

# Footnotes

The Official Newsletter of Carnegie Mellon University's Department of History



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## LETTER FROM THE HEAD

Greetings from Baker Hall! You have in your hands or on your screen the third issue of our departmental newsletter. The field of history is more critical than ever: we live in a world of short memories and glib historical comparisons while we're bombarded with claims about what's unprecedented and what's inevitable. Our department is playing a crucial role in creating and disseminating new historical research, whether through Prof. Fields-Black's Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Combee*, the dozens of other books and articles our faculty have produced, energetic new department members or exciting class offerings. Having taken over as Department Head in January, one of my goals has been to continue to build a sense of community, not just sharing food and conversation but also reveling in our collective accomplishments. I hope you enjoy sharing in them with all of us.

I want to thank Alexandra Garnhart-Bushakra, Aidan Beatty, and especially Victoria Donahoe for ensuring this newsletter came together with such skill. This is also an opportunity for me to draw attention to our other amazing staff members—Natalie Taylor, Olivia Cunnally, and Arlie Chipps—who make what we do as a department possible. We were all lucky to have had Allyson Creasman as our interim Head in fall 2024. The previous Head, Nico Slate, is now on a well-deserved sabbatical, but he too deserves special mention for having led us through some difficult years with kindness and generosity.

I would like to extend a special welcome to alums to come visit us, to join in events as they're listed on our calendar, and to keep up connections with the department. We also love hearing your good news, so keep in touch for future editions which we will publish each summer. Let me end by reiterating how important I think our work together really is. If you wish to support what we are doing, and enable us to do more, please don't hesitate to reach out to me, or if you are so inclined, to use the QR code on page 5 to make a donation. I always look forward to hearing from the great things our faculty, staff, students and alums are up to—it is part of what makes this position a joy.

With best wishes,  
Christopher J. Phillips

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHT



*“I am humbled to bring the untold stories and unheard voices of formerly enslaved people to life.”*



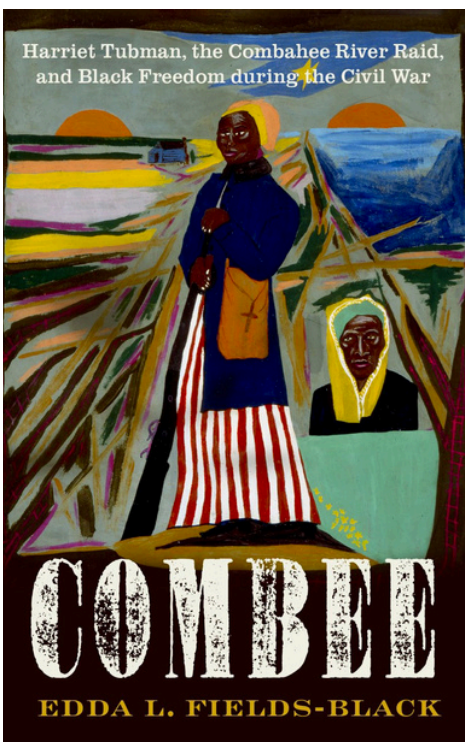
## **Dr. Edda Fields-Black has received a coveted Pulitzer Prize and the Lincoln Prize for her book recounting a rebellion led by Harriet Tubman that freed 756 enslaved people**

Dr. Edda Fields-Black’s book *COMBEE: Harriet Tubman, the Combahee River Raid, and Black Freedom during the Civil War* was selected as a [2025 Pulitzer Prize winner](#) in history. “I am truly grateful to the Pulitzer board for recognizing the Combahee River Raid and Harriet Tubman, the Second South Carolina Volunteers and the Combahee freedom seekers’ quest for freedom as a significant chapter in our nation’s history,” said Fields-Black. “I am humbled to bring the untold stories and unheard voices of formerly enslaved people to life. Thank you to the museums, research centers, archives, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, descendants of Harriet Tubman, the Combahee freedom seekers and planters, current Combahee River landowners and the entire team at [Oxford University Press] for partnering with me in making ‘COMBEE’ possible.”

Published in 2024, a culmination of years’ worth of research, *COMBEE* recounts the story of Harriet Tubman’s instrumental heroism leading the largest rebellion of enslaved people in U.S. History. A monumental work, *COMBEE* is told from the perspectives of Tubman and the previously enslaved people who successfully liberated themselves in the raid. Fields-Black herself is a descendant of a formerly enslaved man who fought in the raid. Using previously unexamined documents, including US Civil War

Pension Files, bill of sale, wills, marriage settlements, and estate papers from planters’ families, Fields-Black’s impressive research brings to life the memory of those who found freedom along the Combahee River. *The New Yorker*, which named *COMBEE* one of their “Best Books We’ve Read This Week,” writes, “Fields-Black’s powerfully situates [Tubman] among her contemporaries—controversial military geniuses who advanced the war effort through espionage, river raids, and guerrilla tactics, and fellow fellow freedom seekers who, like Tubman, chose not to fell but to go back down to pharaoh’s land and fight.”

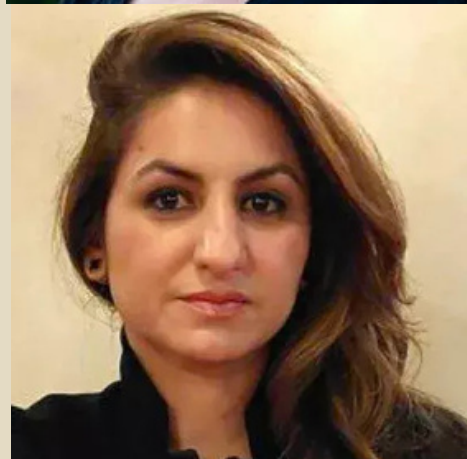
In addition to the Pulitzer, Fields-Black received the [2025 Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize](#), the [2025 Tom Watson Brown Book Award](#), the [2024 George C. Rogers Jr. Award](#), the [2024 Marsha M. Greenlee History Award](#). She also received honorable mention for the [2025 James A. Rawley Prize](#), was a finalist for the [2025 Mark Lynton History Prize](#) and [2025 ASALH Book Prize](#). *COMBEE* has earned praise from the *Wall Street Journal*, *Boston Globe*, and *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, among many others, and was added to several year-end lists, including “Best Civil War Books of 2024,” “Top 10 History Books: 2024,” and “Oxford University Press Best Books of 2024.”



# WELCOME TO THE DEPARTMENT



**Dr. Erin Dean** joined the Department of History and the Steinbrenner Institute for Environmental Education and Research in the fall of 2024 as Associate Teaching Professor. Dr. Dean is an environmental anthropologist whose research and teaching explore the intersections of environmental and social justice. Dean's current work explores renewable energy development in East Africa. She also has conducted research on gender, cosmology, community-based conservation, agriculture, participatory forestry, and political authority in Tanzania and Zanzibar. Her teaching background includes a broad range of courses in the environmental humanities and qualitative research design and methodology.



**Dr. Mejgan Massoumi** joins the department as Assistant Professor in the history of the Middle East/North Africa/West Asia. Dr. Massoumi received her Ph.D. in June of 2021 from Stanford University's Department of History. Her research explores Afghan engagement with a global communication technology, the radio, during a period of intense political reform and social transformation (1960-1979). Drawing on archives in Farsi, Pashto, Tajik, Urdu, and English, and a collection of oral histories from former Radio Afghanistan employees and other producers of music and art, her work offers a fresh perspective on Afghan history by considering the mobile and fluid international networks made possible through the producers and consumers of radio and music in the twentieth century and the centrality of the Afghan people to that story. Dr. Massoumi joins us having just completed an early-career fellowship from the American Council of Learned Scholars (ACLS).



**Dr. Anika Walke** joins the department from Washington University as the inaugural Askwith Family Associate Professor in Holocaust Studies. Dr. Walke's current research looks at the long aftermath of the Nazi genocide in Belarus. Her work is part of a growing attention to the Nazi genocide in the occupied Soviet territories and the social dynamics associated with war and genocide. In particular, Dr. Walke is interested in how people remember and live with the effects and repercussions of systematic violence. Walke's first book, *Pioneers and Partisans: An Oral History of Nazi Genocide in Belorussia*, analyzes how the first generation of Soviet Jews experienced and remember the Nazi genocide. Foregrounding questions of identity and memory, the book contributes to understanding the problems and strategies of minority and displaced groups to attain social inclusion. Dr. Walke teaches courses on the Holocaust and the history of the Soviet Union.

# WELCOME TO THE DEPARTMENT

**Beth Jameson** now serves as the History Advisor and Humanities Coordinator, where she provides academic advising for students pursuing History majors & minors. She also implements initiatives that support a robust community of humanities students, faculty, and staff, and promote the humanities across campus. Prior to joining the History team, Beth was a career consultant for Dietrich College students at CMU's Career & Professional Development Center. Prior to working in higher education at CMU and before that Tufts University, Beth spent her career in the nonprofit sector. She received her master's degree in Food Studies from Chatham University, where she focused on food justice education. She received her bachelor's degree in Sociology from Boston University and as an undergraduate she studied & interned abroad in Dublin, Ireland.



**Dr. Sarvnaz Lotfi** is a Visiting Assistant Professor who specializes in the history of R&D and economic thought. Dr. Lotfi holds a PhD in Science and Technology Studies from Virginia Tech, an MA in International Affairs from The New School, and a BA in Neuroscience and Anthropology from Oberlin College. Prior to joining CMU, Dr. Lotfi found great joy in teaching humanities and engineering students, first at Virginia Tech and later as a Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow at Loyola University Maryland. She has served as a Visiting Research Fellow at Duke University's Center for the History of Political Economy and is a member of the book review advisory board of the *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*. Dr. Lotfi is working on her first book manuscript, "Measure of Our Ignorance: A Pragmatist Genealogy of R&D," as well as a new project that charts the evolution of R&D contracting and renegotiation practices during the early years of the Cold War.



**Dr. Trevor Sangrey** joins the department as a Visiting Professor. Dr. Sangrey's research examines US social movements with a focus on race, class, gender, and sexuality. They hold a doctorate in the History of Consciousness, with a parenthetical notation in Feminist Studies, from the University of California, Santa Cruz and have researched the development of linked rhetorics of race and class through an exploration of the pamphlet literature published by the Communist Party of the United States between 1928 and 1943. Dr. Sangrey will be co-teaching the Dietrich College Grand Challenge Seminar "Gender: Contemporary Issues" in fall 2025.



# FROM THE DESK OF DR. DONNA HARSCH



Being a tenured professor is one of the best jobs one can have in this country full of unpleasant, dull, badly paid, and precarious occupations. I recognize my luck in landing on a secure, self-guided, and multidimensional career which develops within in a small community that collaboratively decides on its own regulations and standards. Certainly, at points during my 34 years (that can't be right) in our department, I had serious doubts about whether academia was such a terrific profession. Cue the pre-tenure anxiety. One day during my early years in the department, Peter Stearns, then head of the department, called me into his office and said (more or less – I was too traumatized to remember his exact words), “What have you been up to? You need to get your act together if you expect to get promoted.” Nor do I idealize collegial deliberations that, in practice, can be fraught and fractious and infuriating. I still cringe to think of some recriminations flung around at some faculty meetings.

Nonetheless. When I look back over the decades, it's the good parts that (mainly) come to the fore. I recall innumerable brief or extended, simple or complicated encounters with staff, undergraduates, graduate students, and colleagues. Taken together, they weave a variegated, densely textured tapestry of experience within a changing, yet continuous, professional microcosm. My daily interactions with Natalie Taylor about every possible departmental issue were one of the true joys of my time as head of the department. When an undergraduate course really clicked, the satisfaction of being in the classroom was deep, even thrilling. Working with a graduate student on revising draft chapters was always engrossing and (once an entire draft was done) extremely enjoyable.

In the case of colleagues, I sometimes felt like the herded cat and sometimes like the frustrated shepherd. Overall, though, I remember the collaboration. Mary Lindemann, John Soluri, and I engaged in the unusual cooperative effort of redesigning the World History course we inherited from Stearns and taught in alternating semesters. Every term we essentially revamped the course yet again. It was a difficult task, and we arguably failed the test. At least for me, however, the brainstorming, the problem-solving, the group endeavor was great fun. Knowing we were in it together, the missteps became bearable and sometimes hilarious.

In the case of the year in/year out cooperative work of faculty, I took particular interest in and meaning from hiring and from promotions/tenure. Deciding on and assessing who/what fields we would choose to bring on board, on the one hand, and carefully reading, critically evaluating, and frankly discussing our colleagues' research and teaching, on the other, were to me the heart of our mission as a collaborative body. I learned a lot not only about the field of history under consideration but also from colleagues whose astute analyses of the scholarship always impressed me. In our discipline, the work of research and writing is typically done individually. The collective deliberation that characterized our work as members of a faculty was, for me, an effective antidote to what otherwise might have been a lonely academic endeavor.

*Professor Donna Harsch*

## THE IMPACT OF GIVING

Through your gift, you are helping to create and sustain opportunities for our students and faculty to investigate and solve real-world problems. Scholarships, hands-on learning, innovative research, educational enrichment – it all begins with generous supporters like you.

Discover how donors are making a difference for the next generation of scholars like [Isabel Brum](#), [2023 History graduate](#), whose internship in Kisumu, Kenya, learning about HIV care and the social determinants of health that impacts people's quality of life, was thanks to a donor-funded award.



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



*I'm interested in finding ways to use education as an accessible tool for empowerment."*



Photo: Stefanie Johndrow, Deitrich College Communications

## Zoe Schneider, 2025 graduating senior, was named the recipient of the K&L Gates Prize

The K&L Gates Prize is awarded to a student from across the university “who has best inspired their fellow students to a love of learning through a combination of intellect, high scholarly achievement, engagement with others and character.” Schneider, who majored in Ethics, History, and Public Policy and minored in the history of Science, Technology & Society, now will pursue a Ph.D. in Philosophy at Brown University.

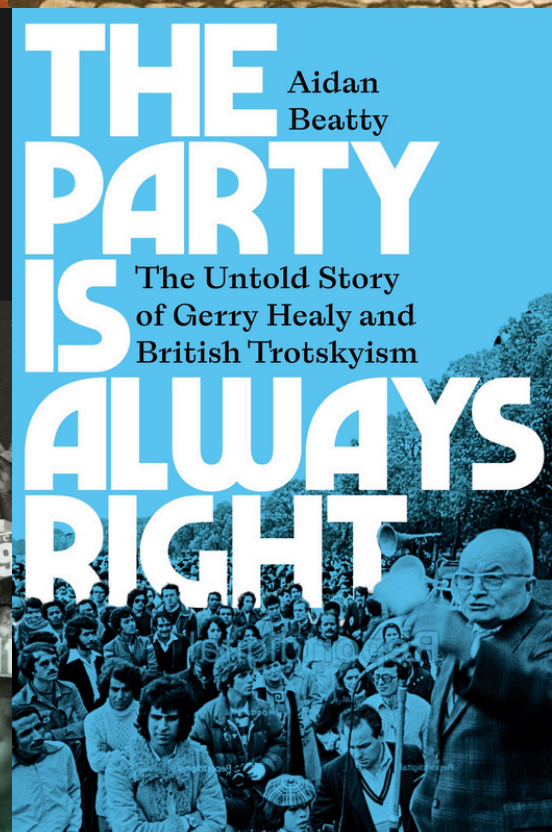
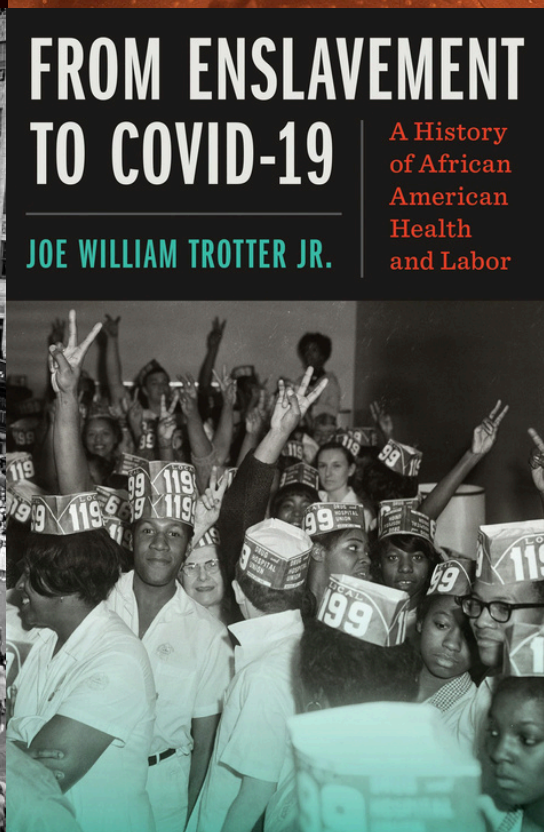
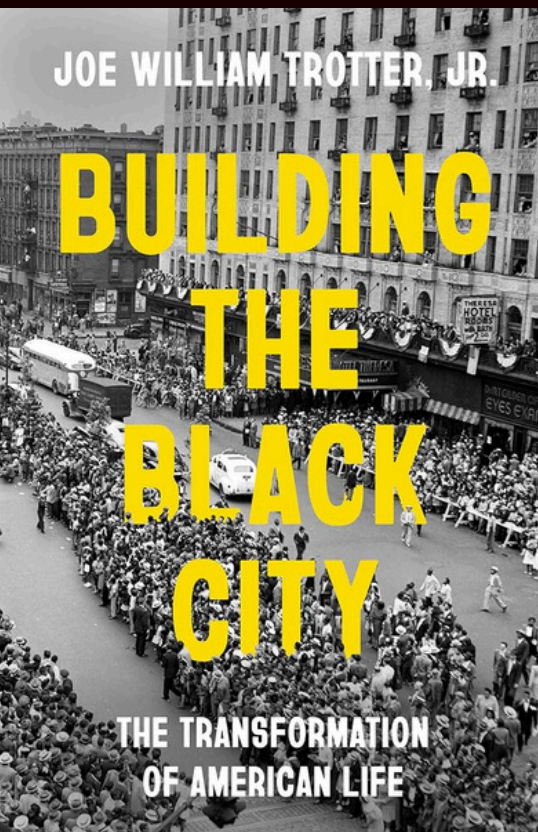
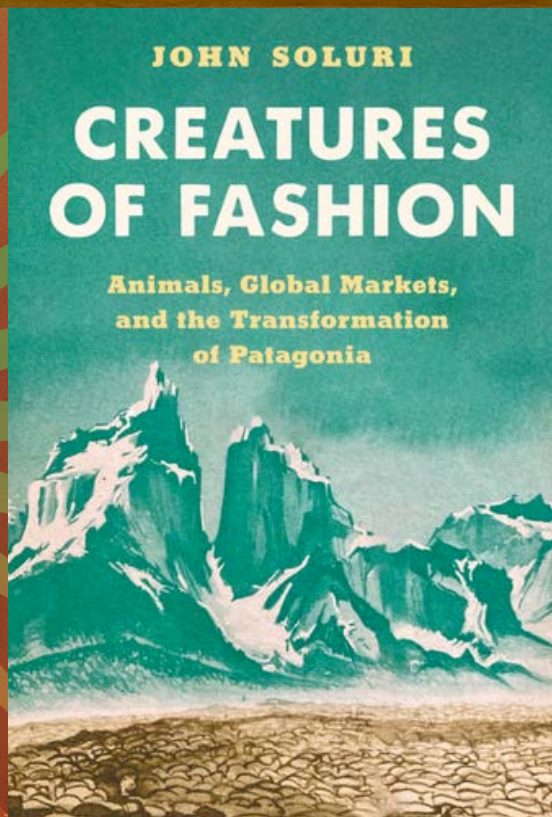
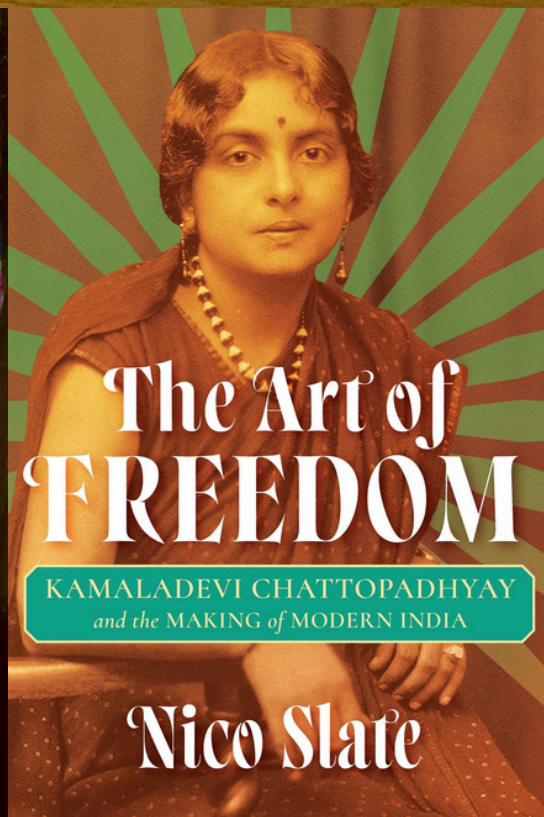
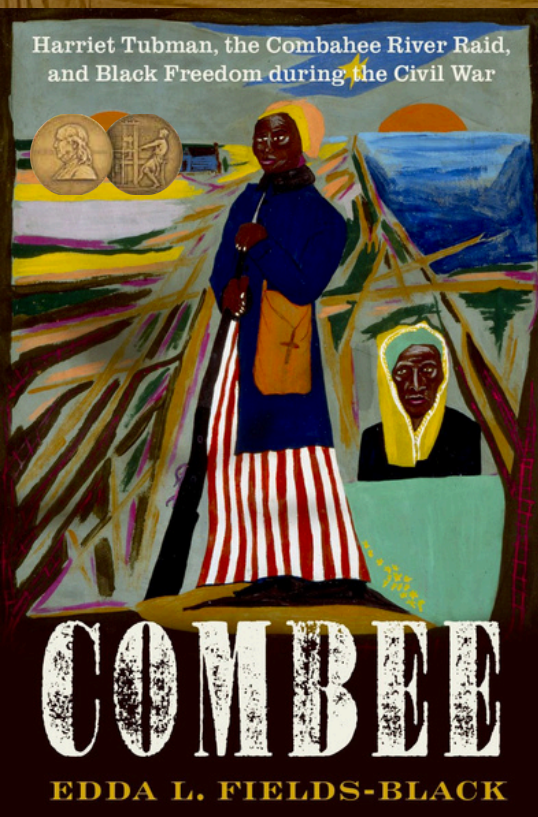
Schneider’s academic interests center on global and gender justice. Her senior honors thesis explores labor exploitation and how it intersects with global economic structures. “I’m working to develop an intersectional structural theory of exploitation,” she said in her [interview](#) with university communications. “The first part of my thesis connects a lot of different projects that I’ve done, which goes hand-in-hand with history as well.

So, it has that EHPP focus of how does economic and political policy from an imperial level through globalization and global markets shape the sovereignty that different states have to make their political decisions and human rights choices.”

Beyond the classroom, Schneider interned at Rise Up, a Bay Area-based nonprofit focused on gender justice and worked with ARYSE, an Allegheny County nonprofit supporting immigrant and refugee youth, helping develop a social-emotional learning program. She also was selected into the 2024 Collester Family Community Engagement Fellowship Program which aims to provide students with experiential learning opportunities to equip them with the skills needed for community-based leadership.

Schneider was recognized at our commencement ceremony as winner of the Eugene D. Levy Award for Most Outstanding Student in the Department of History. She also earned University honors, College honors, and is an inducted member in the academic honors society Phi Beta Kappa.

# NEW BOOKS ON OUR SHELF



# FACULTY NEWS

**Erin Dean** was selected as one of the 2025-2026 Provost's Inclusive Teaching Fellows at the Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation. Erin teaches both for history and for the Steinbrenner Institute for Environmental Education and Research.

**Edda Fields-Black's** COMBEE: Harriet Tubman, the Combahee River Raid, and Black Freedom during the Civil War (Oxford University Press, 2024) was awarded the 2025 Pulitzer Prize for History, the 2025 Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize, the 2025 Tom Watson Brown Book Award, the 2024 George C. Rogers Jr. Award, the 2024 Marsha M. Greenlee History Award, an honorable mention in the James A. Rawley Prize, and was a finalist on the 2025 Mark Lynton History Prize and the 2025 ASALH Book Prize. It was listed in "Best Nonfiction Books of 2024" on Bloomberg.com, "Also Recommended" among the "Best Books of 2024" by The New Yorker, "Best Civil War Books of 2024" by Civil War Monitor, "Top 10 History Books: 2024" by Booklist, and Oxford University Press Best "Books of 2024". COMBEE was also included on the Publishers Weekly Starred Review, and Library Journal Starred Review. Professor Fields-Black presented COMBEE at the Association for the Study of African American Life and History Annual Conference, Darlene Clark Hine and Gerald Horne Book Roundtable with Dr. Ka'mal McClarin, Dr. Deidre Cooper Owens (author of *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology*), and Dr. Melissa L. Cooper (*Making Gullah: A History of Sapelo Islanders, Race, and the American Imagination*), at the Southern Historical Association/Western Historical Association Conference in Kansas City, MO, and at the Association of Black Women Historians' 45th Anniversary Conference "Our Mothers' Gardens: The Future of Black Women's History" in New Orleans, LA.

**Michal Friedman**, together with CMU colleague Dr. Nevine Abraham, joined a panel on "Critical Pedagogies of Palestine and Israel" as part of the British and Irish Association of Jewish Studies (BIAJS) at the University of Bristol, UK in July, 2024. Michal and Nevine presented on their interdisciplinary coteaching focused on Israeli and Palestinian Food Cultures and experiential learning through leading a trip with students to Israel and the West Bank.

In May, **Wendy Goldman** gave a series of invited talks on the struggle against fascism during WWII, and women and the Russian revolution, in Buenos Aires, Argentina and Santiago, Chile. This summer, on the 72nd anniversary of the execution of the leaders of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, she was invited to speak to Congregation Beit Simchat Torah in New York to commemorate, "The Night of the Murdered Poets," in a combined program of Yiddish song and history. In the fall, she gave a short course of lectures to the 92nd Street Y in New York on the Soviet home front during WWII. She spent a month at the University of Hawaii, Manoa in the fall on a Russian studies fellowship. She gave papers at the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES): one on Stalinism, and the other, on Jews in the newly-liberated territories of the Soviet Union in the wake of the Holocaust. She continues as the co-director of the Socialist Studies Seminar, and director of the CMU Prison Education, which is now in its third year at Somerset State Correctional Institution. Many new faculty have expressed interest in the program and she looks forward to getting more people involved with this critical work. Her first book, *Women, the State, and Revolution*, written so many years ago, is finally being translated into Russian. She is currently working on a new book on state-sponsored and popular antisemitism in Stalin's last years.

**Carl Kubler** was named one of 14 Luce/American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Early Career Fellows in China Studies. His project, "Beyond Conflict: Global Trade and Everyday Relations Between China and the West, 1780-1860," examines the history of trade and grassroots relations among Chinese people, Europeans and Americans on the South China Coast in the decades surrounding the first Opium War (1839 to 1842). This project will culminate in a book. Dr. Kubler also published an article, "Speaking with Devils: Sino-European Vernaculars and Translingual Communication before the Treaty Ports," which appears in the journal *Modern China*.



Prof. Edda Fields-Black in Auburn touring COMBEE, photo credit *The Citizen*



Professors Nevine Abraham, Michal Nahman, and Michal Friedman



Professor Wendy Goldman's invited talk at the University of Buenos Aires

# FACULTY NEWS

In August 2024, **Emanuela Grama** was invited to take part in the workshop "Property, Possessions, and the Moral Materialities of Holocaust Justice" at the US Holocaust Museum where she presented on Romanian Jews' claims for property restitution in the aftermath of the Second World War. She discovered that the Museum archival collections has a treasure trove of microfilms, containing copies of important collections from the Romanian archives and plans on returning to conduct further research for her book manuscript. Dr. Grama's first book, *Socialist Heritage*, has now been published in a Romanian-language translation, *Centrul Vechi: Politica si Patrimoniul*. The translation, which includes new sections based on additional archival material, was favorably received in Romania, with critics praising the book as "outstanding" and "innovative." *Centrul Vechi* received the 2024 Constantin Giurescu Book Prize from the Society of Historical Studies (the national professional association of historians in Romania). A popular Romanian content creator made a youtube video based on the book, which got more than [24,000 views](#). In September, Dr. Grama published a short essay in a special issue of *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, as part of a Festschrift honoring anthropologist Katherine Verdery's outstanding career and theoretical contributions.

In addition to receiving a ACLS Early Career Fellowship, **Mejgan Massoumi** won the World History Association's 2023 Dissertation Prize. Her dissertation, entitled "The Sounds of Kabul: Radio and the Politics of Popular Culture in Modern Afghanistan, 1960-79," was selected from a very competitive field as "the best doctoral dissertation in world, global, or transnational history."

**Christopher Phillips** continues his work on the history of biostatistics and as part of that was invited in September to give the Harden Lecture at the National Institutes of Health. The talk was titled "NIH Biostatistics and the Reformation of Modern Medicine." He also contributed to the Bloomsbury Cultural History of Mathematics series this year with an essay on "Everyday Literacy." In January 2025, Dr. Phillips took over as Department Head.

On October 16, **Scott Sandage** gave the 12th Annual Senator Rush D. Holt Lecture at West Virginia University, donating his honorarium to the Organization of American Historians through its Distinguished Lectureship Program. His talk, "Laughing Buffalo in Paris: Indigenous History as Métis History," explained how his own family story inspired new archival research that rewrites the known history of the Omaha people from the time of Lewis and Clark. His visit to Morgantown was hosted by the WVU Department of History, where he also presented a workshop for doctoral students entitled, "How to Read a Book: The X-ray Method for Preserving Your Book-Life Balance."

Outgoing departmental head, **Nico Slate**, is currently on a well-earned research sabbatical. He visited India earlier this year to promote his new biography of the Indian feminist, socialist, and antiracist activist, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay. The book, *Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay: The Art of Freedom*, was published this past March by HarperCollins India and by the University of Pittsburgh Press. The text is a biography of the remarkable anticolonial and antiracist activist Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay (1903-1988) and has received enthusiastic coverage in the Indian press. It is the third volume of the "Indian Lives" series edited by eminent historian and public intellectual Ramachandra Guha.

**Ezelle Sanford III** will be participating in the symposium "Honoring a Legacy: 30 Years of Making a Place for Ourselves" celebrating Dr. Vanessa Northington Gamble's pioneering work as a physician, historian, and activist in the history of race and racism in American medicine and her lasting impact in October 2025.

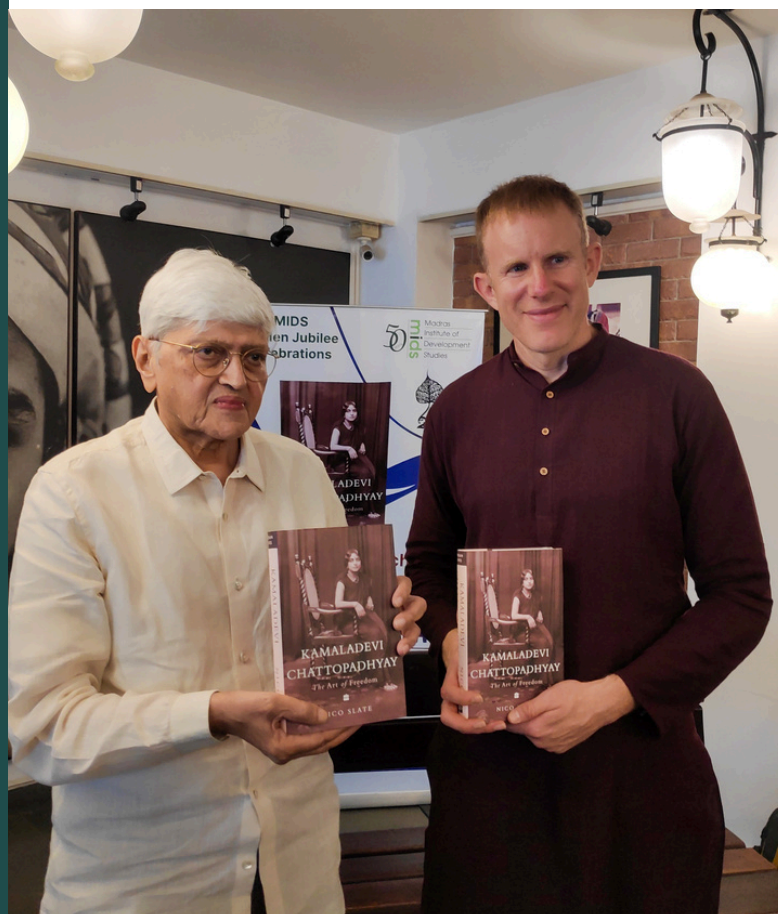


Romanian archives at the Holocaust Museum, photo credit Prof. Grama

## NIH Biostatistics and the Reformation of Modern Medicine



Professor Phillips' invited lecture at the National Institute of Health



Professor Nico Slate with Gopalkrishna Gandhi, a retired Indian diplomat and one of Mahatma Gandhi's grandsons, at a book event in Chennai

# FACULTY NEWS



**John Soluri** published a new book in Spring 2024 with the University of North Carolina Press, *Creatures of Fashion: Animals, Global Markets, and the Transformation of Patagonia*. The book examines how the commodification of wild and domesticated animals for textiles transformed Patagonia. Soluri's research project, *Coffee Break*, which was part of a Hospitality Initiative organized by the Center for Arts in Society, held various events that encouraged new ways of thinking about "good coffee" by bringing coffee drinkers into conversation with coffee farmers, roasters of La Prima, De Fer, and 19 Coffee Co., baristas, and one another to re-imagine forms of hospitality rooted in sustainability and justice, not connoisseurship. *Coffee Break* held events at The Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry, Phipps Conservatory, and the Hunt Library, among others. Soluri is working on research related to histories of petroleum extraction in Patagonia and agricultural diversity and cuisine in Latin America.

In June, 2024, **Lisa Tetrault** gave a talk to the US Capitol Historical Society about the 19th Amendment, which has since been re-broadcast by CSPAN. In August of 2024, Lisa Tetrault received a fellowship from the National Archives, the Cokie Roberts Fellowship in Women's History. The students in Prof. Tetrault's Body Politics class have completed a number of public-facing projects, from a creative writing one-page manifesto-ish drawn from class material to a series of infographics, drawing on material from the class, which were then posted around campus. Body Politics students also have been doing teach-ins; as an alternative to a quiz, they teach assigned material to another person and write up a reflection. This has been wildly successful and their "students" have ranged from their fathers to an entire sports team. These are all opening conversations that would likely never have been had and enriching the lives of everyone involved (by the students' own reporting).

In 2024, **Noah Theriault** was promoted to Associate Professor and invited to serve as Visiting Professor at the University of the Philippines in Baguio, where he taught a graduate seminar on Global Political Ecologies and gave a public lecture on "Navigating the Dilemmas of Indigeneity." Together with Dr. Nida Rehman in the School of Architecture, Prof. Theriault won a Dietrich Seed Grant for collaborative research on "Energy Justice in Northern Appalachia: Past, Present, and Future." For the American Ethnological Society's annual conference, he served on the Advisory Committee and spoke on the plenary roundtable, "For/Against Repair." A transcript of the panel Noah co-organized -- "Long Live the Lantern Fly: Invasive Lifeforms, Extermination Campaigns, and Possibilities of Coexistence" -- was published in *Tree News*. In addition, he gave an invited lecture at the Winchester Thurston Upper School on "Climate Justice, from Pittsburgh to Palawan;" completed a three-year term as Chair of the Philippine Studies Group of the Association for Asian Studies and was elected to serve a one-year transitional term as Vice Chair; and published a review of Josen Masankay Diaz's book *Postcolonial Configurations* in the *Journal of Asian Studies*. The Mattress Factory Contemporary Art Museum invited Theriault to lead a Summer School seminar connected to their *State of the Sky* exhibition. His seminar explored the role of documentation--as a set of practices and artifacts--in revealing, concealing, reproducing, and contesting the effects of industrial toxicity.



Professors John Soluri and Molly Warsh at the launch for *Creatures of Fashion*



Professor Lisa Tetrault's talk on the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment re-broadcasted on CSPAN



Professor Noah Theriault with Dr. Audra Mitchell at the EHRS research seminar "Revenant Ecologies: Defying the Violence of Extinction and Conservation."

# FACULTY NEWS

CAUSE and the Department of History co-sponsored the 109th Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History, where **Joe William Trotter, Jr.**, Giant Eagle University Professor of History and Social Justice, received the organization's Luminary Award in honor of his contributions to the field of African American studies. CAUSE marked the completion of its 3-year A. W. Mellon-Funded Project on reparations in the city of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County with a dinner and presentation of the results to public officials, followed by showing and discussion of the reparations film, "The Cost of Inheritance," with WQED film producer Darryl Ford Williams. In fall 2024, the University of Pittsburgh Press published *Black Urban History at the Crossroads: Race and Place in the American City*, the product of papers delivered at the 20th and 25th Anniversary Conferences of CAUSE; and the University of California Press published Dr. Trotter's latest book, *Building the Black City: The Transformation of American Life*. The department and CAUSE hosted a panel on the former book during the 30th Anniversary Conference of CAUSE, April 11-12, 2025, and will host a symposium on the latter in fall 2025.



Professor Joe Trotter accepting the ASALH Luminary Award

History welcomed **Anika Walke** to campus in October 2024 for a widely attend public lecture entitled "From the Ghetto to the Forest: Surviving the Holocaust in Belarus." In the 2025-26 year, Prof. Walke will join our faculty as the inaugural Askwith Family Professor, in which position she will continue her well-regarded work on Holocaust history. Prof. Walke will not only help us grow the presence of Jewish and Holocaust Studies at CMU and in Pittsburgh, but will also make it possible to place CMU on the map in these fields nationally and beyond. It will also allow us to form a consortium with Pitt's Program in Jewish Studies, with whom the Buncher Chair in Jewish Studies already collaborated quite closely.



Professor Anika Walke's widely attended lecture on the Holocaust in Belarus

**Benno Weiner** was promoted to Associate Professor with indefinite Tenure and named Director of Graduate Studies. He published "Mediating Disputes, Making Minzu: Minoritization on an Ethnocultural Frontier of Early Maoist China," in the edited volume *How Maoism was Made* (Oxford UP) and he was a finalist for the *Washington Post's* 2024 Kukula Award for Excellence in Nonfiction Book Reviewing. In 2024-2025 Benno gave invited talks at Columbia University, University of Colorado at Boulder, University of Michigan, and Dickinson College, while a talk at Academia Sinica in Taipei was canceled due to Typhoon Gaemi. Prof. Weiner also was an invited participant in a roundtable hosted by the University of Sheffield in Britain, a program committee-sponsored roundtable at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, and workshops held at L'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris and the University of Pennsylvania's Center for the Study of Contemporary China. Listen to Benno talk about ethnopolitics in China on the [Sinica podcast](#) and read a [review essay](#) in the *Los Angeles Review of Books*.



Professor Benno Weiner's travels in Yogyakarta

# UNDERGRADUATE NEWS



“Coffee and Capitalism” student Damian Molina presenting research at *The Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry* (Above photos of event taken by Olivia Cunnally)

Students of Prof. John Soluri’s “Coffee and Capitalism” class presented their interdisciplinary research projects to local roasters and the wider CMU community at *The Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry*. The show, titled “Grounds for Change?”, explored the contemporary coffee trade’s unevenly distributed benefits which also contribute to climate change.

Ava Arias, a social and political history major, received Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship funding to research Dorothy Height, an unsung Pittsburgh-born Civil Rights heroine, and her activism. The program awards \$4,500 to undergraduates at Carnegie Mellon for 8-10 weeks of summer research on campus in any field of study. Arias first learned about Height in a class with Professor Ezelle Sanford III, “Introduction to African American History,” and was inspired to dig deeper after learning about Height’s work in the Civil Rights Movement. Professor Sanford became her project mentor.



Ava Arias, Social and Political History major, spotlighted by Dietrich College for receiving an undergraduate research fellowship

Mira Ireland won the Indira Nair Award for Outstanding Achievement in Global Studies. Simone Rothstein won the Edwin Fenton - Preston Covey Award for Outstanding Achievement for Ethics, History & Public Policy. Zoe Schneider won the Eugene D. Levy Award for Most Outstanding Student in the Department of History. Kate Russo was awarded the 2025 Ludwig Schaefer Award for Outstanding Achievement in Social & Political History. All of the awards were presented at commencement.

# UNDERGRADUATE NEWS

History students Sanaa Akindele, Sofia Cordoba Valencia, Cynthia Erazo Rodas, Kira Keisler, Aleksandra Handrinos, Eric Moreno, Tatym Rasmussen, and Zoe Schneider were selected into the Collester Family Community Engagement Fellowship Program. The program provides students with experiential learning opportunities that develop community-based leadership skills. Eric Moreno, Global Studies 2024 graduate, worked as mentor for a youth soccer program.

Kyle McClain, a 2025 graduate in Ethics, History and Public Policy, was spotlighted by Dietrich College to talk about the personal and professional importance of his chosen field. McClain, states, “A lot of laws and policy are not focused on giving people choices. I’ve had family experiences with children with autism and the therapies that are given to them and I’ve seen how those therapies can sometimes hold children back from their full potential. It’s such an important field and it deserves the utmost attention and respect.” McClain graduated with University and College honors, his senior honors thesis was titled *Why Should I care About Anyone Ever? A Theory of Ethics*. McClain adds, “This diversity of applied research and allowing students to go in any direction is what brought me to CMU.”



Eric Moreno, Global Studies graduate, mentoring youth soccer program as part of the Collester Family Community Engagement Fellowship

Kyle McClain, Ethics, History and Public Policy 2025 graduate, in his Dietrich College spotlight



## ALUMNI NEWS

**Dr. Shivdev Rao, History Department alumni, named to TIME100's 'Most Influential in Health' list for his pioneering startup, Abridge, that transcribes doctor-patient conversations using AI**

Dr. Rao’s work reduces clerical paperwork burdens on physicians, decreased burnout, and helps physicians focus on the person in front of them. “Clinicians across the country can get their life back,” Rao says. “But they can also hopefully deliver more empathetic care because they’re more present and building better relationships.” Rao earned his Bachelor of Arts from the History Department in 2001. He is a Cardiologist at UPMC and the CEO and Founder at Abridge.



# GRADUATE NEWS



Stacey Akines (Above)

**Stacey Akines** was involved in a range of teaching, research, and public scholarship activities as visiting Student Fellow at the Center for Urban Education. A key part of her work was co-instructing the “Educational Philosophy of bell hooks” Freedom Seminar where she guided students through hooks’ transformative vision of “engaged pedagogy” which treats education as the practice of freedom. Akines delivered a talk on her March interview, “Liberation is Yet to Come: An Interview with Stacey Akines” in which she discusses home education as a form of liberation for Black youth. Stacey’s research on August Wilson and his American Century Cycle resulted in several projects, including the development of an undergraduate syllabus and a presentation at the August Wilson Society’s Biennial Colloquium in April 2025 where she co-presented “Studying August Wilson’s Century Cycle: Bridging Pedagogy and Scholarship Toward Future Research.” She received the Milton A. and Nancy D. Washington Fellowship Award in 2024 and was a panelist at “Revealing Black Educational Histories: A Historiography of ‘Unthinkable’ Framework Possibilities,” at the American Educational Research Association Conference in Philadelphia.

Having received his doctorate degree in December 2024 **Javier Bonilla** accepted a position as a 2025-2026 Post Doctoral Research Associate in the School of Architecture for the Initiative in Architecture, Urbanism, and the Humanities at Princeton University. Dr. Bonilla also published an article entitled, “Sanitary Purposes’: Engineering, Landfills, and Health During the Construction of the Panama Canal,” It appears in the journal *Environmental History*. He currently is a fellow at the Linda Hall Library where he will conduct research for a new chapter of his book manuscript, “Downstream from the Locks,” by examining rare engineering journals, technical publications, and public health records related to water infrastructure in the Panama Canal Zone.

**Katie Burch** was awarded a Master of Arts degree in May 2025.

**Zachary Crouch** received the Joel Tarr Fellowship and in March received the Best Paper in Global History Award at the Northeastern History Graduate Conference. Zach presented his research at the Asociación Latinoamérica de Historia Rural in Mexico City. In the coming year he will be organizing a panel on “Transboundary Animals: Histories of Animals Across Political, Social, and Species Boundaries” for the 2025 meeting of the American Society for Environmental History. Zachary was awarded a Master of Arts degree in May 2025.



Katie Burch, Kari Thomas



Zachary Crouch, Zhuoheng Li, Yi Xiao

# GRADUATE NEWS



Wyatt Erchak

**Arko Dasgupta** received his doctorate degree in summer 2025. His dissertation, “The Colour of Anticolonialism: Locating Antiracism in the Indian Freedom Struggle,” explores the ways Indian political activists forged transimperial networks in solidarity with other peoples of color, revealing race’s centrality to Indian anticolonial thought. Arko published an essay in *The Indian Express*, “Rabindranath Tagore: I will never allow patriotism to triumph over humanity,” in honour of Tagore’s birth anniversary for one of the newspaper’s recently launched columns. Dr. Dasgupta also published article, “Kala Bagai: An Early Indian Woman in America,” in the Summer 2024 issue of the *India International Centre Quarterly*.

**Wyatt Erchak** will earn his doctorate degree in fall 2025 for his dissertation “Private Wrongs: A Hidden History of the American Civil War’s First Black Union Regiment” and he was recognized for this achievement at our 2025 commencement ceremony. Erchak co-organized (with his cohort colleague and friend, Jahanzaib Choudhry) a panel on W.E.B. Du Bois for the Organization of American Historians conference in Chicago. He also completed research fellowships at the Georgia Historical Society and the American Antiquarian Society, where he worked for Cornell University’s Freedom on the Move Project, and is currently a Dissertation Fellow with the U.S. Army Center of Military History. Most recently, Erchak was awarded the Abraham Lincoln Institute’s Scholarship Award. Forthcoming publications include a book review in the *Journal of African American History* and a number of articles. Publisher’s Weekly published an interview that Wyatt Erchak conducted with screenwriter Robert Edwards about his new graphic novel, *Defiant: The Story of Robert Smalls*.

**Jamie Leach** received his Ph.D. in summer 2025 for his dissertation, “Well-Adjusted? Retirement Practices and the Social Science of Aging in the United States, 1935-1986.” Dr. Leach also presented conference papers at the Society for the History of Recent Social Sciences, aka HISRESS (Philadelphia), where he received the society’s Early Career Prize, and the Society for US Intellectual History (Boston).

**Thea Liu** completed her requirements for ABD with a dissertation prospectus titled “Rethinking Warlordism: Navigating Social Reconstruction, Nationhood, and State-Building Amid Political Fragmentation.”

**Alex Tabor** earned his doctorate degree in May 2025 for his dissertation “From Public Welfare to Human Services: The Roles of Local Voluntary Organizations and Government in Allegheny County, 1922-1997.” Alex was awarded the Goldman Fellowship Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching at this year’s commencement ceremony.



Alex Tabor

**Matthew Turetsky** received a Fulbright fellowship and completed the Boren fellowship for International Study where he studied the Quechua language. Matthew spent time in Lima and Puno, Peru, where he visited a small library and met with an agronomist who studies quinoa. Matthew also traveled to La Paz and Sucre, Bolivia, where his trip set the groundwork for a more extensive stay in which he’ll further research under his Fulbright fellowship.

**Michael White** earned his doctorate degree in May 2025 for his dissertation, “The History of African American Health in Twentieth Century Pittsburgh.” Dr. White has accepted a position as Visiting Assistant Professor of African American History at Western Carolina University.



Matthew Turetsky



**The Inaugural “Three Rivers Graduate History Conference”** was held March 14-15 at CMU. A joint effort between the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon University’s history graduate students, the conference invited students and scholars to explore the theme, “Agents of Change: Power, Resistance, and Structures in History.” Designed to foster intellectual exchange and professional networking amongst students from across the Rust Belt and beyond, the nine thematic panels covered topics such as historical memory, social and political revolution, and race, gender and science. Seventy-six individuals participated in the conference which included keynote speeches by Dr. Wendy Goldman and Dr. George Reid, professional workshops, and panel sessions. The conference’s organizing committee included Zachary Crouch and Alicia Johnson from CMU and University of Pittsburgh graduate students Samuel Rocha Ferreira, Iris Alejandra Medellin Perez, and Leila Nilipour.

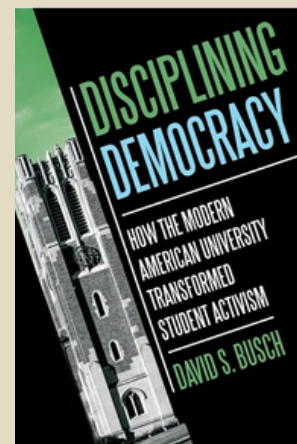
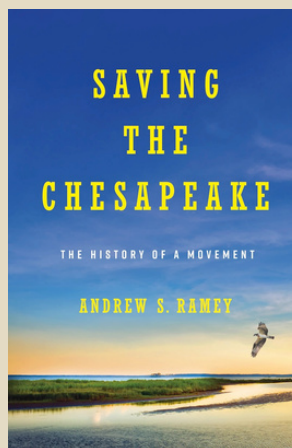
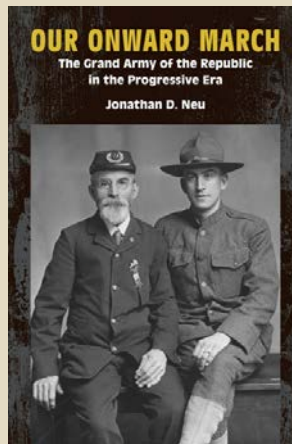
# ALUMNI NEWS

**David S. Busch** (PhD 2019) published his book, *Disciplining Democracy: How the Modern American University Transformed Student Activism*, Cornell University Press.

**Amanda Katz** (PhD 2021) has received a Fulbright US Scholar Program Award for 2025-2026 where she'll undertake the project, "Road Scholars: Teaching, Learning and Research the History of Science and Technology in Greece." Amanda will travel to the University of Crete in Greece and will have the opportunity to conduct maritime and land transport research at the Institute for Mediterranean Studies.

**Jonathan Neu** (PhD 2018) published his book, *On Onward March: The Grand Army of the Republic in the Progressive Era*, Fordham University Press.

**Andrew Ramey** (PhD 2009) published his book, *Saving the Chesapeake: The History of a Movement*, University of Virginia Press. Dr. Ramey continues his work as the Director of Advising for Dietrich College.



# STAFF NEWS

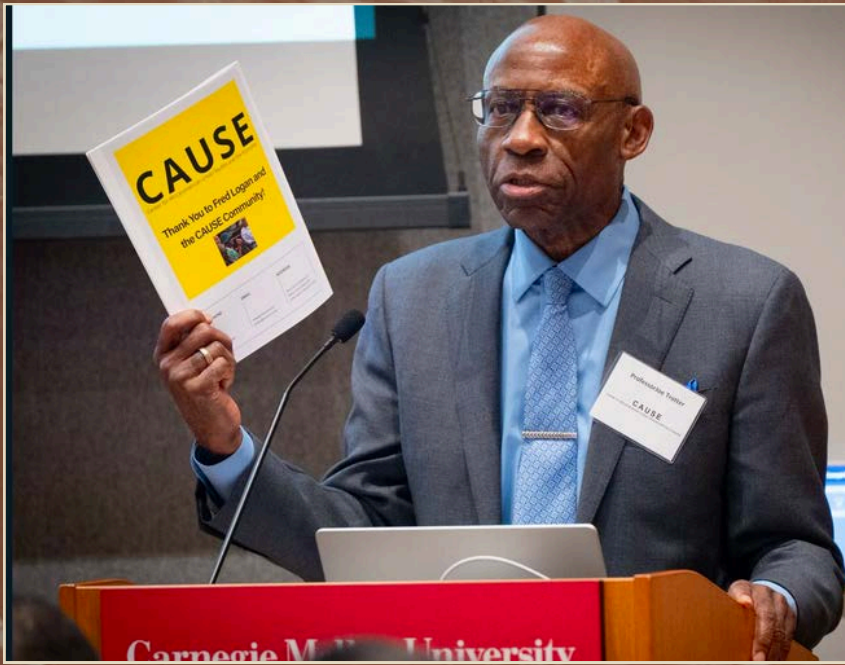


In September, **Aidan Beatty** published his third book, *The Party is Always Right: The Untold Story of Gerry Healy and British Trotskyism*, with Pluto Press (London). The book was positively reviewed in [The Irish Times](#) and [Tribune](#), has been featured in the Irish Story, Cosmonaut, and Antifada podcasts. Dr. Beatty's most recent article, "The Pornography of Fools: Tracing the History of Sexual Antisemitism," was just published with the *Journal of Right-Wing Studies*.



**Victoria Donahoe** earned a certificate in Design Fusion from the School of Design's Joseph Ballay Center, which aims to provide a more creative and imaginative culture across CMU by unlocking potential of faculty, staff, and administration. She finished the program on December 13, 2024 after giving a class presentation demonstrating design fusion in practice on campus.

# COMMUNITY EVENTS



The Center for Africanamerican Urban Studies and the Economy (CAUSE) held a 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration and conference under the theme, "Black Urban History at and Beyond the Crossroads." Photographed (above): Professors Joe Trotter, Leslie M. Harris, Leslie Alexander, Clarence Lang, and Earl Lewis.

The Annual Margaret Morrison Distinguished Lecturer in Women's History featured Anita Say Chan, author of *Predatory Data: Eugenics in Big Tech & Feminist Solidarities for an Independent Future* (top right)

Professor John Soluri's Coffee and Capitalism class lecture in the Panama exhibit at Phipps Conservatory with members of Anei Coffee, a Columbian cooperative whose organization is made up of indigenous native communities (bottom right)

# COMMUNITY EVENTS



Professor John Soluri's "Coffee and Capitalism" class photograph (above)

Kaiser Kuo, host of the Sinica Podcast, gave a lecture on "The DeepSeek Moment," and then joined Professor Benno Weiner for a live podcast recording on, "China's 'Second Generation Ethnic Policies'" (right)

Baz Dresinger's lecture "Doing Transnational Justice: Lessons from Incarceration Nations Network" moderated by Professor Wendy Goldman as Director of the CMU Prison Education Project (far right)

A Conversation with Dr. Jacob Flaws about his book, *Spaces of Treblinka*, on the Treblinka death camp in Poland, moderated by Professor Michal Friedman, Buncher Chair of Jewish Studies (below)



# COMMUNITY EVENTS



Graduates, family, and friends at our 2025 diploma ceremony; keynote speech given by Professor Edda Fields-Black. Photographs taken by Olivia Cunnally.



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[cmu.edu/history](http://cmu.edu/history)

We would love to hear about your own news and accomplishments so we can highlight them in future volumes of *Footnotes*; please submit your materials to Victoria Donahoe, [vdonahoe@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:vdonahoe@andrew.cmu.edu)

