

# THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST



**BU HISTORY**  
DEPARTMENT  
NEWSLETTER

**SEPT**  
**2022**

**BOSTON**  
**UNIVERSITY**

# FROM THE CHAIR'S DESK

## JAMES JOHNSON, PROFESSOR AND CHAIR

Dear Friends of the Boston University  
History Department:

We start the academic year with the accustomed mix of excitement and anxiety that comes with September, with new classes, familiar faces, fresh resolutions, and the worry of not getting everything done on time. This year also seems different, with in-person classes, fewer masks, and a state closer to normal than we've known for two and a half years. The campus feels changed, and that's a reason for hope.

In the department we welcome two new colleagues, Dave Glovsky and Rui Hua. Professor Glovsky is a scholar of African History who works in cross-border migration in four West African countries. Professor Hua studies East Asian History with an emphasis on the formation of legal structures in twentieth-century Manchuria. The courses they are teaching this term—Modern Africa and Modern Chinese History—are an indication of the wide appeal and relevance of their work.

In this issue of *The Presence of the Past*, you will read more about our new colleagues: that in an earlier incarnation Professor Glovsky was a play-by-play sports radio broadcaster and that Rui Hua abandoned Astrophysics for History. You'll also learn about other faculty, graduate students, and alumni. Over the summer, faculty presented papers in Paris, Padua, Naples, Bologna, Jena, Washington, D.C., and Austin. The department's graduate students, past and current, have published recent books and articles, as well as essays in the *Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Book Review*.

This year brings a change in undergraduate advising with Brendan Fraser and Julia Martorell our new professional advisors for undergraduates. They will meet with students to help select courses, review requirements, and offer advice about wider goals and activities. Be sure to read the profiles of Brendan and Julia in this issue. They join a superb administrative staff—Cady Steinberg, Molly German, and a team of work-study students—to keep this complex department running smoothly.

The articles in this issue describe a vital and productive Department of History at Boston University. Thank you for being part of this community. May the new academic year bring you discovery, growth, and delight in the process. May it also give us the chance to reconnect with the many good things we have missed these past two years.

James Johnson  
Chair and Professor, Department of History





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# CONGRATS CLASS OF 2022 HISTORY GRADUATES!

On May 20th, 2022, we celebrated the graduating class at their convocation ceremony. Faculty remarks were given by the chair Professor Nina Silber and Assistant Professor Paula Austin, this year's history convocation speaker. Student speeches were given by CAS College Prize Winner Catherine Devlin and Warren O. Ault recipient Sebastian Porreca.



**Ariane Chernock** published an article about the legacy of Princess Diana in the BU Today article, [“Why Are We Still Talking about Princess Diana 25 Years after Her Death?”](#)

**James Johnson**, was featured for an article in CAS News. [Read this article, “Bird is the Word for This Nature Loving Historian,”](#) and find out about his passion for photographing birds. Included is an interview with Professor Johnson and images of some of the birds he’s found in nature. [\(Pictures featured on page 6\).](#)

**Eugenio Menegon**, along with Theology Professor Daryl Ireland and the [Center for Global Christianity and Mission at BU](#), launched the first version of the [China Historical Christian Database](#) (CHCD) on July 27th. The database is supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities and hundreds of private donors. CHCD quantifies and visualizes the place of Christianity in modern China, allowing users to do large-scale analyses of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant missions – separately or combined. This groundbreaking project

consists of the largest dataset on Christianity in China ever assembled.

Professor Menegon also went on a ten-day visit to Naples (*pictured below*) as part of the Faculty Exchange program between Boston University and the L’Orientale University of Naples. [Read about their trip on the School of Theology website.](#)

**David Mayers** published an essay entitled “Freelance Revolutionist: Agnes Smedley in Wartime China, 1937–1941” in the database *Taylor & Francis Online*. [Find the entire essay here.](#)

**James McCann** has been invited to serve as reviewer/referee for the European Research Council (ERC) that is part of the EU. He will evaluate and recommend research proposals from EU country applicants in areas of ecology, environment, and health.

He wrote about repatriating a church manuscript to Ethiopia and its reception there. The article appeared in the American Studies Center Weekly Brief, [which you can access here.](#)





In the early summer of 2022, Professor McCann was a visiting Professor at the University of Padua. On June 7, he delivered the paper “Call it Polenta: A History of Maize and Its Place in Diet in Veneto” at the lecture hall of the Orto Botanico (Europe’s oldest botanical garden) to a full house audience that included faculty from Boston University, University of Padua, and students from the BU/Padua Exchange Program.

He also submitted an invited chapter “Malaria in Africa” to the new online publication *Oxford University Press’ Encyclopedia of African History*. This work was a product of his Guggenheim Fellowship.

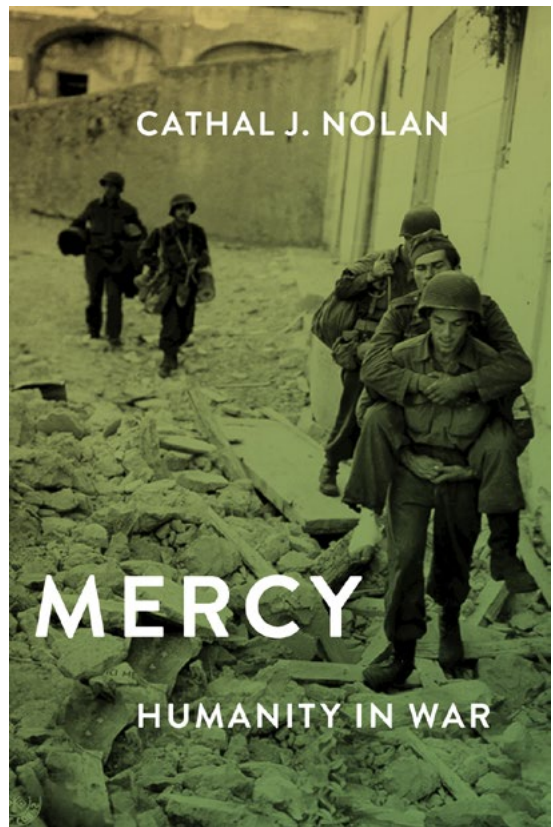
In June ‘22 he visited sites and recorded a study of Venice water supply to be presented in a September conference in Sicily.

**Cathal Nolan** led a Smithsonian Journey to Normandy, from Honfleur to the D-Day beaches, ending at Mont San Michel. He lectured on “William going the other way,” the Hundred Years’ War, revolution and reaction in Vendée, and the liberation of Paris. He accepted invitations as a Fellow of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft and as a Fellow of the Mercatus Center of George Mason University. He finished the galleys of his forthcoming book *Mercy: Humanity in War* (Oxford University Press, November 2022; *pictured right*). He conducted national podcast interviews about the war in Ukraine. He spoke to the Directorate of Concepts, U.S. Army Futures Command in Austin TX, on “Operational War: Lessons from History.” He also briefed the War Plans & Planning Guidance Group, Office of the Secretary of Defense, on “Winning and Losing Protracted Wars,” part of their draft of a classified proposal for the Secretary of Defense and the Pres-

ident. Both groups were interested in the implications of his work on doctrinal traps and lessons of long wars of attrition, the dangers of short-war thinking, contractors and propaganda, and other lessons of the long wars of 9/11. In September, he will speak at the U.S. Army War College on operational errors caused by the “allure of battle.”

**Simon Payaslian** presented the paper “Religion and the Construction of American Armenian Identity: Discourses of Immigrant Community Legitimation,” at the [Fifth Annual Conference of the European Academy of Religion](#), in Bologna, Italy, June 20-23, 2022.

**Sarah Phillips** was featured on a podcast with Linda Gordon about the Dust Bowl and Okie migration. [Listen to the entire episode here.](#)



**Nina Silber** spoke over the summer on a similar theme in two very different venues. In June, she attended a conference on “Eastern Europe’s Twentieth Century Today” at Friedrich Schiller University in Jena Germany where she discussed “The Politics of the Lost Cause in the American South” as part of a panel that explored “Cultures of Defeat.” In August, she spoke on Peak’s Island, off the coast of Maine, on “The Confederate Flag and the Lost Cause” for the Fifth Maine History Museum, the former reunion hall of a Maine union army regiment.

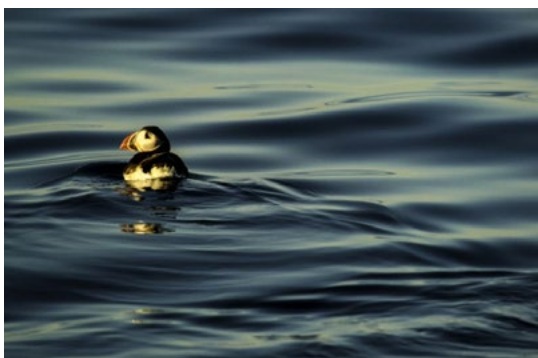
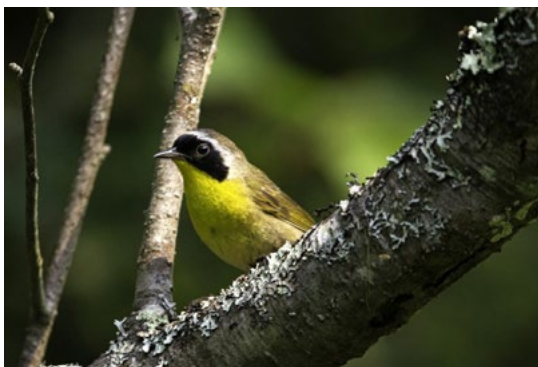
She was also quoted in a recent article for *Business Insider* regarding the use of “Civil War” language in current political discourse.

**Bruce Schulman** wrote an article published in the Washington Post titled, “Fifty Years Later, Watergate is Still Shaping our Politics.” [Read the full article here.](#)

**Jonathan Zatlin** took part in “Losing Home: Workshop on the Expropriation of Jewish Property by Mortgage Lending Banks during the Third Reich” on May 23rd and May 24th, which was co-sponsored by the Centre for Global Security and Governance of the University of Aberdeen and the Centre for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Affairs of the University of Toronto.

He also co-organized a conference on “Pictures of the Holocaust. The Photography of Persecution, 1933-1945,” which took place at the George and Irina Schaeffer Center for the Study of Genocide, Human Rights and Conflict Prevention at the American University of Paris June 22-24, 2022. At the same conference he presented a paper entitled “Pictures of a Deportation: Gestapo Images of Wurzburg’s Jews, 1941-42,” which analyzed one of the few visual accounts created by the Nazis of the deportation of German Jewry.

Professor Zatlin also participated in a roundtable on “Le juif, figure de l’étranger. citoyenneté, nationalité et apatridie” for a conference on “Les rafles de l’été 1942 en Europe de l’Ouest” at Le Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris from April 3-4, 2022.



*Professor James Johnson bird photography; featured from page 4.*

# NEW FACULTY

## DAVID GLOVSKY

### AFRICAN HISTORY



#### What are your principal research interests?

My research looks at cross-border migration between four West African countries (Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and Guinea) to explore larger historical processes in African history over the last 200 years. People moved between different precolonial, colonial, or postcolonial states for a variety of reasons—among them were to escape enslavement and liberate themselves, to avoid colonial exactions, to form new religious and social connections, for seasonal work, for better farm and pastureland in changing environmental circumstances, or for marriage.

I argue that in this region, people have lived in two parallel spaces: one of individual, bounded nation-states, and a second, cross-border space characterized by mobility, fluidity, and connection. My work studies these alternative spaces (or geographies, as I call them) from the 19th century to the present. I use oral traditions and histories alongside traditional archival sources to represent the dynamism of a region characterized by high levels of mobility. My research asks fundamental questions about the relationships between states and the people who live in them, and why people might choose to opt out—or in—of nation- and state-building projects, and what alternatives people build when states don't serve their interests.

#### What drew you to your principal research interests?

Before I was an academic, I served as a Peace Corps Volunteer for two years in a small town, Dabo, of roughly 5,000 people in southern Senegal, and nearly everyone I knew there had family in a neighboring country. When I left the Peace Corps, I wasn't interested in continuing in development work, but I was very interested in engaging with the histories of people (and a region) that I had come to care about.

#### Why were you drawn to BU?

BU is one of the best places in the world to study African history, but equally important for me, it's less than 15 miles from where I grew up! As a historian who works across disciplines, I wanted to be part of both a vibrant History Department and African Studies community. And from a non-work perspective, I am excited to work near Fenway Park (I'm a big Red Sox fan) and have my son grow up around his extended family.

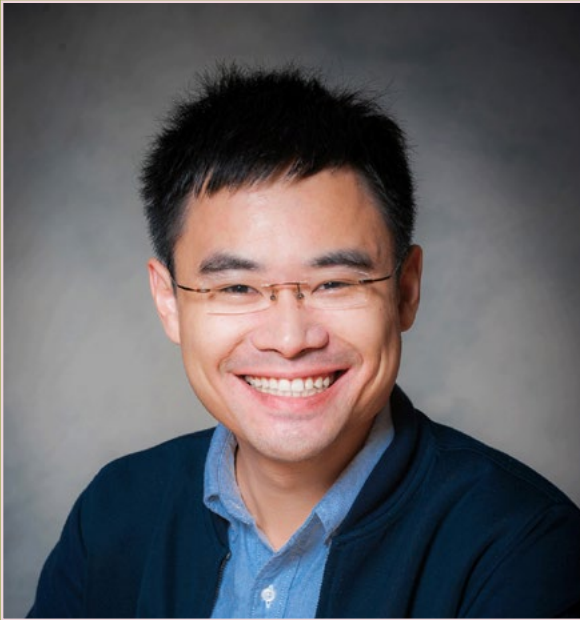
#### What are your interests outside of teaching/researching history?

If I hadn't been a history professor, I probably would have ended up working in sports. I was a sports radio broadcaster and columnist in college (including covering a hockey game at Agganis Arena). I also spent a year doing live statistics for college sports at ESPN before graduate school. So, in my spare time, I watch a variety of sports and try to improve my 10-year-old fantasy baseball team. I also enjoy exploring nature and hiking with my spouse and my almost 2-year-old son, Sam. When I have time, I'm a voracious reader, and love to read fiction in a variety of different genres. Having been lucky to live in different places around the world, I am also always in search of new cuisines and food to try!

#### What is one interesting or fun fact about you?

In 2019, my trivia team won the West and Central Michigan Sporcle Trivia Championship.





# NEW FACULTY

## RUI HUA

### EAST ASIAN HISTORY

#### What are your principle research interests?

I am primarily interested in telling good stories about the extraordinary wits and agency of the common people under empires and great states. In my current line of research, I explore how peasants and petty merchants shaped the game of great powers in early 20th century Manchuria through what some have called “lawfare.”

I write about Chinese peasants riding a Russian train to St. Petersburg to sue the Russian emperor, reed harvesters fighting two empires at once with lawsuits straddling three borders, and lumberjacks defeating warlords at the warlords’ very own courtrooms. I think of these stories as a way to balance the state-centered narratives about the modern legal order in Northeast Asia. I am also interested in how non-human actors – minerals, wetland organisms, earthquakes, and supernovas, among others – participated in the making of East Asia’s legal modernity. Some of this will be in my second project.

#### What drew you to your principal research interests?

I always wanted to become an astrophysicist and study alien worlds not of our own. I find the utterly foreign landscapes of other planets at once overwhelming and poetic. But then, for some reason, the above aspiration did not end up happening. So when I realized that I was, in fact, becoming a historian, I decided to find a past world that was different from my own to study. And that is Manchuria: a borderland with some of the most marvelous forests, grasslands, and wild rivers in East Asia. The home to the earliest bird fossils of the Asian continent, the erstwhile land of mammoths and Siberian tigers, and the battleground of many empires and as many aspirational adventurers. And all of this is now gone: like the early stars that made the atomic elements for our world in their depths. And so Manchuria ended up being my exoplanet.

#### If you could have dinner with any historical figure, who would it be?

A Manchurian peasant from the early 20th century! Maybe they can tell me where they stashed all their documents, so that I can find them in the corresponding archives? Or they can just tell me what they actually did, so that I do not even need to find the said documents in the said archives.

# COURSE SPOTLIGHT

PROFESSOR CARI BABITZKE

CAS HI 301: WOMEN AND GENDER  
IN U.S. HISTORY



**REMEMBER THE LADIES?** The U.S. Women's National Soccer Team achieved pay equity in the same year that the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. How are both possible? In the 21st century? Join Professor Cari Babitzke for an exploration of the history of women and gender in the US. The course will explore the day to day and larger ways that gender activists made space for themselves in American life.

Through success, failure, and backlash, they have marched on. Come learn about their long struggle for equality. Will be offered in Spring 2023 on Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00AM - 12:15PM.

\*Students will get credit for Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies Program Minor with a petition

# NEW UNDERGRAD ACADEMIC ADVISORS

## BRENDAN FRASER Advises Last Names A-K

### What is your role here at the BU Department of History?

I joined the Departments of Political Science and History at the end of May and am one of the two new Undergraduate Academic Advisors. I work with Undergraduate students through academic support related to course selection, registration, degree advice, future planning, and graduation goals. I look forward to working with all of my advisees moving forward!

### What did you study in college?

I received my Associates Degree in Liberal Arts with a concentration in Communication from Massachusetts Bay Community College in 2012. I then graduated from Framingham State University after transferring there with a Bachelor's Degree in English with a concentration in American Literature in 2016. I graduated from Salem State University with my Master's Degree in Education: Higher Education In Student Affairs in 2018. I am now currently enrolled in my second Master's Degree at Southern New Hampshire University working towards a Master of Arts in English with a graduation date of Summer, 2024.

### What inspired you to work here?

Advising is my number one passion in life. I love working with students and helping them to reach their overall academic and professional goals. I have worked in higher education for the past 12 years and in that time grown as a professional and learned what I can provide to students. I can offer students the opportunity to grow and develop their own critical thinking skills and guide them towards their eventual goals after college. As for working at Boston University specifically, I have always heard how great a school it truly is and in my short time being here, I have already confirmed this to be true. From the people I work with and the students I have had the pleasure of meeting so far, I know this is an amazing opportunity and look forward to continuing to work with students.

### If you could have dinner with any historical figure, who would it be?

I would love the chance to have dinner with any one of the many 19th- and 20th-century authors I know and love including F. Scott Fitzgerald, Agatha Christie, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Toni Morrison, Emily Dickenson, Robert Frost, Edgar Allen Poe, and so many others. It's so hard to narrow it down to just one, so I would be more than thrilled to have the chance to have dinner with any one of these influential historical figures.





# NEW UNDERGRAD ACADEMIC ADVISORS



## JULIA MARTORELL

### Advises Last Names L-Z

#### What do you do as an academic advisor and what brought you to the role?

My role as an academic advisor is to guide my students through their decision-making, whether it's about their classes, internships, post-grad plans, or navigating the wide world of BU. I decided to pursue advising because I had an advisor that changed the way I viewed my education and that truly helped me earn my degree at BU and I wanted to give that same energy back to a new generation of students. It is

one of the most exciting things for me to be able to interact and learn from my students as we collaborate to make this the best undergraduate experience possible for them. I am very happy to be able to provide my students with the support that they need to succeed and to go off and do great things in the world.

#### What did you study as an undergraduate?

I officially have a degree in Sociocultural Anthropology, but as an undergraduate I was a student of many things. I took classes on history, literature, public health, the refugee crisis, art history, curatorial practices, and so much more. I was also a big student of Boston and the different community initiatives that exist in the city. A big reason why I have stayed at BU for so long is because the University allowed me to learn in settings that went beyond the classroom and this is something that truly shaped my undergrad experience.

#### Where are you from?

I am originally from Mexico and then we moved to Miami, FL where my sister and I grew up. I always mention these two places because they are integral to who I am! I am very proud of my Mexican heritage and even though we lived there for a very short period of time, I feel very deep roots in Mexican soil. Miami was a wonderful place to grow up in as an immigrant girl because all of my friends also came from Latinx and immigrant backgrounds, and we were able to share in those experiences and celebrate our different cultures. Viva Mexico!

#### If you could have dinner with any historical figure, who would it be?

I would love to have dinner with Frank Herbert, the author of the Dune books. I just finished reading the books and I have an endless list of questions to ask him about the world of Dune, but also about what inspired him to write them. They aren't just the pillars of literary science fiction. They offer up timeless commentary on politics, society, the environment, power dynamics, the preservation of culture and tradition, and so much more that I just want to hear from him where all of these ideas came from. A dinner with Frank would be such a gift.

**Cari Babitzke (GRS '22)** was chosen by the BU Writing Program as their Outstanding Teaching Fellow for the 2021-2022 Academic Year! This distinction values the important contribution Cari has made to their teaching mission and highlights confidence in her performance and abilities.

Cari also participated in a panel at the Purdue University American Political History Conference this summer. [A recording of the panel can be found on C-SPAN.](#)

On June 23, 2022, Cari successfully defended her dissertation. Starting Fall 2022, she will be a part-time history lecturer for the department.

**Anne Blaschke (GRS '12)** wrote an OpEd for the Washington Post's Made by History column on [the 50th anniversary of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972](#), and was interviewed for an article, "[How Title IX Changed the World for Girls](#)," on [Romp-er.com](#).

**Patrick Browne (GRS '22)** successfully defended his dissertation on June 7, 2022. Starting Fall 2022, he will be a part-time history lecturer for the department.

**Christopher Conz (GRS '17)** wrote a chapter in the volume *Environment, Power, and Justice: Southern African Histories*. His chapter is titled "Stick to thy Hillock?: James Machobane and the Problem of Agroecology in Lesotho." [Read more about the book at the Ohio University Press website.](#)

**Zach Fredman (GRS '16)** published a book (*featured right*) with the University of North Carolina Press titled, *The Tormented Alliance: American Servicemen and the Occupation of China, 1941-1949*. [Read more about his book here.](#)

Zach was also recently appointed Associate Chair of the Arts and Humanities Division at Duke Kunshan University, Duke Univer-

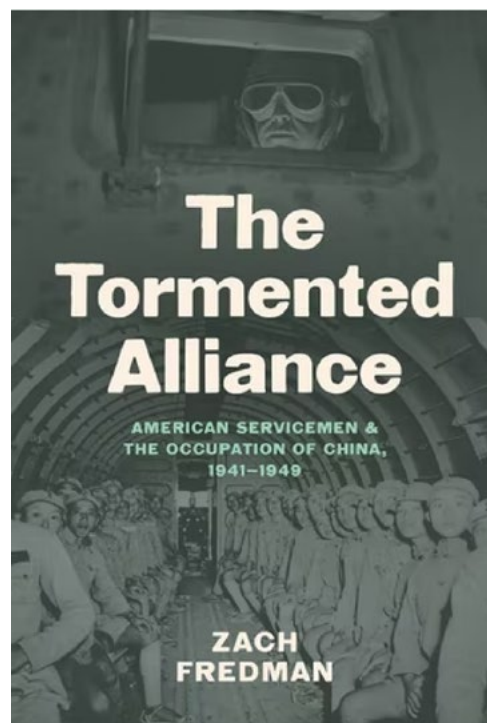
sity's China campus, where he assists the division chair in running an interdisciplinary academic division with more than 40 faculty members.

**Tom Sojka** published a review essay in LA Review of Books on Deborah Cohen's *Last Call at the Hotel Imperial*. [Read the full essay here.](#)

**Henry Tonks** was awarded the 2022 Initiative on Cities (IOC) Fellowship. The IOC awards one Boston University graduate student the opportunity to spend the summer working with the City of Boston, within the Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics. Henry had the opportunity to explore an interest in public service and civic innovation while having a positive impact on the surrounding community.

Learn more about Henry and his fellowship in [an interview](#) preceding his work at the Mayor's office and in [a blogpost](#) recapping his experience on the IOC website.

**Jonathan Williams** led a discussion on *A Civil Action* with the [Massachusetts Historical Society](#) on September 8th.



# ALUMNI PROFILE

## EMMA SCHLAUDER, CAS '19 HISTORY & ARCHEOLOGY

### What have you been doing since leaving the History Dept?

After leaving the department, I attended the University of Sheffield (Class of 2020) as a Fulbright Scholar where I received a MSc in Human Osteology & Funerary Archaeology with Distinction. My thesis examined the presence of foreign goods and individuals in Denmark's Bronze Age burial mounds. During this time, I received the Barzun Prize for Youth Engagement, funded by former U.S. Ambassador Matthew Barzun, to design a heritage project that would engage 16-18-year-olds in the local community. This has been put on hold due to the pandemic. I have additionally completed a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management through the Harvard Extension School.



Upon completion of my masters, I returned to the U.S. and held a one-year post-graduate placement as a Cultural Resource Specialist at U.S. Army Fort Huachuca in Arizona. I am now working as the Research Archaeologist for the George Washington Foundation in Fredericksburg, VA. I am based at Washington's childhood home Ferry Farm. There I conduct historical and archaeological research on the Washington family and the enslaved population. An eleven-week excavation season occurs each summer, and I frequently collaborate with our education department for events and outreach opportunities.

On the fun side of things, I managed to fulfill a childhood dream of riding horses in U.K., and, before the pandemic, added Jordan and Belgium to my list of visited countries. While in Arizona, I explored many historical/archaeological sites and stayed at the Grand Canyon. As I am now in Virginia, I look forward to continuing to take advantage of my proximity to museums and sites related to early American history.

### How did your experience in the department shape your professional and personal life?

My experience in the department helped me prepare to work independently and interact with people from a variety of backgrounds with different views and interests. It additionally encouraged me to pursue positions that would involve research and bring me into close contact with historical collections. This certainly matches my new position and I am excited that I found a role that fits my goals so early in my career.

### What interactions with History faculty did you value most during your time in the department?

While all of the professors were helpful and wonderful to speak with in regards to classes. The interactions I treasured most were personal conversations that occurred when I went for advising or simply stopped by their offices. Professors Chernock and McCann, in particular, always encouraged me to pursue my interests and were there if I needed someone who would listen. Having such interactions allowed me to form some wonderful connections that I still treasure and I continue to catch up with my former advisors from time to time. I hope to return and visit the department soon.



# NEW PAGE ON THE HISTORY WEBSITE

**THE BOSTON UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY WEBSITE LAUNCHED A NEW PAGE FEATURING OVER 20 (AND COUNTING) ALUMNI PROFILES!**

**READ STORIES FROM HISTORY UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE ALUMNI REGARDING WHAT THEY'RE DOING NOW, AND HOW HISTORY HELPED SHAPE THEIR LIVES.**

**ALUMNI PROFILES**

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