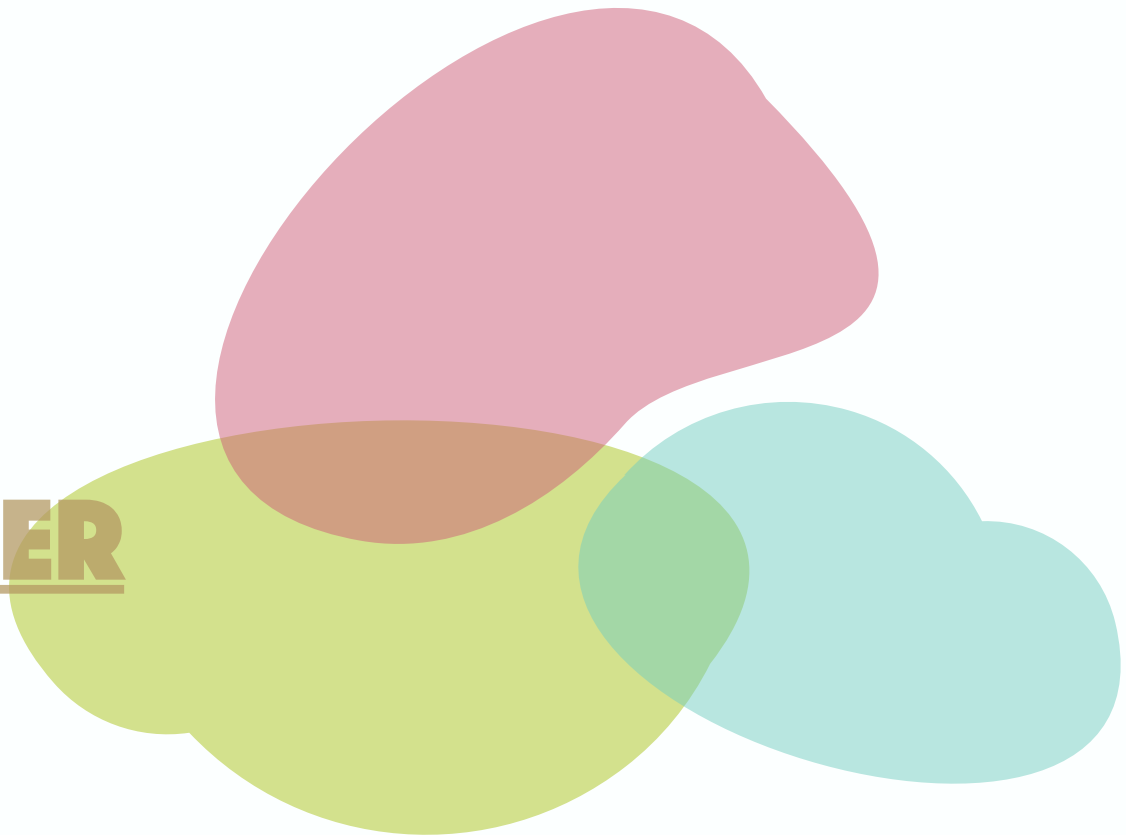


OLDE NEWS

SUMMER

2021



FROM THE CHAIR

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES **JOSH HOWE**

As a historian, I often feel complicit in a certain fetishization of major moments and figures in American history. Celebrations of independence day, armistice day, presidents' day, Jackie Robinson day—even the eponymous subject of Annette Gordon-Reed's important new book *On Juneteenth*—demand that historians interrogate and contextualize the marquee events and tipping points of the nation's past, alongside the key individuals that made those moments possible. And much of the time, we are more than happy, either through critique or memorialization, to oblige. After all, it's not every day that the public cares what we have to say.

And yet, embedded in the impulse to celebrate these big moments is an assumption that these moments are the moments that matter, the stuff of which history is made. And that is an assumption that many of us don't actually believe. Indeed, historians of all people tend to be the first to recognize the import of the real work that happened *after* the big moments for which we have parades, as well as the plurality of often underrecognized individuals who actually did that work. Our public celebrations tend to ignore that the building of the nation continued into 1777, for example. Or that June 20th, 1865 was the first day in the rest of a still-ongoing century-and-a-half struggle for the rights of formerly enslaved Americans and their descendants. Or that Jackie Robinson and the

black players that followed him into the majors after his 1947 debut all still took grounders and went to batting practice before every game in 1948, 1949, and so on. In each case, the world looked different the day or the year after the thing we celebrate. But those worlds of the past were uncertain worlds—worlds informed by the events that preceded them, but also worlds of contingency that continued to require a making of their own.

As I look at the upcoming academic year, I can't help but think of 1777; of June 20th, 1865; of baseball in 1948. On a national scale, the "Pandemic Year" of 2020-2021 is over—as is the 2020 election, and some of the acute political violence that came with it. And yet we continue to live and work through a time of great uncertainty, both in terms of the present and future of the ongoing COVID crisis and in terms of racially-inflected threats to voting and other democratic institutions. Closer to home, those uncertainties require that we navigate an academic semester that, while perhaps not marked by the same acute crises as the fall of 2020, still looks quite different from the "normal" that we might have hoped, in optimistic moments, to have returned to. Instead, 2021-22 is the year where we take what we have, with all its uncertainties, and start to build the new normal.

For the history department, that new normal starts with the same commitment to a rigorous and inclusive exploration of the past that has shaped what we do for at least as long as I have been here (which is now approaching a decade). Throughout the past eighteen months in particular, that unflinching commitment to a liberal arts history education has driven dynamic and creative responses among the department's faculty and students to the changing conditions of the pandemic. As chair, I am deeply proud of our collective accomplishments in the face of multiple, overlapping crises, and optimistic about our prospects even amidst the uncertainties of the new academic year.

Among the ranks of the faculty, we are happy to welcome Visiting Assistant Professor Francisco Beltrán for the 2021-22 academic year. Francisco will teach courses in 20th Century U.S. History, including exciting courses on Latinx History, Race in 20th Century America, Immigration History, and Oral History while Professor Jackie Dirks goes on a well-deserved sabbatical. You can read Francisco's thoughts about the relevance of history at this moment in his piece "What Is Going On?" in this newsletter (**pg. 4**). Meanwhile, the department also prepares to see an old hand off to new things, celebrating the long and impressive Reed career of our colleague Professor Doug Fix, who will retire at the end of the 2021-22 academic year. For an overview of some of Doug's many accomplishments, take a look at the profile by Annie Jiang ('21) on **pg. 9**. Finally, we applaud Professor Mary Ashburn Miller, who has taken the reigns of the college's Center for Teaching and Learning this year. Not to worry, however; Mary will continue to teach courses in History and Humanities—and advise history seniors!

— even as she helps the faculty as a whole to develop as effective liberal arts teachers in a dynamic and challenging educational landscape.

Speaking of seniors, we are excited to welcome 12 majors to the thesis ranks this fall. Professor Margot Minardi will once again head up our monthly "Thesis Friday" sessions to support our seniors as they embark on the capstone of their careers as Reed history majors. The department will also once again host our annual Wallace T. MacCaffrey Lecture. This year's speaker will be Michelle McKinley, the Bernard B. Kliks Professor of Law & Director of the Center for the Study of Women in Society at the University of Oregon. You can read more about Professor McKinley's MacCaffrey lecture on **pg. 3**.

Finally, as always, we historians have still been reading! Take a look at what students, faculty, and alumni in the Reed History community have been up to in our "What Are You Reading?" section on **pg. 8**.

The fall semester is upon us, and I am excited to see students back in the classroom as we get back to the work of exploring sources, honing critical writing skills, and feeding the wonder and curiosity that comes with teaching and doing history at the college. The present is uncertain. The future is unpredictable. It's a great time to be a historian.

All the best,
Your Humble Chair,



Josh Howe

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Introducing HIST 421 : Topics in Historiography

Are you interested in a smaller, upper-level history course? Want to do a deep dive into a particular historiographical discussion with students who have experience in other history courses? Like the vibe of the J-Sem and want more, but without the J-Sem paper? Take a look at history's new HIST421 offerings! Introduced for the first time just last year, HIST421 : Topics in Historiography is an opportunity for history majors and affiliated students to spend a semester digging into a particular area of faculty expertise with other students who have a background in history. HIST421 is designated at the 400-level because it is the *only* history course other than the J-Sem with pre-requisites; if you have taken at least two history courses, you are eligible! For more on this year's offering, HIST421: The Power of American Things, get in touch with Josh Howe at jhowe@reed.edu. Keep an eye out for an announcement of *next* year's HIST421 topic this spring!

Thesis Fridays

The first Thesis Friday of the year will take place on September 3 from 9:00-9:50 am at the outdoor tables between the library and the ETC. History seniors are invited to this informal event to learn more about the process of getting started on their thesis. Don't hesitate to contact Prof. Margot Minardi at minardi@reed.edu for more information. Snacks will be provided!

Wallace T. MacCaffrey Distinguished Lecture

This year's MacCaffrey lecture will be led by Michelle McKinley, Bernard B. Kliks Professor of Law & Director of the Center for the Study of Women in Society at the University of Oregon. The topic of Prof. McKinley's talk will be "Degrees of Freedom : Between Bondage and Freedom in Early Modern Lima." For more information about Prof. McKinley and her award-winning book, *Fractional Freedoms: Slavery, Intimacy, and Legal Mobilization in Colonial Lima, 1600-1700*, click [this link](#)! Currently, in accordance with Oregon state guidelines, we are planning for the lecture to be held in person, with opportunities for students to meet with Prof. McKinley, though this is subject to change. Exact time, date, and location TBA.

WHAT IS GOING ON? THOUGHTS ON OUR CURRENT HISTORICAL MOMENT

FROM VISITING ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF
HISTORY FRANCISCO BELTRÁN

50 years ago, in 1971, Marvin Gaye's hit single "What's Going On" resonated with a generation that rebelled against social, cultural, and political norms. The song itself is one of many clear representations of the counterculture era. But on the first day of class, I play "What's Going On" and then ask my students to reflect how the song can also matter to them. I ask them to consider what is happening in their communities, in the country, and across the world. It breaks the ice, but it also tells them from day one that history is also relevant in the present. In our case, many things have been going on since the last Reed College History Department Newsletter was published: from the escalating assaults on voting rights, to the political crusade against the teaching of critical race theory in schools. Social issues like abortion, immigration reform, and healthcare are subjects of ongoing and intensifying national conversations. The

movements for racial justice remain active, a reminder of a major unfinished aspect of our democracy. The longest war in US history came to an end with the withdrawal of the last US troops from Afghanistan, leaving that country with an uncertain future. Wildfires ravage the American west. The COVID-19 pandemic is still with us, impacting lives across the globe. With all that is going on, what issues are defining our present historical moment?

The relentless campaign against voting rights stands out at the moment. The 2020 election will be remembered as one of the most important in history. Despite President Biden's clear victory, millions of people continue to believe false claims that the election was fraudulent. This politically motivated campaign is sowing distrust in our institutions. Many states have launched vote audits, hoping to find proof of a lie. Other

states have taken the legislative route, passing laws that severely restrict access to the polls – mainly for poor, working-class, and communities of color. According to the Brennan Center, between January and July of 2021, 30 new laws were passed in 18 states. The most notable one, passed in Georgia, ended some vote by mail expansions enacted as a result of the pandemic. Activists nationwide condemned the new law as “Jim Crow 2.0.” Conservative lawmakers in Texas tried to emulate their counterparts in Georgia, but pro-voting rights lawmakers took the drastic step of physically leaving the state to prevent a vote. According to the Brennan Center, in the first seven months of 2021, 54 laws were passed in 25 states to protect and expand the right to vote for Americans. Two major bills to protect and expand voting rights are sitting in Congress right now – The For the People Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act. If passed, they would restore and strengthen voting rights provisions gutted by the Supreme Court in 2013. The practice of “one person, one vote” must be preserved and followed, if our democracy is to survive.

COVID-19 has not gone away. A year and a half after the pandemic began, lives remain disrupted. We are still in the eye of the storm. A number of highly effective vaccines were made available to the public in early 2021.



Photo via [The New York Times](#)

People vaccinated in high numbers early on. Daily case numbers and hospitalization figures decreased, leading us to believe the end of the pandemic was near. One by one, states reopened their economies. Mask mandates were dropped. People returned to theaters, malls, gyms, and sports venues. Some schools welcomed back students for in-person learning. Families that had not seen each other in over a year hugged again. It really seemed like we had the pandemic on the ropes. Instead, we put the carriage before the horse. Vaccination rates plateaued in early spring as vaccine hesitancy, fueled by a political misinformation campaign, increased. This opened the door to new, more contagious variants of COVID-19. Daily case totals have skyrocket to summer 2020 levels.

Hospitals are once again being pushed to their limits. Political fights over reinstating mask mandates have erupted in several states. Just a few days ago, an indoor mask mandate for all people was reinstated in Oregon.

This is a critical moment in our country's history. There is a lot going on. Things won't go back to the way they were pre-pandemic, nor should they. The attacks on voting rights and the continued impact of COVID-19 have

lifted the veil on our society, illuminating many of the inequalities that affect Americans of all walks of life. As Marvin Gaye said, "we've got to find a way" to address this. We can't go back to "normalcy." We must learn the lessons from this moment and improve our institutions, protect our democracy, and guarantee the wellbeing of all people.

REMEMBERING MIKE MUNK

FROM PROFESSOR
JACQUELINE DIRKS

Reed alum Mike Munk, class of 1955, passed away in Portland at the age of 87.

A historian and political activist, Mike researched and told the stories of leftists and labor unionists. One of Mike's significant legacies is his epic *Oregon Historical Quarterly* article, which chronicles the effects of domestic anti-Communism on academic free speech at Reed in the 1950s. That complete and careful history of McCarthyism at Reed, published in 1996, is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand the politics of Reed College:

"Oregon Tests Academic Freedom in (Cold) Wartime: The Reed College Trustees Versus Stanley Moore," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* (Fall 1996): 262-354. For many years, I have taught this article to students in several of my classes. Mike always responded to students' email queries.

Mike also authored the invaluable [Portland Red Guide](#). Not your typical tourist guide, it documents Portland's alternate history, charts political dissent, and maps key sites in the changing public cityscape.

In 2018, Mike provided a fascinating oral history of his family to the [Oregon Jewish Museum](#). Future Reedies won't have the benefit of engaging with Mike in person. But you can still read his published work, and access his research archive in the [Oregon Historical Society library](#).



Aerial view of campus, facing west (August 1969)
via [Reed College Archives](#)



Students in the IRC (1999)
via [Reed College Archives](#)

Reed alums share the books they've enjoyed this summer

"For history: a series of books on the Italian Renaissance by Paul Strathern, including *The Artist*, *The Philosopher and Warrior*, an account of the interactions among Leonardo Da Vinci, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Cesare Borgia. I also read his volumes on the Medicis and Borgias, and a history of Venice. I have just started Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Ministry for the Future*, which is speculative fiction about catastrophic climate change and a follow-up to his *New York 2140*. Much like the previous work, it is a novel of ideas and drama presented by an ensemble cast of characters. I recommend him highly. I also recommend P. Delia Clark. I just finished *Master of Djinn*, a steam punk, alternate universe, anti-colonial police procedural set in Cairo in 1912. His excellent *A Dead Djinn in Cairo*, and *The Haunting of Tramcar 015* share the same setting and some overlapping characters. I'm in the middle of his *Ring Shout*, which imagines the Ku Klux Klan of 1920's Georgia as literal alien monsters."

- **Edward Peters ('72)**

"I can't read paper books anymore - my eyes are no longer my friends. But I can listen and have discovered the joys of audiobooks. Piketty's *Capital in the 20th Century* was digestible on audiobook - highly recommend. Trashy summer reading was Deborah Harkness's *All Souls* trilogy - witches and demons and vampires, oh my! She got kudos for the accuracy of her research, and it was impressive. Jennifer Ikeda narrated and is a marvelous mimic for all sorts of accents. Also finished Edna O'Brien's

WHAT ARE YOU READING?

The Country Girls - favorite line: "she said, a penny for your thoughts, but they were worth more."

- **Kate Lowe, née Schmidt ('78)**

"Lately, I've been speeding through the later books in Frank Herbert's *Dune* series. Currently, I'm in the midst of *Chapterhouse: Dune*, the sixth in the series. They're wonderful books, especially for anyone interested in history. So much of what Herbert explores is about history, memory, archives, and myth - how the way we tell stories about the past shapes the present and future. And with those themes, the series becomes more enjoyable the further in you are."

- **Janet Sebastian-Coleman ('20)**

Additionally... David Grann's *Killers of the Flower Moon* **Kirsten Gerbatsch ('11)**; Brad Snyder's *The House of Truth* **David R. Roth ('64)**; Jürgen Osterhammel's *The Transformation of the World* **Daniel Liu ('08)**; Nell Irwin Painter's *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol* **Brian Cowan ('92)**; Robin Costa Lewis's *Voyage of the Sable Venus* **Samrath Bhattacharya ('19)**; and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* **Thomas Weber ('83)**

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS FIX TO RETIRE IN 2022

FROM ANNIE JIANG, CLASS OF 2021

Douglas L. Fix, Elizabeth C. Ducey Professor of Asian Studies and Humanities, is going to retire in 2022. Professor Fix became a Reed College faculty member in 1990 and has taught East Asian history and Chinese Humanities courses covering from as early as the third century BCE to the twentieth century. Reflecting on his three-decade career as a historian and an educator, Fix feels proud of his involvement in the Department of History and Chinese Studies at Reed.

Fix witnessed and contributed to the diversification of the regions covered in history courses at Reed. When he arrived in 1990, Fix offered courses on Chinese, Japanese, and East Asian history. Fix was the only person in the department teaching courses on non-US, non-European history at that time. Additional non-US, non-European history courses were offered as early as 1991 by Christopher Lowe, who taught African as well as African-American history courses for several years,

then later by Latin American and early modern Spanish historian David Garrett, when he joined the history faculty at Reed in 1998. In 1994, Fix collaborated with two Chinese professors, Hyong G. Rhew and Charles Q. Wu, the latter of whom unfortunately passed away this spring, and created the year-long Humanities 230 course: *Foundations of Chinese Civilization*. The course has been taught since the 1995-1996 academic year. Half of the course explores the unification of Qin and Han dynasties (221 BCE to 220 CE) and its political and cultural heritage, while the other half delves into the transformation of Chinese civilization during the “Song Renaissance” (960–1279 CE). In fact, the Chinese Humanities course enabled the Art Department to accept a major donation from Elizabeth Ducey, which created the tenure-track position in Chinese art history and humanities. Chinese Studies grew gradually at Reed College, but History was the first department to devote a tenure-track position

to this area of studies. Many students interested in Chinese history and humanities have benefited greatly from Fix's academic dedication. Patrick Stein ('19), an Environmental Studies alumnus with an allied field in history, fondly recalls that Fix offered him generous help with useful Chinese history book recommendations to begin his journey of Chinese history learning at Reed. Annie Jiang ('21), a recent history graduate, feels grateful for Fix's meticulous guidance of her senior thesis during the academic year of 2020-2021. Having explored Chinese and Taiwanese students in the postwar U.S. in her history thesis, Jiang is pleased that Fix's expertise in and passion about East Asian history and humanities enriched her thesis experiences.

Besides diversifying the regions taught within the history department and running the Chinese Humanities courses, Fix thinks what it means to be a historian evolves in response to the meteoric rise of digital media. History learning and research are not only about reading books and journal articles. They also involve collecting and analyzing multimedia sources, such as photographs and maps. Wu Mi-cha (吳密察), director of the National Palace Museum in Taipei, Taiwan, and Fix's college classmate at the National Taiwan University, inspired Fix to develop digital collections of Taiwanese

history during Fix's first sabbatical year 1996-1997. Since 1999, Fix and several students have worked on the digital collection centered around 19th-century Formosa and its various peoples, natural resources, wildlife, and built environment. This digital project, "Formosa: Nineteenth Century Images," relies on well-rounded sources, ranging from images, to maps, and to linguistic data depicting the political, social, economic, and cultural landscape of nineteenth-century Formosa. The multimedia emphasis enabled Fix to offer history courses that help students master the multimedia representation of history besides textual materials, such as *Cameras and Photography in Nineteenth-Century East Asia*, and *From Treaty Ports to Megacities: Chinese Urban History*. Most of Fix's other courses also include map exercises, which train students to consider historical events in geographical contexts, and visual exploratories, which allow students to closely interpret paintings or photographs as important primary sources. Stephen Schick ('20), an International and Comparative Policy Studies alumnus with an allied field in political science, claims that he became a sharp history thinker, partly thanks to Fix's East Asian history courses that involved multimedia engagement. From paintings of street life in 19th-century Shanghai, to poetry, and to 19th-century Formosan tea trade statistics from the British

consulate, Schick has found it rewarding to learn history with multimedia approaches. The various forms of sources allow him to examine the veracity of the sources and achieve a more well-rounded understanding of history.

Fix served on several major committees at Reed for 15 years out of his 30-year career and advised approximately 75 thesis students. Among the advisees, 6 or 7 students are now teaching history after receiving their PhD degrees in history. Fix is also very pleased that his thesis students have written on a variety of subjects and regions, such as Chinese American, Japanese American, Chinese, Japanese, and even Egyptian history. In retrospect, Fix thinks that it is important to teach with cultural sensitivity. This realization partly comes from Fix's many years of living, studying, and teaching in Taiwan, where Fix had helpful engagements with friends, teachers, colleagues, and students from different cultural and educational backgrounds. Later in his academic career, Fix developed pedagogy that incorporates academic training from different cultural settings. Recalling Fix's thesis handout, Jiang feels lucky to follow Fix's advice to compose a detailed chronology of the period covered in her thesis, including relevant historical

events. This standard tactic, taught to every graduate student in Japanese and Taiwanese universities, appears tedious but actually helped Jiang stay sensitive to the details and write her thesis smoothly.

Professor Douglas L. Fix's three-decade engagement in Reed academics, teaching, and institutional service will always be fondly remembered among Reed faculty, staff, and students. Though a bit sad, we wish him the best for his last year at Reed and his journey after Reed!



**Views in Formosa by T. Griffiths (1882)
via [Formosa : Nineteenth Century Images](#)**

REEDIES AT WORK

HEAR ABOUT THE PROJECTS HISTORY STUDENTS, CURRENT AND PAST, HAVE BEEN WORKING ON

"My latest publication is "Furnishing the Taste for Coffee in Early Modern France," in *The Art of Travel : The Mobility of People and Things in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, ed. Elisabeth Fraser (Routledge Press, 2019). The essay is drawn from my book in progress, provisionally titled *Embracing the Queen of Beans : How Coffee Became French, 1660-1789*. I am also co-P.I. on a digital humanities project in progress, "Visualizing the Data of the Eighteenth-Century French Caribbean." When complete, our website will contain a word-searchable database of 250 digitized censuses from eleven French Caribbean colonies spanning the years 1680-1800, rendered readable by GIS (geographical information systems) mapping software, and accompanied by a set of digitized high resolution eighteenth-century maps for each colony."

Julie Landweber ('93)

"I have been working at the Maritime Museum of San Diego in the collections department. My current projects include doing research for our new "sea-monsters" project, specifically an exhibit about the first female paleontologist Mary Anning and her numerous important findings in the field. I am also working with the US Navy Public Relations Department, leading negotiations for an exhibit donation. Finally, I have been spending time organizing and making summaries of the museum's archives in order to make it easier for scholars to access important historical artifacts and documents."

Olivia Hicks ('24)

"Producing a radio program about geology. Trying to be concise (it is for radio!), but keep getting pulled into the very distant past...and then running into how natural processes - earth and climate - created the world, on hikes and explorations in the north country. And, how people tried to redo those processes - built dams, installed marinas, mined copper or iron - to their own advantage. Doing so disrupted the natural world and social life."

Molly MacGregor ('75)

"In a "circle of life" moment, after spending the past two decades writing about mountains and mountaineers, I've returned to the topic that, starting with my Reed senior thesis, defined my early scholarship: the history of American communism. I am writing a history of the Communist Party USA from its founding in 1919 to the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, which will be published by Basic Books."

Maurice Isserman ('73)

MORE UPDATES!

Congratulations to Prof. Michael Breen on becoming the Editor in Chief of [H-France](#)! H-France is the largest scholarly organization for the study of francophone history and culture in the anglophone world, which includes five open access journals, a discussion list, and various other resources for scholars and students of the history, literature, art, music, and culture of the francophone world.

Jackie Davis ('14) recently received a Fulbright to go to Berlin to finish her PhD dissertation on German modern dance in the United States, and could not be happier. [Es gibt nur ein Berlin](#), indeed!

Alum Vijay Shah is still feeling vindication after [his trial](#)! In 2010, a federal jury determined that the Secret Service violated his rights during a protest at the Democratic National Convention. In addition to sharply rebuking authorities, the verdict affirmed the Constitution. During his pursuit of justice, he received much encouragement from alumni, and found that his historical training informed his activism, including courses in American history with John Tomsich and Richard Fox.

Julia Rudden ('90) says: "my eldest kiddo will be a senior at GWU in DC; my daughter will start Knox College in Galesburg IL in the fall; my son will be in 3rd grade at St. John Catholic School in Seattle." She is proud of all three of her children and wishes them well as they grow.

This submission period we received an unprecedented number of entries, and we struggled not to include every one of them. Thank you all for your contributions to this edition of *Olde News* – we truly could not have done it without you.

Best wishes,

The History Department