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2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT

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Irena Polić, Associate Director
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CREDITS

MISSION
The Institute for Humanities Research (IHR) at UC Santa Cruz is a laboratory for theorizing and implementing new visions of the humanities via faculty research projects, graduate and undergraduate education, and public programs. Established in 1999, the IHR serves as an incubator for new ideas and provides crucial support to faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students at every stage of the research process. One of our key functions is to identify promising students and help them become productive researchers through mentorship programs, fellowships, and internship opportunities.

As the designated humanities center of UC Santa Cruz, the IHR is a part of the University of California systemwide Humanities Network and is able to leverage the human and intellectual resources of the finest public university system in the world.
This year we are celebrating two milestones, the fiftieth anniversary of the University of California, Santa Cruz and the fiftieth anniversary of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). For the past half a century, our faculty have received close to one hundred and fifty highly competitive NEH grants for a total of more than seven million dollars to support an extraordinary range of research projects in the humanities, from “Women in the Local Histories of Imperial China” and “Social Movements in the Modern Arab World,” to “Racial Identity in Late 19th American Fiction” and “Hegel’s Philosophy of History.” In more recent years, “Mortality: Facing Death in Ancient Greece,” and, in 2015, “3D Saqqara,” which integrates Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and 3D modeling to recreate an ancient Egyptian cemetery. For the past fifteen years, the IHR has helped UC Santa Cruz faculty brainstorm ideas, develop proposals, and once successful, administer NEH grants. We look forward to doing so for the next fifty years.

In 2014-15, the IHR launched a major initiative in public humanities including a series of community partnerships with local cultural institutions such as Bookshop Santa Cruz, Kuumbwa Jazz Center, and the Santa Cruz Public Libraries. Over the course of the year, we hosted talks by Toni Morrison, Anita Hill, Azar Nafisi, Karen Armstrong and others. In January, we held the first event in our Questions That Matter series, “Making the Cosmos Local,” a public conversation with historian Minghui Hu and physicist Anthony Aguirre. In September, we organized the inaugural plenary gathering for the Integrative Graduate Humanities Education and Research Training (IGHERT) project on the theme of “Indigeneity in an Expanded Field: Transnationality, Migration, and Human/Nonhuman Belonging.” A collaboration of humanities centers at universities in Australia, the United States, and Germany, IGHERT is funded by a grant from the Mellon Foundation through the Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes (CHCI).

This past year, the Humanities Division at UC Santa Cruz also experienced a transition in leadership. We want to thank William Ladusaw for his exemplary service and we are excited to welcome our new dean, Tyler Stovall, who was also elected to be the next president of the American Historical Association. Finally, it is fitting that as we celebrate fifty years of both UC Santa Cruz and the NEH, we also celebrate the appointment of William “Bro” Adams, who received his Ph.D. from the History of Consciousness program at the university, as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.


director’s letter

Nathaniel Deutsch
Director

New Humanities Dean Named President-Elect of American Historical Association

UC Santa Cruz humanities dean Tyler Stovall has been chosen as president-elect of the American Historical Association (AHA).

The AHA is the largest professional organization in the United States devoted to the study and promotion of history and historical thinking. It brings together historians from all specializations and professions, providing advocacy and leadership on current issues such as academic freedom, access to archives, and the centrality of history to the public culture.

Stovall comes to the campus from UC Berkeley, where he was a professor of French history and dean of the Undergraduate Division of the College of Letters and Science.

Prior to that, Stovall spent 15 years as a faculty member in the UC Santa Cruz Humanities Division. During his last three years at Santa Cruz, he also served as chair of the History Department and provost of Stevenson College.

"The humanities are central to intellectual life in the 21st century," said Stovall. "I am thrilled to come to UC Santa Cruz, a university known locally and globally for its pioneering contributions to humanistic education and research."

Stovall earned his B.A. in history from Harvard University and an M.A. in European history from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he went on to receive a Ph.D. in Modern European/French History with a minor in Latin American Studies.

He is the author of several books and numerous articles in the field of modern French history, specializing in transnational history, labor, colonialism, and race.

Stovall’s latest book Transnational France: The Modern History of a Universal Nation was published earlier this year.

UC Santa Cruz Alumnus Confirmed as NEH Chairman

UC Santa Cruz alumnus William “Bro” Adams was named Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities on July 10, 2014.

Adams earned his Ph.D. from UC Santa Cruz in the History of Consciousness program, after receiving a B.A. in philosophy from Colorado College.

“UC Santa Cruz decisively shaped my intellectual interests and fostered a strong appreciation for the liberal arts tradition,” he noted in a recent interview. In January, Adams marked the official launch of the NEH initiative “The Common Good: The Humanities in the Public Square” with an address at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. focused on the humanities in public life.

Adams previously served as president of Colby College, a position he held since 2000. Prior to that, he was president of Bucknell University; vice president and secretary of Wesleyan University; and program coordinator for the Great Works in Western Culture program at Stanford. Adams additionally served in the Vietnam War as First Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. In 1977, he became a Fulbright Scholar and conducted research at the École des hautes études and the École Normale Supérieure in Paris. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Maine Film Center and the Maine Public Broadcasting Corporation.

Adams said that NEH would now be launching an effort to encourage humanities scholars to focus on topics that are relevant to Americans’ daily lives, and that it will use grants and new projects to emphasize the link between the humanities and public life.

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The Institute for Humanities Research (IHR) presented “Making the Cosmos Local”—the first event in a new series of public dialogues titled Questions That Matter—on January 27, 2015 at Kuumbwa Jazz Center.

The evening featured a conversation with UC Santa Cruz professors Minghui Hu (History) and Anthony Aguirre (Physics), moderated by IHR director Nathaniel Deutsch.

“We want it to be a conversation with the community about questions that matter to all of us,” said Deutsch. “One of our main goals is to share cutting-edge thinking going on at the university about big topics.”

“But we don’t want to just tell it to the public, we want to share it with them in the form of a public interaction with the community,” he added.

Deutsch noted that the new series is part of a broader effort to integrate the university with the Santa Cruz community.

“Showing people what the humanities are revealing is—and always has been—about questions that matter: life, death, the universe, love, play, community. The title of the first event, ‘Making the Cosmos Local,’ captures the spirit of this series which is to bring big questions to the Santa Cruz commons.”

Another important element of the series is to bring thinkers from different fields, revealing that scholars in different areas of study at the university are working on the same problems and questions, often from very different perspectives.

“We think it will be illuminating and exciting for people to participate in a conversation with these scholars as they work publicly and collaboratively on some of these questions,” said Deutsch, “we’re trying to break down barriers between the town and the university.”

Associate IHR director Irena Polić added that one of the goals of the Institute for Humanities Research is to partner with local Santa Cruz institutions such as Bookshop Santa Cruz, Kuumbwa jazz center, and the public libraries to highlight that these are all big cultural institutions in the city.

“The more collaboration there is, the more interesting it becomes. It creates a synergy that becomes more compelling,” said Polić. “The university should not be seen as an ivory tower on the hill, but rather as an organic partner in the community.”

Questions That Matter
New public humanities series brings campus to community

WORDS SCOTT RAPPAPORT PHOTOGRAPHY TOSH TANAKA
Beloved Author Speaks about Writing, Revelations, and Good and Evil

Writings Dan White  Photography Steve Kurtz

Toni Morrison delivered the Peggy Downes Baskin Ethics Lecture at the Rio Theatre in Santa Cruz on October 25, 2014 and received the UC Santa Cruz Foundation Medal at the Founders Celebration dinner that evening.

At 83, Toni Morrison has no plans to retire. At this point in her career, that kind of drive has little to do with unmet goals, the Nobel Prize winner has written 10 novels, a play, and many nonfiction pieces. Her body of work, including the novel Beloved, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1988, is already part of the literary canon.

But Morrison, speaking by phone in her distinctive low, whispery voice from her home in New York’s Hudson Valley, said she just can’t be happy without a project. Her creative impulse and her desire for artistic freedom are as strong as ever.

“Writing novels is the world to me,” she said. “The outside world can be OK or not OK, beautiful or not beautiful, but I am in control here,” said Morrison, who still scrutinizes the first drafts of her novels with a pencil on yellow legal pads. “When I’m writing, nobody’s telling me what to do. The expectations are high because they are mine, and that is a kind of freedom I don’t have anywhere else. Nowhere.”

While Morrison was a well-known literary figure before Beloved, that book’s blockbuster success took her into the mainstream—a remarkable feat, considering the novel’s unflinching look at slavery. Its main character, Sethe, based on real-life escaped slave Margaret Garner, kills one of her children to spare her a life of enslavement.

The impact of Beloved—and Morrison’s writing output as a whole—cannot be overstated, said Angela Davis, the scholar, activist, and UC Santa Cruz professor emerita who introduced Morrison at the 2014 Peggy Downes Baskin Ethics Lecture.

Morrison, through fiction, has made social change, a feat many others have been able to accomplish through nonfiction writing and activism, Davis said.

“I don’t think that our notion of freedom would be what it is without the impact of Toni Morrison.”

Beloved “helped us think about U.S. history in an entirely different way,” Davis said, and Morrison’s specificity—including her elegantly crafted characters—helped change “the abstractness of the portrayal of slavery… it became possible to humanize slavery, to remember that the system of slavery did not destroy the humanity of those whom it enslaved.”

The two have been friends since the early ’70s, when Morrison, while working as an editor at Random House, edited Davis’s autobiography. During that period, Morrison was bringing out new works by uncompromising authors including the African American feminist writers Toni Cade Bambara and Gayl Jones.

Morrison, once an outsider, went on to change the face of publishing, both as a writer and editor, said Paul Skenazy, professor emeritus of literature at UC Santa Cruz, who taught Morrison’s work for years.

“At this point, more than a quarter century later, it’s hard to remember how compact and insular the publishing world was before Morrison, Maxine Hong Kingston, and others made cracks in it,” Skenazy said.

Morrison’s book Song of Solomon is as smart and evocative as writing gets, Skenazy said.

“Her ability in that book to move across fantasy and the hard terms of fiction. [She] does a lot, and it’s powerful.”

Morrison believes an “obsession” with evil has crept into literature over the past century or so while the forces of good have been driven to the sidelines and compelled to bite their tongues.

Morrison thinks this preoccupation, which she credits in part to the horrors of World War I, also holds true in the media. She spoke of news reports that portrayed the Amish community as “freakish” when members of the religious group reached out to comfort the widow of an Amish man who took his own life after committing a killing spree that left five schoolgirls dead. TV broadcasts and newspapers “twisted” what Morrison considered to be a selfless refusal on the part of the community to seek vengeance.

She believes the media has a lurid fascination with things like mass killings, brazen kidnappings, and heinous abuse and neglect, and that it is simply too easy to let such forces dominate works of fiction.

Evil, she says, often has a superficial glamour in stories and novels: “I always think of evil with a top hat and a big band and a cape, a cane maybe, some shiny jewelry so you are very attracted by the glitter.”

On the other hand, compelling portrayals of good are harder to pull off, Morrison said.

Nevertheless, “there really isn’t anything else that humans ought to be cultivating and living for,” she said. “The rest of it is petty and selfish: cartoonish almost.”
On a Bus with Archives of the Non-Racial:
A Mobile Workshop in South Africa

IMAGINE some 45 or so scholars, students, public intellectuals, independent scholars, artists, and performers, all on a charter bus. Now imagine them driving through South Africa—a shared interest in the study of the language of race and racism having brought them together. That was, in effect, the 2-week long mobile workshop, Archives of the Non-Racial: A Mobile Workshop in South Africa which took UC Santa Cruz Ph.D. Candidate in History of Consciousness S.A. Smythe (IHR Summer Research Fellow 2014), Assistant Professor of History Marc Matera, Associate Professor of Feminist Studies Gina Dent, and Distinguished Professor Emerita of History of Consciousness, Angela Davis on a journey. This journey began in Johannesburg and continued through Swaziland, on to Durban’s BAT Centre, then to the Mandela Museum, then to the Steve Biko Center in Ginsberg on the Eastern Cape, and finally over to Cape Town.

International participants, around 60 in total, attended local public events, engaged in public Q&A sessions, hosted open-mic sessions, held panel discussions, gave lectures, organized seminars, and visited museums. During the long bus rides in between, everyone seemed to be more creatively inspired than anything else. They used that time to write poetry, create spoken-word, draw, and give video interviews to the accompanying videographer, Tjasa Kancler, who created a documentary of the workshop.

Oftentimes participants were simply moved to stand up, grab the mic, and engage everyone in conversation. The nature of the workshop was something truly unique.

So where did the idea originate from?

The Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism (JWTC)—under the umbrella of the university’s Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER) and the Seminar in Experimental Critical Theory (SECT)—a program of the UC Humanities Research Institute (UCHRI), joined forces and organized this 2-week mobile workshop, Archives of the Non-Racial which represented, in a leading way, the innovative modes of working in the human and social sciences.

Since SECT’s inception in 2004, the annual summer program has never mounted a workshop of this kind.

The Archives of the Non-Racial Workshop assessed the possibilities and limits of the “non-racial” in terms of the politics of the modern world and its core values: democracy, freedom, dignity, equality, the human, universality, and justice. Among the distinguished sat Achille Mbembe—research professor in history and politics at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa—public intellectual and co-convenor of the workshop. Achille approached UC Santa Cruz Ph.D. Candidate S.A. Smythe and suggested she collect material for Volume 7 of the “Johannesburg Salon,” the online magazine of the JWTC.

S.A. will collect raw material—in her words, “the rawer, the better” of poetry, diary entries, sketches, songs, and art-work. She will also include professors’ and scholars’ notes from the workshop. This will be the beginning of her project to curate a multimedia collection for the website.

“A.S. and I are sure we can produce something truly creative—half design, half an exhibition, half a hip journal, half an academic item—deliberately fragmentary, assembled, and curated.” - Achille Mbembe

UC Santa Cruz Assistant Professor of History, Marc Matera comments, “In addition to my own work, this workshop influenced my teaching and the curriculum of my courses. Interdisciplinary discourse goes hand in hand with fostering transnational conversations, and as an historian, I hope my work becomes oriented towards present issues I have been made aware of through connections I made with scholars around the world.”

Marc’s work focuses on Modern Britain and the British Empire; Black European Studies; Modern European cultural, social, and intellectual history; Black Atlantic; women’s and gender history; history of sexuality; and world history. He is currently developing a new project on a topic very much in the spirit of conversations from the workshop.

As a member of UCHRI, the UC Santa Cruz Institute for Humanities Research (IHR) will continue to support SECT programs and provide crucial support to faculty and students at every stage of the research process, and looks forward to many more academic adventures for humanities faculty and students alike.
Anita Hill’s life changed forever in 1991 when a television audience of 22 million saw her testify before the Senate Judiciary Committee during the confirmation hearing for Supreme Court nominee Judge Clarence Thomas.

Her calm demeanor—as she was pressed to endlessly repeat the graphic descriptions of sexual harassment she endured while working for Thomas—struck a chord with the public and began a conversation about sexual harassment and power in the workplace that still resonates today.

Now an author and professor of law, public policy, and women’s studies at Brandeis University, Hill came to UC Santa Cruz on Thursday, February 26, to deliver a free public lecture on the topic: “Speaking Truth to Power: Gender and Racial Equality, 1991-2015.”

In a telephone interview from her office in Boston, Hill recalled the groundbreaking hearings that took place 23 years ago in Congress.

“The experience itself was surreal beyond anything that I think anybody could have prepared for,” said Hill. “The committee had already voted on the candidacy and nobody really wanted to have a second hearing—there was antagonism on my testifying on both sides, whether it was Democrats or Republicans. It wasn’t until the public demanded a hearing that I got to even be there.”

“I was really there to testify about the character of Clarence Thomas—I wasn’t there to declare that I was sexually harassed,” she added. “It was a fact-finding hearing. But people in this country think that I was on trial because of the tone set by the Senate committee. How (then Senator) Joe Biden allowed the issue to be framed gave people the entirely wrong impression, and it gave the Republicans license to treat me in the way that they did.”

A new documentary film released last year by Academy Award winner Frieda Mock titled ‘Anita: Speaking Truth to Power’ captures the absurdity of the hearing that took place in an era when sexual harassment in the workplace was not yet a national issue.

“When students watch the hearing in the movie, they’re stunned,” Hill noted. “It seems to them like that must have been at least 50 or 60 years ago—that it couldn’t have happened within the lifetimes of people they know, or in their parents’ lifetime. It’s hard for them to believe it.”

In conjunction with Hill’s talk on campus, which was attended by over 800 people, the documentary was screened in downtown Santa Cruz at the Nickelodeon Theater.

After the hearings, Hill began speaking to worldwide audiences about how to build on the progress of the women’s and civil rights movements, urging them to expand their concept of equality to include more than just legal rights. She also wrote her autobiography ‘Speaking Truth to Power’ in 1995.

Four years ago, she followed with another book ‘Reimagining Equality: Stories of Gender, Race and Finding Home’ about the subprime meltdown, examining the deep roots of race and gender inequities that contributed to the devastation of families and communities across the country. But despite the persistence today of entrenched sexual harassment and racial discrimination, Hill—who in 1996 became the first African American to be tenured at the University of Oklahoma, College of Law—still remains hopeful about the future.

“I grew up in a household, the youngest of 13 children,” said Hill. “My mother was born in 1911 and my father in 1912, in rural areas of Arkansas and Oklahoma respectively. They raised children, some of whom were raised in Jim Crow segregation, and daughters who were legally discriminated against. That was part of their reality. But my mother believed that we all get educated and get prepared for the possibility of doing all these things women weren’t allowed to do.”

“So I’ve seen change, not only in my lifetime, but in my siblings’ lifetime, and in my parents’ lifetime. And that’s what I keep holding onto.”

“I also know that everybody doesn’t have to be on board for change to be possible,” she added. “It just takes a committed few to move us. And I’ve witnessed over and over again those people who are truly committed to progress.”

Anita Hill’s visit was presented by the UC Presidential Chair in Feminist Critical Race and Ethnic Studies and the Institute for Humanities Research, co-sponsored by the Office of the Dean of Students, Humanities Division, Social Sciences Division, Arts Division, and Bookshop Santa Cruz.
Jennifer L. Derr, Assistant Professor of History at UC Santa Cruz, received the 2014-2015 IHR Faculty Fellowship. Some of the fellowship funds will be used to purchase rights to images to be included in her manuscript, A New Nile: the construction of the environment and the practice of the state in colonial Egypt, which derives from her dissertation completed at Stanford University in 2009.

As a completed manuscript, A New Nile will provide a rich historical narrative of the transformation of the Nile River and the practice and experience of colonial authority through Egypt’s material agricultural worlds during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Jennifer will collect an array of images, including: 1) before and after pictures of the 1902 Aswan Dam taken by European resident photographers and postcards featuring the infrastructure and after pictures of the 1902 Aswan Dam taken by European residents; 2) colonial images of Egyptian laborers working in those agricultural fields; and 3) medical photographs from the late 19th and early 20th century that portray the physical effects of the disease schistosomiasis—a waterborne disease that spread as a result of the construction of the Aswan Dam.

In an interview discussing her extensive work in Egypt, Jennifer remarks, “moving forward, I ask myself, how will I make an academic manuscript accessible to people outside of academia in Egypt,” and indeed continues to engage in dialogue with scholars from the American University of Cairo and historians associated with Cairo University on understanding how Egyptian citizens—not elites—experience, and often live, in regions outside of the cities of Egypt’s north.

Jennifer received a B.S. in Biological Science with a minor in Middle Eastern History, going on to study history and humanities at the graduate level. Her research covers a range of disciplines—from environmental science, to history—and Jennifer’s academic career achievements are a testament to the university’s commitment to fostering an environment where interdisciplinary study, dialogue, and research can be nurtured.

A New Nile strongly influenced the ways in which my manuscript, A New Nile, has developed – at this university there is a wide range of conversations interrogating questions of scientific practice, the construction of the environment, and the interactions of human beings with these material worlds; these conversations have shaped my work and my path moving forward.

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Ph.D. Candidate in Literature, Joanna Meadvin, received the 2014-2015 IHR Dissertation Fellowship and traveled to the Jewish Historical Society of New York, and to the University of Pennsylvania to read Waldo Frank and Henry Roth’s papers in order to finish the 3rd chapter of her dissertation – “Makhn Amerike / Haciendo la América / Making America”: Jewish Immigrants Write the Jewish Americas (1890-1970) which tells the little known story of the intertwining of Yiddish, Spanish, and English in the multilingual cultures of the twentieth-century Americas.

The project addresses Jewish Studies and American Literary Studies with a focus on literature produced in Argentina and the United States in Spanish, English, and Yiddish.

“My dissertation, grounded in the new multilingualism of American literary studies and the traditional transnational focus of Jewish studies, explores the possibilities offered by the historical conjunction of Yiddish, Spanish and English in the twentieth century. Multilingualism, with its attendant fractured loyalties, has always been an American reality. My project encourages us to challenge the traditional equation between language and nation, as we reframe citizenship in broader and more hopeful outlines,” shares Joanna.

She chose to pursue her graduate work at UC Santa Cruz as she was drawn not only to the Literature Department’s interdisciplinary and multilingual approach, but also to the university’s mission to promote diversity and public service through teaching.

Professionally, Joanna has taught for the Peace Corps, New York City public schools, and at the college level, as a teaching assistant at UC Santa Cruz for Latino Literature, Literature of the LA Riots, Introduction to Literature, Post-colonial Theory, The Hebrew Bible, and as an instructor for the 2014 and 2015 summer class Translation Theory.

Joanna has been teaching steadily at UC Santa Cruz and has had the opportunity to deepen the connections between her research interests and pedagogy. She feels like she’s benefited greatly—both as a teaching assistant and as a graduate student—from strong student-faculty mentorship relationships. “I appreciate the trust the professors I’ve worked with—Nathaniel Deutsch and Juan Poblete—and especially my advisor, Susan Gillman, have shown me throughout my graduate studies at UC Santa Cruz.”

As the 2014-2015 recipient of the Year-Long Dissertation Fellowship, Joanna traveled again to Buenos Aires to gather more information on the committed communist and Yiddishist, Jewish Argentine writer Mimi Pinzón (1900-1975). Pinzón is an author Joanna addresses in the 3rd chapter of her dissertation, an author who provides a portrait of radical, secular Jewish identity that resists the better-known narrative of Jewish assimilation in the Americas.

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Graduate Fellows

JESSICA BARBATA JACKSON, HISTORY
Summer Research Fellow
“Problematizing Jim Crow: Italian Immigrants in the Gulf South, 1880–1914”

ISAAC BLACKSMITH, HISTORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS
Summer Research Fellow
“Conflict Journalism and the Knowledge-Productions of War”

MELISSA BRZYCKI, HISTORY
Summer Research Fellow
“Inventing the Socialized Child, 1949–1976”

NICKOLAS CONRAD, HISTORY
Summer Dissertation Fellow
“Leaving the Church: Studies in the Dissolution of Religious Belief in France, 1770–1940”

ASAD HAIDER, HISTORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS
Summer Research Fellow
“Class Composition and Uneven Development”

RITA JONES, HISTORY
Summer Research Fellow
“A Curious Healing: Women, the Body, and Spiritual Transformation in Late Nineteenth-Century Protestant Movements”

NICHOLAS KALIVODA, LINGUISTICS
Summer Research Fellow
“Agreement in Tesoítlan del Valle Zapotec”

MURIS MACGIOLLABHUI, HISTORY
Summer Research Fellow
“Carrying the Green Bough: A Transatlantic History of the United Irishmen, 1795–1820”

PATRICK MADDEN, HISTORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS
Summer Dissertation Fellow
“The Rise and Decline of Commercial Society: Adam Smith and the Problem of Historical Progress”

SOPHIA MAGNONE, LITERATURE
Summer Dissertation Fellow
“The Speculative Agency of the Nonhuman: Animal, Object, and Posthuman Worldings”

JOANNA MEADVIN
Year-Long Dissertation Fellow
“‘Makhn Amerike / Haciendo la América / Making America’: Jewish Immigrants Write the Jewish Americas (1890–1970)”

JESSICA NEASBITT, HISTORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS
Summer Research Fellow
“‘New representation regimes’: Questions of citizenship in Postcolonial Italy”

ERICA MYSTERY, HISTORY
Summer Dissertation Fellow
“You Can Stake Our Land but You Can’t Stake Our Spirits: Dispossession and Anti-Military Base Struggle in Western Tokyo”

ERIK ZYMAN, LINGUISTICS
Summer Research Fellow
“The Syntax of the Verb Phrase in P’urhepecha”

LAUREN SHUFRAN, LITERATURE
Summer Dissertation Fellow
“The Protestant Reformation and the English Amatory Sonnet Sequence: Salvation and the Trouble of Ending”

S.A. SMYTHE, HISTORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS
Summer Research Fellow
“Conflict Journalism and the Knowledge-Productions of War”

RITA JONES, HISTORY
Summer Research Fellow
“A Curious Healing: Women, the Body, and Spiritual Transformation in Late Nineteenth-Century Protestant Movements”

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LISA SCHULZ, LITERATURE
Summer Research Fellow
“Temporalizing Texas: A Hemispheric, Transnational, and Multilingual Study of Comparative Revolutions”
ERM: The Rise of the Feminist Movement in Okinawa and the * Bertha N. Melkonian Prize Recipient
Mentor: Sandra Chung, Linguistics

“Chamorro Loanword Morphology”
Mentor: Emily Honig, History

“Humanitarian Intervention, a Feminist Perspective”
Mentor: Neda Atanasoski, Feminist Studies

“Rumored Fair Housing Act and California Proposition 14”
Mentor: David Brundage, History

Mentor: Alan Christy, History

“Changing Role of Media, 1995-Present”

JENNIFER J. LEMIEUX, HISTORY
FRANCISCO M. DELGADO, LINGUISTICS
AMANDA L. CHEUNG, LANGUAGE STUDIES
CAMILLE A. CHARETTE, PHILOSOPHY
JORDAN C. BROWN, HISTORY

Undergraduate Fellows

Rafferty Lincoln, History
“Traced Culture: Life and Identity in the Provincial Roman Empire”
Mentor: Charles Hedrick, History

Eileen R. O'neill, Linguistics
“Phonetic and Phonological Change and the Influence of English on Modern Irish”
Mentor: Jaye Padgett, Linguistics

Samantha Orinda, Feminist Studies
“Tracing Contributions: Salvadoran Women in the Diaspora and the 2014 Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) Presidential Campaign”
Mentor: Hector Pefia, Latin American and Latino Studies

Valery N. Vaneças, Linguistics
“A Study in Voice-Quality Using Accelerometers”
Mentor: Grant McGuire, Linguistics

Jake Vincent, Linguistics
“Chamorro Head-Internal Relative Clauses and the Linker”
Mentor: Sandra Chung, Linguistics

There’s no other place where great scholars and ordinary fans and lay readers like me can have a powerful collective experience interpreting and enjoying a great writer like Dickens, who continues to speak to us across two centuries. I’m honored to have the opportunity to join John in helping make that continue,” Stern noted.

John Jordan is an emeritus faculty member of the Literature Department. During his past four decades at UC Santa Cruz, he was a founding faculty member of Merrill College and one of the original founders of the Dickens Project.

Although he is now retired from his faculty position, Jordan will continue on as director of the Dickens Project until 2019, a position he has held for the past 30 years.

Michael Stern is senior counsel at Cooley LLP in Palo Alto. He received a J.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, Boalt Hall School of Law; a Ph.D. in English from Yale University; an M.A. in English from the University of Cambridge, where he was a Kellett fellow at Clare College; and a B.A. in English (magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa) from Columbia University.

Jordan noted that Stern discovered the Dickens Project four years ago after reading a feature story about it in the New Yorker magazine. “He was pleased and surprised to learn we existed and are so close to where he is in Palo Alto,” said Jordan.

“Reading Dickens was a formative experience for me,” said Stern. “His inimitable energy, artistry and critical vision made the prospect of doing English utterly compelling.”

“In his own time, Dickens bridged many gulfs—between social classes, between literary and popular culture, and between different media and modes of performance,” he added. “In our time, he continues to do so. The Dickens Project is a unique venue enabling that.”

“The combination of the Presidential Chair and the Friends endowment are goals of the Campaign for UC Santa Cruz, which to date has raised more than $210 million in resources for the campus.

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“The combination of the Presidential Chair and the Friends endowment will go a long way in ensuring the Dickens Project remains financially sustainable and stays headquartered at UC Santa Cruz,” said Jordan.

UC Santa Cruz has received a $500,000 gift from John Jordan and Michael Stern, plus matching funds from the UC Regents, to establish a $1 million Jordan-Stern Presidential Chair for Dickens and Nineteenth-Century Studies.

The gift will provide support for research and teaching of nineteenth-century literature, and the development and implementation of programs for the Dickens Project in the Humanities Division.

A scholarly consortium headquartered at UC Santa Cruz, The Dickens Project consists of members from more than 40 universities across the United States and around the globe. It is internationally recognized as the premier center for Dickens studies in the world and is one of the leading sites for research on 19th-century British culture.

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**Research Centers & Projects**

**CENTER FOR ANCIENT STUDIES**

The Center for Ancient Studies supports the community of scholars, students, and the general public in and near Santa Cruz who take an interest in antiquity. Programming and research emphasize the many different histories and cultures of the ancient world, the relationships among them, and the place of these antiquities in the modern world. The most visible activity of the Center is its ongoing lecture series on “Archaeology and the Ancient World.” These lectures reflect the diversity of the ancient world, and illustrate the many scholarly approaches to it. Lectures are intended to be of interest to the research community of UCSC, but also reach out to the educated public. Topics have ranged from ancient China to India to Greece and Rome, from Africa to Meso-America. In the past year we hosted two well-attended lectures. Professor Michael Frachetti of Washington University, St. Louis, spoke on his ongoing excavations in Uzbekistan: “Uncovering a Nomadic City Along the Medieval Silk Road.” Professor Yannis Galanakis of Cambridge University spoke on “The Diplomat, the Dealer and the Digger: Writing the History of the Antiquities Trade in 19th Century Greece.”

**CENTER FOR CULTURAL STUDIES**

The Center for Cultural Studies (CCS) was founded in 2007, continues to bring together scholars, students, staff, and community members interested in the study of working people, the labor movement, and the challenges of a globalizing economy in California and beyond—yet another example of UC Santa Cruz’s commitment to fostering interdisciplinary research. Participants include faculty and students on campus from Politics, History, Latin American and Latino/a Studies, Film - Digital Media, and Sociology.

On May 7, 2015, CCS held a public event, “Working for Dignity,” at the Museum of Art and History in Santa Cruz to showcase research conducted by 100 undergraduates on survey data of workers and working conditions in the low-wage sectors of Santa Cruz County. They released a website, WorkingforDignity.ucsc.edu, a digital archive highlighting narratives and images of low-wage workers, while also providing resources for community members, organizations, scholars and policy makers interested in the issues facing low-wage workers.

This is “a census of the invisible,” said Steve McKay, Associate Professor of Sociology and director of the UC Santa Cruz Center for Labor Studies, who conducted the research. “The event is about explaining the experience of low-wage work.” McKay said, “telling the stories, not just the numbers.”

**CENTER FOR LABOR STUDIES**

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**CENTER FOR MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES**

The Center for Mediterranean Studies has developed out of UC Santa Cruz’s Research Group in Mediterranean Studies which, has produced a series of initiatives and programs, including the NEH Summer Institute and a five-year University of California Multi-Campus Research Project (MRP), funded by the UC Office of the President, involving faculty and graduate students from eight UC campuses.

This year, UC Santa Cruz celebrates 50 successful years, and they are not alone; the National Endowment for the Humanities also celebrates 50 years in 2015, boasting a myriad of programs, one of which the Center for Mediterranean Studies of the HR has had the opportunity to enjoy: NEH Summer Seminars and Institutes for College and University Professors.

With direct funding by the NIH (108,000) the Center for Mediterranean Studies has held NIH Summer Institutes in Barcelona, Spain, hosted by the Institució Milà i Fontanals, the Barcelona branch of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), Spain’s national council of research.


**CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF PACIFIC WAR MEMORIES**

The Center for the Study of Pacific War Memories (CSPWM) was founded in 2006 to support a variety of projects arising out of the History Department at UC Santa Cruz with the premier goal of promoting truly collaborative and truly transnational research into the legacies of the Asia Pacific War in the Pacific region across the 60 years since the end of World War II.

A current project of the CSPWM, “The Gail Project,” is taking place in three stages: interviewing veterans assigned to Okinawa during the Korean War, teaming up with researchers and publishers in Okinawa to show the photographs as widely as possible, and showing the photographs with the new script at exhibitions in Hawaii, and the west coast of the United States.

PHOTOGRAPHY: 1. Classics faculty and students with Yannis Galanakis of Sidney Sussex College; 2. Performance by Michael Alpert, klezmer musician following the “Liminal Spaces and the Jewish Imagination” conference; 3. NEH Summer Institute Faculty and participants; 4. Faculty members at the weekly Cultural Studies colloquium; 5. Gail Project student at Fulbright Okinawa Research Center, Yokohama, Japan; 6. Low wage worker interview, Working for Dignity project
THE DICKENS PROJECT

The Dickens Project is a research consortium composed of over 40 colleges and universities from around the world. Founded in 1978 and centered at UCSC, the Project promotes collaborative research on Dickens and the Victorian age and disseminates research findings through annual conferences, institutes, and publications. It supports the professional development of graduate students and produces curricular material for teaching Victorian literature at both secondary and post-secondary levels.

2014-15 was a busy and productive year for the Project. Highlights include the annual “Dickens Universe” conference in August, focused on Our Mutual Friend; the annual graduate student conference in March, held at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville; three special sessions at the Modern Language Association convention in January, held in Vancouver; two NEH summer seminars, one for college and university teachers and the other for high school and middle school teachers, both held in Santa Cruz; and an international conference on “Victorian Modernities,” co-sponsored by the University of Kent and held on the Kent campus in England. In addition, the Project will benefit from the establishment of a Presidential Chair for Dickens and Nineteenth-Century Studies, located in the Humanities Division at UCSC. This Chair will support the Project’s scholarly and research mission. Project Director John Jordan also announced the launch of a $1 million endowment drive on behalf of the Friends of the Dickens Project that will support the administration and public outreach mission of the Project.

LINGUISTICS RESEARCH CENTER

The Linguistics Research Center had another lively year in 2014-2015. The Center had three visiting PhD students—Anamarija van Dooren, Kristin Greer and Ivanica Richtarcikova—and three visiting research associates—Martin Kramer, Karen Lahousse, and Floris Boerselo, in addition to ongoing visitors Daniel Hardt and Craig Martell.

MORTALITY: FACING DEATH IN ANCIENT GREECE, NEH SUMMER INSTITUTE

The NEH Summer Institute on the topic of Mortality: Facing Death in Ancient Greece, held in Athens in 2014, produced undergraduate and graduate syllabi, scholarly papers, and conference presentations. Professor Karen Bassi recently received a grant for a Workshop and a Research Residency from the UCHRI on the topic of “The History of Mortality: Interdisciplinary Approaches.” The Residency, to be held in fall 2015, is an opportunity for scholars and graduate students representing a number of disciplines from around the UC system to discuss what it means to live with death from different historical, cultural, philosophical, and spiritual perspectives. The principal aim of the Residency is to identify the theoretical and methodological approaches that can initiate and sustain Mortality Studies as the basis for collaborative research and curricular development. The Residency will result in four types of outcomes: an edited volume with the working title “Mortalities: Facing Death Across the Disciplines,” syllabi and bibliographies for graduate and undergraduate courses, exhibits of creative works that pertain to the theme of the Residency, and a website for fostering scholarly, creative, and pedagogical collaboration.

SIKH AND PUNJABI STUDIES

Sikh and Punjabi Studies at UCSC supports research, teaching, and outreach on the Sikh community in the context of multiculturalism and globalization. Professor Nirvikar Singh, Satbir Singh Aurora Chair holder, teaches Introduction to the Sikhs, which focuses on these themes under the new Critical Race and Ethnic Studies major, attracts a diverse enrollment, and offers first-hand cross-cultural experience via a class trip to the San Jose Gurdwara. A second endowment, the Guru Nanak Heritage Fund, will soon support an introductory Punjabi language class on campus.

Marking the 30th anniversary of attacks on Sikhs in India, Sikh Studies Chairs from UCSC, UC and California Lutheran spoke at campus events in Fall 2014. UCSC also hosted academic speakers on pioneer Sikh immigrants to the US, and the religious lives of young Sikhs in England. Professor Nirvikar Singh gave talks at UCR and at the UCSC Cultural Studies Colloquium. He spoke to the UCSC Police Citizens Association and to the Sikh Student Association (SSA), and showed a video on community responses to the 2012 shootings of Sikhs at Oak Creek, WI. The SSA also held its second annual “Turban Day” on campus, educating the campus about the Sikh identity.

UC PRESIDENTIAL CHAIR IN FEMINIST CRITICAL RACE AND ETHNIC STUDIES

The UC Presidential Chair in Feminist Critical Race & Ethnic Studies took outstanding initiatives this year to bring scholars and renowned activists to UCSC. Highlights included a visit by Professor Anita Hill in February 2015. Her testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee in October 1991, during the confirmation hearings of Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas, galvanized a national movement against sexual harassment. Professor Hill’s lecture was attended by more than 800 people, simultaneous to adjoining campus facilities and broadcast live on campus radio station KZSC.

In addition, the Presidential Chair funded a conference in April 2015, “The Feminist Architecture of Gloria E. Anzaldúa: New Translations, Crossings, and Pedagogies in Anzaldúan Thought” that brought together scholars and community activists from across the country. Conference keynote was Professor Maria Iaquone and Laura Perez. The conference culminated a winter creative writing course with Javier Huerta, funded by the Chair, and was complemented by the Living Writers series that commenced in January with renowned playwright and poet Cherrie Moraga who co-edited with Anzaldúa the groundbreaking anthology of women of color writers, This Bridge Called My Back. Other Presidential Chair events included a Fall colloquium on “Bodies of Knowledge in the Japanese Empire” organized by Professor Noriko Aso, from UC Santa Cruz’s History Department.

Linguists Receive $260,000 Grant to Study Endangered Irish Language

“Although we all have tongues, we are surprisingly bad at knowing precisely what they’re doing or conveying that to others,” says UC Santa Cruz professor of linguistics Jaye Padgett.

“Tongue motion, it turns out, is crucial to the documentation of endangered languages. Who knew?

And we haven’t even got to the ultrasound part yet.

UC Santa Cruz researchers are working hard to document the Irish language. Even though it is an official language of Ireland and has considerable government support, it is highly endangered. Only 3% to 5% of the population regularly use it in their community, and its future is in doubt.

But one unusual feature of the Irish language is that every consonant comes in two varieties—one where the tongue is raised and pushed forward, and one where it is raised and retracted. So, one important goal comes in two varieties—one where the tongue is raised and pushed forward, and one where it is raised and retracted. So, one important goal of the researchers is to document this contrast—using real-time tongue imaging.

“We do this using a portable ultrasound machine which allows us to non-invasively capture video of the tongue’s surface while it moves during speech,” says Padgett. “Analysis of this ultrasound data will also allow us to answer more general questions about speech production.”

The use of ultrasound in speech research is still in its early stages. Other ways of capturing tongue motion can be dangerous (x-ray video), or more expensive and less portable (MRI). To date, there are very few ultrasound studies of languages outside of English and other dominant languages, and there are none of Irish.

UC Santa Cruz, however, has just been awarded a $261,255 grant from the National Science Foundation to undertake a new project titled “Collaborative Research: An Ultrasound Investigation of Irish Palatalization.”

The principal investigators for the project are Padgett and assistant professor Grant McGuire from the UC Santa Cruz Linguistics Department. They will work in collaboration with Ryan Bennett of Yale, a former student of the linguistics program at UC Santa Cruz and Máire Ní Chiosáin of University College, Dublin.

Padgett and Bennett have both published research on the sound system of Irish. McGuire and Bennett have developed the ultrasound infrastructure at UC Santa Cruz. Ní Chiosáin’s primary research area is Irish language phonology, and she is a native speaker of Irish.

“The funding from the NSF is crucial as it will allow us to take the machine to Ireland, record native speakers of Irish, and analyze the data we collect with the help of graduate and undergraduate students at UCSC and Yale,” said Padgett.

“Analyzing ultrasound data is pretty labor-intensive,” he added. “There are three major dialect regions of Irish, isolated from each other, and we are investigating all three.”

Apart from documentation and research, the researchers also plan to use their ultrasound data to create materials that will be useful to those who want to learn Irish, both within Ireland and around the world.

Assistant professor of history Elaine Sullivan has received a Digital Start-Up Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to develop a three-dimensional model and virtual tour that will demonstrate how an ancient Egyptian site evolved over more than 3,000 years.

The $47,200 grant is one of 17 awards directed to development of new digital tools for study of the humanities that are part of a larger slate of 231 grants just announced by the NEH.

Sullivan is co-principal investigator of a Digital Humanities Research Cluster funded by the Institute for Humanities Research (IHR) at UC Santa Cruz.

“I think of digital humanities as using new technologies to answer questions I can’t answer now—opening up new realms of scholarship,” said Sullivan.

“I’m excited to be part of this working group,” she added. “We all do incredibly different things, but we all see commonalities in the ways we can be creative in using these new technologies. I think people are interested in pushing the boundaries of digital scholarship.”

Sullivan joined the UC Santa Cruz faculty in 2013. Her field experience in Egypt includes five seasons of excavation with Johns Hopkins University at the temple of the goddess Mut (Luxor), as well as four seasons in the field with a UCLA project in the Egyptian Fayum, at the Greco-Roman town of Karanis.

She received her M.A. and Ph.D. in Egyptian art and archaeology from Johns Hopkins University, and her B.A. in history from Duke University.

Sullivan’s project, titled “3D Saqqara: Reconstructing Landscape and Meaning at an Ancient Egyptian Site,” integrates Geographic Information Systems (GIS)—one of the prevalent formats for data organization in modern archaeology—with 3D modeling to re-create the ancient Egyptian cemetery at Saqqara. But Sullivan noted it will also add a fully 4D study of the archaeological site across space and time.

“I’m hoping to finish construction of the model with this grant” said Sullivan. “The next step is to publish the model and stimulate access to it. The goal is to be creating resources that will be accessible to researchers, students, and the general public.”

Irena Polić, associate director of the IHR, noted that Digital Humanities Start-Up Grants from the NEH provide essential support for the planning stages of innovative projects that promise to benefit the humanities.

“Our Digital Humanities Research Cluster has done a tremendous job on jumpstarting a conversation about digital scholarship on our campus,” said Polić.

“We are thrilled to have received this grant and look forward to working with Elaine on the next steps,” she added.

Egyptologist Awarded NEH Digital Humanities Start-Up Grant
DIRECTIONS IN DIGITAL HUMANITIES

The Directions in Digital Humanities Research Cluster is a community of faculty, students, and staff engaged in using technology to define new modes of humanities research, analysis, publication, teaching and learning. The cluster hosts ongoing and special events, including a lecture series, hands-on workshops, and reading groups. In the 2014-15 academic year, the research cluster hosted nearly 20 events including working groups, seminars, conferences, lectures, and the occasional ‘Digital Happy Hour,’ open to all faculty, graduate students, and library staff building digital projects.

PHILOSOPHY IN A MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT

The Philosophy in a Multicultural Context Research Cluster investigates how diverse cultural traditions and academic contexts relate to core philosophical methods of analysis including conceptual analysis, reflective equilibrium, and logical inference. In other words, this research cluster explores both the impact of multiculturalism on philosophical methodology and the use of philosophical tools for understanding the promises and challenges of multiculturalism. In the 2014-15 academic year, the research cluster invited 6 guest lecturers to UC Santa Cruz as part of the course “Brain, Mind and Consciousness” taught by faculty cluster PI, Associate Professor Rasmus Grønfeldt Winther. Topics included the philosophy of mind, neuroscience, cognition, and social psychology, and their applications in fields such as health science, technology, and social development.

SANTA CRUZ ELLIPSIS CONSORTIUM

The focus of the research group, Santa Cruz Ellipsis Consortium, is on ellipsis (the reduction of meaning to silence) and they continue to work on the development of a new research resource; a richly annotated database of naturally occurring instances of ellipsis, one which will be freely available to researchers around the globe who are trying to understand ellipsis and what its implications might be for our understanding of the nature of human language in general. Funding from 2013 - 2015 was provided by the IHR, and from June 2015 the principal funding source is the National Science Foundation, Award No. 1451819 The Implicit Content of Sluicing.

SHAKESPEARE WORKSHOP

Shakespeare Workshop is a collaboration of scholars and artists who are devoted to the study and performance of Shakespeare’s works and to the mission of public higher education. In the 2014-15 academic year, Shakespeare Workshop hosted two major events; the first was “Shakespeare and Music,” a conference drawing on faculty in literature and music held in conjunction with the Santa Cruz Baroque Festival, featuring the Baltimore Consort playing “Music’s Silver Sound: Songs and Consort Music from Shakespeare’s Plays.” The second event, “Coming Home from War” began with a one-person play “Cry, Havoc!” by actor and veteran Stephan Wolfert, about Shakespeare’s soldiers and the experience of contemporary veterans returning from war, followed by a panel discussion the next day with Stephan and faculty from the Arts and Humanities Division.

COMPPLICATED LABOR

The Complicated Labor Research Cluster is an interdisciplinary collaboration that brings together artists and scholars around questions of feminism, maternity, and creative process. It seeks to center questions of care in our research and art whether they are explicit sites of inspiration and study or simply important to the conditions in which we undertake expressive practices. The research cluster held two events in the 2014-15 academic year: ‘Master Memoir Workshop with Ariel Gore’ and Complicated Labor: Feminism, Maternity and Creative Practice Presents A Conversation with Sarah Mangano and Maggie Nelson. Both events were held in collaboration with the Living Writers series at UC Santa Cruz.

CRISIS IN THE CULTURES OF CAPITALISM

Capitalism has emerged as a central theme for research in the humanities. Since the global economic crisis of 2008, it has become clear that scholars are returning to fundamental theoretical questions about the capitalist world-system. The Crisis in the Cultures of Capitalism research cluster provides a forum to promote faculty and graduate student research and sponsor talks and events. The research cluster has hosted over 15 events, notable conferences, guest lectures, a faculty-graduate seminar, and collaborated regularly with the Center for Cultural Studies, inviting scholars Franco “Bifo” Berardi and Jonathan Beller in 2014-15.

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Research Clusters
What motivated you to participate in the 50 for 50 Challenge?

My motivation came from my personal experience with foster care. I was raised in a small town in Vermont where generosity and service were taught at a very early age. Over the years, I came to realize that a community didn’t feel like a home to me until I was actively involved in giving back. When I first heard of the 50 for 50 Challenge, I did not hesitate to sign up.

Why did you select Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)?

When I first arrived in Santa Cruz, I tried out a number of volunteer programs, but none made my heart sing. The more I explored the city and the county, the more I felt as though there was a greater community need that just wasn’t being met, and I didn’t know where to begin. In reflecting upon the service that brought me the greatest joy in the past, I was brought back to 2001. Weeks after the tragedies of 9/11, I joined AmeriCorps to serve at the Vermont Center for Independent Living. It was in my role as volunteer coordinator for the Home Access Program, that I befriended a remarkable woman. I brought a group of volunteers to her home to paint an entrance ramp, and I just couldn’t stay away. Over the months she taught me a number of lifehacks, shared recipes, regaled me with stories of working for the State of Vermont, and recounted her experiences as a guardian ad litem. She spoke passionately about making the difference in the lives of children, and being there about myself as I have about him. I feel blessed to have such a delightful humor. Through our growing relationship, I think I have learned as much more trauma in his short life than anyone should endure over a lifetime. I had hoped to work with a teenage girl, but instead quite by surprise, I had the opportunity to work with a 6-year-old boy. His file was difficult to read. In fact it was so heartbreaking that it took me two separate occasions to get through it. The descriptions of his behavior made me very nervous to meet him. I was afraid that I didn’t have the experience to best support him. In the weeks before our first visit, I called all of my friends and family who had parented sons to quiz them on age-appropriate activities, discipline, and everything between. Once we finally met, all of my worries and apprehension melted away. It was immediately clear that he is a resilient boy first and foremost, and he defies all the descriptions and reports in his case file. He just happens to have had experienced more trauma in his short life than anyone should endure over a lifetime. I had anticipated the very worst, but was surprised by his grace and good humor. Through our growing relationship, I think I have learned as much about myself as I have about him. I feel blessed to have such a delightful child in my life.

Describe your experience, so far. Any challenges or surprises that you didn’t anticipate?

I had hoped to work with a teenage girl, but instead quite by surprise, I had the opportunity to work with a 6-year-old boy. His file was difficult to read. In fact it was so heartbreaking that it took me two separate occasions to get through it. The descriptions of his behavior made me very nervous to meet him. I was afraid that I didn’t have the experience to best support him. In the weeks before our first visit, I called all of my friends and family who had parented sons to quiz them on age-appropriate activities, discipline, and everything between. Once we finally met, all of my worries and apprehension melted away. It was immediately clear that he is a resilient boy first and foremost, and he defies all the descriptions and reports in his case file. He just happens to have had experienced more trauma in his short life than anyone should endure over a lifetime. I had anticipated the very worst, but was surprised by his grace and good humor.

What in capacity are you working with CASA?

Children whose families enter the dependency system due to parental abuse or neglect can receive referrals from the judge for an advocate. CASA then helps to pair advocates with children. CASA website states it best: “the volunteer also works with attorneys and social workers. They review records, research information, and talk to anyone involved with the child, including parents, extended family members, doctors and teachers. From information gathered, a volunteer presents his or her best recommendations to the judge, for the safety and welfare of his or her CASA child.”

Describe your experience, so far. Any challenges or surprises that you didn’t anticipate?

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Additionally, the kindness and compassion exhibited by foster parents and group home staff inspired me to join the board of Above the Line, a local nonprofit that provides extensive support to foster families and at-risk youth in Santa Cruz, Monterey, and Santa Clara counties.