNI NEWS****Andrew K. Koch**

AMST alumnus, Andrew K. Koch (Ph.D. 2008), was appointed as an American Council of Education Fellow for 2013-14. You can read the press release [HERE](#) (External Link)

**Paul D. Reich**

AMST alumnus, Paul Reich (M.A. 2000, Ph.D. 2007), is currently an Assistant Professor of English at Rollins College. Recently, Rollins College has created their own American Studies major/ minor, which Paul will head as Director.

**Rachel Smederovac**

AMST alumna, Rachel Smederovac (M.A. 2010), is quickly rising through the ranks in Human Resources at MIT. Rachel was hired at MIT in February, 2011 as the Director's Assistant/ HR assistant for the McGovern Institute for Brain Research. By July, 2013 she was promoted to Human Resources Administrator at Research Laboratory of Electronics, one of the highest volume units at MIT (which manages 600+ grad students and employees in 70+ labs). Rachel attributes her success to her academic roots.

**John Stauffer**

2009 CLA Distinguished Alumni Award Recipient, John Stauffer (M.A. 1993; Ph.D. from Yale 1999), sat down with the director of the Program in African American Culture of the National Museum of American History to talk about America's abolitionist movement of the 19th century and how it may inform modern efforts to end slavery. You can read part of the interview [HERE](#) (External Link)

## 2012 CHESTER E. EISINGER RESEARCH

## AWARD:

## Reflections on Fieldwork in El Paso, Texas

**Michelle E. Carreon, Ph.D. Candidate**

Thanks to the American Studies Program and the 2012 Chester E. Eisinger Research Award, I had the opportunity to travel to El Paso, Texas for an important stage of my dissertation research. For roughly 3 weeks, from mid-July to early August, I conducted preliminary fieldwork that proved to be more valuable than I could have ever imagined. These weeks in the field offered some invaluable lessons for conducting research and working with communities, which reflect, I believe, core values we hold in American Studies as a field.

In short, my dissertation examines the roles of maternalism, economic citizenship, and care within expressions of what is being called a “solidarity economy” in the United States. The solidarity economy offers an alternative economic approach to current capitalistic modes of production. Practitioners of the solidarity economy emphasize a people-centered approach to production, consumption, and exchange, as opposed to a thing-centered or solely profit-centered approach. Situated within a global movement and its own historical antecedents, the U.S. solidarity economy movement, as it is called by some of its proponents, encompasses various practices. Examples include food and worker-owned cooperatives, bartering communities, community centers dedicated to economic justice and social uplift, fair trade, participatory budgeting, community-supported agriculture, and more. In my dissertation, I argue that it is crucial to examine how specific communities are organizing around these principles and, furthermore, how context and other factors affect these types of mobilization.

Emphasizing the effects of race and ethnicity, class, gender, and political and cultural histories in a specific context, my project focuses on various social and economic justice efforts on the U.S.-Mexico border. Utilizing ethnographic methods, as well as archival research, I focus on three key case studies in South El Paso, which include a women-led community organization, a settlement house, and a midwifery school and birth center, and examine how each of these cases may serve as expressions of a “solidarity economy” on the border. In order to address my broader research questions, it is crucial for me to interact with and learn from the people who are organizing and working within these forms of mobilization. Therefore, my dissertation requires in-depth fieldwork, primarily in the form of participant observation and interviews. Fieldwork is not inexpensive, and the costs of extensive travel can add up, especially for a graduate student on a limited income.

During my trip last summer, I focused primarily on the community organization. My main goal was to begin building rapport with the women and engage in some preliminary participant observation. As Vicki Ruiz states, “scholars cannot ‘give’ voice to people, but they can provide the space for them to express their thoughts and feelings in their own words and on their own terms” (Ruiz, 2000: 6). Going into the field, Ruiz’s words informed my goal to be respectful, receptive to the women’s perspectives, and to value their experiences and wisdom. Furthermore, I continue to be influenced by George Lipsitz’s focus on “learning to listen.” The act of listening was vital as I volunteered with the organization, which included washing dishes in their kitchen, helping cook for their café, participating in their mobile farmer’s market, and the many casual conversations I had with various staff and community members.

Following only three weeks of interactions and writing extensive field notes at the end of my volunteering days, I gained a vast amount of information about the organization’s history and current operations, as well as new academic contacts and other resources. I was able to fine-tune aspects of my research questions, as well as begin building a sense of friendship and trust with some of the women. Importantly, out of these interactions, I became more aware of the delicacy of qualitative research. I became aware of the unpredictability of fieldwork and the importance of letting the dissertation evolve. During the prospectus stage of my research, I intended to focus on multiple cities in Texas. During this trip, however, I gained better insight for the direction of my project and found that El Paso alone offered a useful site to study various examples of expressions of a solidarity economy on the border. Additionally, it became very clear that a few weeks here and there would not suffice. Therefore, I was encouraged to make the important decision to move back to El Paso in the summer of 2013 to spend at least one year collecting data.

## CHESTER E. EISINGER RESEARCH AWARD CONT'D

In closing, the financial and academic support of the American Studies Program, in the form of an Eisinger Research Award, enabled me to carve out the path for my dissertation and identify the next steps of this process. I view this trip as a significant moment, which led to the big decision for me to uproot from Indiana and move back to my hometown. Over the years, many who have gone through this process have told me that one's dissertation changes in ways that you would never expect. These same colleagues, mentors, and friends have also encouraged me to embrace this process and embrace these changes. I would like to offer the same advice to others in the early stages of their dissertation research. I also encourage other students to apply for the Eisinger awards and similar types of funding that our program offers, as well as the various opportunities offered through the Graduate School. I believe that the support I received from the American Studies Program reflects its many strengths, from our faculty's encouragement and support of our various research projects to our program's commitment to interdisciplinary research, such as AMST scholarship grounded in the social sciences—disciplines which are arguably underrepresented in our field. I am grateful for the 2012 Eisinger Research Award and continue to be grateful to the American Studies community at Purdue—a community I will certainly miss this coming year.

Cited Sources: Lipsitz, George. 2001. *American Studies in a Moment of Danger*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Ruiz, Vicki L. 2000. *Las Obreras: Chicana Politics of Work and Family*. Volume Editor, Vicki L. Ruiz. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Publications.