

American Studies Newsletter

August 2008



FROM THE CHAIRS

The Summer In-Between

As "devoted" newsletter readers know, I love Iowa City summers and the opportunity for review and reflection they afford. This summer though has been a doozy! After possibly the worst winter ever, we experienced a "500 year flood" (this means that the insurance map zones depicting the likelihood once every 500 years of flooding were exceeded). A number of internet sites cover the flood and recovery, and so I'll only update briefly. Obviously, the department's home – on the 7th floor of the Jefferson Bldg. in the middle of downtown – was unaffected, and so we have lent office space to those dislocated by flood waters. The University as a whole sustained significant damage. The student union, the art museum, Hancher, and the arts campus were especially hard hit. The Library sustained minimal damage, and books were saved thanks to a human chain that passed books up from the basement. Faculty, students, and Hawkeye fans came together to sandbag UI buildings and homes in the most vulnerable areas. American Studies faculty Horace Porter, Deborah Whaley, and Nick Yablon all live within the zone that was evacuated – Normandy Drive, Upper City Park, and Foster Road. Fortunately, all their homes are okay.

Everyone though was affected: people helped each other; closed bridges and roads made driving around Iowa City near impossible and turned the area into isolated neighborhoods (including several days when we were completely cut off from the airport); those of us who live outside Iowa City couldn't get *to* town, and I fretted over giant trees toppling all around my house because the ground was so saturated that roots could not hold, and every new storm wind took out a few more. (Luckily, none fell *on* the house.) But, everyone in American Studies is grateful – so many others lost so much. Now, everyone is working to reinvent, recover, and return the university and town to strength.

Even before I was somewhat isolated by closed roads, bridges, and the rising Iowa River, I had the opportunity to reflect on both this year and my past eight years as chair. The Department threw a wonderful party (described elsewhere in the newsletter) for me, and I was touched very deeply by the toasts and descriptions of my role as chair. Much of a chair's job involves keeping invisible the "strings" that hold the place together, and it meant a lot to hear that I have made a difference in people's lives. I inherited a smoothly running department, and I'm glad that the consensus is that I have left it a better place than when I found it. I think that is the sum of the best possible achievement.

I am excited (not only to return to being a rank and file faculty member, but) to participate in the directions in which Kim Marra will take the department. For starters, American Studies will be searching this year for a new faculty member who specializes in Latino/a studies. We will be updating both plans for new faculty and curriculum as we prepare for John Raeburn's retirement in 09-10 and had to say good-bye to Rob Latham, who accepted a position directing science fiction studies at University of California-Riverside. We welcome this fall the largest first year cohort in more than a decade. So, it is with new energy that we look ahead. Me? I'm going on summer vacation, taking a semester to focus on my own research, and I'll be back "in the ranks" in January 2009.

-Lauren Rabinovitz



Lauren Rabinovitz and Kim Marra

Crossing from Theatre

My years in American Studies at Iowa have directly coincided with Lauren Rabinovitz's term as chair, since I joined the faculty as a quarter-time affiliate in the fall of 2000. I have been privileged to witness her leadership at close hand and have personally benefited as a faculty member from the stimulating, supportive department environment she cultivated for eight years. The excellence the department attained during her tenure was recognized numerous times by the CLAS and by a national review. It is both an honor and a challenge to be taking the DEO reins from her.

Until now, my primary appointment has been across the river in Theatre Arts where I have taught theatre history (from ancient Egypt to contemporary U.S.) to undergraduate majors and M.F.A. students in acting, directing, design, dramaturgy, playwriting, and stage management since 1990, and served as Director of Graduate Studies since 1998. During Lauren's tenure, American Studies has developed and solidified an emphasis in popular and fine arts, along with several other interest areas. I've been thrilled to cross over and participate in that development, as American Studies has become an intellectual home away from home where I've been able to pursue my more specialized research in late nineteenth and early twentieth century American theatre, develop more courses in that area, and work with doctoral students. I have taught 45:156 Arts in America: Starmakers and Impresarios, 45:155 Performing America Queerly: Histories of Sexuality on and off the Stage (with Jane Desmond), 45:118 American Women Playwrights: 19th and 20th Century, and a graduate seminar, 45:230 Performing Arts in American Culture: America through the Theatre. With research assistance from several American Studies graduate students (thank you Eriko Ogiwara, Danielle Rich, Karen Smith, Matthew Thomas, Nate Titman, and Charlie Williams), I completed one book, *Strange Duets: Impresarios and Actresses in the American Theatre, 1865-1914* (University of Iowa Press, 2006), and started another, tentatively titled "Fashioning the Thoroughbred Ideal: Show Women and Show Horses on American Stages, 1865-1930." Certainly one of my major goals as chair will be to sustain and grow the vibrant department culture in which I have thrived and in which all of our faculty and graduate students can continue to flourish in research and teaching as we cooperatively pursue excellence in American Studies.

While faculty and graduate student development must be a primary responsibility, I am also deeply committed to undergraduate education. In addition to my 100-level classes, every year for the last twelve years, I have taught two large general education lecture courses, Theatre and Society: Ancients and Moderns (49:002, Fall) and Theatre and Society: Romantics and Rebels (49:003, Spring), that satisfy requirements in historical perspectives and fine arts. Now that American Studies has become my home department, I will continue to teach these courses in fulfillment of my reduced obligation to Theatre Arts while I am chair. I am passionate about how the arts—whether the fine or performing arts, or, as Lauren has written in the CESA mission statement, the "arts in everyday life"—can offer a richly revealing window into the larger society and culture of a particular place and time for scholars at all levels. This fall, I will also be serving as Director of Undergraduate Studies, partly because we are short staffed owing to faculty leaves, but also because I am eager to learn more about the under-

(Continued on page 4)

The Department Thanks Lauren Rabinovitz

-Kim Marra

Lauren Rabinovitz officially ended her term as Chair of American Studies on 1 August 2008, after eight years of tremendously dedicated, inspired leadership for which we are all deeply grateful. When she took office in the fall of 2000, American Studies had only just shifted from the program status on which we had been building since 1947 to full department status. Thus, ushering in the new millennium, Lauren served as both the first department chair and the first woman to head American Studies at Iowa.

On a beautiful spring evening last May, the department held a gala outdoor thank you party for Lauren at the home of incoming chair Kim Marra and her partner, Theatre Arts faculty member Meredith Alexander. Department secretary Laura Kastens generously helped with the invitations and the planning and documented the event with her digital camera. About sixty current and former graduate students and faculty members and spouses attended, including Professor Emeritus Rich Horwitz, who made the trip back from Rhode Island especially for the party. All contributed to a luscious spread of food and drink topped off by a spectacular mocha raspberry mousse cake designed by Deborah Whaley and executed by Deluxe Cakes and Pastries with a cinema box office façade surrounded by cookies in the shape of movie reels. Champagne flowed during some twenty toasts, as faculty members and graduate students offered tributes to all that Lauren had done for them during her term. Laura Rigal presented the guest of honor with a gift on behalf of the department, a beautiful inlaid sterling silver serving bowl engraved with Lauren's name and years as chair accompanied by a gift certificate for cooking classes at Prairie Table. Afterward, with her husband Greg Easley by her side, Lauren movingly and humorously reflected on her experience heading the department. Among the notable events of her years as chair are the following:

2000-2001

- began by redecorating – including recovering chairs (they have held up very well; several still grace the halls)
- expanded joint appointments: Kim Marra, Eric Rothenbuhler, Bluford Adams, Rob Latham, Susan Birrell, Ken Cmiel, Horace Porter
- made Floating Fridays a regular, recurring part of American Studies (directed by Laura Rigal)
- inaugurated the American Studies proseminars with first one in conjunction with John and Joy Kasson visit: Showmanship, Stars, and Sexual Dilemmas
- Alexander Kern Dissertation and Travel Awards established (directed by John Raeburn)
- hosted holiday party with Rich Horwitz's silent porcellina auction
- inaugurated the Albert E. Stone Distinguished Alumnus Speaker
- moved the department from the 2nd floor to the 7th floor of

(Continued on page 3)



The guest of honor reflects on her eight years as department chair.



Kim Marra, new DEO, honors the work Lauren did, including covering chairs!



Nick Yablon shares a memory.



John Raeburn raises a toast to Lauren's years as DEO

(Continued from page 2)

the Jefferson Building

2001-2002

- African American film series
- proseminar co-taught with Rich: Machine in the Garden; rode the Boone Valley Railroad
- Rich retires, but before his swan song party, we brought back Al Stone, and Rich interviewed him and published the interview in AS

2002-2003

- proseminar on Food in America with John; published American Studies Cookbook
- published a book resulting from a 2000 Obermann Summer Seminar: Memory Bytes
- ran MAASA conference in Iowa City
- hired Nick Yablon
- end of her first term: went to London for summer to do research as May Brodbeck Humanities Fellow

2003-2004

- Eric Sandeen honored as Alumni Fellow and was Albert E. Stone Distinguished Alum Speaker
- Brown v. Board of Education Lecture series: Cultural Frameworks for Civil Liberties
- co-chaired and organized Obermann Humanities Symposium, Feminism and Film History
- worked on office merger for one office for all of the Jefferson Building departments

2004-2005

- Leola Bergmann was honored as Alumni Fellow
- took a Career Development Leave to work on a book
- arranged for American Studies on Know the Score: The Politics of American Musical Performance
- chaired and organized a symposium on arts in American Studies scholarship, with Tom Doherty as Albert E. Stone Distinguished Alumnus Speaker; edited some of the talks in a special section of *American Studies*

2005-2006

- tragic loss of Ken Cmiel
- created Center for Ethnic Studies and the Arts (CESA)
- Jane Desmond left Iowa for the University of Illinois
- hired Deborah Whaley
- tornado hit Iowa City

2006-2007

- CESA book dinner and discussion: Walter Benn Michaels' *The Trouble with Diversity*
- CESA Lecture Series: Thinking Outside the Box

2007-2008

- published a second cookbook, *Food in America*
- CESA Symposium on Food, Ethnic Identities, and Memory with Iron Chef cookoff
- inaugurated the CESA junior faculty publication workshop
- negotiated more TAs for American Studies graduate students than at any previous time

(Continued on page 9)



Greg Easley speaks with Rich Horwitz



Grad student Luke Stacks reads reflections from past & current students.



Lauren speaks with grad student Barb Shubinski & Lauren's partner Greg Easley

Crossing From Theatre

(Continued from page 1)

graduate program and to meet more of our majors in American Studies.

This change in leadership in our department has coincided with an historic summer of catastrophic flooding that has affected our whole city and campus, but especially the arts units. I was prepared for a major transition in moving my primary office from the Theatre Arts Building, where I have resided for eighteen years, across the river and up the hill into the Jefferson Building. But to have to do it when my first home department sits flood-ravaged, riddled with giant, roaring aeration tubes, with no power and hence no lights or working elevator, and my office contents have been hurriedly removed and stashed in a massive jumble with those of all my colleagues in the upper seats of a very dark theatre, has been traumatically trying. I can't thank Gyorgy Toth enough for helping me make the most of the strictly supervised half-hour evening time slots we were allotted to locate and haul out entirely by hand our heavy boxes of books and papers. I at least am blessed to have a wonderful new department home to move into. The rest of the Theatre Arts Department will be housed in temporary quarters over Devotay and Linn Street Café in Brewery Square, while the School of Music takes refuge in the new commercial space at the corner of Court and Clinton Streets. The silver lining is that these arts colleagues will be closer to us in the Jefferson Building. Theatre, Music, and Hancher will be mounting performances in alternative spaces like the Englert, Old Brick, high school auditoria, and churches. Our friends at Riverside Theatre, who along with Theatre Arts produce much new American work each year, still have their space on Gilbert Street, but they lost their scenery storage facility in Coralville. Thus dislocated and financially hurting, the arts need our support more than ever. As we study the traditional arts and the arts of everyday life, let's make the arts and our artist colleagues even more a part of our own daily lives.

Theatre for me is not only a favorite mode of cultural expression and a research specialty; it is also a way of working that is inherently collaborative, interdisciplinary, embracing of difference, and individually and collectively transformative. The most engaging, intellectually challenging performances are both rigorously researched and creatively inspired, often simultaneously serious and ironically humorous, and occasionally downright raucous. I look forward to collaborating with all of you in the American Studies community in my new role.

-Kim Marra

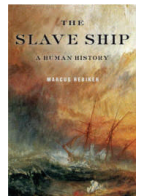
Book Reviews

- Rich Horwitz

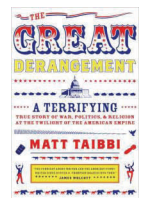
Maybe folks would be interested in some reading recommendations . . . especially since I have been unusually libertine in choosing. I.e., I don't have to be "keeping up with the literature" or "prepping classes" on anything in particular. Oddly enough, though (maybe predictably for those of you who know me well), I still prefer non-fiction. Anyway, here are the keepers of the lot:



1) *The Slave Ship: A Human History* by Marcus Rediker -- a terrific synthesis of tons of otherwise scattered material that both surveys the subject in broad outlines and grounds it to particular people and experiences, ethically engaged without being remotely preachy, a model of interdisciplinary synthesis.



2) *Where Does the Money Go? Your Guided Tour to the Federal Budget Crisis* by Scott Bittle and Jean Johnson -- a carefully reasoned presentation of how the U.S. got into its current deficit and the silliness of most of what passes for wisdom and remedies in the Blogosphere and knee-jerk positions on the left and right.



3) *The Great Derangement: A Terrifying True Story of War, Politics and Religion at the Twilight of the American Empire* by Matt Taibbi -- for those of you wish (as I) that there was a Hunter Thompson or Tom Wolfe for the current decade, a funny, horrifying, dark-dark-dark perspective on the moment. Like *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail*, it is both utterly alienated and persuasive that we should be, too. (By the way, too, a decent example, in its own way, of "multi-sited ethnography." If it didn't probably date me so, I'd rate it my number one, heads above the dozen or so other books of outrage at the Bush years I've lately consumed . . . now to the point of boredom.

Coming through Hell and High Water: Our Communities and “the Floods of ‘08”

By Gyorgy “George” Toth

Days later, as I was in sweet slumber rolling,
I woke to the sound of bells wildly tolling:
“The Tisza is upon us!” so the message found me -
And as I looked out, I saw a sea around me.

Like a lunatic who had broken his chains,
There I saw the river racing on the plains;
Roaring and ripping, it was rising higher;
As if about to swallow the world entire!

Sandor Petofi, *The Tisza*, 1847

In general, people don't seem to plan for disasters. It is in the middle of an emergency that the strain peels back the fabric of society, and brings out the best and the worst of human communities. A friend in need is a friend indeed, goes the saying, - in times of supreme collective efforts, strangers become friends, and after forged in fire, such relationships often endure.

I do not know how the floods of June 2008 looked from the inside. Similar to Petofi, I was taking my vacation in Budapest, Hungary, when I was awakened by the international news bulletins flashing on the TV screen, and finally the situation's urgency was driven home by my girlfriend's incontrovertible “CALL ME NOW” in the subject line of an email message.

I did not know what this emergency felt like for the people who were in the midst of it. The fact that international news coverage is skewed towards the United States was in this case useful for me – CNN International broadcast images and reports from Cedar Rapids and Iowa City into the heart of Europe. However, I also knew that the media's penchant for drama would distort the extent of the disaster. Thus even as I checked in by phone every few hours with my girlfriend, I vacillated between despair and ‘wait-and-see.’ In any case, the tension between sipping cappuccino in Budapest's coffee houses and reading calls for volunteers to sandbag Dr. Joni Kinsey's house was getting to me – I felt terribly guilty for not being able to help out in a time of great need.

Backed up by obstructions, a river can flow backwards, the water seeking the direction of least resistance. Waves multiply and reach much further than people would expect them to. So did the news of the floods of 2008. My first inkling of this came when I saw frantic messages on the listserve of the International American Studies Association, the scholarly body of Americanists across the world. Our American Studies department is larger than life on the mental map of the United States for international scholars who have visited here for conferences, teaching and research. Colleagues from Ireland, Hungary, Germany and Poland enquired about the state of our department and university. Scholars from as far as India wanted to know how our community was doing, what we needed, and which university buildings were damaged. Even as I was returning to the U.S., I was responding to their queries as best as I could, directing potential donors to the UI Flood Fund. The study of American culture connects our community to all these people even as nationality and geography separate us. In this sense, we are part of a larger network of academics spanning continents – a community which becomes imaginable for us at conferences and in emergencies.

I did not know what this emergency felt like for the people who were in the midst of it. Only gradually did it become clearer to me what people here were doing. I did not know how many of our professors and graduate students stepped into the breach and helped sandbag homes and university buildings, racing the clock. I did not know who helped secure precious research and collections materials from the Main Library – and who had to pack up their offices in a matter of hours. I did not know who was evacuated, and who put them up for as long as it took to be able to return to their homes. And I did not know who would be helping with flood cleanup for weeks to come.

The only thing more amazing than the silent and generous outpouring of mutual support from within our own academic communities is how reluctant those very same people seem to be to come forward and share with us the record of their selfless help. It is of the highest character not to expect rewards for this kind of assistance. Still, there is another very good reason for being candid about what you did. Sharing the details of how and who you helped is an acknowledgement of our common humanity. It is an inspiration for others. And it is a source of pride in our communities.

In the winter of 1838 Budapest experienced one of the worst floods of its history. The Hungarians of today know little else about that historic flood than the nickname of Miklos Wesselenyi, a nobleman who in a boat braved the icy waters to save people and property. Wesselenyi is still known as “the Navigator.”

As the floods of 2008 have proved, our community has many “navigators.” They are human embodiments of the moral compasses we bring with us from our various cultures to negotiate our human relationships, to realize our potential and live out our humanity. Here's to our navigators – the folks who helped us come through hell and high water.

Graduate Student Accomplishments

Erica Hannickel (to defend in September) has accepted a job as an assistant professor of history at Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin. She'll be teaching American history, environmental history, agricultural history, and everything cool and interdisciplinary on the shores of Lake Superior. She's already been chased by a bear, and is settling in just fine!

Sharon Lake received an American Association of University Women (AAUW) American Dissertation Fellowship for 2008-09, and also received the Jane A. Weiss Memorial Scholarship for 2008. She presented a paper at the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women in Minneapolis in June, 2008: "The Accidental Feminist: Firefighting, Breastfeeding, and the Rights of Economic Citizenship."

Faculty News

Susan Birrell is going to present two keynote addresses at the Korean Association of Sociology of Sport in Seoul in September 19 and 20. One presentation will be on her Everest work and the other on critical narrative analysis. She will also be doing the keynote for the North American Society for Sociology of Sport on the politics of Everest climbs in November in Denver.

Lauren Rabinovitz (American Studies/CCL) and **Doris Witt** (English) have been named the directors for the fall 2009 Cmiel Research Semester at the Obermann Center for Advanced Studies. Their topic: "World Fares: Food, Culture, and Society since the Age of Industrialization" will be the focus for a faculty semester-long research seminar with related speakers and other events in 09-10. Lauren says she is especially proud to be named co-director for the seminar named in honor of Ken, our former colleague in American Studies.

Deborah Whaley will present the paper "Rustle Your Bones, Honey Lambs: Torchy Brown Comics, Popular Front Politics, and Hip-hop Feminists' Revenge," at this year's American Studies Association Meetings in

Albuquerque, NM. Her publication "Links, Legacies and Letters: A Cultural History of Black Greek-letter Organizations" will be published this October in *Brothers and Sisters: Diversity in College Fraternities and Sororities*, Gregory Parks & Craig Torben-son eds. (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008)). Finally, she is co-curating, with Kembrew McLeod, the art exhibition *Two Turntables and a Microphone: Hip-Hop Contexts and the Photography of Harry Allen*, at the University of Iowa Art Museum in April 2009.

The PBS "American Experience" two-hour documentary on Whitman, aired in April 2008 and featuring **Ed Folsom** as a "talking head," is now available on DVD and can be watched at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/whitman/>. Folsom worked on this project since its inception, doing initial consulting and audio interviews, editing the script, recommending participants, providing photos and manuscripts, consulting on the accompanying website, and filming a four-hour interview, parts of which appear in the film. The documentary was well-received.

Folsom's essay, "So Long, So Long!: Walt Whitman, Langston Hughes, and the Art of Longing," appeared in David Haven Blake and Michael Robertson, eds., *Walt Whitman: Where the Future Becomes Present* (U of Iowa P, 2008). Two of his books, *Whitman Making Books / Books Making Whitman* (2005) and *Re-Scripting Walt Whitman* (1996), were also favorably reviewed this year by *American Literary Scholarship*.

Folsom has kept busy, giving invited lectures and presentations at the University of Delaware, Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Des Moines University Medical School, at the American Literature Association meeting in San Francisco, the ALA on Literary Biography: Theory and Practice. He was also invited to teach the first Transatlantic Whitman Seminar, held in June at the University of Dortmund in Germany. Thirty graduate students from twelve different countries attended the seminar. Folsom also organized and co-directed the weekend symposium on "Talking Back to Whitman" that concluded the ten-day event.

Folsom has been on a Guggenheim Fellowship this past year, working on a biography of *Leaves of Grass*, trying to figure out what a biography of a book entails.

Faculty

Lafayette (Bluford) Adams
(English)

Susan Birrell
(Health & Sports Studies)

Richard Horwitz (Emeritus)

Kim Marra (Theatre)

Horace Porter (English)

Lauren Rabinovitz
(Cinema & Comparative Literature)

John Raeburn (English)

Laura Rigal (English)

Albert Stone (Emeritus)

Deborah Whaley

Nick Yablon

Staff

Laura Kastens

Carrie Louvar

Meet Our New Graduate Cohort!

Rob Albanese I am originally and currently coming from Providence, RI, and hold a BA in Film Studies from Rhode Island College. I've also lived in Portland, OR, Minneapolis, and Bowling Green, OH, where I received an MA in Popular Culture Studies at Bowling Green State University in 2004. Since then, I have worked as an office temporary, an adjunct professor of film studies, a freelance music journalist, a video store clerk, a bottler at a seltzer water plant, a language arts instructor for high schoolers, a liquor store stockperson, a warehouse worker, an editorial copywriter, and have run my own moving business off craigslist. Surprisingly, one of my principal research interests is labor studies, particularly the role working subjects play in their subjugation to capitalism and its demands. I am also interested in post-modern literature and theory, media studies, and music subcultures. My other interests are: spending as much time with my wife as possible, riding my bike, playing basketball, watching sports in general, teaching myself to brew beer, music - particularly noise and black metal, exercising, cooking and exploring global cuisine, drinking beer and scotch, and struggling at writing brief personal narratives.

Kirsten Archer I have a bachelors of arts in English and history from Walla Walla University. My research interests include built environment, place, and television. My hobbies include reading (cookbooks, travel, children's books, and others), watching television (HGTV, FOOD Network, 1990's series, the Office), people watching, and since I'm often short on sleep, napping is probably my favorite activity by default.

Derrais Carter I am from Kansas City, KS. I completed my undergraduate degrees at the University of Kansas. I double majored in Sociology and African/African American Studies. I am interested in exploring constructions and representations of black masculinity in visual culture and black popular music. Currently, I am extremely fascinated with the Black Power and Blaxploitation Eras. When I have free time I like to go biking (it's a new hobby of mine, so I don't have UPS legs... yet). I also like to take random trips and cook with my girlfriend.

Philip Deslippe comes to Iowa from Los Angeles where he worked for three years

as the Development Director for a Sikh saint's non-profit and as the assistant to a literal witch. He received a BA in English with a minor in American Studies from the University of Connecticut in 2000. His earlier academic work explored the literary interpretations of the New York City grid system and religious symbolism in various works of American literature. Philip's current academic interests include folk spirituality, fringe religious movements and hidden histories. In his free time he enjoys yoga, meditation, photography and spending time with his wife Jennifer.

Jennifer Hagedorn. I am 23 years old and I come from Herdecke an der Ruhr. This is a small town close to Dortmund in Western Germany. I studied at the Universität Dortmund and the Aalborg Universitet in Northern Jutland, Denmark. My first degree is a B.A. in Applied Literary and Cultural Studies. My special research interest lies in topics related to migration as well as multi-ethnic communities, both on the policy making and the representational level, e.g. border crossing in literature and film. Personally I am interested in all kinds of art as well as in international relations. That's why I regularly attend international Model United Nations conferences since 2004. This year, I was Head Delegate of a German delegation to the National MUN in New York City. Moreover, I own an Icelandic horse and like riding very much as well as other sports like swimming and diving. Lastly, I am studying foreign languages (Spanish, French, Danish, Icelandic) and love traveling, which I did a lot recently.

Jonathan Hansen is a returning graduate student, resuming his course of study in preparation for comps. His academic interests are in science studies, the history of medicine and cognitive disabilities, the social construction of behavioral disorders, critical theory, exploitation cinema, hip hop and comic books. Jonathan's undergraduate degree (in English and Communication Studies) is also from Iowa, which means that he has lived in Iowa City for a long time. Before that, he lived in Omaha. Jon's also a musician, and plays some instruments in a bunch of bands. Jon isn't entirely comfortable speaking about himself in the third person, yet for the purposes of this exercise, found all other perspectives unsatisfying.

I am **Vanessa Nakoski** and I just graduated from the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) with my Bachelor's in

American Studies. I'm interested in studying popular culture, specifically the way 9/11 has affected television. I'm from Frederick County, Maryland (in Maryland, we're all very county-proud), which is relatively rural considering that we're just outside the DC Metro area. When I'm not working, I enjoy singing, crafts, and watching TV, but mostly just relaxing with friends.

Julie Shanahan, originally from Reno, Nevada, grew up in the Chicago suburbs. She graduated summa cum laude from the George Washington University in May 2008 with a B.A. in English and American Studies. Julie looks forward to joining the American Studies community at Iowa to begin her study of 19th century American culture with a focus on literature and gender. Outside of school, Julie loves to travel—she recently spent a month backpacking through Ireland.

Alexis Stevens I grew up in Marshalltown, IA, which is about 100 miles northwest of Iowa City. My whole family attended the University of Iowa, but I chose to head west to the University of Oregon instead. There, I majored in Ethnic Studies and minored in Women/Gender Studies. After receiving my BA in 2004, I relocated to Portland for two years and then Los Angeles for another two. Now I'm heading back to Iowa to continue the family tradition. My focus in American Studies will be on race and gender, and I am especially interested in immigration and material culture. I'm not sure exactly what I want to do after school, but it will probably involve teaching. In my free time, I play music, watch movies, and ride my bicycle.

Nicholas Yanes was raised in South Florida and is unfamiliar with the phenomena northerners call "snow." He received his Bachelor Arts from the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors and his Masters from Florida State University's American & Florida Studies Program. His research interests are popular culture and American history. In his free time he enjoys working out, mocking undergraduates, and dreaming of world domination.

Alumni News

Hannah Brenner Beginning this academic year, I am leaving my position at the University of Oklahoma and will serve as the first Executive Director of the Center for Women and Law at the University of Texas School of Law in Austin. The Center for Women in Law represents the vision and commitment of its founders, a group of 31 dedicated alumnae who conceived of the Center and provided initial funding for its endowment. It will combine theory with practice, identifying and addressing the persistent issues facing individual women and the profession as a whole. With an approach both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary, the Center will focus on gathering and sharing best practices from all avenues of law practice as well as from a host of other professions, including medicine, business, journalism, politics, and academia.

Rev. Michael Burk was granted an honorary doctorate in theology from Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa at their commencement exercises on May 18, 2008 in recognition of his leadership in the development of a new generation of primary worship resources. That same weekend he was elected bishop of the Southeastern Iowa synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As bishop, he will provide oversight for approximately 97,000 baptized members of the ELCA in more than 150 local communities of faith. He says "It is not lost on me that in addition to shaping the way I see and think about things, my American Studies degree has positioned me for some interesting (and demanding) opportunities."

Sousan Coultrap-McQuin is the new chancellor of the University of Michigan-Flint.

John Gronbeck-Tedesco (BA 98) I am finishing my PhD at the University of Texas at Austin in the Department of American Studies. My dissertation, *Reading Revolution: Cuban Politics in the American Cultural Imagination, 1930-1970*, addresses how themes of revolution shaped U.S.-Cuban cultural exchange in matters of foreign policy, civil rights, and leftwing social movements during this forty-year period. I have enjoyed three research trips to Havana, Cuba, and intend to make international travel a constant part of my future scholarly endeavors.

M. Alison Kibler has received tenure at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, PA.

David J. Marcou, UI-AmSt-MA-1978, has been busy since last year. He's seen two of his articles about photography (relating to Bert Hardy, and to Annie Leibovitz and John Loengard) published in 'Smithsonian' Magazine thus far, with more SM assignments upcoming. And he is donating some of his own photos to Smithsonian Museums and the National Gallery of Art, among many national archives. Also, he writes a fairly regular guest column for the 'La Crosse Tribune', and is having the pub scene from his Irish play 'Song of Joy--Or the Old Reli-ables' produced at Irishfest-La Crosse (directed by Colleen M. Hogan), August 8. He is publishing his full script of that play in August, and is looking for further producers for his plays, and further publishers for his writings and photos. He also works part-time at two retail stores in La Crosse, Wisconsin, along with doing his freelance journalism and documentary work. David's son, Matthew, and Matt's best friend, Angelica, are doing well at the UM-Minneapolis. David and Matthew are both mentioned positively in Steve Weinberg's 'A Journalism of Humanity: A Candid History of the World's First Journalism School,' for the Centennial this year of the Journalism School David graduated from in 1984, Missouri's. David J. Marcou also earned a degree from UW-Madison in History, in 1973. His group and David will also did a public reading of his play 'Song of Joy--Or the Old Reli-ables', in addition to the staging of the pub scene at Irishfest Aug. 8. He also plans to publish the full-script soon.

Allison McCracken (PhD 00) was promoted to Associate Professor and Director of the American Studies Program at DePaul University in Chicago.

Dan Nathan (PhD '97) is pleased to report that in February he was awarded tenure at Skidmore College, where he is very happy. In the spring, his essay on the 1929 Baltimore Black Sox, a forgotten Negro league team, was published in *Baseball In America & America In Baseball* (Texas A & M University Press). And in May, he published an essay in *The International Journal of the History of Sport* titled "Travelling: Notes on Basketball and Globalization; or, Why the San Antonio Spurs are the Future."

Megan Nelson After two years of celebrity sightings, constant sunshine, epic traffic jams, and massive wildfires, we have left Los Angeles and moved back to Boston. I have taken a research leave from Cal State Fullerton and will be spending the 2008-2009 academic year researching and writing my book on Civil War ruins. Dan has re-

turned to the Boston office of Bingham McCutchen. My new contact information is below. I'm also looking forward to an Iowa Am Stud gathering at the OAH 2009, when I will be on a panel ("American Ruins") with Nick Yablon and Eric Sandeen.

Natalie Robertson My first book, *The Slave Ship Clotilda and the Making of AfricaTown, U.S.A.: Spirit of Our Ancestors*, is now published. This morphed from my dissertation at Iowa. It is the culmination of 15 years of transatlantic research that is based upon primary material that I collected from descendants of the slaves who founded AfricaTown (Alabama) as well as descendants of the Africans who sold their ancestors into slavery in 1860. The book tracks the smuggling voyage of the Clotilda from Alabama to Whydah (Republic of Benin); it traces her captives' origins back to specific places in southwestern and central Nigeria; and, it discusses how the Africans drew on their West African knowledge and skills to overcome their victimization in Alabama. This research has received generous support from numerous organizations including the Stanley Foundation (University of Iowa); PASALA (Project for the Advanced Study of Art and Life in Africa/University of Iowa); the CIC/Mellon Foundation; the National Endowment for the Humanities; and, the Advanced Studies in England Program, affiliated with University College, Oxford. It has also received a major endorsement from Bill Cosby, Educator, Entertainer, and Author of *Come On People: On the Path From Victims to Victors*.

Chrys Poff Pandhi (PhD 04) and her husband Anshul welcomed a baby boy on March 26, 2008. His name is Rohan Walker Pandhi.

Jane Simonsen & Mike Augspurger Jane participated in a panel at the Berkshires conference in Minneapolis in June and received a research grant from Augustana for this summer. She'll also be serving as the President of MAASA this coming academic year. Side note and plug: I taught Sharon Wood's *Freedom of the Streets* in her US women's history course this past year to rave reviews. Students loved learning about the history of the town just across the river. Mike Augspurger is using his interdisciplinarity to good advantage by teaching in the English, history, and liberal studies programs at Augustana.

Thanks (Continued from page 3)

Lauren expressed gratitude for the opportunity to help foster a solid, vibrant community with a campus-wide reputation for our activities and the ways everyone pitches in for regular Ida Beams, proseminars, lectures, and workshops.

She is taking a well deserved leave in Fall 2008 to work on her book *When the Devil Drives: Spectacle, Movies, and World's Fairs* and will return in Spring 2009 to full-time teaching, research, and service as Professor of American Studies. She continues as Director of the Center for Ethnic Studies and the Arts. CESA will be hosting the second Junior Faculty Publication Workshop "Women of Color in Popular Culture" 18-20 September and a conference (hopefully joint with MAASA) on Identities and Technocultures 3-4 April 2009.



Grad student Cinda Nofziger shares her thoughts on Lauren's tenure as DEO.



Faculty Horace Porter & Grad student Patrick Oray



(L-R) Rob Latham, Sam Graber, Laura Rigal, Mark Mattes, Andy Vlad, Jen Ambrose



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Bachelor's Degrees

Fall 2007

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Spring 2008

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Davis-Mcelligatt, Colin
Ertz, Sarah
Gargano, Joseph
Gentz, Kevin
Hauge, Matthew
Moran, Magriet
Sobus, Carrie Ann
Vannice, Emily
Walters, James
Watson, Kathleen

Summer 2008

Bender, Jacob

Admitted to PhD Candidacy

Luke Stacks

Comprehensive Exams

Eric Johnson
Betsy Loyd
Cinda Nofziger
Brad Parsons
Ivana Takacova
Gyorgy Toth
Mark Warburton
Steven Williams

Successful Prospectus Meeting

Betsy Loyd

M.A.

Spring 2008

Regina Range
Ashely Brewer Gill

Ph.D.

Fall 2007

Ulrich Adelt "Black, White and Blue:
Racial Politics of Blues Music in the
1960s"

Spring 2008

Eleanor McConnell "A Scarce Plenty:
Economics, Citizenship, and Opportunity
in Revolutionary New Jersey, 1760-1820"

Kirsten Bland Walters "Ultimate Spin:
Contesting the rhetoric, countercultural
ethos and commodification of the
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